

**TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND OR FOREIGN LANGUAGE  
TO ADULTS IN QATAR: EXPLORING GENDER DIFFERENCES  
IN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION**

**by**

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## **Abstracts**

This study was conducted to explore gender differences in language acquisition of adult male and female learners in Qatar. With globalization, English is no longer exclusively being used by the traditional English-speaking world only. It has become the international communicative language, used for commerce and trade, as well as the social media. For these reasons, many learners in Qatar attend an English language centre to acquire the necessary skills to become more fluent in the language. Both male and female learners enter the classroom with a wealth of life experiences, but just unable to communicate effectively in the target language. Therefore, teaching English to adult males and females from different nationalities, including the local Qatari population, should never be considered in isolation. The gender differences in language acquisition of these learners have to be acknowledged, taking their cognitive styles, motivation towards learning, strategies employed, anxieties experienced and the teaching practices into account.

English language lecturers have a responsibility to be knowledgeable on the subject they teach, as well as possess the necessary skills to best educate these learners. In this situation, adult language learners do however, also have to accept responsibility for their own actions and seek out every opportunity to acquire English.

### **Key terms**

Adult learners

Anxieties during language acquisition

Foreign language learning

Foreign language teaching

Gender differences in cognitive abilities in language acquisition

Motivation towards acquiring a second language

Strategies employed in English second language acquisition

Anxieties experience during language acquisition

Teaching methods for English second language learners

## Declaration

**Student number: 0701-704-9**

I hereby declare that "TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND OR FOREIGN LANGUAGE TO ADULTS IN QATAR: EXPLORING GENDER DIFFERENCES IN LANGUAGE ACQUISTION", represents my own work and that all the sources I have used, or quoted, have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



2014/09/05

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SIGNATURE

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R ROUSSEAU (MRS)

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AMTB - Attitude Motivation Test Battery

CALLA - Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach

CL - Cooperative learning

CLT - Communicative language teaching

EST - English for Science and Technology

GCC - Gulf Cooperation Council

ICT - Information technology skills

L1 - First language or Native language

L2 - Second language

SEC - Supreme Education Council

SILL - Strategy Inventory for Language Learning

SLA - Second language acquisition

TCK - Third culture kids

TL - Target language

UAE - United Arab Emirates

ZPD - Zone of proximal development



## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **ORIENTATION**

#### **1.1 Introduction and orientation**

The teaching of English as a second language to adults in Qatar has experienced a dramatic growth over the past twelve years. To this end, tremendous effort in securing adequately qualified teachers has been made to provide quality English language education to the local Qatari population, as well as to different adult nationalities who are employed in Qatar's public and private sectors. A language of communication is central in the lives of people and as such, forms part and parcel of their existence. English as a universal language has found favour with the Qataris, since the majority of Qatar's skilled labour force is made up of different nationalities, whose preferred language of communication is English.

Generally, at the local Arabic speaking schools, all tuition is in Arabic, except for Mathematics and Science, which are taught through the medium of English. However, a directive from the Supreme Education Council (SEC) exempted high school graduates joining courses taught in Arabic at Qatar University from the Foundation Programme, designed to provide these learners with English language, Mathematics and information technology (ICT) skills (Bainbridge 2013:279). Many of these learners enter the adult world with limited knowledge of written and spoken English. In order for the adult learners to improve their English communicative skills, or to be able to study abroad, they have to be competent in the command of English, because English is regarded as a universal language.

At present, there are more than ten approved institutes providing English language education to Qataris and various other foreign nationalities from around the world (Bainbridge 2013:313). These institutes are registered with the Supreme Education Council. They were founded to fill this void in education and follow either an American or a British curriculum with regard to spelling and pronunciation. Lecturing is being conducted by native English speakers. The SEC has; however, issued a decree stating that as of Spring 2012, Arabic should be the official teaching language at Qatar

University. But, a good command of English is a prerequisite for learners requiring admission to international universities in Qatar and also abroad. As a result, the teaching of English as a second language to adults in Qatar became crucial, hence this study.

Quality education is regarded not only as an important mechanism to strengthen the economy of Qatar, but also as a vital mechanism to improve the communicative skills of the Qataris, as well as of foreigners living here, in order to function effectively in a globalised world (Chaddock 2008:130; Bainbridge 2013:278). With English as the communicative language used in many industries within Qatar, such as aviation, banking and general business, more and more adult learners, who have had little or no exposure to English in their respective home countries, now have the need to study it.

## **1.2 Motivating factors for undertaking the study**

The researcher has been living in the Middle East for more than eight years, two of which were spent in Bahrain, and just over six years in Qatar. During all these years in both these countries, the researcher has been teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL).

During this period the researcher has become increasingly aware that gender differences play a role in acquiring English as a second or foreign language, in respect of the adult learners' cognitive abilities, their motivation to study, the strategies they employ, and the anxieties they experience.

The researcher is presently employed on a part-time basis at an English language centre in Qatar, where an American-style English curriculum is being followed with regard to the study material and spelling being used. The teaching staff members are all native English speakers who come from America, Australia, Canada, England, and South Africa, originally. The learners are mainly from the local Qatari population, in addition there are those who come from a variety of expatriates living in the country, who need a universal communicative language. Learners therefore enter the learning environment with diverse abilities and different motivation towards language acquisition. This diversity is manifested in different learning strategies the learners employ, which make it difficult to accommodate them in the same classroom.

Learners studying at the centre can be divided into either multicultural classes or classes with only Muslim men or only Muslim ladies, because these ladies sometimes prefer not to be in a learning environment with adult males who are not directly related to them. People can differ significantly in their learning styles on a much broader scale than can be immediately perceived in a classroom. The researcher became aware of the gender differences in learning when observing how adult learners acquire English as a second or foreign language. These differences also influence and determine the way lecturers, who are aware of these differences, teach. The researcher has also become acutely aware of the importance of taking note of these differences when teaching adult learners of different genders, nationalities and different abilities.

It was hoped that the findings of this study would provide insight into the gender differences in learning English as a second or foreign language; and also serve as groundwork for future research into learning and teaching English as a second or foreign language to adult learners in other countries where English is a foreign language.

### **1.3 The prevailing circumstances and atmosphere**

The announcement in December 2010 (The Peninsula), that Qatar will host the 2022 Football World Cup, was accompanied by different perceptions and expectations by Qataris and foreigners living in this country, especially with regard to the medium of communication. The more immediate realization was to equip all nationalities with the communication skills in English to deal with the demand of the new situation. Since the announcement, English proficiency is now seen as a very important priority of the education system in Qatar. For this reason, this study became important, since it aimed at pointing the way as to how this national campaign could be effectively rolled out to meet the expectation of the Qatari people's wishes regarding the need to communicate effectively in English during the world cup and beyond.

At present there are twelve English curriculum schools, providing education to Qataris and various nationalities in Qatar (SEC 2012). As explained before, (see section 1.1) at the local primary and secondary schools, however, all subjects are being taught in Arabic, except for basic Mathematics and Science, which are taught in English. These young learners grow into adults with very little or limited command of English. Therefore, they need to be taught additional English at adult centres in order to reach a

certain level of proficiency. In other words, young learners have had some exposure to the use of English, but because during teaching or learning they could still revert back to Arabic for detailed explanations of these subjects, their English command became constraint or restricted in a way.

### **1.3.1 Religious and cultural influences**

Qatar is an Islamic state and as such, the local religion plays a significant role in all spheres of society, including second language learning. The Holy Koran (39:9) it sees education firstly as making man a right thinker and it secondly enables man to receive information from the external world. Because of this all-encompassing influence of this holy book, Islamic education is uniquely different from other types of educational theory and practice; it serves as a comprehensive blueprint for both individuals and society and is the primary source of knowledge.

The local religion therefore, also serves as a constant reminder to lecturers of other beliefs to guard against prejudices or criticisms. In the classroom, lecturers have to be aware at all times not to engage in discussions about religion or beliefs and not allow learners to do it either.

Culture has diverse meanings, as it involves the way social constructs are formed within a group, and in this way imparting their ways of thinking, feelings and beliefs to other members of a group they socialize with. "Culture can be seen as a framework of assumptions, ideas and beliefs that are used to interpret other people's actions, words and pattern of thinking" as defined by Cortazzi and Jin (1996:170). Lecturers have to be constantly aware that learners will integrate their own cultural system during target language learning, as will be further explained in section 2.2.

## **1.4 The research problem, aims and objectives of the study**

### **1.4.1 The problem statement**

In view of the preceding discussion it is evident that the problem of this investigation revolves around the following question: How do men and women differ in English



language acquisition with regard to cognitive styles, motivation towards learning, strategies employed and anxieties experienced?

#### **1.4.2 Research sub-problem statements**

As native English speakers, we lack answers to some basic questions about the acquisition of English by non-native speakers. In other words, what are the gender differences in adult learners which influence the acquisition of English as a second language? To find answers to the above problem, it was necessary to ask the following sub-questions:

- What are the gender differences in cognitive styles in L2 acquisition?
- What factors have an influence on motivation with respect to how different genders of adult learners of English as a second language acquire it in Qatar?
- What are the different strategies employed by adult men and women learners of English in Qatar?
- How do learners of different genders experience anxiety in L2 acquisition in a multicultural EFL teaching situation?
- What are the best practices for teaching English to adult men and women learners?

#### **1.4.3 Aims and objectives of the research study**

The principal aim of this research study is to explore gender differences in the acquisition of a second or foreign language, taking the learners' cognitive styles, motivation towards study, strategies used and anxiety experienced, into account.

##### **1.4.3.1 The objectives of the research study**

It was hoped that the following objectives would be achieved by this research project:

- To explore the role played by cognitive styles in respect of gender differences between lecturers and learners, as well as learners and their peers in language acquisition of non-native speakers;

- To determine if motivation has an influence on different genders of EFL learners in English language acquisition in Qatar;
- To investigate whether different strategies are employed by men and women during language acquisition;
- To focus the attention of other lecturers and create an awareness of the gender differences and perceived anxieties of learners they might encounter when teaching language acquisition to adult learners in a multicultural society; and
- To investigate the effectiveness of the various theories on foreign language teaching.

## **1.5 Research methodology and design**

### **1.5.1 The research methodology**

Richards, Platt and Platt (1993:315) defines research as, “the study of an event, problem or phenomenon using systematic and objective methods, in order to understand it better and to develop principles and theories about it.” From this study the researcher hopes to construct a theory or model of how different genders acquire a foreign language like English in this situation.

The qualitative method was applied in this study and was discussed further in Chapter 3. By using the qualitative method, the researcher wished to obtain data through systematic interviews, observation and the recordings in as natural a setting as possible. Creswell (2003:175) views a “natural setting” as “the face-to-face contact the interviewer has with participants”. In other words, by using these methods, participants’ experiences will be reported in their own words (Lewis-Beck, Bryman & Liao, 2004:891; McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:315). According to Leedy (2005:94), qualitative research “is typically used to answer questions about the complex nature of phenomena, often with the purpose of describing and understanding the phenomena from the participant’s point of view.” The researcher intended to study the complex situation with regard to language acquisition and EFL teaching to adult learners of different genders in Qatar.

## **1.5.2 The research design**

Teaching English language to adult male and female learners from various nationalities, as well as from the local Qatari population is in its own right a unique event. A case study has the capability to capture this unique information about human behaviour, as it “enables a very close examination and scrutiny and the collection of a great deal of detailed data” (Salkind, 2012:217). Using a case study also encourages the use of several techniques, ranging from classroom observations, focus group interviews, as well as individual interviews (Salkind, 2012:217).

### **1.5.2.1 Case study**

According to Denscombe (2007:35) case studies focus on one (or just a few) instances of a “particular phenomenon” with a view to providing an in-depth account of events, relationships, experiences or processes occurring in that particular instance. This study focuses on a few instances of the phenomenon of the gender differences in respect of cognitive styles, motivation in language acquisition, learning strategies and anxiety in the classroom at one language centre and one university in Qatar, when teaching English as a foreign language to adult learners, with the view to provide in-depth accounts of the events experienced in the particular instance (Denscombe 2007:35; McMillan & Schumacher 2006:316).

### **1.5.2.2 The research population**

Salkind (2012:33) describes the strategy for selection of participants for a research as taking a larger group of participants, referred to as the population and then to select a smaller group from the population, referred to as a sample. Various adult male and female learners at the language centre were asked to participate in the study. Lecturers, who the researcher deemed to be insightful, were also invited to participate in the study.

The study was based at one language centre in Qatar. At the centre, the learners enrolled at any time for a four week English course and it ranged from Introductory level (very basic with little vocabulary or communicative skills), to more advanced levels, ranging from level 1 to level 9. To determine the entry level of learners, they (learners)

have to write a placement test comprising of a set of fifty (50) multiple-choice questions, as well as short essay on a known subject, like, My best friend or My best holiday. An oral test is conducted if some information is needed to help place the learner more correctly.

### **1.5.2.3 Gaining access to participants**

Written permission was obtained from the Centre Director to conduct the research at this specific English language centre. The participants were identified and approached to give their “informed consent” to participate in the research (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:334). The sample of the letter of invitation to participate, are attached as Appendix C.

### **1.5.2.4 The sampling methods**

Five groups of learners from the local Qatar population; and learners coming from various other nationalities who were studying English as a second or foreign language at this particular centre formed part of the study. The focus was firstly on one English language class for adults, with just male Arabic speaking learners and secondly one female class with only Arabic speaking learners. The third class consisted of male and female learners from different cultures and fourthly one male and female class with Arabic speaking learners, who were originally from various countries. Finally, one class of only Spanish speaking ladies, wanted to improve their English communicative skills.

All lecturers, some permanently employed and others part-time workers, were all native English speakers and each was either from America, Australia, Canada, England, or South Africa. The researcher selected five lecturers to participate in the study. As a result, only five classes were observed; the selected lecturers’ teaching methods and techniques were observed in these classes. In addition, three other lecturers were involved in the one-to-one individual interviews.

### **1.5.3 The data collection instruments**

#### **1.5.3.1 Observations**

The researcher observed five different classes to gain an insight into the interaction between the lecturer and the learners, and a firm grasp of the situation. She also shifted her focus toward the interaction among learners from different cultural groups with their peers. Observing these five groups provided the researcher with valuable information as to the way in which learners behave within the classroom situation, with regard to the research objectives.

This provided valuable information as to how learners acquired English in a multicultural classroom situation. This was done in an atmosphere of becoming an “insider” into the real life experiences and gaining feelings and impressions of learners in their classrooms (Delport & Roestenburg 2011:181-182).

A checklist was used to structure the observations (see Appendix A). Different classes with adult language learners were observed with one class consisting of males and females from different nationalities, the second class Arabic speaking males and females, a third class Arabic speaking males only, the fourth class Arabic speaking females only and the fifth class with Spanish speaking ladies only.

#### **1.5.3.2 Questionnaires**

According to Salkind (2012:147), “Questionnaires save time because individuals can complete them without any direct assistance or intervention from the researcher.” Participants may also be more honest with their answers, because in this instance, they were not required to identify themselves, but only indicated if the questionnaire was completed by a male or female adult learner (Salkind, 2012:148).

A specifically designed questionnaire, using the Strategic Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) as designed by Oxford (1990:1), was used (see Appendix B). Twenty of these questionnaires were hand-delivered to male and female adult learners, to be completed by them at their own convenient time. To protect the anonymity of the learners, they only had to indicate whether completed by a male or female.

The second set of questionnaires, which was an adapted version of Gardner's attitude motivation test battery, (AMTB), were handed out to adult male and female learners. The instrument served to indicate learners' motivation towards English second language learning (see Appendix E). These questionnaires were purposefully handed out in a classroom to five males and six females from various nationalities. The learners were all at level four of English learning and already had an adequate language command of English to answer the questions.

### **1.5.3.3 Focus group interviews**

Denscombe (2007:178) notes that the researcher; as the facilitator, explore attitudes, perceptions, feelings and ideas on a specific topic. These interviews could last between one (1) to two (2) hours and by involving more people, more opinions could come to the surface. This would provide the researcher with a better understanding of how gender differences affect language acquisition in a situation where learners were encouraged to share their perceptions, experiences, wishes and concerns (Greeff 2011:360-367).

For the purpose of this study, ten learners were involved. These ten adult learners, consisting of three males and seven females, were all Arabic speaking and each was either from Egypt, Qatar or Tunisia. These interviews took place at the language centre, in a classroom designated for this purpose and where discussions could be conducted in a relaxed atmosphere. The same set of questions was used to interview the focus group interviews, as well as for individual interviews with learners (see Appendix C). All focus group interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed verbatim.

### **1.5.3.4 One-to-one interviews**

A one-to-one kind of interview schedule involves a direct contact between the researcher and the participant(s) (Denscombe 2007:10). During such an interview, the researcher was in a position to ask a set of prepared open-ended questions and she was also able to observe the participant(s) face to face (Greeff 2011:347-348). In addition, informal conversational interviews, which more resembles a chat between researcher and participant and during which the participants may forget that they are being interviewed, were also conducted (Greeff 2011:347-348).

Because the participants felt comfortable and not threatened in any way, they shared their feelings more openly. Individual interviews with lecturers, as well as adult male and female learners were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim.

#### **1.5.3.5 Note-taking**

The field notes of interviews and observations contained a comprehensive account of the research process conducted by the researcher with regard to what actually happened and was said, as well as attitudes, perceptions and feelings observed (Greeff 2011:372-373). Throughout the duration of the process, the researcher kept regular notes to remain focussed. Not all the notes might necessarily be used, but were kept, should they be needed for clarification at a later stage.

#### **1.5.4 Ethical considerations**

Because some participants might find the investigation personally intrusive, great care was taken in planning how to handle the ethical dilemmas in interactive data collection (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:334).

Salkind (2012:85) warns researchers that, on the outset of the research, they should be mindful that the participants are human beings, who should be treated in a way that preserves their dignity, despite the outcome of the research. With this in mind and before data was gathered, participants were assured that all information provided by them, would be treated with a sense of confidentiality. They were also informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

The following ethical issues, as proposed by Salkind (2012:85-89) served as a guide and were observed during this research:

- *Protection from harm.*  
For the purpose of this research, there was little chance of physical harm to participants, but care was taken not to let them feel uncomfortable or unsafe, and with no threat of any psychological harm.
- *Maintenance of privacy.*

Participants were made fully aware that they would remain anonymous throughout the research and only the researcher would know their respective identities and allocate a number to each name represented in the study. Great care was taken not to invade the private space of participants.

- *Coercion.*

Participants were not forced into participation of this study, but willingly agreed to do so.

- *Informed consent.*

Participants were fully informed of the intentions to collect data during the study, how long it would

Potential benefits of the study to the researcher and society at large and how they would be able to obtain a copy of the final report of the study.

- *Confidentiality.*

Confidentiality was maintained by assuring the participants that information they shared with the researcher, would be treated with strict confidentiality and that features and settings were typically disguised to appear similar to several possible places or people.

## **1.6 Delimitations and limitations of the study**

The scope of this study was delimited as follows:

- Due to time-consuming scope of the work, the study is limited in scope to various classrooms at one English language centre in Qatar, because of the time-consuming scope of the research.
- The study was also limited in terms of the years given to a doctoral student to complete his or her studies.
- Participation in the research project was limited to the learners and lecturers at the specific English language centre in Qatar, because the researcher is familiar with the teaching methods applied at that specific centre and feels comfortable with the situation.
- Only lecturers qualified to teach English as a foreign language, were considered.
- Adult male and female learners from the local Qatari population, as well as learners from the various expatriate communities living in the country who were



attending at the selected English language learning centre, formed part of the research.

### **1.6.1 Gaining access to the research site and ethics**

The centre director felt very honoured in giving me permission to conduct the research at the language centre. She had extensive teaching experience in the United Kingdom and advanced TEFL experience in Europe, Asia and the Middle East. She had been very helpful and supportive throughout my studies and never hesitated to provide me with valuable personal input.

Permission to participate in the study was willingly given by all the participants.

While conducting the research, I was ever mindful of my own conduct and evaluated it regularly and adhered to the following ethical issues: not to harm participants, getting informed consent, using voluntary participants, and debriefing participants (Strydom 2011:115).

## **1.7 The structure of the thesis**

### **Chapter 1**

It is an introduction and orientation. This chapter provides the background to the investigation and explains how the globalization of English in recent years plays a part in Qatar. The rationale for the study, as well as its aims and objective, the problem statement and research design are also discussed.

### **Chapter 2**

This chapter reviews literature and related matters. The literature review exercise involved sources as abstracts, dissertations, theses, journal articles, research papers, textbooks, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, magazines and newspapers, as well as information sources accessed on the internet. Aspects that are discussed include relevant cognitive styles of males and females in language acquisition, motivation of learners to acquire English as a second language, strategies used by male and female learners and anxieties experienced by these learners in L2 studies.

### Chapter 3

This chapter is about the description of the research methodology and research design used to collect data. Data was collected by firstly conducting five classroom observations. Specifically designed SILL questionnaires were used to find out how adult male and female learners acquire English. These questionnaires are about strategies used by adults during language acquisition. The AMTB questionnaires were applied to examine the adult learners' motivation towards learning English. Focus group interview was done with learners, as well as one-to-one interviews with learners and lecturers were conducted. Finally, notes were kept by the researcher throughout the study.

### Chapter 4

Data collected in chapter three was analysed and the determination of the research findings done. This chapter presents the results of the study in a format that is easy to read and as objective as possible.

### Chapter 5

This chapter deals with the summary of conclusions and recommendations. It presents the conclusions and suggestions for further research.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW WITH RESPECT TO A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK UNDERPINNING ISSUES OF GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE ACQUISITION OF A FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

From time immemorial, it has been common to find people taking pains to learn a different language from their native one, for a variety of reasons. In other words, acquiring the use of a foreign language is a matter that is brought about by many factors and reasons. In the case of Qatar, the major reasons why English should be known, is that many different nationalities work in Qatar and need English to communicate with each other. The other reason is that in 2022, the World Cup soccer match under FIFA, will be played in Qatar and English will be used as a language of communication, because it has a universal application. In this chapter the researcher intended to examine how a foreign language is taught, acquired and how gender differences play a role in the acquisition of English as a second or foreign language by adult learners.

In order to achieve this, a theoretical framework that underscores the issues of language teaching and acquisition, plus how gender differences affect the acquisition of a foreign language, as discussed by different scholars and writers, was examined. The review of literature is basically aimed at constructing a conceptual and theoretical framework that will act as a bedrock for the investigation and ultimately, the understanding of the issues under the four main areas, namely: gender differences in cognitive styles when learning a second or foreign language, motivation for learning a foreign language, strategies employed for acquiring a foreign language and anxieties experienced during this learning process.

Interestingly, as one reads more, one becomes increasingly aware of other variables should that be considered in studying language learning in a multicultural context, including: the culture of the lecturer; the culture and gender of the learner; and instructional methods used. These variables could be the subject of future research and not the present one.

### 2.1.1 The map in which Qatar is located

Qatar is a peninsular country situated halfway down the west coast of the Arabian Gulf and shares a land boarder in the south with Saudi Arabia. The country is centrally placed among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, consisting of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman (Bainbridge 2013:15).

Doha is the capital city and is situated on the central east coast. Doha is also the major administrative and commercial city with the highest population in the country. The rest of the country is mostly barren. Although oil was only discovered in 1940 in the country, Qatar is now a major exporter of liquid natural gas (LNG) to other countries around the world. Even if it is a relatively small country, its rich supplies of LNG and oil have afforded Qatar the highest per capita income in the world (Bainbridge 2013:18).

Figure 2.1 Map of Qatar



## 2.2 Gender, religion and cultural obligations or mandates in traditional Arabian context that have a bearing on the teaching - learning situation

In a general sense, gender can be defined as referring to masculinity or femininity of people. According to the Richards, Platt and Platt (2004:726) the definition is as follows:

**Gender:** 1- The fact of being male or female. 2- Males and females, considered as a group; *differences between the genders*. 3- The system in some languages of marking words such as nouns, adjectives, and pronouns as being *masculine, feminine or neuter*.

In this study the emphasis is placed on the concept of gender differences in language acquisition. In a majority of Arab countries, women are seen as less important to men and therefore have to really prove themselves as worthy members of society. To overcome this barrier, and because of this perception of inferiority, women seem to be working harder than men in the language learning situation.

Cameron (2005:485) notes that gender is not something once and for all acquired at an early stage of life, but it is an ongoing accomplishment, produced by repeated actions. She indicates, that most of the time, a person's gender is built upon his or her biological base, constructed from birth through various life experiences within the family and society. Because of the all encompassing nature of the Islamic religion in this country, many Qataris lead a male and female segregated lifestyle. This is also reflected in education, and starts from a young age where boys and girls are not allowed to interact and do not attend the same schools. The social context of a person's life, accompanied by unique experiences therefore shapes his or her life, and as a consequence, individuals may or may not comply with the presumed gender identity. Women are allowed to vote and drive in Qatar, but their activities are inhibited by social and family restrictions, and most gatherings are segregated by gender. Mangan (2002:4) notes that although Qatar is considered moderate by Persian Gulf standards, and appears to be moving toward a democratic system of government, it still has an autocratic regime. Hence, these views by the above authors are noted and also given space in this chapter, because to ignore them would bring about unintended consequences that could lead the study in a direction that was unplanned for.

On the other hand, Eckert and McConell-Ginet (2003:436) argue that gender is the social elaboration of biological sex. According to them, gender is a learned behaviour being

taught and enforced by the social environment people live in, and that *gender* is not something a person has, but does. In many societies girls grow up playing mostly with dolls and learning culinary skills, and as such acquiring maternal habits, whereas boys play with cars and display more manly actions that might also influence their language usage and acquisition.

Because of the impact religion has on the society in Qatar, there is a very distinct segregation between males and females, especially after puberty. Lecturers and learners all have to be aware of, and strictly adhere to what is expected of them at all times. The Holy Qur'an prescribes that women should lower their gaze when talking to men and cover up by wearing a headscarf (hijab) and special over-coat (abaya), (Qar'an 24:30-31). In Arabic culture: the word "hijab" means "cover". To comply with the Islamic customs, the Muslim ladies are expected to cover their hair when in public and western expatriates are expected to show respect and dress modestly, meaning no exposed shoulders or knees. These prescriptions also have an influence on language acquisition, as they dictate where learners are educated, what they learn, who they share a common language learning classroom with, and by whom they are being taught.

Western learners, who attend classes at the centre, are expected to abide by these rules, especially with regard to dress-code and behaviour. These Western learners also seem to integrate readily during group- and pair-work in the classroom, because they experience it as a normal part of learning by interacting with others, irrespective of gender. However, it is not so for the Muslim ladies, as they are not supposed to make eye-contact with men. This could at times be problematic during group- or pair-work and their permission always has to be obtained prior to engaging in such activities. According to the Holy Qur'an (4:34) "Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more strength than the other, and because they support them from their means..." However, without making sure that the interpretation is accurate, the previous excerpt should be used with caution because of a lack of impartiality in its meaning, especially that the researcher is not familiar with Islamic understanding of the Holy Qur'an. The problem arises when a lady, because of her subordinate status, either refuses to communicate or does it so softly, that the lecturer has difficulty in determining whether she understands the work, or has the ability to communicate, or whether the necessary acquisition of English has in fact

occurred. In the language learning class, this could lead to spending extra valuable time, repeating the work unnecessarily.

With regard to the science of gender and language, Cameron (2005:172) refers to the division of three different categories: *deficit*, *dominance* and *difference* and she asserts that all kinds of research can be placed in one of these categories. According to her, these hypotheses or categories stand for different convictions regarding the different use of language expressions between males and females. In the language learning environment, one sometimes hears references to *male language* and *female language*. This seems to indicate that there is an understanding that one can differentiate between male and female related languages, suggesting further that men and women speak and express themselves in different ways, even when they speak one and the same language. The study sought to examine this kind of situation to distinguish between the language styles of men and women. To this end, O'Loughlin (2000:2) also notes that, although not entirely clear as to how it is executed, a distinction can be observed between "male and females conversational styles". At the language learning centre, learners are normally guided on possible topics suitable for oral classroom discussions; in this regard women seem to prefer to talk about fashion, beauty and romantic movies, whereas men prefer to talk about cars, camels and horror movies.

In some societies, women still play a submissive role (see section 1.3.1) and yet, in others, women have become more liberated, and they are therefore trying to bring about changes for themselves and their surrounding world. These changes might even be reflected in their language usage. Language reflects society and societies are forever changing. So, if differences are to be found, would they specifically be gender related, or reflect status and power and how would this be perceived in the learning of English as a second or foreign language? The latter was further explored by this study under the sub-question discussed in subsection 1.4.2 of chapter one and also in the questionnaire attached as Appendix C.

### **2.2.1 Deficit, dominance and difference theories**

### **2.2.1.1 Deficit theory**

The “deficit” approach can be attributed to Otto Jespersen, who in 1922 published *Language: Its nature, development and origin*, in which he ascribes male language as normative (standard) and the language of others, including females and children, as deficient (non-standard), as it is considered extra to the norm. Since there seemed to be a difference between the language use of men and women, the gender differences in their respective cognitive processes of language acquisition was further explored in this study, which was discussed in section 1.4.2 of chapter one, included in the Observation sheet presented as Appendix A and also in the questionnaire attached as Appendix C.

To this end, Lakoff (1975:40) is sharing Jespersen’s view and argues that women’s different manner of speaking reflects their subordinate status in society, because their style is deficient and lacks authority and assertiveness. But she also continues to explain that “women are socialized to believe that asserting themselves strongly is not nice or ladylike or even feminine” (Lakoff, 1975:54). In the researcher’s opinion, this seems to generalize social behaviour and a possible inferiority role played by women in society. This could also be an indication that men and women adapt their language styles towards the person they are interacting with, like when they speak their native languages. This is yet another reason to further explore the differences in language acquisition and ultimate usage of the acquired second or foreign language.

### **2.2.1.2 Dominance theory**

The above mentioned deficit approach led to the *dominance* approach, where Freeman and McElhinny (1996:232) argue that women’s speech is subordinate to men’s as a result of political and cultural inequalities in society. They divide Lakoff’s (1975) views on women’s language into three categories, namely:

- The lack of resources that would enable women to express themselves strongly.
- Language that encourages women to talk about trivial subjects.
- Language that requires women to speak tentatively.

The dominance approach to language learning and gender is not flawless. In this approach Freeman and McElhinny (1996:236) and Uchida (1998:286) portray women as “weak, helpless victims of a patriarchy that forces them to act in weak, passive,



irrational or ineffective ways". For reasons mentioned, and with the benefit of hindsight, the impact of society and cultural frameworks on linguistic studies was further explored, by using the sub-question appearing in subsection 1.4.2 of chapter one and also in the questionnaire attached as Appendix A.

A UNESCO 2012 survey in 41 selected countries reveals that in all these countries, except Brazil, the male literacy was higher than the female literacy, often by a wide margin. This could be because there are still women in some societies who see themselves as disempowered members, mainly as a result of their cultural beliefs and orientation, and they gladly accept this as such, especially in the Arab world, where for instance the UNESCO 2012 survey revealed that in Pakistan the literacy rate for males was 63% and the literacy rate for women was 36%. With more and more exposure to a western style of living, there are women who will no longer accept this situation and will therefore attempt to reverse or change their position.

The Gulf Times of 20 June 2013 reported that of the Class of 2013, who graduated from the Qatar University, 845 were female students and 226 were male students. At the graduation ceremony for female students, the Master of Ceremonies, Qatari student Fatema al-Emadi, from the College of Business and Economics, said: "Qatar's ambitious National Vision 2030 is to establish a knowledge-based economy which means that expanding knowledge and education is the key to elevating our nation" (Gulf Times). In the researcher's view, these educated women are slowly trying to make their mark and put their unique stamp on certain areas in society, like taking up employment in various industries, such as banking, engineering and science, in what previously used to be perceived as male-dominated careers. These recently qualified students would now have equal opportunities in the labour market, as well as in English language acquisition as learners, provided that this will afford them an element of dignity and independence. They now realize they have the ability to acquire a second language and to find employment in the labour market, which ensures them future financial independence.

### **2.2.1.3 Difference theory**

The *difference* approach was developed in reaction to Lakoff's (1975) deficit and dominance theories. An explanation for the different rate of language acquisition could be attributed to an innate biological difference between males and females. West and

Zimmerman (1987:125) reason that the differences in linguistic behaviour are a result of men's social power, leading to their domination in their interaction with women. Likewise, in societies where women are perceived to be more powerless, their speech will contain linguistic politeness elements (Deuchar, 1988:27). This could be an indication that women are more likely to answer with a simple "mhm" or "yeah", to show either agreement or some interest in the conversation, where men would like to either voice their own opinions or show their superiority over the conversation. This was further explored to determine gender differences within the English language classroom, under the sub-question appearing in subsection 1.4.2 of chapter one and also in the questionnaire attached as Appendix C.

Block (2002:53-54) sees the difference approach in a more positive way, as such adopts the socially liberal position of equality between males and females. The researcher is of the opinion that women's speech and communication styles are not inferior to men's, but are only problematic because of cultural clashes and prejudices. This is often experienced in the English language classroom, where some women, because of cultural beliefs and upbringing, would keep quiet when a man is talking, whereas other women would try and take control of the conversation, to show dominance, even if it is only marginal.

In the researcher's view, the findings of the above studies are generally in agreement with the theories of those who support them even though they are not totally convincing, as they fail to take into consideration the influence of race, culture, age and gender. The influence of culture on language use can never be underestimated, especially in a country like Qatar with a local population of just over 700 000 and an ever growing expatriate community of 1 million, coming from more than a 100 countries around the world. These expatriates are bringing in and trying to integrate their beliefs and their cultures in an already fairly well established society. In the midst of all these, they need a universal language of communication – in this case, English.

### **2.2.2 Gender differences in language acquisition**

Different studies have been conducted on gender differences in language proficiency, and the media and general public were intrigued by the book *Men are from Mars, women are from Venus*, Gray (1992:2), in which he argues about the existence of large

psychological gender differences. He notes that apart from physical differences in appearance, there might also be differences in the way they think and act on given tasks. Deborah Cameron (2006:139) in her essay *Men are from Earth, women are from Earth*, reframes Gray's popular book to demonstrate how masculinity is subject to manipulation. In this essay she seeks to explain how the stereotypical myth around masculine dominance changed because of economical and ideological shifts in society. She points out that whereas females were previously seen as inept communicators in the deficit/dominance approach theory, this can now be attributed to male communicative behaviour, because "male behaviour has been reframed as dysfunctional and damaging" (Cameron, 2006:138) – a view to be tested in this study in answer to objective number one in subsection 1.4.3.1.

In "the hunter-gatherer"-hypothesis (Mildner, 2008:41) suggests this division in cognitive abilities arose from a division of labour between the genders in prehistoric humans, where men were predominantly hunters and women the gatherers. Miller (2000:3) suggests another origin of gender cognitive differences and theorises that language may have evolved partly for purposes of sexual display. This theory likens the appearance of birds in nature, with males being more visible in colour and fitness, by walking and dancing around to attract a mate. While females, although less visible, have the ability to choose a mate, with the fitter male seen as the victor. Therefore, this theory suggests that men will be better at language acquisition, in order to "attract" and women will be better at understanding the language. In the reality of human life, however, it might appear that females are more talkative than men. Seen as such, it is logical to surmise that females will be the first to be able to acquire language usage before males. This view was also tested in this study in addressing the sub-question given in subsection 1.4.3.1.

Chen, Sachdev, Wen and Anstey (2007:691) and Kruggel (2006:9) all report that men have an overall 8% larger brain size and 16% more neurons than women, but the significance of this with regard to language learning is not quite clear. There are however some indications that there is a difference in language acquisition and linguistic tasks between males and females. According to Bauer, Goldfield and Reznik (2002) and Huttenlocher, Haight, Bryk, Seltzer and Lyons (1991) the biological factor of gender in language development should be taken into account, as by the age of sixteen months, girls tend to outpace boys and demonstrate a larger vocabulary. When learning

phonologically-familiar novel words, women outperformed men, but when learning phonologically-unfamiliar words, men performed better (Bauer, Goldfield and Reznik, 2002). Although the actual difference in size of the brain is of lesser importance, this study is also testing this revelation of gender biological differences in language acquisition by adults, in order to give it a scientific validity. A set of phonologically-familiar and phonologically-unfamiliar words were given to a group of male and female participants to test this. See the relevant spelling words in Appendix F.

Seen in the above light, there are gender differences manifested in doing linguistics tasks and in the process of language acquisition, that need to be further explored in order to confirm or reject this speculation. Larsson, Lovden and Nilsson (2003) and Maitland, Herlitz, Nyberg, Backman and Nilsson (2004) suggest that the presence of gender differences on linguistic tasks is not a uniform finding, but Jackson and Rushton (2006) note that in the standardised test for college admission in the United States, men have been outperforming women on linguistic tasks and in verbal intelligences tests, according to Quereshi (1994). Ryan, Kreiner and Tree (2008) suggest that the effects of gender on verbal learning tasks become insignificant, once age and education levels are taken into account. As this is a study on adult second language acquisition, this was investigated further by testing men and women on accuracy when performing a verbal task, to see if it could be supported or contradicted.

A person's declarative memory (part of the long-term memory system), has extensive storage capacity and longevity and underlies the learning and retrieval of information. The declarative memory is also linked to the ability to store and apply knowledge of facts and events. Ullman (2001:2004) localises females' advantage on linguistic tasks on the use of this declarative memory system. Whereas the procedural memory (short-term memory), underlies acquisition of skill, like learning implicit rules and sequence, according to Lewicki, Hill and Czyzewska (1992). Ullman (in Ulmann et al., 2002) and Ullman and Estabrooke (2004) conducted a series of studies, showing that women tend to rely on the declarative memory system when retrieving past-tense verbs, whereas men relied on the procedural memory for performing the same task. In learning novel words, gender differences in acquisition can be tested in respect of declarative versus procedural memory systems. Storkel (2001) notes that when novel words fit well into the native-language (L1) phonological structure, retention occurs. Therefore, if the novel word is phonologically familiar and fits well into the native language structure, the

learner's long-term knowledge, associated with the native language, will process that word. From the latter, and relying on the declarative memory, it could be assumed that women should outperform men when learning phonologically-familiar words. These views were explored further to establish if the same conclusion would be achieved or reached in second or foreign language (L2) learning. See the relevant questions in Appendix F.

### **2.3 Adult learners**

Learning is a life-long process and does not necessarily have to stop after school-going age. For the purpose of this study, the adult learner will be considered as a person above the age of eighteen and not of school-going age any more. Adulthood refers to the many facets of the adults' lifetime and this will include the time spent in further education. This study explored the acquisition of English as a second or foreign language by the adult learners.

An important theory in adult education is Malcolm Knowles' Andragogy – the art and science of helping adults learn. He was convinced that adults learn differently from children, and therefore orientated adult educators to change their perceptions from “educating adults” to “helping them learn” (Knowles, 1950:6). According to his set of six crucial assumptions listed below, adult learners as being different from child learners because they are characterised by:

- The need to know: Adult learners have the need to know why they need to know or learn something and how will it fit in with what they already understand.
- Self-concept: The self concept of the maturing person moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being a self-directed human being.
- Experience: The maturing person accumulates a growing reserve of experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning.
- Readiness to learn: The maturing person's readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of his social roles.
- Orientation to learning: The perspectives of the maturing person are ever changing from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of

application. His or her orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject-centeredness to one of problem centeredness.

- Motivation to learn: As a person matures, the motivation to learn becomes intrinsic (Knowles, Holton and Swanson, 1998:3-4).

There have been sceptics of Knowles' assumptions, but Merriam, Cafarella and Baumgartner (2007:104) note that studies of brain development can be used in support of his beliefs, such as self-concept and experience, citing that Knowles' **andragogy** is "the best-known theory of adult learning." Andragogy assumes that educating adults is *learner-focussed*. In the English classroom at the language centre, adults enter the learning situation with a rich experience of their own respective cultures, as well as from previous learning experiences. Although some adults are highly dependent on a teacher for structure, others have the ability to work independently, once work is understood.

The adult learners need to know the importance of what they are taught, because they want to know the relevance of it to their lives and what they will benefit by acquiring additional knowledge. There are situations where adults learn something for enjoyment, because they have free time during the long summer breaks. In other situations they learn something because they need to know it for self-improvement or for a promotion at work. Just having a great vocabulary, but not the necessary competence to conform to the grammar rules in communicating, could be pointless. Some learners memorise words, especially difficult ones, but are unable to use them in a sentence. At the language centre where the researcher teaches, the characteristics of adult learners can be distinguished. These learners, male and female come from various nationalities and cultural backgrounds. They have different language abilities, prior knowledge, life experiences and ways of thinking, but all with a desire to acquire competence in English. Their desire to learn is a great motivator to the researcher of this study.

### **2.3.1 Adult second language acquisition**

Second language acquisition (L2) differs considerably from learning a person's mother tongue. Where a person's first language (L1) develops seemingly effortlessly, a second language is acquired through either experiential learning or after many hours learning in a classroom, as in this case. Cook (2003) argues that, although L1 and L2 develop

separately, at some level they must co-exist, and integrate as an “integration continuum”. For some individuals, this integration might happen over time, depending on how long they have been studying L2, or on other individual factors. According to Grosjean’s (Grosjean 2001:3) concept of language mode, this integration will happen, depending on the speaker’s perception of a monolingual mode (using either L1 or L2) or in a bilingual mode that is when using L1 and L2 at the same time.

The first to distinguish between second language acquisition and second language learning was Krashen (1982). He based his theory on five main hypotheses:

- The **acquisition-learning hypothesis**. This is an unconscious process by which language develops as a product of real communication and exposure and requires meaningful interaction in the target language in a natural way (Crawford and Krashen 2007:16-17). This is similar to the learning process of the adult learners at the centre, where language learning is done in a formal classroom, but with ample time to learn language structure and vocabulary. Although the classroom is not always seen as a *natural way*, learners at the language centre get the opportunity to practise fluency, and not necessarily accuracy, when given time to interact with fellow learners during group- or pair-work.
- The **monitor hypothesis**. The second language learner uses the *monitor* to scan what he or she wants to say; he or she then edits it, before a word is uttered. Learners have to be ever mindful of this hesitation in speaking, which although disturbing and not fluent, adds to language acquisition by the learner. During English language acquisition, the adult learner sometimes speaks slower when speaking English, than when speaking his or her native language. While the adult learner is conversing in the acquired language, he or she is constantly scanning the spoken word for correctness in pronunciation and grammar and uses the learnt system to correct himself or herself.
- The **natural order hypothesis** suggests that a natural order is followed for acquisition and structure. Krashen (1982) however disregards the necessity for grammatical sequence, when the objective is to acquire language. Adult learners at the language centre do not always follow a specific order when

learning a language and tend to follow their own adapted way when acquiring new vocabulary and grammar.

- The **input hypothesis**. Krashen (1985:100) suggests that for a *comprehensible input*, learners of a second language need to be exposed to meaningful language in order to learn. He also suggests that acquisition is more important than learning. The lecturers at the centre are all native English speakers and learners are given ample time to converse with them, as well as fellow learners. During break times, the learners enjoy engaging with the different lecturers in a more informal way and are encouraged to do so in order to get exposure to the target language, in this case English. In the researcher's opinion, speaking in the target language does not always result in language acquisition, but can indirectly assist in English language acquisition.
- The **affective filter hypothesis** plays a variable facilitative role and according to Krashen (1982) these variables include motivation, self-confidence and anxiety.

The affective filter, which forms part of Krashen's Monitor Model, that acts as a filter that either permits or prevents input necessary for language acquisition, and it was also recognised by Gass and Selinker (2001:201). This implies that adults do possess the affective filter, and therefore the ability to acquire languages. This is of importance and a point that lecturers have to be constantly aware of when teaching English as a second language to adult learners. Not all studies agree with Krashen's theory, for example McLaughlin (1987:20-24) who suggests that even though learning and acquisition are not the same, the two processes can never be seen in isolation, because they are so inter-related. The use of the *affective filter* is of particular interest to this study, because a learner's ability to acquire English as a second or foreign language may be constrained by negative emotions, such as anxiety.

In another view on second language acquisition, there are researchers who support Vygotsky's view of the **zone of proximal development**, (ZPD), in second language acquisition. This view focuses on the level of potential development – the gap between what the learner is able to do currently and the next stage in learning. For learning to occur, the process of scaffolding is needed – where the learner draws on the experience



of a more advanced language user. During these processes, the learner must develop interactional competence, the ability to manage exchanges in spite of his or her own limited language development.

Shrum and Glisan (2000:319) propose a more recent view of second language acquisition and suggest the following elements to be present within the language learning classroom:

- Comprehensible input in the target language – in this case English.
- An interactive environment that models and presents a variety of social, linguistic and cognitive tools for structuring and interpreting participation in talk. Therefore, lecturers should allow enough time for learners to do group work and pair-work to practise newly learned language skills.
- Opportunities for learners to negotiate meaning in the target language, with assistance from the lecturer and from one another. Learners should be engaged in classroom discussion to get ample practice.
- Opportunities for learners to interact communicatively with one another in the target language. Learners should be given time in the classroom to ask relevant language questions to other learners.
- Conversations and tasks that are purposeful and meaningful to the learner. Conversational topics for learners should be specific to newly learnt grammar activities.
- A non-threatening environment that encourages self-expression. Learners should be encouraged to speak, even if they make mistakes, to improve fluency and confidence in the use of English in front of others.

Vygotsky's view of the ZPD versus the view of Shrum and Glisan (2000:319) are somewhat opposing and for acquisition of English as a second or foreign language, what was of interest to this study was to test if learners use trial-and-error in the integrated use of language skills, or do they always follow a building block-style specific sequence. According to the ZPD of Vygotsky's, learning occurs with the assistance, or guidance of others. In this instance the adult language learner would need the help of the native English speaking lecturer for learning to occur.

As mentioned before in section 2.3, adult learners come to the centre to acquire English for various reasons. During the long summer holidays, the majority of the younger

adults attend English language classes because they want to prepare themselves adequately for admission to one of the English speaking affiliated universities in Qatar or to study at English universities abroad, in countries such as America, Australia, Canada or England. Adult men and women from different nationalities normally attend classes to improve their language skills in order to be promoted at work. A few of the expatriate adults attend classes to meet the entry-level immigration requirements for America or Canada, and others to find possible employment in Qatar. Only a few would attend classes out of boredom and it gives them something useful to do, such as an opportunity to socialize with others and to practise their newly learnt English language skills. Lecturers should be constantly aware that adult learners have different needs, as well as abilities to acquire English as a second or foreign language and take that into account in order to make the learners competent in functioning independently as L2 users.

## **2.4 Cognitive language learning styles**

According to Richards, Platt and Platt (1992:61) a cognitive style of learning can be referred to as a particular way in which a learner tries to do something. In this case, that “something” is the learning of a foreign language. In other words, in second language or foreign language learning, different learners may prefer different styles to learn or acquire the language. This issue was investigated, to provide answers to question number two discussed in subsection 1.4.3.1, because it is very important, as it is the main driving force behind this study. See the relevant questions in Appendix C.

### **2.4.1 Cognitive styles**

For many years, the Swiss scholar Jean Piaget (1896-1980) was very influential in cognitive development of young children and curriculum development in early childhood and primary schooling. According to his theory, the Formal Operational stage is reached by the age of eleven and up. His theories, however, did not necessarily take the *adult learner* and the influence of the social world on learning, into account. For the purpose of this study, an adult is a person over the age of 18. In the researcher’s view, adult learners enter the learning environment with their own wealth of knowledge and experiences and have varying needs for language acquisition.

More studies later on, used the theories of the Russian psycholinguist, Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934), who included the influence of social factors into adult learning. The views of the latter were highly utilised in this study, because he believed strongly in the central role that community plays in the process of “making meaning” and his theories stress the fundamental role of social interaction in the development of cognition (Vygotsky 1978). The adult learners at the language centre are from various nationalities, as well as Arab nationals from Qatar and other Arab speaking countries around the world. Although in the community of Qatar at large, English is the communicative language, many learners are not exposed to native English once they leave the centre and have limited opportunity to practise their newly learnt language skills.

#### **2.4.1.1 Commonalities in the constructivist perspectives**

Constructivism can be described as a learning theory, used to explain how people acquire knowledge. The basic idea of this theory is that problem solving is at the heart of thinking, learning and development of people. People construct their own understanding of problem solving through reflection on past and immediate experiences, which leads to an active process of change within the learner.

In order for a more complete understanding of adults’ thinking and acting, the correlation between cognitive psychology (as proposed by Piaget) and socio-cultural constructivist (as proposed by Vygotsky) perspectives needed to be explored, to determine the gender differences in the cognitive processes during language acquisition, as well as the influence of cultural factors in language learning. They needed to be explored, precisely because Prawat and Floden (1994) have also recognised the fact that shared commonalities exist between cognitive psychology and socio-cultural theories, and this has resulted in the broad acceptance of constructivism, where learners play an active role in their cognitive development. To minimise the differences, it is necessary to identify links between the relationship of cognitive and social theories in order to establish their respective contributions to thinking and acting, according to Gauvain (1993) and Scribner and Beach (1993) and Wertsch (1991:7). From these authors we learn that thinking and acting are important in language acquisition. Therefore we have a set of two different research agendas. What needed to be described is the learners’

action in the learning of a language, the situation created for language learning to take place and the activities learners engage in during language acquisition.

According to Glassman (1994) both these mentioned constructivist perspectives favour inquiry. But, as Wertsch (1991:10) notes, without taking important variables, such as particular circumstances and application of knowledge into account, this shortcoming is not sustainable under controlled conditions in everyday applications. It could be argued that the classroom is a controlled situation, where lecturers have a prescribed set of textbooks and specific syllables that have to be taught. The unique situation within the English language classroom at the language centre can however not be overlooked. Lecturers, although all English native speakers, are from different nationalities and have different approaches to teaching and apply different methods. The learners, on the other hand, are from diverse cultures around the world and as such, bring their experiences and differences with them as well. They all have to be accommodated within one classroom!

Piaget (1980) and Vygotsky (1978) both emphasise constructivist views about active and interpretive knowledge acquisition when individuals, in an effort to maintain its viability, integrate and extend knowledge. This knowledge can be achieved by encouraging the learner to be pro-active in arriving at his or her own version of the truth, influenced by culture and worldview. As Billett (1998) notes, 'both the cognitive and socio-cultural constructivist views of learning propose that, initially, the construction and organization of knowledge is individual or idiosyncratic'. By knowing and understanding how people learn, process and remember information, lecturers could plan lessons more effectively and create a more positive learning environment for their learners. According to Piaget (1950), Inhelder and Piaget (1958) and Vygotsky (1978) both perspectives see development as a result of the social world individuals dwell in and as being a qualitative transformation of thinking, instead of a quantitative addition with regard to the influence of social circumstance. While Piaget's theory encourages hands-on learning, Vygotsky believed learners should construct their own knowledge through interacting with others around them. As Van Lehn (1988) suggests, both Piaget and Vygotsky, however, agreed that without overcoming the problem of impasse, or perturbation, no learning would occur. Lecturers have an increasing responsibility to ensure that learners *make sense* of what they learn and develop the ability to make that knowledge *their own*.

Assimilation, accommodation and equilibrium are the three adaptive processes for cognitive development. Although this study explores the adult learner, a person's initial learning processes cannot be overlooked. According to Woolfolk (2004:33) Piaget proposed that as part of children's cognitive development, they develop schemes, which are mental representations of people, objects or principles. The latter can be changed or altered through what Piaget called assimilation and accommodation. Whereas assimilation is information already known, accommodation refers to adapting existing knowledge to perceived knowledge, Piaget (1950). When new knowledge does not fit in with the accumulated knowledge, disequilibrium occurs, but after accommodation of new knowledge, equilibrium occurs and a person can advance to a new cognitive stage, Woolfolk (2004:37). Having a well-balanced equilibrium is what keeps assimilation and accommodation balanced, resulting in a healthy adaptation level. As both Piagetian and Vygostkian perspectives share this seeking of equilibrium, it seems more likely that the gap between these perspectives will be bridged, Anderson (1993).

The adult language learner differs from the child, as he or she has already existing knowledge of the world around when he or she enters the classroom; newly learnt information must be integrated into the existing one for learning to occur. Lecturers should be mindful that a positive learning environment, could lead to a more positive outcome of language acquisition.

#### **2.4.1.2 Differences in Piagetian and Vygotskian constructivist perspectives**

Although there are commonalities between their constructivist perspectives, there are also differences, which were examined, emphasising each perspectives view by looking at the following:

- The **social contribution** of cognitive development in the acquisition of a foreign language.

Both Piaget and Vygotsky acknowledge the factors of *social contribution* to cognitive development as a necessary condition for the acquisition of a foreign language. But, according to Inhelder and Piaget (1958:75), whereas Vygotsky supported the role of history in the sourcing and transformation of knowledge, for Piaget it is not sufficient and he favours biological contributions. Vygotsky's view is that historically derived, socio-culturally determined knowledge is the result of social interaction. He refers to it

as a process of inter-psychological (between social partners) which results in intra-psychological outcomes (internal attributes), Vygotsky (1978). Piaget (1980) privileges the “appropriation” concept of the intra-individual process (interiorization) during knowledge construction. Rogoff (1995:141) reasons that, according to her, *internalization* implies the passing of external knowledge from outside to inside and *appropriation* refers to the individuals’ actively interpreting externally accumulated knowledge and “gaining facility in an activity”.

Social skills that were previously acquired by the adult learners will be beneficial in the acquisition of English as a second or foreign language.

- The degree of **biological determinism** in the acquisition of a foreign language.

The degree of *biological determinism* is another area of difference between these two perspectives. Piaget stated that development preceded learning, whereas Vygotsky claimed that learning is developed, and as such, plays the central role in development. This stage development theory of Piaget has been greatly challenged with claims that stage development does not result in the person’s universally applicable forms of knowledge, according to Glaser (1989, 1990). According to Rogoff, (1990:8:14) Vygotsky, however, viewed biological growth, or ontogenetic development, as only one aspect of cognitive development.

Learning, especially in the acquisition of English by the adult learner, does not stop when reaching a certain biological age; it can be part of a life-long learning experience.

- Whether they are characterized by **collaboration or antagonism** in promoting or hindering the acquisition of a foreign language.

In certain ways, the distinction between *collaboration and antagonism* could be viewed as characteristic of these perspectives, rather than real differences. Piaget (1968) proposed that a person seeks to ensure equilibrium between antagonistic viewpoints in order to generate sensible knowledge. Whereas Vygotsky (1978) regards knowledge as being collaboratively inter-psychologically constructed, through a joint process of problem solving and decision making.

Lecturers should recognize the range of learning styles that an adult learner brings with him or her to the English language classroom and be experienced enough to strike the

balance (happy medium) between when to drill acquired knowledge into the learners and when to allow them to have fun and enjoy the learning experience.

- The **degree** to which each theorist acknowledges **self-regulation** in the acquisition of a foreign language.

Rohrkemper (1989) argues that this distinction of *degrees of self-regulation* may be overemphasized. Piaget (1976) greatly emphasised that learning is being self-regulated from within an individual, or intra-individual, whereas Vygotsky (1978) viewed learning as being social and between individuals, or inter-individual. From the latter, one can deduct that knowledge could be developed from the concept of appropriation, as well as from social norms and patterns found in workplaces, the home and recreational settings. As Rogoff (1990:151) states, “The process of appropriation transforms knowledge from initial idiosyncratic structuring to something which is socially patterned by proximal (close) and distal (distant) forms of guidance.”

Allowing the adult learners enough time to socially interact with one another and communicate through the medium of the target language, English, at the same time, while under the supervision of the lecturer to make corrections where needed, will ensure that learning becomes meaningful.

The chart that follows illustrates the differences between the two perspectives. Looking closely at the differences, one realizes that there are arguments for and against either. The researcher, as a matured person herself, regards learning and further education as a lifelong experience and not something that necessarily stops at a certain chronological age. For this reason, her leaning would be more towards the Vygotskian view, as the social interaction and diverse cultural influence in language learning, are aspects that cannot be overlooked.

Differences in Piagetian and Vygotskian constructivist perspectives:

The Piagetian view	The Vygotskian view
Higher-order thinking is biologically determined	Higher-order thinking is derived from social interaction
Stages of development determine the application of knowledge and learning is constrained by these stages	The development of cognitive structures precede cognitive development, resulting in the possibility of learning
Individual possesses an intra-psychological urge to seek equilibrium	Inter-individual interaction leads to intra-psychological development
Acquisition of knowledge is self-regulated	Appropriation is active, contested, interpretive and self-regulated

Looking at the summary of Piaget’s and Vygotsky’s views, the view by the latter, which emphasises the taking of social interaction into account, underpins a great deal of the researcher’s own teaching. Lecturers need to recognize the importance of group work and pair work and learn to make them fun activities, so that adult learners could feel encouraged to interact with each other to improve their language skills. The researcher, as an educator herself, would apply the principles of Vygotsky more when teaching English to adult learners of all nationalities, as she believes the principles of scaffolding, conversational interaction with other learners and cultural tools are important elements to their language acquisition.

#### **2.4.2 The lecturer’s role**

The role of the lecturer in the constructivist classroom is to organize information in order to engage learners in an exciting and interesting manner that involves the active participation of the learners through sharing of ideas and also, by assisting them in developing new learning skills and to link them with previous learning or existing knowledge. The lecturer should guide learners in using cognitive strategies such as self testing, practising communicative skills, asking probing questions and reflecting on newly learnt grammar and vocabulary. As Brooks and Brooks (1993:25) note, it “requires a paradigm shift” and “the willing abandonment of familiar perspectives and practices and the adoptions of new ones”. In the researcher’s view, learning, and specifically English second language acquisition is not static, it is a process of continual



growth and reorganizing of information. Learning can be achieved by positive reinforcement of desired behaviour within the classroom.

Following the constructivist theory of teaching, lecturers have to make the shift from a traditional way of teaching to a more learner-centred way, where learners are encouraged to get involved by interacting with fellow learners and socialising with native speakers, asking relevant questions in the target language and come to their own conclusions with regard to English language acquisition.

### **2.4.3 Instructional methods**

Using the constructivist approach, Vygotsky's findings suggest a learning environment which involves guided interaction that allows the learner to reflect on inconsistency and to change the situation through communication. In an article, *Learning theory: Constructivist approach* (Brewer), some educational prescriptions shared from a constructivist viewpoint are stated as being:

- *Prior knowledge.* Integrating existing knowledge with newly learnt knowledge can remind learners of what they already know.

Therefore, lecturers should encourage learners to actively construct new information and integrate this new information into what they already know, in order for meaningful learning to happen.

- *Real and authentic problems.* The proponents of constructivist approach to education believe that problem-solving and critical thinking promotes effective learning.

Learners should actively participate in problem-solving in the language learning classroom and also be encouraged by lecturers to exercise critical thinking their attempt to find solutions to problems that are very true to reality.

- *Constructivist curriculum.* The use of a constructivist curriculum is based on what learners already know, what they don't understand and also on the lecturers' objectives for the class.

Lecturers should incorporate new ideas with already familiar information to achieve learning goals. In order for language acquisition to be effective, lecturers should demonstrate the necessary effort and purposefully build knowledge structures over an extended period of time.

- *Cognitive conflict and social context.* The cognitive conflict or puzzlement by what is not understood by the learner, acts as the stimulus and organization for what is to be learnt.

Therefore, learners need to “resolve” this puzzlement and lecturers should afford them enough time to communicate and have classroom discussions with fellow learners.

- *Constructivist assessment.* Assessment of learners can be done through written or oral tests.

At the language centre, learners are regularly assessed on their progress as they need the feedback to serve as motivation for future learning.

- *Technology and constructivism.* The role of technology is a valuable tool in the language learning classroom.

Technological communicative tools can enhance learners’ cognitive processes during problem solving and lecturers should use this as a learning aid.

In the learner’s opinion, when applying the above mentioned prescriptions in the classroom, the activities will be more learner-centred and the lecturer will act as an expert to guide learners into adopting cognitive strategies such as expressing understanding, asking relevant questions and reflecting on their own progress. Therefore, lecturers can use a scaffolding, or building-block style of teaching, to add to what learners already know, to achieve success within the language learning classroom.

#### **2.4.4 Communicative Approach and Competence in language teaching**

The Communicative language teaching (CLT) approach became more popular as educators acknowledged its strength to develop learners’ communicative skills. Noam Chomsky was among the first to demonstrate that there should be a shift from the

mastery of grammatical structures to greater communicative proficiency. Hymes (1972) further advanced the theory and stated that the developing of *communicative competence* was the goal of language teaching, implying the acquisition of both the ability and knowledge to use language. Hedge (2000:44) observes that communicative competence also encompasses the relation to the psychological, cultural and social rules, which regulate the use of language and the understanding of its linguistic forms. Lightbown and Spada (2006:196) define CLT as learners' ability to efficiently express what they mean in the target language and successfully achieve communications in real-life situations. Richard and Rodgers (1986:71) suggest that CLT incorporates grammar translation, audio-lingual methods, communicative language teaching and the natural approach and could therefore rather be considered an approach, than a method.

The researcher's view is that, when using traditional teaching methods, such as grammar translation methods, lecturers spend a substantial amount of time on drilling grammar pattern rules and learners have to repeat these patterns until the work is fully understood. The CLT approach encourages learners to practise structures through activities, such as group work and pair work within the language learning classroom. This affords the lecturer time to move unobtrusively among the learners, giving help or guidance where needed, but without learners feeling inhibited to use their newly learnt language skills.

Hymes (1972), complemented by others, suggests a list of communicative competences, and includes the following:

- *Linguistic or grammatical competence*. This refers to a set of grammatical rules to guide the formation of sentences, (Hedge, 2000:46).

Not all learners are interested in the language rules and lecturers have to encourage their understanding of not only these grammatical rules, but also their exceptions. English second or foreign language lecturers have a great task to encourage learners to use their newly learnt language skills, by giving them enough time for conversation in the classroom.

- *Sociolinguistic or pragmatic competence*. The four language skills, reading, listening, writing and speaking cannot be taught in isolation according to Hedge (2000:46).

Lecturers should be mindful that learners will also acquire language through social interaction within the classroom, as well as with their external world. Additional reading material, with interesting subjects, could be a useful tool to get learners to improve their reading skills, as well as English language comprehension.

- *Discourse competence.* Learners are supposed to distinguish between various discourses in order to use grammar accurately and communicate fluently. Hedge (2000:50) proposes *discourse analysis* as an approach to analysing discourses when communicating with others, with reference to sentences, speech acts and turns-at-talk.

Lecturers should draw learners' attention to the fact that the development of discourse competence leads to the forming of meaningful sentences and affording learners opportunities to interact socially and practise their English language skills with more accuracy and fluency.

- *Strategic competence.* The learners' critical and creative minds help them to strategise knowledge for the effective and appropriate use of language. Hedge (2000:52) suggests that strategic competence acts as mediator between the learners' internal language knowledge and the awareness of the external social and cultural context when communicating.

Lecturers should constantly encourage learners to engage in speaking activities with other learners in the English language classroom, in order for these learners to become less self-conscious.

- *Fluency.* Hedge (2000:54) added fluency to the list, stating that it implies coherent communications in terms of the appropriate use of linking devices, intelligible pronunciation and correct intonation, insisting that CLT emphasises comprehensibility and not accuracy.

Lecturers should at times tolerate errors, as this creates a sense of comfort and self-confidence on the part of learners who might not possess the necessary practical competence, but enjoy practising newly acquired skills in the English language classroom.

According to the researcher, the above CLT provides quite a holistic approach to language teaching, as it incorporates active learner participation, knowledge construction and individual and collective discovery of problems, as well as finding of solutions to problems by the language learners.

#### **2.4.4.1 Cooperative language learning**

Cooperative learning (CL) is defined by Richards and Rodgers (2001), as group work structured in a way to enable learners to interact and exchange information cooperatively, rather than promoting competition in language learning.

The three vital variables for language learning as proposed by Krashen (1985) and Kagan (1995) are input, output and context.

- Input. According to Krashen's Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory (1985), for second or foreign language learning to occur, there needs to be input, or constant exposure to the target language, in this case English.

For language learning to occur, lecturers have to expose learners to enough opportunities within the classroom to practise their communicative skills and also encourage them to engage in English conversation with other native speakers as often as the opportunity arises. For the purpose of this study, Krashen's theory implies immersion in the target language to maximise acquisition and this will be provided by the native English lecturer in the classroom.

- Output. If speech is not functional, learners will not benefit from it.

Lecturers once again serve as the facilitators to encourage learners to use the language in as natural a setting as possible, in order for language learning to be effective. This can be done during classroom session doing group or pair-work, and where the lecturer can monitor the situation. It could therefore be concluded that communication (output) by the language learner, produces language acquisition.

- Context. Kagan (1995) suggests that another factor that fosters language acquisition or learning, is a supportive, friendly, motivating, communicative,

developmentally appropriate and feedback rich context. Further to that: Kagan (1995) also suggests various pointers for lecturers to employ in order to create a supportive learning atmosphere, that promotes asking relevant questions; group work or pair-work; praise, support and encouragement; and awareness of what fellow learners know.

Language learners will acquire the target language, in this case English, if they are given the opportunity in the classroom to communicate about real objects and events meaningful to them.

The lecturer who facilitates the communicative language teaching variables, namely input, output and context will achieve language acquisition by the learners.

#### **2.4.5 Experience elsewhere about cognitive styles**

Language acquisition and development are made possible by a person's conceptual systems, governed by his or her intricately linked neural connections in the brain. Taylor (1995) notes that: "Language, being at once both the creation of human cognition and an instrument in its service, is thus more likely than not to reflect, in its structure and functioning, more general cognitive abilities." This seems to indicate that humans are born with certain cognitive learning capabilities that are genetically transmitted. This is noteworthy, and as this study is dealing with language acquisition of the adult learner, it has captured the necessary attention in this study.

##### **2.4.5.1 Spain**

Escribano (2004) in a study of a group of Spanish speaking engineering students at a Madrid university, learning English for Science and Technology (EST), he concludes that rather the difference in background knowledge, than the language level, accounted for the main reason for distorted interpretation and comprehension of text. The more advanced engineering students, with prior knowledge of the situation, scored better and the differences in language levels, in this instance, were insignificant.

This theory was tested in this study to see if it would be supported or rejected.

## 2.5 Defining motivation

Various studies indicate that motivation plays a prominent role in second language learning achievement and in influencing language learning strategies (Gardner and Smythe, 1975; Crookes and Schmidt, 1991; Oxford and Shearin, 1994). It is not always easy to identify and study a learner's motivation, especially in a large multicultural classroom. As Cook (1996) notes, if 'atmosphere' or 'culture' gets added to the mixture, the behaviour of particular learners can be affected at this particular time. The researchers feels strongly that the role and influence of the lecturer to motivate learners in second language acquisition, can never be underestimated, as some learner may react positively towards encouragement from the lecturer. The lecturers' perspectives of the subject matter, as well as their abilities to integrate learners from different nationalities and backgrounds, may influence learning in the classroom. Lecturers have an obligation to treat all language learners equally, irrespective of cultural differences or nationality. If learners are not fully integrated and not made to feel part of the second language learning classroom, learners might feel alienated and de-motivated to study.

Richards, Platt and Platt (1992:238) define motivation as "the factors that determine a person's desire to do something." They refer to "instrumental motivation" and "integrative motivation" in second and foreign language learning. Instrumental motivation is useful for certain "instrumental" goals, such as getting employment or passing an examination. With integrative motivation there is an internal drive to learn a foreign language in order to communicate with people from other cultures. Crookes and Schmidt (1991), Gardner and Macintyre (1993), Dornyei (1994), Gardner and Tremblay (1994) and Oxford and Shearin (1994), among others, more recently reverted to the basic task of defining motivation in second language acquisition and suggested further study to strengthen the theoretical basis from various perspectives. This was further explored in this study, in examining the sub question number three in subsection 1.4.3.1, to determine if differences between male and female learners' desire, or internal drive to acquire English, can be attained.

Therefore, the lecturer needs to know and understand the learners' goals and motivation towards acquiring English as a second or foreign language, in order for the learning to result in a positive outcome.

### **2.5.1 Instrumental motivation**

According to Hudson (2000) instrumental motivation can be defined as ‘the desire to obtain something practical or concrete from the study of a second language’. Underlying this is the learners’ goal to gain some social reward (encouragement from the lecturer or family members) or economic reward (a promotion or salary increase at work) for L2 achievement and refers to a more functional reason for language learning.

The intensity, with which learners are involved in a learning activity, indicates how motivated they are to learn. The extent of their involvement however, depends on their experience of the subject matter and on the meaning they allocate to the material. As a prominent researcher in the field of second language acquisition, Gardner (1985) identified motivation in general, though relevant to second language learning, as the single most influential factor in achieving this goal. Mowrer, (as cited in Larson-Freeman and Long, 1994) suggests that children’s success in learning a first language to gain family identity and that of the community at large, influenced Gardner’s work on motivation.

Lecturers should be aware in the classroom not to reward the good language learner with higher mark and verbal praise, or punish the language learners who scored lower marks, in order for learners not to become frustrated or de-motivated to study.

### **2.5.2 Integrative motivation**

Integrative motivation can be defined as the natural, inherent drive to seek out new challenges. In other words, in language acquisition, it is characterised by the learners’ positive attitudes towards the target language group and the desire to integrate into the target language community. According to Crookes and Schmidt (1991) motivation has been identified as the learner’s orientation with regard to the goal of learning a second or foreign language. Falk (1978, as cited in Norris-Holt, 2001:3) points out that, “students who are most successful when learning a target language, are those who like the people that speak that language, admire the culture, and have a desire to become familiar with or even integrate into the society in which the language is used.”



The Qataris, as well as other nationalities studying English at the language centre, all have the desire to acquire the target language with the intention of becoming fluent enough to find employment, to study abroad, or simply to use English as the language of communication in society.

Learning English as a second or foreign language (L2) in Japan would differ greatly, for example from learning English in a country like Qatar. In the language learning classroom in Japan, learners are mainly from the same cultural background, whereas in Qatar, this learning occurs mostly in a multicultural environment, with learners from diverse nationalities and backgrounds. Benson (1991) suggests that a more appropriate approach to English Foreign Language (EFL) learning would be the desire of the individual to become bilingual, as well as fitting into that culture. Learners of English in Japan, being a more mono-cultural society, would find it therefore more difficult than learners of English in Qatar. Although Arabic is the preferred language on all official documents, English is widely spoken and understood or partly-understood by many residents, local Qataris or the various other nationalities. English also serves as the preferred language of communication to accommodate the various nationalities living in this country. In this case, learners are not learning English as a second language to fit into the culture of Qatar, but to be more widely understood by the diverse nationalities living here.

#### **2.5.2.1 Instrumental versus integrative motivation**

According to Taylor, Meynard and Rheault (1977) and Ellis (1997) both instrumental and integrative motivation are essential to sustain long-term success when learning a second language. Ellis (1997) refers to Gardner and Lambert (1972) who in earlier research, deemed integrative motivation of greater importance in language learning.

Irrespective of the underlying reason for studying English in Qatar, whether it be a promotion at work, finding employment or to develop social skills, motivation is an important variable in second language acquisition by men and women alike and cannot be overlooked. Qatar is perhaps a unique English learning environment, when taking into consideration that not all the learners will be exposed to the language once outside the classroom and might not have ample opportunities to practise newly learnt language skills, except only in the classroom.

Lecturer should be aware of the possible factors that may affect the language learners' attitudes towards language acquisition.

### 2.5.3 Gender differences in motivation to study ESL

Not all studies have yielded the same outcome, and some produced mixed results with regard to gender differences in motivation towards studying a second language. According to a study in Hungary, using the Gardner's socio-educational model, Dornyei and Clement (2001) found that females scored higher than males in all aspects of instrumental and integrative motivation factors, when studying various foreign languages. However, a survey done in Japan of English language learners and using the same model, did not confirm these results (Mori and Gobel 2006). Mori and Gobel (2006) speculated that a possibility could be differences in social standards and cultural influences.

This study tested the differences in motivation towards English second or foreign language acquisition between adult males and females, to see if the above could be confirmed or rejected.

Gardner (2010) states that second language acquisition takes place in various settings and therefore, the affective reactions towards it, and influence of the second language cultural group cannot be overlooked. These cultural influences can affect the learners' motivation to acquire the second language. Gardner's socio-educational model presents interrelated variables in second language acquisition, namely:

- **Social milieu**, which will include the learner's culture and environment. In this instance, the English second language class with learners from diverse nationalities and cultural backgrounds, and with native speaking English lecturers, also from diverse backgrounds, is multicultural in character.

The English language lecturer should be aware of, and take into account that they are teaching adult male and female learners from various nationalities and cultural backgrounds, but all with a desire to become proficient in the dominant language of communication in Qatar, namely English.

- **Individual differences**, which includes intelligence, aptitude, motivation and anxiety. The factors could all inhibit the individual male and female learner's ability to acquire the target language, English.

English language lecturers should take the above variables into account when teaching adult learners.

- **Setting**, in other words, is the second language being learnt in a formal or informal setting?

Although the classes are conducted using prescribed textbooks, English language lecturers at the centre give a lot of attention to the fact that it should be done in a relaxed atmosphere to promote and encourage learning.

- **Linguistic knowledge**, including language and non-linguistic skills. Learners bring with them a wealth of knowledge and experience about life, as well as their own respective languages; helpful elements to acquire a second language.

This study tested if motivation towards English second language learning would enable learners to obtain a higher level of proficiency.

- **Integrative motive.** This concept is divided into three components: *integrativeness*, referring to the learner's attitude towards the learning situation and motivation; *attitude* towards the learning environment and textbooks; *motivation* exerted to learn new material.

At the language centre lecturers are skilled in stimulating and promoting English learning, they have a good command of English, present well-prepared lessons with interesting topics and employ a meaningful evaluation procedure to motivate learners to acquire English as a second language.

Although studies on gender differences in motivation towards second language learning is not easily found, Kay and Knaack (2007) note that there were no marked individual differences in motivation between male and female students using online based learning methods. A lack of noteworthy studies in this particular field could possibly contribute to the fact that no differences between male and female motivation towards language learning could be found. Although criticized by some, Gardner's socio-educational model, and more specifically the *Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB)*, was applied in this study to explore differences in males' and females' motivation

towards English second language acquisition, precisely because of its popularity and dominance in this area.

#### **2.5.4 Experiences elsewhere concerning motivation**

In this section, a few examples of how other nations have gone about learning a target language are cited and similarities and contrast that could help advance the present study are drawn.

##### **2.5.4.1 Canada**

Several studies done in Canada with learners of French as a second language, suggest that males are less motivated to learn the target language than their female counterparts (Massey, 1994; Netten, Riggs and Hewlett, 1999; Pagliaroli, 1999).

The motivation of adult English language learners in Qatar was also tested in the study to determine if the disinterest of Canadian male students to acquire French is in any way unique, or can it also be detected among learners in this study as well?

##### **2.5.4.2 Britain**

A British study also concluded that males are less interested and motivated to learn French, than females (Williams, Burden and Lanvers, 2002). As the nationalities of these learners were not mentioned, it is assumed that they were English speaking and therefore learning French as a second language.

In her study on two male Italian English language learners at the University of Northumbria, UK, (Macleod, 2002) and the effect of instrumental motivation on their language acquisition, Macleod concludes that, "Key influential factors included: beliefs about language learning, certain personality traits (sociability, personal determination, flexibility and open-mindedness), preferred learning style and setting, including location, teaching method and length of course."

As mentioned before, the situation in the second language classroom in Qatar is entirely different, as the learners are from various nationalities and cultural backgrounds, and

they all want to acquire English. Therefore the differences in motivation of male and female English language learners were also tested in this study. Although second language learners should be self-motivated to study, lecturers should encourage them to rely more on themselves than on the lecturer to be successful.

## **2.6 Learning strategies**

The word *strategy* is derived from the Greek word *strategia*, meaning steps or actions taken for the purpose of winning a war. Although the warlike meaning has fallen away, the control and goal-directedness remain in the modern version of the word (Oxford, 1990:8).

Richards, Platt and Platt (1992:208:209) define learning strategy as a way in which a learner attempts to work out the meanings and uses of words, grammatical rules and other aspects of language. In second language learning this could be intentional behaviour and thoughts that learners make use of during learning in order to help them remember newly learnt information (Richards, Platt & Platt, 1992:208:209). The effectiveness of second language learning is thought to be improved by lecturers' abilities to teach learners more effective strategies. Chamot and O'Malley (1996) suggest the general communicative language teaching approach. They prefer the *Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach* (CALLA), using a strategies-based instruction to second language learners that includes clear strategy instruction, content area instruction and academic language development (Chamot and O'Malley, 1996).

Oxford (1990) describes language learning strategies as specific action or techniques used by learners to assist their progress in developing second or foreign language skills and that gender is among a number of factors that influence their learning style and strategies. Research has shown that conscious, tailored use of tools such as active, self-directed involvement is needed for L2 learning (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

When teaching English as a second language to learners from diverse nationalities and cultural backgrounds, the teaching of strategies might not always be high on the priority list. This could be because of a volume of work that has to be covered by a specific syllabus within a given time-frame within the classroom, and lecturers might not have the necessary time or energy to contemplate teaching strategies as well. Just by

teaching adult learners how to learn, will enable them to become more successful in English language acquisition.

### 2.6.1 Main categories of L2 learning strategies

Although O'Malley and Chamot (1990) offered alternative ones, Oxford (1990) identified six major groups of L2 learning strategies:

- **Memory related strategies.** *Memory-related strategies* help learners' link one L2 item or concept with another, but do not always involve deep understanding. Purpura (1997) concludes that the use of memory strategies in test-taking had a significant negative relationship to learners' test performance in grammar and vocabulary.

The English language lecturer should remind the adult language learner to be careful when using memory-related strategies, as opposed to understanding the grammar structure, in order to avoid confusion during recall, because the adult learner has already developed an individual learning style.

- **Cognitive strategies.** With *cognitive strategies* the learner is able to manipulate the language material in direct ways, e.g., through reasoning, analysis, note-taking, summarizing, synthesizing, outlining, reorganizing information to develop stronger knowledge structures and practicing structures and sounds formally in naturalistic settings. Studies in the English Foreign Language (EFL) teaching field were done in particular by Ku (1995), Oxford, Judd and Giesen (1998) and Park (1994).

Within the language learning classroom, lecturers should give learners enough time to take notes and organize work, in order to acquire newly learnt knowledge.

- **Compensatory strategies.** *Compensatory strategies* refer to guessing from the context in listening and reading and "talking around" the missing word to aid speaking and writing and help learners make up for missing knowledge. Oxford and Ehrman (1995) demonstrate the significance of compensatory strategies in relation to L2 proficiency in their study of native English speaking learners of foreign languages.

Learners often use gestures if they do not have the words for a specific expression and then wait for the lecturer to “give” them the word. This can be helpful to encourage fluency when speaking.

- **Meta-cognitive strategies.** *Meta-cognitive strategies* are those like identifying one’s own learning style, planning for a L2 task, gathering and organizing material and work space and evaluating success are employed for managing the overall learning process. These strategies had “a significant, positive, direct effect on cognitive strategy use, providing clear evidence that meta-cognitive strategy use has an executive function over cognitive strategy use in task completion”, (Purpura, 1999).

Adult learners should be encouraged by English language lecturers to develop their own style of learning to better accommodate individual needs of the adult language learner.

- **Affective strategies.** *Affective strategies* were identified as one’s mood and anxiety level, talking about feelings, rewarding oneself for good performance and using deep breathing or positive talk and has shown to be significantly related to L2 proficiency in research by Dreyer and Oxford (1996) among South African EFL learners.

The experienced lecturer should be in touch and in tune with their learners to identify the individual personal feelings and try and alleviate negative influences from them within the English language learning classroom.

- **Social strategies.** *Social strategies* help the learner work with others to understand the target culture as well as the language by asking questions for verification, asking for clarification of confusing information and conversing with a native-speaking partner. In a study by Dreyer and Oxford (1996) these strategies were strongly associated with L2 proficiency in studies on the South African English foreign language learning.

Learners should be given enough time by the English language lecturer to interact and socialize with native speakers, for example, opportunities should be created for them to meet the lecturer, or more advanced learners, informally outside and within the classroom.

Taking Oxford's (1990) L2 learning strategies into account, the diverse composition of the population in Qatar is bound to reflect on various strategies employed by other learners in their L2 acquisition, as well as the implications they have in the classroom. ESL learners vary significantly in their sensory preferences, as demonstrated by Reid (1987), with different nationalities favouring different learning strategies. The learning strategies employed by males and females when learning English as a second or foreign language, were further explored in this study to find similarities or disprove their existence.

### **2.6.2 Gender differences in learning strategies**

Not a great deal of research has been conducted on gender differences in learning strategies of second language acquisition. The findings of the few studies conducted, did not necessarily reveal conclusive evidence in respect of different strategies employed by males and females in second language acquisition.

Tran (1988) reports that a study of English as a second language by Vietnamese immigrants to the USA revealed that males used more skills to improve their language than females. These skills included taking English courses, practising English with Native American speakers and watching television or listening to radio programmes in English. Nyikos (1990) also concludes that males made greater use of a particular strategy for vocabulary recalls. When using visual-spatial stimuli of colour and pictures, males were better, however, females recalled better when only colour was the only stimulus (Nyikos, 1990).

According to a study by Zoubir-Shaw and Oxford (1995:182) female learners studying French made more use of "guessing or working with contextual clues" as a learning strategy, than male learners. In a study of Chinese learners studying English as a second language, GU (2002) made the same finding as Zoubir-Shaw and Oxford (1995:212). After a study of 1200 university students, Oxford and Nyikos (1989) proposed that gender had a "profound influence" on strategies employed and that it was more frequently used by females than males. According to Ehrman and Oxford (1989) females also employed more strategies and used them more effectively.



In the language learning classroom, helpful strategies for the lecturer to improve L2 by the adult language learners are: allowing learners time to organize work; reminding them not to rely on memory only and that they have to understand the work; allowing enough time for learners to practise their English skills; repeating work when necessary, and finally, including pictures, colour and gestures to assist learners. Lecturers should develop strategies to help the adult language learner to be more effective. The use of language learning strategies was further explored in this study to determine if the same conclusions as the above would be reached. For learners to use more learning strategies in English second language acquisition, lecturers have to become the facilitators to guide these adult language learners.

### **2.6.3 Experiences elsewhere concerning strategies utilized**

Considerable studies have been conducted on language learning strategies utilized by learners of English as a second or foreign language. Not many studies however, have been carried out in the Arabic setting of ESL.

#### **2.6.3.1 Qatar**

Using the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) Al-Buainain (2009) concludes that meta-cognitive strategies scored the highest and affective strategies was ranked the lowest. The subjects of her study were only female learners, who enrolled in the Department of Foreign Languages at Qatar University and representing different learning levels.

As the above study in Qatar included only female learners, the SILL (Appendix C) applied in this study to test strategies employed, included adult male and female English language learners, to see if the same conclusions could be reached.

#### **2.6.3.2 Italy**

Macleod (2002) notes in her survey of two successful Italian men, that as English language learners they both employed a variety of learning strategies, depending on the

particular learning task. Both learners reported that the time constraint and teaching method resulted in an increase in the number of strategies utilized.

This study tested the various strategies employed by adult male and female English language learners at the language centre.

## **2.7 Defining anxiety in L2 learning**

Acquiring a second language can sometimes be a traumatic experience for learners. Worde (1998) reports that one third and more of learners examined, reported various levels of anxiety during language learning. Of the many variables related to foreign language learning anxiety, research has determined that they fall into the two main categories: *situational variables* and *learner variables*. Jackson (2002) and Spielmann and Radnotsky (2001) note that course level, course organization and course activities, as well as instructor behaviour and attitudes, and social interaction with fellow learners fall under situational variables. On the other hand, Brown, Robson and Rosenkjar (2001:378), as well as Gregersen and Horwitz (2002), amongst others, include age, attitudes, beliefs, culture, gender, learning styles and learners' personalities under learner variables.

Anxiety, as a well documented psychological phenomena could by definition be defined "the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the automatic nervous system" (Spielberger, 1983).

To be able to understand language learning anxiety in the language learning classroom, its causes, as well as its effects on the learning process and learners' ability to cope with it, needs to be explored.

### **2.7.1 Anxieties in L2 learning**

MacIntyre (1995) argues that language anxiety plays an essential role in language learning as a social cognitive activity. According to MacIntyre, understanding what causes anxiety and what consequences these anxieties have, need to be understood by language lecturers.

The English language lecturer, as the facilitator in the classroom, needs to understand the importance of these anxieties experienced by adult language learners and how they could hamper the language acquisition process.

Language anxiety is a relatively distinctive psychological phenomenon, with specific characteristics in the language learning situation and is intertwined with other individual factors such as emotions, motivation and personality traits. The learners at language centres in Qatar are from different ages, nationalities, religions and gender, which all serve as added complications within the learning environment. Lecturers should be culturally sensitive in dealing with a number of diversities within the language learning classroom.

### **2.7.2 Gender differences in second language learning anxiety**

In second language learning, anxiety could be caused by the lecturer, gender differences or the learners' perceived ability level. Horwitz (2001) and Young (1999) note that learning anxiety has been attributed to the student's self-esteem and self-image being threatened by his or her own inability to express an opinion in the target language. According to Spielmann and Radnofsky (2001) the variables in second language anxiety fall into the two main categories of *situational variables* and *learners variables*, where situational variables could be course related items, such as activities, lecturer behaviour, the level and social interaction with other learners, and learner variables include emotions, motivation and individual personality traits.

Anxiety could also be *situation-specific*, as Spielberger (1983) notes. A learner might feel anxious to write an English second language essay, but would feel very comfortable writing an essay in his or her first language. Learners who feel incompetent in the second language, could be reduced to a childlike state, according to Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986), who associated three factors with foreign language anxiety: "a fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety and communication apprehension."

Learning anxiety can affect both genders and lecturers should always be mindful that not all learners will react in the same way to teaching methods, because it might have an adverse effect on learners who perceive a situation as threatening. The normal classroom introductions before the start of a new language learning session could make some learners very anxious and embarrassed, because of their initial lack of appropriate

words to use. To make it easier for learners, the lecturer could lead by the example of introducing himself or herself to the class, as the adult learners like to know more information and background about their lecturer as well. Another contributing factor to classroom anxiety is if a lecturer should ask learners questions in a predictable order, the learners could become more anxious as their turn approaches.

Lecturers need to consider their own actions and not let it add to classroom, or language learning tension, but should do everything in their power to make the learning experience as pleasant as possible for the adult language learners. Lecturers should not be judgmental toward learners, show or express verbal disapproval and try to make insincere positive reinforcement.

### **2.7.3 Experiences elsewhere about learners' anxiety**

According to Tallon (2009) individual differences such as cognitive abilities, personality characteristics, learning styles, meta-cognitive differences, social contexts and affective aspects are some of the factors determining the outcome of the learning process. He does however point out that anxiety is a very important affective variable in learning a foreign language.

The influence of adult learners' anxiety during English language acquisition was tested in this study, because it can affect the outcome either positively or negatively.

#### **2.7.3.1 China and Qatar**

In a study of EFL learners in China, Cheng (2002) notes that one-third of the learners were negatively affected by foreign language anxiety, depending on their interest in English and their intentions to study the language. Likewise, Al-Buainain (2009) notes that despite efforts by learners to relax, their fears of making a mistake often kept them from trying when they were uncertain about how to express what they wanted to say, in English.

In the researcher's view, some adult learners enter the classroom with a lot of anxiety, be that towards studying English, or personal baggage that they carry with them, that

hampers learning. Lecturers should put adult learners at ease in the language learning classroom and as such, make it more pleasant for these learners to acquire English.

### **2.7.3.2 Japan**

A survey by Matsumoto, Kudoh, Scherer and Wallbott (1988) indicates that Japanese learners at a university in Japan experienced anxiety in a similar way the American learners, whose desire to express themselves effectively could not be attained or, experienced. The Japanese learners attributed the cause of their anxiety to the lecturer or other people, the effects associated with gender and their perceived ability level.

This is of interest to this investigation; as a result the influence of gender on adult language learning anxieties, was tested.

## **2.8 Cultural perspectives**

In the English language teaching environment in Qatar, for example in the classroom, lecturers have to be constantly aware of differences between men and women, and acknowledge them, especially taking the Middle Eastern culture into account. Cultural factors, such as religion, the environment and heredity, cannot be overlooked. The local Muslim religion determines that certain segregation will exist between men and women, as explained in section 2.2. Irrespective of their motivation to study English, Muslim women are not allowed to make eye-contact with men. In a multicultural classroom situation, this can be problematic. It is not always clear who the ladies are talking to or what they are saying, especially if they wear a full face veil. The Western ladies do not mind and would quite openly engage in a conversation with men, Qatari or expatriate, during pair-work and group work. Therefore, what the Western ladies perceive to be a normal learning environment, Muslim men and ladies might not be comfortable with.

Lecturers have to be constantly mindful of the differences and must always obtain permission from the Muslim women before assigning them for pair-work with male learners, ladies are granted the right to refuse. The lecturers' sensitivity in the classroom towards the adult male or female learners from different cultures is of utmost importance.

### **2.8.1 Lecturers' culture**

Some years ago, English was regarded as belonging to the English-speaking world only. As the world has “become smaller” because of international communication and advanced technology, English has become an international commodity, being used in many industries as the medium of communication. Jenkins (2000:5) notes that native speakers had the privileged status as “owners of the language, guardians of its standards and arbiters of acceptable pedagogic norms”.

Learners in the diverse second language classroom might experience the fear of being assimilated into a target culture represented by the lecturer of that culture. According to Ferdman (1990:189) neither the lecturer nor the learner should consciously attend to the ways in which they are engaged in ‘cultural transmission’ in order not to hinder the learning process. Taylor (1985:15) and Wertsch (1991:16) note that Vygotsky’s view of culture also suggests that no human ever functions autonomously from outside interference and that even when functioning in isolation, a person is inherently social in that he or she incorporates socially evolved and socially organized cultural tools.

The second language classroom in Qatar also differs considerably from those in other countries, not only in learner composition, but also with regard to motivation and perspective. As mentioned before, the lecturers at the language centre are all native English speakers, but from different English speaking countries, like America, Australia, Canada, England and South Africa. Most of the lecturers are monolingual English speakers, but not all of them are experienced in teaching multicultural learners. Ogbu (1988:14) and Pajares (1992) note that the cultural differences and beliefs between lecturers and learners are often at odds with one another, preventing learning. Lecturers should have prior knowledge of the situation in order for them to be effective as English second or foreign language teachers.

The learners, on the other hand, are from a multitude of countries from around the world, and from different cultural and religious backgrounds, as explained in section 2.2. Learners enrol for English language classes for different reasons. Some enrol because they are required to do so in order to be promoted at work, to be able to attend a university abroad, to be able to communicate to colleagues, and a small group enrol simply because they are bored and need something to do to fill the long summer

vacations. Lecturers quite often shy away or neglect to create an awareness of cultural differences within the classroom for various reasons such as these: inexperience about acknowledging it, avoiding negative learner attitudes, or because their main concern is English acquisition by non-native speakers. Lecturers should be more culturally aware and gain insight into the cultures and backgrounds of learners when teaching English as a second or foreign language to adult learners.

### **2.8.2 Learners' culture**

The English teaching environment in the language classroom in Qatar is very unique, because of the varying nationalities of the learners. One classroom might be from eight different nationalities, or a classroom with just Qatari men, or Qatari ladies, or a classroom with men or ladies, all Arabic speaking, but from the various Arabic speaking countries around the world. These language learners arrive at the centre to acquire English as a second language. Each of these learners, male or female, is already proficient in his or her native language, and has certain academic abilities, experiences and interests he or she brings with to the classroom. Some of the learners have very supportive home environments for language acquisition and development, with access to modern technology to support their learning. However, not all learners are that fortunate; those who are not so fortunate; will rely on motivation and encouragement from the lecturer in order for language acquisition to be effective. The relationship between the culture and background of the English language learner and the culture of the community in which the learning takes place, might affect the adult language learners' attitude and motivation towards learning.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

In chapter two, the focus was on the theoretical exposition of gender differences when teaching English as a second language to learners in Qatar. Skehan (1989:168) notes that various factors affect the learning of a second or foreign language, such as intelligence, motivation, attitude, age, gender, personality and anxiety. Although various studies have researched individual groups, very few have however, explored the group as a whole with regard to gender differences in cognitive styles, motivation towards,

strategies utilized and anxieties experienced during English second language acquisition. The above gave me the reason to further explore the use and interaction of all four as a group during acquisition of English as a second language.

With the internationalization and complexity of a globalized world economy, the learning of English could become the necessary communication tool to bridge the ever growing gap. This research built on existing research results about issues pertaining to English second language acquisition by adult learners, taking gender differences into account.

In the next chapter, the research design and methodology are discussed.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE RESEARCH, METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter is about the processes implemented to carry out the research, namely the research design, methodologies used and the methods followed to select the participants, who provided various types of data needed to answer the research questions. The specific methodology to be used was discussed in section 1.5.1 of chapter one. According to Adler et al. (1989:61) “choosing a methodology determines what we can study as well as the range of possible results and conclusions.”

Exploring gender differences in English language acquisition of adults learners in Qatar are both the aims and objectives of this study and this fact was discussed in detail in chapter one at section 1.4.

##### **3.1.1 Target population and sampling**

The target population for the study was as discussed in subsection 1.5.2.2 of chapter one and adult male and female English language learners at the language centre, formed part of this group. Barker (2003:380 as referred to by Strydom 2011:224) describes a sample as “a small portion of the total set of objects, events or persons from which a representative selection is made.” According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:327-328) in a case study design, a sample is a selection of the population it is drawn from in order to focus on a phenomenon selected by a researcher to obtain an in-depth understanding, irrespective of the sites, participants or documents studied, (see subsection 1.5.2.4).

###### **3.1.1.1 Purposive sampling**

Strydom (2011:232) notes that purposive sampling “is based entirely on the judgement of the researcher, in that a sample is composed of elements that contain the most characteristic, representative or typical attributes of the population that serve the

purpose of the study” and following these, participants were selected using the following criteria:

- The five classroom observations were selected because they provided the researcher with the opportunity to observe adult learners being taught English as a second or foreign language in as natural a setting as possible. The researcher’s attention was focussed on language acquisition by studying the learners’ cognitive processes, strategies they employed, their motivation towards studying English and anxieties experienced while learning English as a language.
- The participants for the focus group interviews were selected because they were all adults learning English as a second language and were all willing to engage in English conversation to express their feelings about language acquisition. These learners were from different nationalities, including learners from the local Arabic population.
- The individual interviews with the three lecturers who were selected because they all had four years or more experience of teaching English as a foreign language and were qualified TEFL lecturers. They were handpicked as Cohen and Manion (2001:113) assert, on the basis of their typicality.

The British lady had been teaching English for eight years and was particularly knowledgeable in dealing and assessing adult learners from various nationalities acquiring English.

The second British lady had more than thirty years TEFL experience. She had degree in Social Anthropology.

The third interview with the American gentleman who was selected because he was also fluent in Arabic and could clarify expressions by learners perhaps not otherwise understood in the language learning situation. Arabic adult learners, especially males, felt more comfortable in giving him a direct answer to certain questions.

- The participants who formed part of the individual interviews with learners, were three adult men and three adult ladies, who were at a higher level of English language acquisition and were selected because of their ability to verbalise their thoughts and feelings clearly and more precisely.

### **3.2 Methods of data collection**

The data collected for this study started in 2012 and continued into 2013. Salkind (2012:214) notes that a researcher can employ a variety of techniques and approaches for data collection from participants.

The data for this study was collected using:

- Classroom observations.
- Questionnaires.
- Focus-group interviews.
- Individual interviews.
- Detailed notes kept by the researcher of what was observed, as well as personal feelings.

#### **3.2.1 Observations as an instrument of data collection**

Strydom (2011:330) suggests the following definition of participant observation, “Participant observation can be described as a qualitative research procedure that studies the natural and everyday set-up in a particular community or situation”, (see section 1.5.3.1).

For this study, I was in some ways guided by Sapsford and Jupp (1996:58) who suggest that observation may be used in the beginning stages of a research project to explore a certain area, which will later be studied more in-depth by employing other methods. Strydom (2011:331) refers to Druckman (2005:236-253), Unrau (2005:236-243) and Monette et al. (2005:228-232) who are of the opinion that “the steps in the process of participant observation are of a more holistic nature and are more intertwined than those of quantitative research.”

The five classrooms observed, were selected because the learners were all adult males and females from various nationalities acquiring English as a second or foreign language as described in subsection 1.5.2.2. This provided the researcher with the opportunity to observe the learners, as well as the lecturers with regard to finding answers to the research questions. These classroom observations were carried out shortly before the researcher commenced with interviews and therefore helped her identify other issues needing to be explored further. To structure the observations, the researcher designed

her own checklist, based partly on her own understanding of andragogy, while keeping the aims and objectives of the study in mind. While sticking to the checklist, additional notes on interesting happenings within the classroom were jotted down to compliment the information elicited by means of the checklist. Included in the checklist (see Appendix A) were the following:

- Cognitive styles (global, analytic, auditory, visual).
- Motivation (Instrumental or integrative).
- Learning strategies.
- Anxiety.
- Teaching methods.

Five classes with adult English second or foreign language learners were observed. Each class was observed for between thirty minutes to an hour during the language lessons. These observations were conducted at different times during a period of four weeks. Convenience sampling, as Salkind (2012:103) refers, was used, as it was a very convenient way to select a sample and these learners were accessible, as described in subsection 1.5.2.4.

The **first class** consisted of fourteen adult male and female learners and they were from seven nationalities, including learners from Belarus, Hungary, Iran, Korea, Qatar, Spain and Yemen and the lecturer was from England. Both men and women asked a lot of questions to clarify instructions from the lecturer. All the learners appeared to be motivated to acquire proficiency in English. About the learning strategies employed, they took a lot of notes to correct mistakes and displayed a keenness to correct their own mistakes, as well as the mistakes of others; this facilitated their learning process. The men discussed difficult words and had difficulty in pronouncing words like “Thai food” and “recipe”. The learners interacted well and asked lots of questions and even directed one to the researcher. They showed no anxiety towards learning, but perhaps they were apprehension of the presence of the researcher.

The **second classroom** contained all Arabic speaking male and female learners, from Egypt, Qatar and Yemen, and the lecturer was from South Africa. The aim of the lesson for the day was explaining the use of Present Continuous Passive tense, with the example: “The city is being polluted by smoke from the factories”. All the learners took notes and asked for verification when work was not fully understood. They were able to

correct their own and the mistakes of others when asked to write sentences on the board in front of the entire class. The ladies were reading a faster than the men and had a better comprehension of what they read than men.

The **third class** was an all male Arabic speaking class. The learners were from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Pakistan, Sudan and Tunisia, with the lecturer from England. They understood the instructions given to them about the use of a dictionary to assist their learning. The men all expressed that their motivation towards learning was to get a good job, for global conversation and to be able to study at a university. When completing a written task about matching the information in section A with the one in section B, the learners used numbers only and had to be reminded by the lecturer to write out the sentence in full, so as to reinforce the information and also to learn to be careful and accurate.

The **fourth classroom** observation was a classroom with all Arabic speaking ladies from various countries and the lecturer was from Canada. The lecture for the day was on the use of the phrase: "Is it this one, or that one". When prompted by the lecturer about their motivation towards language acquisition, one lady indicated that she was studying English in order to go to university; another one said her father would give her gifts for good marks, and the other stated she will reward herself for good marks by buying a new handbag. The ladies were all very quiet, but participated in classroom activities when required to do so. They were good at note taking and regularly asked for clarification of instructions.

The **fifth** and final observation was in a classroom with six Spanish speaking ladies, desperate to improve their communicative skills and the lecturer was from England. As a listening exercise about pronunciation of words, the ladies were given a list of words and when the words were read out by the lecturer, they circle the ones they thought they were hearing. They reported that they used the English sub-titles of movies to further assist them with pronunciation. During conversation time, they expressed their desires to become more fluent English speakers in order to communicate better with the teachers at the children's schools, in restaurants, at airports and for making new friends. One lady then proceeded to tell the others about her anxieties, which resulted from her lack of competence in English; this started from the time she arrived in the country; at the airport she realised that being unable to converse with airport staff, life ahead would not be easy.

The classroom observations shifted the focus from language acquisition to a broader focus on gender differences in cognitive styles, motivation towards their studies, strategies employed during language acquisition, as well as possible anxieties experienced whilst acquiring English as a second or foreign language by adult learners. This privilege also afforded the researcher the opportunity to get to know the learners better and at the same time, for them to get to know the researcher and to become more comfortable with having her in the language learning classroom as an observer.

The classroom observation was very helpful to use as a starting point for the continuation of the research study. From these sets of data, (as presented in subsection 4.4.1), key features of each class observed, which were captured by means of completing checklists.

### **3.2.2 Questionnaires as a method of data gathering**

According to Cohen and Manion (2001:245) questionnaires are a widely used and useful technique for obtaining the same information from respondents in a relatively economical way. Although questionnaires are not that prominent in qualitative research, because the subjects are responding to the stimulus and might not act naturally, they nevertheless reach a larger sample that can be reached by conducting interviews (see subsection 1.5.3.2).

#### **3.2.2.1 Strategic Inventory for Language Learning questionnaire**

A specially designed questionnaire, based on the Strategic Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) as designed by Oxford (1990:1), was applied (see Appendix B). The copies of the questionnaire were hand-delivered to male and female adult learners, to be completed by them in their own good time. The questionnaires were randomly handed out to the learners who were at levels 3 and above (as described in subsection 1.5.2.2), because the questions were quite extensive and required a more advanced knowledge of the English language. Of the twenty questionnaires handed out, only thirteen were received back. In order to protect the anonymity of the adult language learners, these questionnaires were all completed anonymously and respondents were only required to indicate whether completed by a male or female learner.

Questions one to nine concern memory-related strategies and learners were expected to give an account of how newly learnt information, with special reference to vocabulary, would be stored in the memory, in order to be retrieved for later use. It became evident that ladies apply these strategies more than men.

Questions ten to twenty three dealt with cognitive strategies that would link existing knowledge about the learners' native language to newly acquired information about English as a second or foreign language. Both genders seemed to be employing these strategies evenly.

With regard to questions twenty four to twenty nine, learners had to indicate whether they used guessing and gestures (body language) while acquiring English, and the females seemed to be using these more often than males.

Questions thirty to thirty eight concerned the employment of meta-cognitive strategies. According to their responses, it became evident that ladies do not significantly organize, plan or evaluate their own learning more than the men.

Questions thirty nine to forty four dealt with affective strategies, involving feelings, attitudes and motivations towards language learning, and according to their responses, were used more by men than by the women.

With regard to social strategies, as contained in questions forty five to fifty, where social interaction formed part of language acquisition, it became evident that men use these strategies more often than women (as presented in subsection 4.4.2.1).

### **3.2.2.2 Questionnaire of attitude motivation test battery**

The second set of questionnaires (see Appendix E), which were based on the adapted version of Gardner's attitude motivation test battery, (AMTB), were handed out to adult male and female learners. The questionnaire was meant to establish how motivated learners are to learn to speak English as a second or foreign language. McMillan and Schumacher (1993:126) refer to purposeful sampling as the selection of particular elements from the population that will be representative or informative on the topic of interest. For this reason, these questionnaires were purposefully handed out in a classroom with five male and six females from various nationalities. The learners were

all at level four of English learning and already had adequate command of English to answer the questions.

In the questionnaire, the majority of questions dealt with the learners' motivation to study English and as such, acquire it as a second or foreign language. The ladies indicated that they were a lot more motivated to study, than the men. In the questions dealing with the learners' attitudes towards learning in general, course material and the lecturer, ladies viewed them more favourably. These were all adult learners and for this reason, the encouragement they received from their parents, could not really be considered.

These completed questionnaires were analysed in Chapter Four and then compared with information gathered during observations; and then compared with the information collected by means of interviews. The information, though limited to only five male and six female adult learners, was useful in clarifying certain facts and opinions regarding motivation towards English language acquisition by these language learners (as presented in subsection 4.4.2.2).

### **3.2.3 Focus-group interviews**

Greeff (2011:360) suggests that focus groups are group interviews aiming at "understanding how people feel or think about an issue, product or service." The group is *focussed*, involving commonalities in characteristics or activity (Greeff 2011:360), (see subsection 1.5.3.3).

Two focus group interviews were conducted. These interviews were with three male and seven female adult learners and they were originally from Egypt, Palestine, Qatar and Tunisia. The interviews formed part of their conversational skills development during the English language acquisition lessons in the classrooms. The same group of learners were used for the first and second focus group interviews. This was done at the beginning of their course and again at the end of the course, in order to get a better understanding of their perceptions toward language acquisition.

The participants had enough time and opportunity to voice their opinions, while at the same time encouraging each and every one to partake of the interview. These exercises were very insightful and the participants were stimulated by the perceptions of others,



while simultaneously giving follow-up answers. The researcher, acting as the facilitator, used predesigned questions to guide these interviews and probed participants periodically with follow-up questions when necessary to get additional information. All the time it appeared participants were more than willing to share their feelings and opinions freely. The following questions formed part of the interview (see Appendix C):

- What professional qualifications do you have?
- How long have you been studying at the centre?
- What level are you studying at the moment?
- How do you learn English?
- Be specific and tell me how you learn, what makes it easier to remember things and do you use any special strategies to make it easier?
- What motivates you to study English?
- Do you get anxious before writing a test or speaking in front of others?

These focus group interviews were all tape-recorded and later transcribed. Although all the learners were Arabic speaking, the interviews were conducted in English. Some of the learners had to obtain prior approval from their respective families before they agreed to be tape-recorded. This tempered with the time frame of the interviews, as some families were reluctant to give permission, but agreed in the end. Only a few learners were initially uncomfortable with having their voices recorded; but eventually became more comfortable and participated freely (as can be seen in subsection 4.4.3).

### **3.2.4 Individual interviews**

According to Greeff (2011:347) unstructured or semi-structured interviews are typically used for qualitative studies. Greeff (2011:347) refers to Collins (1998:1) who notes that the term *unstructured* could be misleading, as they (interview) are actually structured in many ways with the researcher initiating and determining the nature of the event. However, by using semi-structured interviews, the experiences of the participants can be explored and understood by allowing them to say it in their own words (Bogdan and Biklen (1992:26). The latter is in line with Greeff's (2011:351) view, who notes that the semi-structured method allows both researcher and participant more flexibility, while at the same time allowing the researcher "to follow up particular interesting avenues that emerge in the interview, and the participant is able to give a fuller picture."

Nine interviews were conducted with participants. Six participants were adult learners, three males and three females and three were lecturers at the language centre. Detailed information was needed from learners and lecturers, in order to obtain learners' perceptions on how they acquire English as a second language and at the same time the lecturers' perceptions on how learners *learn* and to further explore the correlation, if any, (see subsection 1.5.3.4).

#### **3.2.4.1. Interviews with lecturers**

Interviews were conducted with three lecturers and semi-structured questions were asked. Before commencing these interviews, the researcher informed them of the purpose of the study, (see subsection 1.5.3.4).

The first participant was a British lady, between the ages of 50 to 60. She had lived and worked in Qatar as a TEFL lecturer for more than twelve years and was well experienced in teaching adult learners from various nationalities.

The second participant was another British lady, also between the ages of 50 to 60. She had a BA degree in Socio Anthropology. Although she had only two years experience of teaching English as a second or foreign language in Qatar, she had thirty years experience as a TEFL lecturer of adult learners at various language centres around the world.

The third participant was an American 28 year old male. He had a BA degree in Human Resources Management and had six years TEFL experience. He spoke Arabic and English fluently as he came from a background where his father was Arabic speaking and his mother was American.

These participants, whom I felt were "information rich" participants, as well as experienced lecturers in teaching English as a second or foreign language, were interviewed. The following questions were posed (Appendix D):

- What professional qualifications do you have?
- How long have you been teaching at the centre?
- What different levels are you teaching at the moment?
- In your experience, how do learners learn English?

- Be specific and tell me how you think they learn?
- What makes it easier for them to remember and what special strategies do you teach them to make it easy for them to learn English?
- How do you feel learners get anxious before writing a test or speaking in front of others, or is it a “non-event’ for them?
- What, in your opinion do you think motivates them to study English?

As a further exploration, questions such as “Could you explain more clearly what you mean by that?” and “Could you give me an example?” were asked.

These one-to-one interviews with the three lecturers were all conducted at the language centre, recorded and later transcribed (as presented in subsection 4.4.4).

#### **3.2.4.2 Interviews with learners**

In selecting the adult learners to be interviewed, the researcher was very much guided by the recommendations of the lecturers used for the one-to-one semi-structured interviews, as well as her own experience obtained while conducting the classroom observations, (see subsection 1.5.3.4). The learners were all informed that the information they were about to reveal would be used for the research only and would be kept confidential. They were also reassured of their anonymity. All selected learners completed and signed ethics consent forms, (in accordance with subsection 1.5.4).

The six adult learners interviewed, three men and three ladies, were all from different nationalities. The researcher felt that gave her a broader spectrum of data. All interviews with learners were conducted in English, as they were studying this at an English language centre and the researcher had little to no knowledge of their respective native languages.

The learners’ interview questions focused on their own understandings of English second language acquisition, the strategies they employ, what motivates them to study and what anxieties they experience during this process. See Appendix E for the interview schedule.

Recordings were made of the one-to-one interviews with these six adult learners; permission to record and transcribe the interviews was obtained from the learners

concerned. The tape-recorder was inconspicuously placed in order not to unnerve the participants (Strydom 2011:359). These interviews were all conducted at the language centre and later transcribed (see subsection 4.4.5).

### **3.3 Personal notes**

Detailed notes of the researcher's own experiences, thoughts and feelings were kept during the research process, (see subsection 1.5.3.5). This was in line with Mruck and Breuer (2003:3) who encourage researchers to reflect on "their presuppositions, choices, experiences and actions during the research process."

These notes were kept in order for the researcher to reflect regularly on her own perspectives and practices while doing the study, and at the same time to review this alongside the adult language learners and English second language lecturers who participated (see subsection 4.3.6).

### **3.4 Summary**

The research design and methodology used for the research were described in this chapter. It provided an in-depth explanation of the data collection techniques followed, as well as the sampling methods applied by the researcher.

In Chapter 4, the data analysed, results found and discussion of the investigation are presented.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the results of the data collected, were examined. The data collected were from classroom observations, (subsection 4.4.1), Strategy Inventory in Language Learning (SILL) questionnaires, (subsection 4.4.2.1), Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) questionnaires, (subsection 4.4.2.2), focus group interviews, (subsection 4.4.3), individual interviews with lecturers (see subsection 4.4.4) and learners, (see subsection 4.4.5), as well as personal notes kept during the study (see subsection 4.3.6). The steps taken to simplify the analysis process are also discussed in this chapter. These specific steps are divided into: preparing the data, inductive category coding, refining of the categories and finally the analysis of the results.

Five classroom observations were done as specified in subsection 3.2.1. Twenty SILL questionnaires, as described in subsection 3.2.2.1, were handed out, but only 13 completed ones were received back. Eleven AMTB questionnaires were handed out to five adult males and six adult females (see subsection 3.2.2.2). Two focus group interviews, as described in subsection 3.2.3, were conducted. The focus group interviews were conducted with learners and formed part of their general communication skills development sessions. Nine individual interviews were conducted as specified in subsection 3.2.4. Three lecturers were participants in the individual interviews (see subsection 3.2.4.1). The other six of participants in the individual interviews were adult learners, three males and three females from different nationalities (see subsection 3.2.4.2). Perceptions of the participants were presented in narrative form. Special attention was given to the adult learners and their lecturers' perceptions of their cognitive differences during English language acquisition, their motivation towards acquiring language, the strategies they employed while learning and the anxieties experienced while acquiring English as a second or foreign language. It should be noted that where the research participants' were quoted, their respective responses were transcribed verbatim and the transcripts have not been edited in order to keep the participants' views as accurately as possible.

Schurink, Fouche and De Vos (2011:398) describe qualitative data analysis as “messy, ambiguous and time consuming, but it is also a creative and fascinating process.” McMillan and Schumacher (2006:364) refer to data analysis as an inductive systematic process of coding, categorizing and interpreting data for providing explanations of a single phenomenon of interest, and finding a meaning in all the data gathered. This is in line with Patton (1990:390) who notes that inductive analysis means that “the patterns, themes and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis.” The research questions were therefore “a search for patterns in the data – recurrent behaviours, objects or body of knowledge” and therefore exploratory in nature (Neuman 2003:447).

## **4.2 Data analysis**

Schurink, Fouche and De Vos (2011:399) describe qualitative data analysis in the first place as “a process of inductive reasoning, thinking, and theorising which certainly is far removed from structured, mechanical and technical procedures to make inferences from empirical data of social life.”

Initially, the data collected seemed very overwhelming. Firstly the researcher listened to the tape recordings a couple of times, before transcribing the tape recorded interviews of the lecturers and adult male and female language learners verbatim. This was followed up by reading and rereading the transcription a couple of times. Thereafter, the researcher read through the SILL questionnaires a couple of times. Thirdly, she went through her list of classroom observations and finally she read her own personal notes, kept up to date throughout the research, a number of times. This was done in order to establish what Schurink, Fouche and De Vos (2011:399) with reference to Babbie (2007:378) state that qualitative analysis is the “... non-numerical examination and interpretation of observations, for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships”.

### **4.2.1 Data collected**

The data sets consisted of:

- Transcripts of the classroom observations, as well as personal notes made during this time.

- Transcripts of the data collected from the SILL questionnaires.
- Transcripts of the data collected from the adapted AMTB questionnaires.
- Transcripts of the focus group interviews with learners from five different classes as described in subsection 3.4.3.
- Transcripts of the three lecturers' interviews.
- Transcripts of the six learners' interviews.
- Researcher's personal notes kept during the entire period of the research.

#### **4.2.2 Data analysis process**

The data was analysed in order to gain a better understanding of the effects of gender differences between adult male and female learners when acquiring English as a second or foreign language with regard to the differences in their cognitive processes, the strategies they employ, their motivation towards studying, as well as anxieties experienced while learning. Schurink, Fouche and De Vos (2011:403) note that researchers are obliged to observe their own processes, to analyse them and to report analytically on these processes.

For the classroom observation, the researcher used a short description of the typical features, methods and techniques used. These sets of data were then coded and analyzed and scrutinized to identify themes. This enabled the researcher to combine all the data sheets from the different classrooms, to be used during her analysis and interpretation. These classroom observations were coded (CR01 to CR05).

With regard to focus group interviews, the individual interviews with lecturers and the individual interviews with adult learners, the researcher looked for themes and subthemes. The first focus group interviews were coded FGM101 for responding males FGM201 for responding males and FGF210 for responding females. The individual interviews with lecturers were coded ILF01, ILF02 and ILM03, with the "F" indicating a lady and "M" indicating a man. The individual interviews with learners were coded ISM01 to ISM03 for male participants and ISF04 to ISF06 for female participants. Different colour highlighters were very helpful in determining patterns, ideas and similarities.

With regard to the strategy inventory for language learning (SILL) as described in subsection 1.5.3.2, the data was categorised to determine groups they would fall in.

Sorting through all the data turned out to be lengthy, and at times exhausting, but never tedious, as the deeper the researcher delved in, the more interesting it became.

#### **4.2.3 Validity and trustworthiness of data**

Numerous actions were taken to ensure validity and trustworthiness of data collected. Salkind (2012:123) state that *validity* is all about: “that the test or instrument you are using actually measures what you need to have measured.” According to Salkind (2012:127) the relationship between reliability and validity is straightforward: “A test can be reliable but not valid, but a test cannot be valid without first being reliable.” This is in line with Seale (1999:266) who states that the “trustworthiness of a research report lies at the heart of issues conventionally discussed as validity and reliability.”

Various research strategies were used to ensure design validity (McMillan and Schumacher 2006:324-326) and they were:

- *Prolonged field work.*  
Classroom observations and focus group interviews were conducted in as natural and realistic settings as possible.
- *Multi-method strategies.*  
The data collection techniques, as described in section 3.4, were used.
- *Participant language and verbatim accounts.*  
The literal language used by the participants, were transcribed.
- *Low-inference descriptors.*  
These descriptors were almost literally as those used and understood by the participants.

Schuring, Fouche and De Vos (2011:419) propose the following four constructs when assessing the quality of qualitative research:

- *Credibility/authenticity.*  
This was achieved by ensuring that the participants were accurately identified and described.



- *Transferability.*  
The findings of this study could be transferred from one situation or case to another.
- *Dependability.*  
The researcher endeavoured to present a logical, well documented and audited research process.
- *Conformability.*  
It is hoped that the findings of this study could be confirmed by another.

#### **4.3 Data gathering analysis and presentation**

- Classroom observations

During classroom observations, notes were kept continually. The different classrooms were coded (CR01 to CR05) and the checklist as described in Appendix A, was followed. The checklist used was based on the research questions about gender difference in cognitive abilities, motivations towards learning, strategies employed and anxieties experienced while acquiring English as a second or foreign language in the classroom, as well as teaching practices of the particular lecturers when teaching English to adult learners.

The lecturers and learners had prior notice and were aware when they would be observed. The observations were done in a very unobtrusive manner and the lecturers assured the researcher that her presence had no influence on the normal classroom dynamics and that it would have been the same, had the researcher not been there.

- Strategic Inventory for language learning questionnaires

The questionnaires were handed out to learners and served as a starting point to get their perspectives on the strategies they employ while acquiring English as a second or foreign language. The questionnaires were handed out at random, to twenty adult male and female learners who were fluent in English. This was done because the questions were quite extensive and required a more advanced knowledge of the English language.

Of the twenty questionnaires handed out, only thirteen were received back. These questionnaires were all completed anonymously and respondents were only required to indicate whether completed by a male or female learner.

- Attitude motivation test battery questionnaire

Adapted questionnaires of Gardner's attitude motivation test battery were handed out to adult male and female learners to determine their motivation towards English second language learning. These questionnaires were purposefully handed out in a classroom with five male and five females from various nationalities. The learners were all at level four of English learning and already had an adequate command of English to answer the questions.

- Focus group interviews

The two focus group interviews and the participants were all coded to protect their anonymity, and also to serve as a reference for the rest of the study. The ten participants for the first focus group interviews were coded FG101 to FG110. To distinguish between male and female participants for the first focus group interview, an "M" was added for males and "F" for females, in other words FGM101 for a male and FGF110 for a female.

The same participants were used for the second focus group interviews, but with an interval between the two focus group interviews. This time the participants were coded FGM201 to FGF210, depending on the gender. The reason for using the same participants for the second focus group interviews was to get the responses of the adult learners during the beginning stages of English language acquisition and again at the end of the session, with a three week interval, to determine if learning occurred – from their own perspectives, as well as from the lecturer's perspective.

The first focus group interview was held at the beginning of a session with ten participants, three men and seven ladies. They were all Arabic speaking and were from Egypt, Palestine, Qatar and Tunisia. All these participants all had professional qualifications in their own respective fields, but just not equipped to speak English fluently. The interviews were conducted in one of the language learning classrooms and formed part of their communicative skills development. This was done in a very relaxed atmosphere, where all participants felt at ease and comfortable to share their feelings towards English language acquisition.

The second focus group interview was held during the latter part of the session with the same participants as described above. The purpose of the second focus group interviews with the same adult learners was to collect additional data to determine how they as learners felt about English language acquisition and if they felt enough was being done for such learning to occur.

During the second focus group interviews, male and female learners were given a set of phonologically familiar words and phonologically unfamiliar words, to further test the discussion in subsection 2.2.2.

- Individual interviews with lecturers

The lecturers, who took part in the individual interviews, were given a code to protect their anonymity and that served as a reference for the rest of the study. They were also informed that the interview would be tape recorded, but no names would be used and that they had the option to withdraw at any stage, if they did not want to continue with the study. That assurance made them feel at ease.

The three participants for the individual interviews with the lecturers were coded ILF01, ILF02, for the female lecturer participants and ILM03, for the only male lecturer participant. The lecturers for the individual interviews were as described in subsection 3.4.4.1.

The data collected by tape recorder was prepared for analysis by listening to each individual tape recording twice before transcribing the data verbatim. After the recordings were typed, they were once again listened to, in order to ensure no information was omitted.

- Individual interviews with learners

The six adult learners, three males and three females, who took part in these individual interviews, were as described in subsection 3.4.4.2. They were assured of their anonymity during the process and were each given a code, that would serve as a reference for the rest of this study. The six participants who formed part of the individual interviews with adult learners, three males and three females were coded ISM01 to ISM03, for the male learner participants, and ISF04 to ISF06, for the female learner participants.

They were also informed that the interviews would be tape recorded, but without the use of personal names. Although initially uneasy, all participants gave their consent to be tape recorded. The learners, who had to obtain prior permission from family members, did so.

The data recorded by audio tape was prepared for analysis by listening to each individual recording twice, before it was transcribed verbatim.

- Field notes

Personal notes were always written down immediately after the classroom observations, the focus group interviews, and individual interviews with lecturers and learners, as well as after the researcher's own English language teaching classes. These notes were written down as soon as possible and while they were still fresh and foremost in the researcher's memory and still contained the researcher's own preconceptions, expectations, emotions and prejudices.

Finally, from these sets of data collected, the researcher captured the key features for this study.

#### **4.4 Research findings**

The findings of the research will be discussed in the following sections.

##### **4.4.1 Research findings related to classroom observations**

Five classes of adult English language learners were observed, as described in subsection 3.4.1 and the following findings were obtained:

With particular reference to *cognitive styles*, males were asking as many questions as females in order to clarify or understand better what they were learning. All Spanish ladies (CR05) circled words they did not understand during a listening exercise, and thereafter asked the lecturer to clarify and explain the meaning of the words. All these ladies reported to the lecturer that they liked to watch English movies with Spanish subtitles, which helped them with pronunciation of words. During instructions from the lecturers, the males seemed to understand instructions a lot faster and could follow

them right away, whereas females sometimes asked for a second explanation. Although, in terms of accuracy, in executing the task, the females were more accurate. The women also seemed faster with reading activities and displayed a better comprehension of what they were reading and were able to summarize the content of what was read. This seemed to indicate that women were more accurate with performing verbal tasks, as referred to in subsection 2.2.2.

When prompted by lecturers as to their *motivation* to study English as a second language, the overwhelming responses indicated more towards instrumental motivation, as referred to in section 2.5.1, with the majority wanting to get a promotion at work, or finding a job with a better salary. One lady (CR05) however, reported that she was studying English in order to communicate effectively with lecturers, restaurants staff members and airport customer services staff members, and also for making new friends. One Arabic speaking male (CR03) and one Arabic speaking female (CR04) required English to study at university.

The *strategies* employed to acquire English as a second or foreign language, varied. With regard to memory-related strategies, males and females seemed to find it easy with topics that were familiar to them during classroom discussions, like the latest movies (CR01). Men found it easy to discuss cars and desert trips and the women enjoyed conversations about shopping, cooking and children. This indicated that existing knowledge helped with the learning of new vocabulary, and for learners to be able to retrieve this knowledge at a later stage, as and when required to do so.

For *cognitive strategies*, males and females all used note-taking as a way of remembering what was being said, or explained (CR01). Females however, incorporated this a lot more, by taking lots of notes and they would also ask for additional clarification before commencing with a particular task. Men just seemed to write down individual words written on the white board (CR03). When given a verbal task to match corresponding information from section A with section B to complete a particular sentence, men used the numbers only to complete the task. The lecturer had to explain once again to the men, that by actually writing out the complete words, will teach them correct spelling and sentence structure, which they then reluctantly did. This indicated that cognitive strategies were employed more by women than men during language acquisition.

Concerning using *compensatory strategies* to overcome limitations about the newly learnt language, it was found that both males and females used them. Men however used gestures to get around unfamiliar words, whereas the women would talk around them. This indicated that in the language learning classroom, males and females make use of compensatory strategies to assist their language learning.

*Meta-cognitive* strategies were employed by both males and females. When correcting mistakes of others, they all seemed to be able to do it quite accurately, but men sometimes failed to notice their own spelling mistakes and had to be corrected by the lecturer (CR01) and (CR02). During classroom observations, the females seemed more organized when it came to writing down information and planned what they wanted to say, by first writing out a sentence before using it in front of other learners. This indicated that females use this strategy more effectively.

*Affective strategies* were used by both male and female learners. The women (CR04) were however, more forward in responding to “rewards” for learning English, by saying, “*My father will give me a gift when I get good marks*” and “*Now I am going to buy a new handbag, because my marks were good.*” The men were better in controlling their feelings, but showed signs of embarrassment if they gave an incorrect answer. None of the men observed, spoke about rewarding themselves for good behaviour or good marks in a test. Women however, would say, “*sorry*”, correct the mistake and continue with a given activity. This indicated that males and females are affected, but men possibly to a lesser degree.

*Social strategies* were also employed by both males and females. During the lessons, the Qatari males (CR03) were more likely to pose questions to the lecturer and one even asked the researcher how long she had been studying and how long it would take her to complete her studies. Although learners sometimes naturally “grouped” themselves according to nationalities, or native language, they all had to use English as the language of communication within the classroom and socially. This indicated that some learners would seek out opportunities to interact and speak with native English speaking persons in order for them to have an advantage of learning directly from the native speakers of the language.

With regard to *anxiety* in the classroom, some female learners initially seemed shy to speak, especially in the presence of male learners. In the classroom with male and

female Arabic speaking learners (CR02), the ladies seemed more relaxed once the lecturer invited them to move closer to her; that suggested they were scared or uncomfortable to speak while sitting next to male learners they were not familiar with. This indicated that, although these female learners seemed more reserved, they participated freely in classroom activities, once their initial anxieties were overcome, in order for learning to be effective. The classroom with the all male Arabic speakers (CR03), were about to write a test and when questioned by the lecturer, all indicated that they were not anxious at all. This indicated that they either felt really comfortable in the language learning classroom, or that they did not want to reveal their true feelings about an upcoming test. In the classroom with the Spanish speaking ladies (CR05), one learner in particular could give a vivid account of her own anxiety, starting from when she first arrived in Doha, Qatar. She said, *"When I first arrived, it felt like I was in a Star Wars movie. Everything was alien to me and I realised that was because of two things. In the first place, I was not being able to speak English. And in the second place, the people all looked so different and I realise that was because of the cultural differences that they dress so differently. I needed the language to speak to the people at the airport and later to speak to the teachers at my children's school. Now it's ok and I'm not anxious to speak English anymore."* This indicated that at least one learner was able to verbalize that for her, once anxiety was overcome, language learning definitely occurred.

In respect of *teaching methods*, it became clear that each of the five lecturers had his or her individual style of teaching, but nevertheless effective in teaching English to adult male and female learners.

During communicative exercises, which were observed in the first classroom (CR01), female learners were more inclined to use ambiguous words they had heard when watching English movies. These words were not always used in context and the lecturer had to explain. After having explained the differences of the words, "find, found and founded", one female learner constructed the following sentence: *"My book was missing and I founded"*, which was then corrected by the lecturer. When asked to question another learner during pair-work, she said: "Have you ever cooked a meal and used a recipe?" Men seemed to struggle more with pronouncing words like *"Thai food"* and *"recipe."*

In the second classroom (CR02) observation, the use of the "present continuous tense" in the passive form was explained to learners by constructing sentences like, "The city is

being polluted by smog.” Learners did not immediately grasp the meaning of the word “smog”, but did not ask for clarification and formed sentences using other words. This indicated that the learners seemed to talk around certain subjects and in this way, avoiding words they did not understand or could not pronounce.

During the third classroom (CR03) observation, learners were taught how to use a dictionary to help them with more correct spelling. Learners were verbally given these three words, “*instruction, pronunciation and pronounce*” to find their meanings within five to ten minutes, as an exercise. It took some learners slightly longer to complete the exercise and seemed to indicate that what they had learnt was not properly reinforced or consolidated. Learners had to be reminded that the words are arranged in an alphabetical order in a dictionary, and that a dictionary is used from front to back and from left to right, unlike in the Arabic way where writing is reversed, in other words, starting from right to left.

In the fourth classroom (CR04) observed, learners had to do pair-work by asking questions using the words “*always, never, sometimes, hardly, ever and often.*” The lecturer gave the learners the example sentence, “*How often do you take a deep bath?*” Because it was an all ladies class, the learners were not shy at all to interact. This seemed to indicate that learning occurred and there was no anxiety or shyness to hinder it.

The final classroom (CR05) observation with the Spanish speaking ladies, who studied English to improve their communicative skills. Learners had to use the word “unacceptable” in a sentence, starting with a gerund or an infinitive. The lecturer first had to explain to them, as it was not too clear when to use “un” or “in” as the prefix, as it differed from their native language. Once that was understood, they could form sentences like, “*Kissing on one cheek is unacceptable in my culture*” and “*To kiss on one cheek is unacceptable in my culture, as we kiss on both cheeks.*” During a further discussion about “*pet hates*”, the lecturer explained that it was not to embarrass anybody or to be judgemental, but that they should behave normal, and the discussion continued uninterrupted. This seemed to indicate that the Spanish ladies in this class were familiar enough with one-another, as well as the lecturer and the learning objective attained.



#### **4.4.2 Research findings related to questionnaires completed by learners**

##### **4.4.2.1 Strategy Inventory for Language Learning questionnaires**

Of the twenty SILL questionnaires that were handed out to learners, only thirteen completed ones were returned. Learners completed the questionnaires anonymously and only indicated whether they were male or female participants. Of the thirteen completed questionnaires, eleven were filled in by females and only two by males. The Strategic Inventory for Language Learning questionnaires (see Appendix B), as described in subsection 3.4.3, were used to determine if the same conclusions for classroom observations, learners' own perspective of learning strategies they employ during language acquisition, and lecturers' perspective could be accepted or rejected.

The responses to the questions on direct strategies, the ones that involve reviewing and practice in the target language (TL) were as follow:

The questions about memory-related strategies (Part A: questions 1 – 9), where new information was committed to memory for retrieval at the later stage. Allowing this information, mainly vocabulary, to form part of the long-term memory, showed only a slight difference between male and female learners. The females answered only marginally higher than men on the use of memory-related strategies, indicating that they use it more than males.

On the questions about cognitive strategies (Part B: questions 10 – 23), which link new information to existing schemata and thus forming and revising internal models to produce messages in the target language, in this case English, the differences were negligible. This indicated that there is no significant gender difference with using cognitive strategies.

The responses to the questions about compensatory strategies (Part C: questions 24 – 29), which include guessing and using gestures to improvise for limitations on relevant knowledge about the newly acquired language, indicated that females use it more than males.

The responses to the questions on indirect strategies, the ones providing indirect support for language learning such as planning, co-operating and seeking opportunities, were as follow:

The meta-cognitive strategies (Part D: questions 30 – 38), that allow learners to control their own understanding, by using techniques such as organising, planning and evaluating their own learning, revealed only a slight difference between female and male use of them. This indicated no significant difference in the use of these strategies by males and females.

When responding to the questions on affective strategies (Part E: questions 39 – 44), the ones which involve feelings, attitudes and motivation towards studying, males indicated that they employed them more than the females.

On social strategies (Part F: questions 45 – 50), which involve interaction with other learners by asking questions, males responded that they used them more than females. This indicated a significant use of the social strategies employed and that they are incorporated more by males than females, into the language learning process.

#### **4.4.2.2 Attitude Motivation Test Battery questionnaires**

Eleven adapted questionnaires of Gardner's Attitude motivation test battery (see Appendix E) were completed by five male and female adult language learners. In response to Gardner's three components of assessing motivation, namely: the desire to learn the language, attitudes towards learning the language and motivational intensity, participants responded as follows:

When responding to the adult language learners' desire to acquire the language, females indicated a much stronger desire to learn to speak English than their male counterparts. The trend very much continued with learners' responses towards attitudes for learning, including their attitudes towards the course and their lecturer. The adult females all indicated that they favourably viewed the lecturer, as well as the course. The adult men indicated that they viewed the lecturer and course material less favourably. Overall, the responses from the participants indicated a much higher motivation by the female learners to acquire English. Although some learners indicated that they were encouraged by their parents to learn English, this fact cannot really be considered that strongly, as the participants in this case were all adult male and female language learners and therefore able to make their own individual decisions about learning.

#### 4.4.3 Research findings related to focus group interviews

The following findings were obtained from the first focus group interviews conducted with the adult learners:

When asked how they acquire or learn English, the participants mention a number of issues. They indicated that some learning happens in the workplace, through interaction with work colleagues. Three respondents replied that, *“It is part of my job to speak to others”, “My colleague speaks good English and she helps me by correcting when I use wrong words”* and *“Now I try to speak to my colleagues.”* One respondent who also speaks Arabic and French, replied, *“I always have to remember to put the adjective in front of a noun and not behind. But to learn English, I have to do it in a classroom with a good teacher”*. Others also mentioned that for acquisition of English, and for the learning to be more effective, it happens in a formal classroom with a qualified teacher. Others responded as follows: *“My English is terrible, that is why I have to learn it in a formal classroom”* and *“But I struggle with grammar and hopefully I will learn that in the classroom”,* to one saying, *“That is why I’m here. To learn”. “How that (referring to the learning process) will happen, I’m not sure”*.

Interpretation: The abovementioned indicated that learners were not actually too sure about their own language acquisition, but it seemed that they were of the opinion that it was more likely to happen in a classroom with a teacher; which is consistent with Krashen’s input and output theory as described in subsection 2.4.4.1.

When asked to respond as to the strategies they employ to make it easier to acquire language and remember words, the majority replied that they make use of given opportunities to speak English. They replied by saying, *“I just speak whenever I have the opportunity”, “I speak English quite a lot and tell other English speaking people to help me and correct me”* and *“I try and speak to my teacher as often as I can, even if it is in break time.”* Repetition seems to play a major role in their language acquisition as some responded, *“I have to write things over and over”, “I say the words over and over”* and *“Repeat, repeat, and repeat”*. Only one learner referred to using colour as a tool to remember, by saying, *“Yes, when I study and use different colours, it helps me to remember the words”*.

Interpretation: The abovementioned indicated that learners were not really aware of the strategies they employed during language acquisition and that it is not being taught by

lecturers. The use of colour as a learning strategy, especially in adult learners, seems underutilized.

Participants reacted overwhelmingly positive towards their motivation for acquiring English and all but two indicated that, besides wanting to communicate more effectively, it was to get a promotion at work. Only one participant required that for future studies for a Master's degree. This indicated that the possibility of promotion at work was a strong motivating factor to language acquisition and is consistent with instrumental motivation, as described in subsection 2.5.1.

As to the participants' response on anxiety before writing a test or when speaking in front of others, once again the majority replied that they do experience anxiety. One participant replied, *"I even start to shake"* and another *"Yes, because I always want to do well"*. The responses varied about the specific classroom situations they thought provoked anxiety and they were:

(FGM101) *"An anxious teacher"*.

(FGM102) *"Not knowing my fellow students and feeling shy in front of them."*

(FGF107) *"I am shy and it makes me nervous"*.

(FGF108) *"Exams and not having enough time to study"*.

(FGM109) *"I am very shy and do not like to speak a lot"*.

(FGF110) *"A little, I feel nervous because my English is not good"*.

Interpretation: The respondents also indicated varying reasons they thought were responsible for anxieties in the classroom. Some replied, *"Sometimes the teacher, sometimes others when they laugh at me and my accent, because I am from Egypt"* and *"Being scared of a teacher, or just being unsure what to say"* and yet another replied, *"In the beginning I'm scared of the teacher, then I relax"*. Others responded, *"Exams. I like to do well", Results. I want to do well, so I get stressed out completely"* and *"Thinking that I am not going to do well in a test or speak well in front of others"*.

As to how they coped with anxiety, participants replied:

(FGM101) *"I try to stay calm"*.

(FGM102) *"Try to listen carefully and correct my mistakes"*.

(FGF104) *"I wait until the teacher walks past me and then I ask her to check my work and correct it, so I don't feel too embarrassed.*

(FGF105) *"Oh, when I feel very nervous, I move around on my chair, but it is getting better".*

(FGF108) *"I study hard and come prepared for a test. It works for me".*

(FGM109) *"It is getting better all the time. Especially if I get to know the teacher and other students better".*

Interpretation: This indicated that external factors such as unfamiliarity with a lecturer, or internal factors like personality, or fear for an approaching test or examination, contribute to learners' anxieties within the language learning classroom, and is consistent with learners' anxieties as described in subsection 2.7.2.

When asked to respond to the question if they felt that lecturers were doing enough to accommodate the learning process and how it was being done, a few responded that they needed more practice in speaking English and improving writing skills. Only one responded with, *"I would like to see more IT skills introduced. It might help all of us a lot".*

When asked how they felt about lecturers' handling of males and females in one classroom, the majority accepted the situation. The participants responded with, *"It is good for us to be in a class with men and women. Now we can all talk and I am beginning to feel more comfortable"* and *"It was not easy for me in the beginning. But now I am fine and talk to the ladies next to me"*. Most of the ladies, however replied that they are comfortable with the present situation of being in a class with men as well.

Interpretation: This could be because some ladies were more mature and some were already married and did not feel intimidated by male presence.

When asked how they would like to be taught English and what would make the situation more acceptable for them as learners, the responses varied. The majority would like to get more practice in speaking and writing, and replied with, *"More practise with speaking and writing"* and *"A lot more of everything for me."* One in particular wanted *"Grammar exercises. I don't want to do spelling. The computer has a spell checker and a lot more writing is done on it"* and another replied, *"Like I said before, perhaps if we can don on-line exercises, it will help"*.

Interpretation: This indicated that some learners needed a lot more practice to improve their communicative and writing skills, and some learners have become more aware of the advances and benefits of technology to aid language learning.

The following findings were obtained from the second focus group interviews with the same group of adult male and female learners:

When asked how they feel they now learn English, participants responded with, *“I now have many skills to improve my English”, “I am not shy to speak anymore and I now have a better structure to write letters”* and *“I feel a lot more relaxed and I think, because I am more relaxed, I actually learned more”*.

When asked the second time around about the strategies they employed during language learning, the responses varied:

(FGM201) *“I still use my previous knowledge to help me.”*

(FGM202) *“I find that I still use my knowledge of Arabic and French to help me, but then I have to remember to change the word order and not use direct translations.”*

(FGF203) *“I just have to study and understand the work.”*

(FGF207) *“I do memorise certain things, but I have to study them to remember.”*

(FGF208) *“If I understand something, it is a lot easier to remember.”*

This indicated that adult language learning occurs when learners use existing knowledge as a foundation for future learning, as discussed in subsection 2.4.1.2.

When these focus group participants were tested on the use of phonologically familiar words and phonologically unfamiliar words, (as referred to in subsection 2.2.2), the three males performed slightly better than the females. This indicated that for this study, the theory that women outperformed men on learning both phonologically familiar and phonologically unfamiliar words could not be accepted.

#### **4.4.4 Research findings related to individual interviews with three lecturers**

Teaching English as a second or foreign language to adult male and female learners from different nationalities requires experienced English language lecturers. As the main

objective of this study was to explore the gender differences in language acquisition of adult learners, the responses of these three lecturers were particularly useful. It was of interest to this study to get these lecturers' individual perspectives on learners' differences in cognitive learning styles, motivation towards studying English, the strategies learners employ during language acquisition and anxieties learners experience during English language acquisition. These lecturers were all qualified TEFL lecturers, and each with more than six years experience in English language teaching.

The participants answered as follows to the question, "How, in your opinion, do you think learners acquire English?"

(ILF01) *"Well, I can only speak about the situation of teaching English in Qatar, ok, but I found that here, a lot of repetition and drilling and trying word association and practise."*

(ILF02) *"I think a lot of learners think they can acquire English simply by being present. And perhaps they soon learn that that isn't enough. But I think it would be like learning any physical skill." And, "I think I don't really see any difference in learning whether you're in a classroom, or whether you're learning it from your parents when you were a child, that you can do it by any other way, than copying. I think we have been taught and very much in believing that by using books and this and that. But in a way they are learning by copying and not necessarily understanding what they are doing. It's not that that's what we are teaching, but we ought to."*

(ILM03) *"I think they both acquire the language by associating it with their native language. So they would try and find similarities in terms of grammar structure in their language and English language. So that I guess, they try and build on their foundation, or sometimes on the basis they can comply to formally learn the language."*

Interpretation: The adult male and female language learners have their own individual ways of acquiring language and the way lecturers teach, have to accommodate these individuals. The responses from the lecturers indicated that learners acquire language by building on the already existing structures of their native language, but that teaching styles of lecturers differ. One responded that learners first need to be able to copy what they are learning, before they actually understand what they are learning.

On the question, "What in your opinion are the difference in the way men acquire English and women acquire English?" they responded as follow:

(ILF01) *“Yeah, generally speaking, I find that women these days do try to work harder and they take it a little bit more seriously. I think in general men here, are mostly coming because they want to get a certificate or promotion at work. And they don’t seem to do their homework as often as the ladies and I certainly do feel that these days, women are definitely trying harder.”*

(ILF02) *“Mhm, I think men have a clearly different approach from women. First of all, I don’t think that men think they need to learn as much as women do, being generally. Men assume a higher level of knowledge or competence in English than they actually have and women assume a much lower opinion, not all.”* And, *“Women underestimate and men overestimate themselves. So I think men are usually an awful lot lazier than women. Women don’t actually realise that they are as good as they are and they try a lot harder by doing the work that is given to them, whereas men don’t usually do that. But, in acquiring it, I don’t see how they actually physically acquire it without copying.”*

(ILM03) *“Hmm, in terms of teaching men and women, performance wise, women tend to be, or grasp it a little faster than men. I’m not particularly sure why, but I would assume, especially because in the Qatar culture, I have seen women are much more hardworking and willing to put effort forward. Where with the guys, they like to be spoon-fed and if it doesn’t work the first time, there must be something wrong. That’s my opinion.”*

Interpretation: It was clear that the participants saw women as harder working learners than their male counterparts.

On the question, “What, in your experience are the differences in cognitive styles of male and female learners in language acquisition?” the participants answered as follow:

(ILF01) *“I can’t really answer this one.”*

(ILF02) *“Well, as far as I know, we know that male and female brains are different in the way they are sized.”* And, *“I think the idea of women being more conscientious about learning anything, including languages and men are less conscientious, because they think they can do it already. But there is also something physical, I think there is a difference that makes it easier for women to do it.”*

(ILM03) *“From the way they learn English, I haven’t really noticed the difference. Because they all seem to start out the same way in drawing similarities between their native language, Arabic and English. And from there, when they find some sort of*



*similarity in structure they can use as basis. But it depends on their personalities, really. Where men tend to associate terms with business, or cars and outdoor activities, women more along the lines of shopping or decoration, or even just simple conversations. Ah, but they all start from the same point, but differentiate on their personalities.”*

Interpretation: It is possible that men and women learn language almost in the same way, by building on existing knowledge and using known similarities to suit their personalities, but there is a slight indication that acquiring a language is easier for women than for men.

Participants responded as follow on the question, “What motivates them to study English?”

(ILF01) *“Over the past few years the motivation has been to get a promotion in their jobs, to travel overseas, or to go to university, as that has been a pre-requisite that they have to learn English, but currently that has changed now. I think, I see, in fact, not as many people actually seem to want to learn English at the moment, as previously. I don’t know why.”*

(ILF02) *“What motivates them? I suppose because it’s an international language, because it’s going to open doors for them. So social things, work things. Therefore more money, more power, anything, it’s going to empower them, I guess, and could lead to more money, better social life and more possibilities and better everything.”*

(ILM03) *“In this particular country, it’s, ah, to keep up with the times. Hmm, a lot of high positions or a lot of opportunities only come nowadays, with English. It is very common nowadays to see a Qatari man, fifty-six years old in the Army or government department, where he’s hit a glass ceiling, because he does not have English. This can provide him with an opportunity to learn, if he learns, he gets a promotion. So, it’s more monetary value. Although I have seen a few guys come in wanting to improve, all on their own. So that would be the main reasons they are here.”*

In a follow-up question as to how would this affect the motivation of women, the answer was:

(ILM03) *“For the women, phew, it would be a part yes, but the main drive would be to compete with the guys. Because they have the excellent example set to them by Sheikha Moza, (consort of the Father Emir) who speaks English, is well educated, and who is not*

*shy to go after her ambitions. Also that in their high schools, they are much more well behaved than what I have seen in the male high school. So they are taught discipline from an early age, that sticks with them and they are much more hard working and determined.”*

Interpretation: The motivation to study English as a second or foreign language by adult men seems to be the desire to get a promotion at work, and therefore more of a monetary value. As for the motivation of adult women to study English, an inner drive to achieve and to be on equal basis with their male counterparts. Being able to communicate more fluently in English also empowers the adult learner.

About the strategies employed in acquiring English by adult male and female language learners, the question was “What makes it easier to remember things and do you use any special strategies to make it easier for these language learners?” The answers were as follow:

(ILF01) *“The course we have doesn’t always lend itself to doing that exactly. But what we are trying to do, is always do review, review, review. We get them to do different exercises and extra homework activities. As long as they are willing to do it.”*

(ILF02) *“To help them, I get people to use pictures or abbreviations, that kind of stuff. But to write things down, is the way to remember things. I get people not to translate things, just get it, it’s there, and it’s in your mind.”*

(ILM03) *“Hmm, I find that they find it easier to remember when I can take away their fear or anxiety. Hmm, especially with the guys. Because in the Arab culture, if they come in front of so many other people, they consider themselves ambassadors of their family. This is a good thing. But at the same time they are pretty nervous in terms of making mistakes. So they would come into class, I tell them, you’re here to learn. You have come here to makes mistakes, so I can correct you, and you can move forward. Once they get over that initial anxiety sensation, they tend to relax. And once they relax, I see their performance increase.”*

On the follow-up question, “So how do learners remember information?” the answer was:

(ILM03) *“Mhm, I think women, they learn. They do it by creating acronyms, like SWOT, for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. A lot of females students in my*

*class use information to create a key acronym and they use that for their vocabulary, and they use that to remember. In terms of the guys, they seem to memorise it. They tend to memorise an entire paragraph verbatim. So when the exam comes, they copy and paste the entire paragraph. So that's the biggest difference I can tell."*

The follow-up question was, "Do you think that by memorising they understand what they are learning?"

(ILM03) *"No, no, not in the least bit. In terms of the copy and paste method, I ask them questions and they draw a blank. No recollection, no sense of critical thinking.*

Interpretation: Lecturers use various strategies to facilitate language acquisition. One participant used review of the work to make learning more effective. To get learners to write down what they are learning, improves their language skills. Another participant responded that women use acronyms as a way to remember information and men remember information verbatim, without really understanding the work, but by removing their classroom anxiety, learning will occur.

When responding to classroom anxiety, the answer to the question, "Do you think they get anxious before they write a test or speaking in front of others?" the responses was:

(ILF01) *"Definitely before writing a test. That can go right through, right the way up to the top. Of course, if you see them come in and do course, after course after course, you do see them improving and you do see them growing in their confidence. The men try to play it down a bit. The women get particularly anxious."*

(ILF02) *"Some people do get anxious before writing a test or speaking. Speaking in front of others is probably the most nerve-racking thing they can do, whether it's your own language or another language. I think, if you can help them, with preparing it properly, then they tend to be less nervous. I think, it also depends on who's doing it and who's watching them, as well. If you could do it on a very limited base or film, it's less nerve-racking. Speaking in front of other people is a nervous thing for anybody. But if you have a proper plan, and that's what I always try and get them to have, is a system, and what I'm trying to do, is to give them notes and out-lines and things like that, to feel more confident."*

(ILM03) *"In terms of writing a test, to be honest, every student who comes to write a test in business studies, they get very anxious, because they really don't know what to write.*

*So I really don't think that that applies, but for men speaking in front of others, that absolutely terrifies them. In front of a class of five, ten or twenty, the focus is totally on them. So, everything would be analysed, grammar, mistakes, body language or any activities that they may have, that sort of stuff. For the men especially, I find them very, very, very anxious. Surprisingly, some of the women have been anxious, because they don't normally mix with men, so when they are in a mixed class, they get very shy. But some of the women, most of the women, are not shy to speak their minds, hey. They bring in elaborate presentations, and have fun. I was quite surprised when I first saw this."*

Interpretation: Language learners are extremely anxious before writing a test. Men, in particular, are also very anxious when they have to do a presentation in front of the class, as they realise their every movement will be scrutinised by fellow learners. Lecturers can assist these language learners by helping them to plan properly before a presentation or test, in order to lessen their anxieties.

On the question of what teachers are doing to accommodate the learning process, and how that is being done to accommodate different genders in the classroom, the responses were:

(ILF01) *"I think that that rather depends on the teacher. I think that I can generally gauge a class to see who needs what, and if they are willing to actually do it. Definitely, if the student is interested in learning, they would try and accept any measures you've got. You've got to try and help them on their way, but there are some who are quite resistant, accept just learning straight from the book."*

(IL02) *"This is more general. I don't think that for adults, learning a language should be with books. But because they've learnt everything else, at school let's say, from books, they automatically assume that learning a language, is using a book as well. But it appears to me it's kind of a security blanket. You've got this book, you can write things down, have your head in it and nobody is looking at you. I don't think it's the way to learn a language, I don't think it's the way to learn. You spend time with a person of that nationality; you go and live with that person, live in the house with that person, that sort of thing. And you just have that language to speak, like you would have a child in the house. If you could learn a language, that is how I would do it and I would have no books. I don't think we are doing the learning process well. You are at a school; you are*

*over the age where you can retain information. But I do think the way we do it and the way schools do it, is not very accommodating. It's not bad, but it's not the best way I think."*

*(ILM03) "Ahh, see. In my opinion, in our centre, we try, but sometimes a lack of technology in the class can really hinder us. Because students have the latest iPads, iPhones, they are more up-to-date with the latest technology that most of us. And we are still teaching from books, white boards, white markers, which is ok. But at the same time, if you have a projector and connect to a computer, or videos, we could show them, or a Facebook page and exercises for them to practise their English. And I feel it's really a shame because you could do more of an effective job. If you have the latest technology you can relate to students. Especially the younger ones. But, from what I see in high school, especially from the male side, no."*

Interpretation: Some language learners prefer to be taught straight from a book as their point of reference. One participant responded that learning would be more successful, if the language learner could be immersed in the language, by living with an English-speaking family. All young learners possess the latest technology and that would be the preferred option, in order to relate to them and accommodate their learning needs.

The questions about gender differences in the classroom are: "How do you handle different genders within the classroom? Do you handle men differently to how you handle ladies? What would you therefore exclude when you have just men in the class or when you have only women in the class?", and were responded to as follows:

*(ILF01) "Yes. Yes I do."*

Follow-up question: "In what way?"

*(ILF01) "I actually prefer working with the women. Ahm, it is amazing how you can turn everything, every project, every grammar point into shopping and the things that they like. Ahm, generally the young ones look at me actually like a mother, they just seem to like to want to please. That is nice and they just are sweeter. With the guys it's sort of joking and messing around a little bit really. And I definitely find myself speaking about different topics to men as compared to women."*

*(ILF01) "Ahm, yeah, if there is something, if we have a mixed class, and there is anything remotely talking about love or relationships, especially here in the Middle East, I always*

*leave it out. And I always look to see that it's culturally sensitive. Whether that just be because we are where we are, than when we were teaching somewhere else like in Thailand or another country, then I think that possibly will be different, but we do have to be careful of what we say and do here. So as not to offend. With a mixed class, well, that's more so. Especially if you have younger girls who have never been exposed to the Western sort of cultural bias, as such. And yeah, I mean, I do have to be careful, as I don't want them going and speaking to their fathers about it, and yeah, you've just got to use your head and gauge it in a place like this."*

Question: And you say that the men are different. Can you explain more if women are also different in a mixed gender class?"

(ILF01) *"They are shy. I mean, obviously it depends on the personality of the person. And in general, a lot of these girls have never been talking to men and they are learning something new, so they feel a bit shy. And often they tend to group, a group of women and a group of men. But if they go right through the levels, as I have said before, they do get confidence and they do come out. But in general, definitely men are different when there are only men and women are different when there are only women."*

Question: "How will that affect group-work when you put say a Qatari man with a Qatari woman?"

(ILF01) *"That depends on them. Sometimes it's just not acceptable and the women won't do it. It depends on how they, I suppose see their roles in society and how the women now are a lot more modern in their thinking, but there's still a lot here that especially the young girls, especially the group fifteen to nineteen, where their parents really don't like them to integrate with men in the class."*

(ILF02) *"Men are actually, although men are naughty, you can tease them. You can't tease women. Men, you can make fun of them, when they're naughty, you can make them look silly in front of others. Women you have to compliment, and that sort of thing. So yeah, it's quite different. But it's individual. But in general, you can treat men a lot differently."*

(ILM03) *"I handle them a little differently. They guys try and take a lot of face, so they do a lot of pranks. Women for the most part, are generally better behaved, but they also have to control their power. Because, there was one particular class with this women, she was married and a little older than most of the other students and she thought she*

*was ahead of everybody. And so she tried to control the class. For the last two weeks it was just a matter of who had control of the class. It was bad, it was really bad. But those sorts of students are the rare occasions. But generally women are to me much more behaved. So women are easier to be with, but for guys, I have to make sure I'm on top of them all the time."*

Follow-up question: "About the women who tried to take control of just a group of students, or of the class, can you explain more?"

*(ILM03) "If somebody had a question, she would try and answer it before me. Sometimes she would be right, sometimes not. Normally if it was correct, I would say, great. But in essence, I was becoming almost obsolete, and just there for nothing. And that would lead to a different set of problems."*

Interpretation: Learners are handled differently in the language learning classroom, but their personalities have to be taken into account. Women in general tend to be better-behaved, whereas men sometimes play around and do not take studying seriously. However, the lecturer has to be mindful of, and show respect towards the local culture, while at the same time maintaining order in the classroom.

The participants responded as follows to the question: "How would you like other teachers to handle different genders within the classroom?"

*(ILF01) "Mhm, that's quite a difficult one. We usually give teachers autonomy in their classrooms. The only way I can possibly gauge it, is if someone comes to me and complains, and I can go and speak to teachers and ask him or her as to the methods that they were using."*

*(ILF02) "Mhm, I just think any teacher needs to be aware of the differences."*

*(ILM03) "Yes, definitely, I would tell you if I had a student who is high-lighted, I would definitely tell you. With regard to gender, I wouldn't make any particular references, but if there was a particularly bright student, or a student who needs a little more work or struggles in particular areas, I would tell my fellow teachers. Yes, definitely."*

Interpretation: Lecturers generally have autonomy in the classroom to teach in their own individual style, as long as the curriculum is followed and learning occurs.

On the question, "What else, in your opinion can be done to make the situation more acceptable for all learners to acquire English?" participants responded with:

(ILF01) *"Mhm, well, well I think English should be made compulsory in schools, actually, rather than in learning centres. But then again, if it is compulsory, they don't have a choice, as well as, and like I mean, they should know English ant it is a world language. I mean, because even though they have changed it a bit around in Qatar, English is a world language and if they go outside for business, they should have it."*

(ILF02) *"Well, adding to that, I would just say, much smaller numbers at a time, as well. So ones and twos really. You can't have groups of six and twelve."*

(ILM03) *"Ahmm, perhaps more interaction between different classes. I had a pretty high level, which I think was a level seven. A really upper level, or quite advanced class. To have them maybe to enter into a class a few levels below them, or even above them, and have them play games together, or interact and have they achieved some objectives. Like interview two or three people, say about hobbies."*

Interpretation: Learners should take English as a compulsory subject in the local schools and not have to attend language centres to achieve that. On the other hand, learners should interact more formally with other people, where the lecturer can act as the facilitator to make corrections, and assist learners to learn from the corrected mistakes.

"What additional information about the above mentioned questions would you like to bring to my attention or that you think could add?"

(ILF01) *"I don't have. I just feel that in the years that I have taught here, I have seen a big difference in how students interact in the classroom when it's mixed. I still think that where we are, lends itself better to having separate gender classes, because I've had situations where men who have been really great in an all men's class, all of a sudden revert to this shy, introvert because there are women in the classroom. Mhm, I just think it's more acceptable. Here it's different if you get a mixed class with different nationalities and you can absolutely have a blast with them. But for culture and mmh, I can only speak for Qatar; I definitely think the success, especially in a centre like this, would merit it when they had separate classes. I definitely think that in this part of the world it works better."*



(ILF02) *“I suppose, if they want to do it properly, if governments want to do it properly, they have to start at an early age.”*

(ILM03) *“I have nothing more to add.”*

Interpretation: One lecturer report that it might be more beneficial for English language acquisition if male and female learners could be segregated into separate classrooms.

#### **4.4.5 Research findings related to individual interviews with six learners**

The six learners, who participated in the individual interviews, were mostly qualified in their respective fields of employment. They enrolled at the centre to acquire English as a second or foreign language, in levels ranging from five to seven, which is fairly high. These participants already had a good understanding and command of English and could respond confidently to questions.

The participants answered as follows to the question, “How do you learn English?”

(ISM01) *“I read stuff over and over. I normally go over the work that we have done in the classroom and make notes of words I couldn’t remember. Oh, and I keep my own dictionary.”*

(ISM02) *“You see, when I was in school, we had English teachers from countries like Egypt and Syria, so, my experience was not that good. Half the time their pronunciation of words was not good either, so my English did not really get any better. Now I have to use it in my work and I speak it every day, but sometimes, you know, my colleagues cannot speak English very well either and I get a bit lazy. But I try and listen to a lot of English programmes on TV.”*

(ISM03) *“I read a bit, watch TV and try and look at newspapers when I can.”*

(ISF04) *“Well, at the moment I’m doing it in class, but I also have a private tutor.”*

Follow-up question: “Could you explain more?”

(ISF04) *“Yes. I learn a lot in class about grammar and word order and things like that, but with the tutor we do a lot of speaking.”*

(ISF05) *“Mmh, I prefer to study with some friends in a group. I don’t like to have private lessons. I prefer the classes, because when I’m in a group, I can exchange information with other students.”*

(ISF06) *“I am very competitive, so I study hard for everything, including English. I go over the work we have done in class. Then, when I cannot remember, I mark it and ask the teacher the next day to explain again. I try and talk to as many English speaking people as possible, but you know, it does not always work that way.”*

Interpretation: It was apparent that various learners have individual styles of English language acquisition. The males indicated more visual stimulus, like reading the work over and over, and using communicative skills. The females preferred to learn in a social context in a classroom. Only one lady indicated that, besides learning in a classroom, she also used a private tutor.

Each adult learner has his or her own motivation to acquire the target language when they come to the English language classroom. When participants were asked, “What motivates you to study English?” They responded as follows:

(ISM01) *“Oh, now that is an interesting one. We, me with my wife and kids, want to immigrate to Canada and I want to do well in English, because I have to pass the entry test.”*

(ISM02) *“Well, first of all to be able to talk to my colleagues. I’m away from home for two weeks at a time working off-shore, so I have to talk to other people. And also, if I continue to study English and get real good, I will get a promotion to become a manager one day.”*

(ISM03) *“You see, when I come back and want to work in Hamad hospital; I have to pass a test to show them I can speak English.”*

Follow-up question: “Could you explain more?”

(ISM03) *“You see, where I study, we do not really use English, but I need it for the future. It is very important, because what will happen if I get a patient and I cannot understand the person?”*

(ISF04) *“Two things. One is the fact that my daughter is in a school where they follow an American curriculum. So I need to speak to her teachers and also to try and help her with*

*homework. Number two, my husband has a lot of social work functions. His English is really very good, so I want to be able to speak to the people we meet at these functions."*

*(ISF05) "Nowadays, I think I can speak four languages. English, French, Spanish, Italian and of course my mother tongue, Portuguese. Mhm, when I thought I wanted to learn English, it was because I wanted to change my profession. I used to work as a physical teacher in Education, and ah, and I decided to change my profession, so I became a flight attendant. And as a flight attendant, I should speak many languages to be able to speak to different passengers and I like to talk."*

*(ISF06) "To be able to do better in university. And I would like to become an actor one day, so that will really help me. And another thing, I will get paid. And when I'm famous, I will get lots of money. Ha, ha, ha."*

Interpretation: Language learners enter the classroom with an individual motivation towards studying English. The motivating factors for the adult learner to acquire English, varied. But it was clear that males and females needed English to communicate with other people, for possible future monetary reward, for either a better life in another country, a promotion at work, or a career change.

When participants were asked what strategies they employed to learn English and what made it easier for them to remember, they replied as follows:

*(ISM01) "Every day I write words in it (own dictionary) that were new to me plus the meaning. Then, when I have the time, I run through them again and try and memorise them, or at least try and understand. I also make notes of words I do not understand well and ask teacher the next time in class to explain."*

*(ISM02) "When I'm not in class, I get a bit lazy. But when I have to study, I read the work over and over."*

*(ISM03) "I read, and read, and read and try and remember."*

*(ISF04) "Well, I do write everything down. I do not just rely on my memory to get me through. And I try and do as many on-line English studying as well."*

*(ISF05) "I don't know. I just study. I study a lot when I am home and I read a lot in the language, and I memorise. I listen to this music and I try to accompany the song and I memorise. I don't know, I don't know."*

Follow-up question: "What else makes it easier for you to memorise, like singing?"

(ISF05) *"No, I don't know. I only read and my memory is photograph(ic). When I see a word written, I just memorise it the way I wrote it down. And I have a photograph(ic) memory. I think it helps me a lot."*

(ISF06) *"I do memorise words by saying them over and over. I listen to TV programmes and try and follow it without looking at the sub-titles. I also use colour pencils. I find that really helps me and almost make the words 'jump out' at me that I marked. This way I remember them better."*

Interpretation: From the above responses, it could be concluded that the majority of these adult language learners memorise what they have learnt in order to retrieve it for later use. Repetition by way of reading and rereading work as a way to consolidate what has been learnt was also employed by five of the learners. Only one learner reported the use of colour to help her with remembering unfamiliar words.

Learners replied as follows to the question, "Who or what do you think is responsible for anxieties in the classroom?"

(ISM01) *"I study and try and do my best. That is not really for me. Being a bit older, I don't really get anxious anymore. But you know, there is always the uncertainty before a test, ha, ha. Anxious teachers can be really bad for the whole class."*

Follow-up question: "Explain more."

(ISM01) *"Well, you see, if the teacher feels nervous, it is easy for the class to pick that up and not feel comfortable."*

(ISM02) *"Not really. But yes, sometimes, when I went out the night before and did not have time to study. People who do not want to listen and are noisy in class. When one person is not paying attention or when a teacher gets a bit mad! Things like that. Like I said, sometimes it's the students, sometimes it's the teacher. But it does not happen that often. Only sometimes."*

(ISM03) *"Only if I did not study, but that does not really happen. Writing a test. Noisy students. Cheating. I'm not really sure. It is not easy to say."*

(ISF04) *"I'm fine with speaking, but that's ok. But I do get anxious before writing a test. I think that is just a normal reaction. Even if I studied and know my work and even at this*

*age, I still feel nervous. I think we have been very lucky with very understanding teachers. But if the teacher is anxious and shows it, the class would feel it. And that would be teachers who have not prepared work properly.”*

(ISF05) *“No, I’m not anxious. I speak. I just speak.”*

(ISF06) *“At the moment we are in a nice class. The students are all nice and the teacher very friendly. Like I said, at the moment it’s fine. But it can be a bit of both. Students can be very naughty and noisy or just not paying attention. But if the teacher is anxious, we can all feel it.”*

Interpretation: The above responses indicated clearly that learners’ anxieties do exist within the language learning classroom and that these anxieties were caused by different situations. The responses indicated that anxieties within the classroom were mostly associated with the learning process and that learners attributed the cause of their anxiety to either the lecturer or other learners. The learners’ perceived own inabilities, being anxious before writing a test, and not having had enough time to study, as other contributing factors.

Participants responded as follows to the question, “How do you cope with anxiety in the classroom?”

(ISM01) *“I study and feel confident when I know my work.”*

(ISM02) *“You know me; I do my work, come in and go out. I don’t really talk in class with other students. Only outside or in break time.”*

(ISM03) *“Ha, ha. I study. If I know the work, it’s ok.”*

(ISF04) *“Make sure I know my work. Not come to class late, although it can be a rush in the mornings.”*

(ISF05) *“I never had a problem during my classes. I don’t know how to answer this, but if there is a problem, I would speak to the teacher about the problem and I would speak to the person who was causing the problem.”*

(ISF06) *“I try to relax. Not always easy.”*

Interpretation: As these responses were participants’ self-reports, personality traits were not taken into account. It is possible that language learning classroom anxieties may

stem from their individual perfectionist tendencies, because four of the participants reported that they felt confident when they know they have prepared themselves adequately for class. One participant responded in a mature attitude by getting to the core of the problem and suggesting it should be eliminated from within the situation, by addressing the “guilty” parties directly.

The English language learning classroom at the language centre is very unique, in the sense that the adult learners who want to acquire English as a second or foreign language, could be highly qualified in their specific fields, but just being unable to communicate effectively in English due to lack of the necessary skills to express themselves adequately in the target language.

From time to time, some ladies from Qatar or from other Arabic speaking countries would request an all ladies class to study English as a second or foreign language together. This is normally done because it is encouraged from their respective families, or for personal reasons. Some of these ladies are not comfortable to speak to other men who are not closely related to them or come from the same household. With them, since they come from families where speaking face to face with an adult male stranger is either prohibited or viewed with a sceptical eye. That prompted the next question, “How would you like teachers to handle different genders within the classroom?” The responses were as follows:

(ISM01) *“In class we are all the same and should get the same attention.”*

(ISM02) *“Sometimes I feel a bit uncomfortable with ladies in the class, or even with the men. But once I know them a bit better, it becomes easier and we talk like normal, you know.”*

(ISM03) *“They (the lecturers) must just be respectful, know their work and not let others talk too much and be noisy in class.”*

(ISF04) *“Well, we had no problem. We all got along well and there was really no need to treat anybody differently.”*

(ISF05) *“They treat everybody equally.”*

(ISF06) *“I can’t really say. I was in an all girls’ school. The guys in class with us now are very respectful, so that makes it no problem for the teacher. I really don’t know what it would be like in a class where the teacher can’t handle the situation.”*

Interpretation: From the answers it was evident that these participants felt quite at ease in the English language learning classroom. The normal assumption in this part of the world especially, would be that ladies sometimes feel uncomfortable in a classroom with unfamiliar men. One male participant however, responded that he also feels uncomfortable with ladies in the classroom, or even males he is not familiar with. This indicated that the uncomfortable feeling of different genders within one language learning classroom, does not apply to females only, but that males sometimes shared the feeling.

To provide learners' perspective on teaching practices, participants responded as follows to the question, "How would you like to be taught English to make the situation acceptable for adult male and female language learners in the classroom?"

(ISM01) *"We could get more chance to speak. I like to speak and do not always have enough time in class to do that. Involve students in the process, but don't let them take over the class. No where to draw the line."*

(ISM02) *"Here I think teachers are doing a lot. That's why I keep coming back. They really want to help, I feel. And they are all doing a lot to encourage us and make us want to learn and enjoy English classes. This is good for me. A lot better than in school. Here we have enough time to learn grammar and spelling. Perhaps a bit more talking one to one with the teacher."*

(ISM03) *"This way works for me. But I don't have enough time to speak English and my friends don't want to help me. They just laugh at me. I don't know. Some students don't like strict teachers. I don't mind."*

(ISF04) *"Everything was really ok for me, but we could do more speaking. I can only speak from my own experience and everything was fine. Really."*

(ISF05) *"I, I was very lucky, because I had very good teachers. I studied with a very good English teacher."*

(ISF06) *"Well, in school we only had one hour and forty-five minutes of English lesson a week. That was not enough. Now I am here and we would all just love to talk. But I understand the teacher has work to do and have to teach us grammar and structure and things like that. But what I'm getting here is so much better than the school days."*

*Perhaps if we could do some on-line stuff. I think that will help. But I don't know how the teacher will have the time to check our work."*

Interpretation: Learning grammar structure in the classroom plays an important part during language acquisition. The responses from the participants indicated that in general, they were satisfied with the English language curriculum being followed at the language centre. Five participants indicated that they would prefer to have additional time for talking. This was a clear indication that the adult male and female language learners needed ample opportunities to improve their communicative skills. One respondent indicated that technology could be incorporated into the language learning classroom.

Participants responded as follows to the final question, "What additional information about the above mentioned questions would you like to bring to my attention?"

(ISM01) *"Well, I like to study. That is why I'm here. I get irritated by students who want to fool around in class and teachers who can't stop that."*

(ISM02) *"Nothing to do with the school really. But I wish I can go back to my old school and tell the other students there to work hard and study, study, study. It will make life a lot easier for when they leave school and have to find a job. It is not easy when you have all the responsibilities of a working person."*

(ISM03) *"How long will it take me to be more fluent in English?"*

(ISF04) *"We had enough time to interact in the class, but still, that was not enough for me to practise speaking. For that reason I prefer to have a private tutor and will keep on doing that for some time. It just gives me that little bit of extra time and I feel I have to perform, almost, because it is just the two of us during that time."*

(ISF05) *".....it's very particular what I think. I think some people are born with a gift for a language and fortunately, I have this gift and for me it's very easy to learn foreign languages. I don't know if it's so easy. I don't know if it's easy for other people. But for me it was very easy and I was concentrating about learning the language, because I needed to change my life and that was my motivation to change my life."*

(ISF06) *"Maybe if we could all meet after class somewhere, perhaps for a coffee and we can just talk. Not in the class. Where we are all relaxed. But I also know that in the situation and this country, it is not really possible to happen."*



Interpretation: The adult male and female English language learner have varying expectation when they enter the classroom and with what they want to achieve. Accommodating these adult learners in one English language learning classroom is extremely challenging, and at the same time rewarding when learners acknowledge that they feel learning has occurred.

#### **4.4.6 Research findings based on field notes kept throughout the process**

Field notes were kept throughout the research and the following complements the findings based on the classroom observations, SILL questionnaires, focus group interviews as well as individual interviews with lecturers and learners.

The adult male and female English language learners came to the centre with their own preconceived expectations and with varying knowledge of the target language, but most of the times qualified in a specific field of employment. They all however, had the desire or need to study English.

When teaching adult males and females from various nationalities, lecturers have to be constantly aware that they will acquire English as a second or foreign language differently. From classroom observations and individual interviews with lecturers, it seemed clear that men preferred conversations about personal interest such as cars or outdoor activities and women were quite happy discussing trivial subjects like shopping, children and associated items. The adult learner also enters the language learning classroom with life experiences that are used as a source of learning. These adult learners need to know the relevance of what they are learning and the future benefits of what they learn.

The lecturer needs to know the adult learners' motivation for studying English when they enter the language learning classroom. From classroom observations, focus group interviews and individual interviews with lecturers and learners, it became clear that for men, getting a promotion at work, and therefore the monetary value, is a great motivator. The women regarded developing communicative skills, to be able to interact with others in the target language, in this case, English, as a strong motivator to study. Lecturers have to take the motivation of the adult learner into account as an important variable in second language acquisition.

In the language learning classroom, lecturers have to be constantly aware that the adult male and female learners employ various strategies to facilitate learning. With the focus group interviews, it was clear that learners employed different strategies, such as repetition of words verbally and visually, by reading the same thing over and over. Some learners would memorise words that they can relate to their native language. The use of colour as a helpful tool was used infrequently. From the individual interviews with lecturers, one responded that the present curriculum does not always allow enough time to incorporate teaching of specific strategies. Another responded that women quite often use acronyms to help them remember work and that men would memorise an entire paragraph without understanding what they have learnt. Lecturers therefore, have to become the facilitators to guide these adult language learners to acquire the target language and to make this process more effective. In order to achieve this, lecturers have to allow learners enough time in the classroom to organize their work. They also need to remind these learners not to rely on their memories only, but they need to understand what they are learning.

For language learning to be effective in the classroom, lecturers have to be aware of the learners' anxieties that will influence acquisition of the target language. Social variables and learner variables need to be taken into account when teaching English to adult male and female learners. During classroom observations, focus group interviews and interviews with lecturers and learners, it became clear that learners preferred lecturers who know their own limitations, are familiar with the course work, can create a pleasant classroom atmosphere and allow learners enough time for interaction in the target language. In order to be effective with English second or foreign language teaching, the lecturers also have to keep the learners' age, attitudes, beliefs, culture, gender and personalities in mind at all times.

With reference to the perceived powerless speech of women when compared to the socially dominant speech of men (see subsection 2.2.1), this study did not come to the same conclusion. The male and female focus group participants, as well as the individual learner participants were all very articulate and never answer questions with a simple "mhm" or "yeah." One of the female participants for the individual interviews with learners did however, start a sentence twice with "mhm" before continuing with the rest. But could be as a result of her being able to speak five languages, so she only needed time to organize her thoughts in English. Only one of the female participants for

the focus group interviews started a sentence with “mhm”. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, this indicated that an assumption that there is a difference in male and female speech during an interview could not be supported.

The only significant gender differences that became evident during this study, was when comparing the final assessment results of these male and female learners. The women on average scored significantly higher marks, than the men during their final classroom assessments. This could indicate that women either worked harder or that they simply had a better understanding of English at specific language learning level.

Teaching English in Qatar can never be seen in isolation without taking the cultural diversities of the lecturers and learners into account. From classroom observations, focus groups interviews and individual interviews with lecturers and learners it became clear that learners required a competent and knowledgeable lecturer. In order for learning to be more effective, teaching should become more learner-centred, with ample time for learners to interact with the lecturer and other learners. Lecturers just have to be constantly mindful to be culturally sensitive, in order not to be offensive towards any learner.

**4.5 Consolidation: Themes and subthemes that emerged from the findings**

Five main themes, related to the problem formulated in subsection 1.5.2 emerged from the data, namely (1) different cognitive styles of the adult language learner; (2) motivation toward language acquisition; (3) strategies employed by adult language learners; (4) anxieties experienced in the language learning classroom; and (5) teaching styles in the culturally diverse adult language classroom. A number of subthemes were identified from these five themes and are depicted in Table 4.1:

Themes	Subthemes
Different cognitive styles of the adult language learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning on a need-to-know basis</li> <li>• Life experience as a source of learning</li> <li>• Non-threatening environment</li> </ul>

	<p>to assist learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating communicative situations</li> </ul>
Adult learners' motivation towards language acquisition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social influences such as cultural backgrounds</li> <li>• Instrumental motivation such as a promotion</li> <li>• Integrative motive to study</li> <li>• Skilled lecturers</li> <li>• Attitude motivation test battery</li> </ul>
Strategies employed by adult language learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allowing time to organise work</li> <li>• Enough time to practise</li> <li>• Repeat work if necessary</li> <li>• Include visual aids to assist learning, such as pictures, colour and gestures</li> </ul>
Anxieties experienced by adults in the language learning classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Situational variables: course material, lecturers' behaviour and attitude, social interaction</li> <li>• Learner variables: age, attitudes, beliefs, culture, gender, personalities</li> </ul>
Teaching practices in the culturally diverse adult language learning classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competence and knowledge of the lecturer</li> <li>• Learner-centred teaching</li> <li>• Opportunities to interact in the target language</li> <li>• Culturally sensitivity towards learners</li> <li>• Respect for the English language learner by the lecturer</li> </ul>

#### **4.5.1 Different cognitive styles of the adult language learner**

The adult male and female learners who enter the centre to acquire English as a second or foreign language all they need to know is the relevance of what they are going to learn. Although some of these learners want to acquire the language for self-enrichment, the majority do it in order to be promoted at work.

The lecturers who took part in the research mainly indicated that male and female English language learners seem to start out the same way, by drawing similarities between the target language and their respective native languages. They also indicated that women seemed to be more successful in acquiring the language, because they tend to be hardworking and demonstrated a greater effort towards given tasks, but certainly there was a difference in learning styles. Women seemed to learn more by repetition and using acronyms and men by memorising. From a language acquisition point of view, however parallel repetition and memorisation might be, repeating newly learnt vocabulary and grammar verbally and by writing it down, seemed more effective than memorising portions of work, without really understanding the meaning thereof.

The various life experiences that the adult male and female language learners bring with them to the English language learning classroom, can significantly affect their language acquisition. These experiences might not always be positive and therefore, negative influences such as anxiety or no motivation towards studying can have an adverse effect on learning. Lecturers were ever mindful of this and tried to create a non-threatening environment, where learners could use existing knowledge in a positive way, as a foundation on which their newly learnt skills could be based.

Learning English as a second or foreign language in a classroom cannot always be seen as a *natural way* for language acquisition. Learners were however, given ample time to practise newly learnt language skills with greater emphasis on fluency than accuracy in order for learners to become more relaxed in using the language. This afforded learners the opportunities to interact with each other and in this way build on existing knowledge.

#### **4.5.2 Adult learners' motivation towards language acquisition**

The adult learners' motivation towards language acquisition may affect their ability and desire to learn English as a second or foreign language.

The skilled lecturers indicated that they were all fully aware that their personalities and teaching methods, as well as the personalities of the adult male and female language learners might influence motivation towards successful language acquisition.

With reference to instrumental motivation, the lecturers and adult learners who participated in the research indicated that a promotion at work was a strong motivation to acquire English as a second or foreign language. For men in particular, the strongest motivation was the monetary value attached to it.

With reference to integrative motivation towards language acquisition, for both males and females, it was to keep up with the times, to get into universities around the world, or just to be able to use it when travelling overseas. The female learners also indicated that they wanted to learn English to be able to communicate with others, be that in a bank, at an airport, or with the English speaking teachers at their children's schools.

The cultural influence on motivation towards language learning can never be overlooked. At the centre, a unique learning environment exists, mainly because of the composition of the learners. The culturally diverse group of learners in one language learning classroom could influence their motivation and perspectives on acquiring English. One lecturer indicated that for the Arabic speaking women in particular, to be able to compete with the men, was a strong drive. These Arabic women, in particular, seemed to be more disciplined, better behaved and more determined to achieve high standards in language acquisition.

In terms of evaluation of adult English language learners, the majority indicated that they needed to achieve good marks in order to either get a promotion at work, be eligible to enter university, or to be accepted for immigration to a foreign English speaking country. The majority of these learners also indicated that they are affected by negative marks for a test and that it could temporarily hamper their language learning motivation.

#### **4.5.3 Strategies employed by adult language learners**

The lecturers, who participated in the research, indicated that various strategies were employed to facilitate language learning. One lecturer reported that repetition of work was a great tool to be successful, but only if learners were willing to do so. Another lecturer indicated that, especially in the Arab culture, if the male learners' fear of failure could be taken away and these learners could relax in front of others, effective learning would normally occur.

The adult male and female learners, who formed part of the individual interviews, indicated that organising work, writing it down and reading the same things over and over, facilitated learning. Some female learners also indicated the use of radio and television programmes in English, as well as on-line English language learning programmes, facilitated their learning. One female learner indicated that she relied on her photographic memory to assist her language learning.

The learners who formed part of the focus group interviews were not really too aware of the different strategies they employed during language acquisition. Some also indicated that repetition assisted them to learn, as well as having enough time to communicate in the target language. Only one learner reported using colour as a strategy to assist learning.

In the responses to the SILL questionnaires completed by thirteen learners, no significant differences could be found about various strategies employed by male or female language learners (see subsection 4.3.3).

From the responses of lecturers and learners alike, the use of visual aids, such as pictures, colour or gestures to assist learning, were underutilised.

#### **4.5.4 Anxieties experienced by adults in the language learning classroom**

In terms of situational variables like course material, lecturers' behaviour and attitude, as well as social interaction, the responses were as follows:

At the language centre, the course material makes provision for regular assessment, to see if learning occurred and if learners are indeed progressing. The lecturers who participated in the research indicated that some learners usually prove to be nervous before writing a test and that would be at all levels of language learning, from introductory level, to the most advanced level. Other learners would be anxious before

a classroom presentation. One lecturer indicated that adult male learners would be terrified to do presentations, for fear of having the whole class attention focussed on them. The adult female learners, although initially nervous, because they would not normally be exposed to speaking in front of a group of men, would deliver amazing presentations.

Lecturers, who managed to keep a calm and relaxed atmosphere in the classroom, seemed to be more successful. Learners indicated that they would normally be anxious during the beginning stages of a course, until they become more familiar with the lecturer and fellow learners. Learners also indicated that throughout the course, if a lecturer could not control a class of adult language learners, they would become uneasy.

Because of the cultural diversities in the adult language learning classroom, both male and female learners indicated that they would initially experience anxiety, because of being in an unfamiliar situation of not knowing the lecturer or fellow learners. Although it were mainly women who reported being shy, two of the adult men in the focus group interviews indicated that they were also initially shy to speak to women during group and pair-work.

In terms of learner variables, such as age, attitudes, beliefs, culture, gender and personalities, the indications were as follows:

The learners who participated in the research, were all over the age of eighteen, and could, to a certain extent, decide for themselves to learn English. Some of the younger female learners would however, still be under the guardianship of their parents and would report unsatisfactory behaviour to the head of the family. Lecturers indicated that they were constantly mindful of the situation of teaching in a multicultural environment and tried to remain firm, but friendly in the classroom.

One lecturer indicated that in the Arabic culture, especially in respect of men, when they have to speak in the presence of others, they see themselves as ambassadors of their families, and as such, are nervous for fear that they would make of mistakes. Once the lecturer could manage to convince these learners that the advantage of being in a formal class is that their mistakes would be corrected promptly, and their performance would consequently improve.



#### **4.5.5 Teaching practices in the culturally diverse adult language learning classroom**

It could be concluded that English language teaching in Qatar has a unique element, since these learners are not only from Qatar, but also from other Arabic speaking nationalities in the Middle East and elsewhere, as well as from various other countries around the world. The adult male and female learners who studied at the centre also have different needs and requirements to acquire the language. Lecturers should always keep this in mind and adapt their teaching practices to accommodate pressing needs of these learners.

The lecturers who participated in the research were all experienced in the field of teaching English as a second or foreign language and had the necessary qualification to do so. Although some adult learners depended on the lecturer for guidance during language learning, teaching at the centre is more learner-focussed and once work was understood, the adult male and female learners managed to work independently.

A communicative approach to language learning was followed. This afforded the language learners to become more proficient in speaking English, while learning to grasp the grammatical rules at the same time. During group and pair-work, learners had ample opportunities to communicate in the target language, while all the time being under the watchful eye of a knowledgeable lecturer who could guide them and correct mistakes when necessary.

Lecturers were always mindful of their responsibility to be culturally sensitive when teaching these adult learners. That would include being sensitive when doing group and pair-work, by always obtaining prior permission from the ladies before engaging in such activities, as some ladies might feel uncomfortable to speak to men who are not part of their immediate family. Culturally insensitive subjects, such as love and relationship would also be taboo in a multicultural classroom, to avoid offending anybody's beliefs or religion.

The lecturers indicated that they had no particular male or female preferences when teaching English. However, as one lecturer indicated, the topics covered in an all male class would differ from those offered in an all female class. To a group of some ladies, every grammar lesson could be related to any topic that would be of interest to them, it could be shopping, children or just everyday subjects. These participants also indicated

that women were a lot more hardworking and dedicated to acquiring English. Therefore the task of the lecturer was expedited and accomplished with ease.

Lecturers also had to be mindful of the fact that an adult male and female language learner entered the classroom with his or her own wealth of information in a specific field of expertise and would need this knowledge to be acknowledged and respected.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

Chapter four dealt with the analysis of the data collected, as well as the interpretation and findings of the research. The data gathered for the analysis that formed part of this, were classroom observations, questionnaires on SILL and AMTB, two focus group interviews, individual interviews with three lecturers, individual interviews with three male and three female learners, as well as field notes kept throughout the process.

From the responses gathered, the general opinion was that the adult male and female language learner enter the classroom with a lot of prior knowledge in their respective field of employment, but with limited knowledge of English. The acquisition of proficiency in English by male and female learners should never be considered in isolation, without taking the gender differences, culture and beliefs into account.

The final chapter will furnish a summary and discussion of the key patterns that emerged from the findings.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **OVERVIEW, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This research focused on exploring the gender differences in adult male and female learners when acquiring English as a second or foreign language. These differences were explored by looking at their cognitive styles, the learners' motivation towards acquiring the language, the strategies they employed, the anxieties they experienced during language acquisition, as well as the teaching practices to accommodate these learners. This final chapter provides an overview of the investigation. Six years of teaching various levels of English to multicultural adult learners in Qatar, contributed to the shaping of the researcher's abilities and attitudes towards this study.

#### **5.2 Overview of the investigation**

Chapter 1 of this study dealt with the orientation and background of the research. This entailed an explanation of the necessity of teaching English to adult learners in Qatar. The main focus of this study was on exploring gender differences when acquiring English as a second or foreign language, as exhibited with regard to the adult learners' cognitive abilities, their motivation towards studying, the strategies they employ during language acquisition and anxieties they experience.

The statement of the research problem, the motivation for and contribution of the study, as well as its aims and objectives, were also presented in this chapter. The aims and objectives revolved around looking at the prevailing theories on different cognitive styles in men and women, as well as the influences of motivation, strategies and anxieties could exert during English language acquisition. This was done with also keeping the best teaching practices in mind to accommodate these adult language learners. A case study was conducted for this research, as the case study focuses on one (or just a few) instances of a phenomenon in a particular setting, with a view to providing an in-depth account of events, relationships, experiences or processes occurring in that particular instance or case. The methods used were also briefly

mentioned and discussed. In conclusion, the chapter division and clarification were provided.

Chapter 2 provided a review of literature relevant to this study. Aspects that were discussed, included relevant cognitive styles of males and females in language acquisition, motivation of learners to acquire English as a second language, strategies used by male and female learners, anxieties experienced by these learners in L2 studies, and the best teaching practices to accommodate these learners. The study also looked at related studies on these issues in various other countries.

Each adult male or female language learner enters the English language classroom with a wealth of knowledge in a specific field, but just not proficient in English. These learners do however; need to know the relevance of what they are going to learn and the benefit of it for their respective future use. Teaching multicultural adult male and female learners should never be considered in isolation. Qatar is an Islamic state and therefore the local religion and culture and the influence of that on the rest of society, including the language learning classroom, cannot be ignored. Lecturers have to be mindful of these influences when engaging learners for group or pair-work and also be culturally sensitive towards learners, with regard to topics covered during general conversation.

Discussions in this chapter also covered the role of English second or foreign language acquisition by the adult learners and the best teaching practices. According to Krashen, acquisition is more important than learning. He suggests that learners need to be exposed to the target language and have ample time to converse in that language in order for learning to be effective. To be effective in the English language classroom, the communicative approach, a widely accepted method, seemed to be the preferred option.

The chapter concluded with discussions of the lecturers' and learners' cultural influence and the role there of, on English second or foreign language acquisition.

In Chapter 3 the decisions that determined the research design and choice of the research methods for the study, were discussed. The research methodology of the case study, as conducted at one particular English language learning centre in Qatar, was explained. A qualitative approach was adopted for this investigation.

Data was obtained from classroom observations, focus group interviews, questionnaires, individual interviews with lecturers and learners, as well as from field notes kept by the researcher while conducting the study.

Five classroom observations, as described in subsection 3.2.1, were conducted. The first classroom observation was with male and female learners from various nationalities. The second observation was with a class of all Arabic speaking male and female learners. In classroom number three was an all male Arabic speaking group and the fourth classroom observation was of an all female Arabic speaking group. The final classroom observation was with a group of Spanish speaking ladies.

Two sets of questionnaires were handed out to learners. The first, a specially designed questionnaire as described in subsection 3.2.2.1, based on the Strategic Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) as designed by Oxford (1990:1), was used (see Appendix B). Of the twenty six questionnaires handed out, only thirteen were returned. Learners could complete these questionnaires anonymously, but only indicating whether done by a male or female learner. Only learners with a more advanced knowledge of English were given questionnaires, because of the extensive nature of the questions. The second set of questionnaires as described in subsection 3.2.2.2, using an adapted version of Gardner's attitude motivation test battery (AMTB) were purposefully handed out to five adult male and six adult female learners to serve as a point of reference regarding their motivation towards English second language learning (see Appendix E).

Focus group interviews, as described in subsection 3.2.3, were conducted. The two focus group interviews involved the same male and female Arabic speaking learners. The first focus group interview however, was at the beginning of a learning session and the last one in the final week of the learning session.

Individual interviews were conducted with lecturers and learners. Three lecturers, two female and one male as described in subsection 3.2.4.1, participated in the individual interviews with lecturers. Three adult male language learners and three adult female language learners, as described in subsection 3.2.4.2 were involved in the individual interviews with learners.

All responses of the collected data were presented in their original format. Throughout the process, field notes, as described in subsection 3.3, were kept by the researcher

regarding what was actually being observed, as well as personal feelings and perceptions.

Chapter 4 focussed on the data analysis and the interpretation of the findings. This chapter presents the results of the study in a format that is easy to read and as objectively as possible.

In the final chapter, Chapter 5, an overview of conclusions drawn from the research, were presented. This chapter furnishes the limitations of the study, as well as conclusions and suggestions for further research.

### **5.3 Limitations of the study**

The contribution of this study was to explore the gender differences of adult male and female learners in Qatar when acquiring English as a second or foreign language, and more specifically the influence of these learners' cognitive differences on language acquisition, their motivation towards learning, strategies employed during language acquisition, the anxieties they experienced, as well as the best teaching practices to accommodate them. While the aims of the study were achieved, it was conducted at one specific English language centre and therefore the applicability and generalisation of the findings to other contexts could be limited. The commitment of the centre director, lecturers and learners who participated, as well as the researcher's own perceptions, might differ from other language centres in this country and other English language centres around the globe where English is being taught as a second or foreign language. Therefore the applicability of the findings to other contexts should be treated cautiously.

### **5.4 Conclusions of the study**

#### **5.4.1 Conclusions drawn from the literature study**

- The adult male and female English language learner enter the classroom with a wealth of knowledge, but also with preconceived gender differences. Within the context of this study, that would include differences in ability to acquire a

language, as well as differences in communicative styles (refer to sections 2.2). Women are presumed to be disempowered in certain societies and that would also be reflected in their specific language usage (refer to subsection 2.2.1). This perception is however, slowly changing within the Qatar learning environment, where education is now seen as a tool to elevate a nation.

- The adult male and female language learners also need to know the relevance of what they are learning and the future benefits of such learning. As a person matures, the motivation to acquire a second or foreign language might become more internal and that will assist the learning process (refers to section 2.3). Some adult learners are motivated by the monetary value attached to learning, whereas others are motivated to study for pleasure.
- Adult second language learning differs from mother-tongue learning in that in respect of mother-tongue, learning occurs with little effort, whereas in respect of a second language, learning has to take place in a classroom with a qualified lecturer. If this learning is done in a meaningful way, with enough exposure to the target language, learning will be successful (see subsection 2.3.1).
- Learning is a life-long process and should not stop after a certain chronological age. But, the preferred learning styles of the adult male and female learners are different (see section 2.4). Learners enter the English language centre from various nationalities around the world, as well as from the local Qatari population. Language learning can never be seen in isolation and the social and religious culture surrounding this learning, should always be considered (see subsection 2.4.1.1).
- The communicative approach to foreign language teaching is still the prevailing preferred method. This approach in the language learning classroom forms the basis of instruction. The implications of using the communicative approach, are that lecturers would spend less time on grammar and language structure (see subsection 2.4.4). This would be achieved by allowing more time for learners to interact formally and socially in the classroom by doing group and pair work. During this time the lecturer has ample time to act as a facilitator to correct mistakes, where necessary. Lecturers should however, familiarise themselves with the various cultures and religions within one language learning classroom. Therefore, topics covered should always be culturally sensitive, to avoid misconceptions.

#### 5.4.2 Conclusions drawn from the case study

The aim of this case study was to explore gender differences in second or foreign language acquisition, taking cognitive styles, motivation towards study, strategies used and anxiety experienced, into account (refers to subsection 1.5.3). Therefore, the conclusions drawn from this study were directly related to the principal aim.

- Gender differences in cognitive styles

Adult male and female language learners can more easily remember what they have learnt, if it could be linked to their existing knowledge. These learners enter the language learning classroom with a wealth of knowledge in their respective fields and from life-experiences, but unable to communicate effectively in the target language. The study revealed that men sometimes overestimate their learning abilities and women underestimate themselves (refer to subsection 4.4.4), *“I think the idea of women being more conscientious about learning anything, including languages and men are less conscientious, because they think they can do it already.”* The male and female learners start their English language acquisition from the same point of reference and that would be by drawing similarities between their native language and English. Women also seemed more effective in learning the language, because they appeared to be hard working. Women were more inclined to use repetition to remember work, while men would memorise, without necessarily understanding what they were learning.

- Motivation towards English language acquisition

Different motivational factors fuel the adult male and female language learners' desire to acquire English. For men, the motivational drive pointed more towards the monetary value that would include a promotion at work, more money and lastly the possibility of entrance to a foreign university or to communicate effectively when travelling overseas. Women were more motivated to study English for personal communication needs, like being able to converse with a child's school teacher, or officials at a bank or an airport. As one male lecturer reported, *“In this particular country, it's, ah, to keep up with the times. Hmm, a*



*lot of high positions or a lot of opportunities only come nowadays, with English. So, it's more monetary value. For the women, phew, it would be a part yes, but the main drive would be to compete with the guys. Because they have the excellent example set to them by Sheikha Moza, (consort of the Father Emir) who speaks English, is well educated, and who is not shy to go after her ambitions"* (refer to subsection 4.4.4). The influence of the lecturers' personalities, teaching methods and cultural differences on the learners' personalities, and therefore, their motivation towards acquiring English, could also not be underestimated, as this could lead to de-motivation towards language acquisition.

From the completed AMTB questionnaires, however, it could be concluded that women were considerably more motivated to acquire English than their male counterparts. This included motivation towards communicating with others, their desire to acquire a language, as well as attitudes towards the course material, learning in general, and towards the lecturer. The female learners, although all adults and responsible for their own actions, were also motivated by their families to continue acquiring proficiency in English.

- Strategies employed by learners to assist language learning

The adult male and female learner who enrol for an English language learning course, already possess individual strategies to facilitate learning. A lot of the men used memorising as a strategy to learn. Women on the other hand used repetition, writing and organising work, and forming acronyms to facilitate their learning. Memorisation, without understanding the meaning of vocabulary and its function in language, will not lead to effective learning. Lecturers do not always have the necessary time during their busy language teaching schedule, to devote time to teaching strategies as well.

With reference to the SILL questionnaires completed by learners, the following could be concluded: women employed memory related strategies marginally more than men; no significant differences could be found concerning application of cognitive strategies between men and women; compensatory strategies were used more by women than men; there were no significant differences in the application of meta-cognitive strategies used between males and females; affective strategies were applied more by males than females; social strategies

were employed by both males and females, but slightly more by males than females (see subsection 4.4.2.1).

- Anxieties experienced by adult language learners

The anxieties experienced by the adult male and female language learners, are caused by various situations. Some learners felt less stressed if they had ample time to prepare for a test. Some learners find the mere idea of speaking in front of a group of people, frightening (refer to subsection 4.4.5).

As one female lecturer responded, *“Some people do get anxious before writing a test or speaking. Speaking in front of others is probably the most nerve-racking thing they can do, whether it’s your own language or another language. I think, if you can help them, with preparing it properly, then they tend to be less nervous.”* And one male lecturer responded, *“For the men especially, I find them very, very, very anxious. Surprisingly, some of the women have been anxious, because they don’t normally mix with men, so when they are in a mixed class, they get very shy. But some of the women, most of the women, are not shy to speak their minds, hey”* (refer to subsection 4.4.4).

From the responses of the participants, it is evident that males and females experience anxieties within the language learning classroom and mainly before a test or oral classroom presentation. Women are however, less anxious to do classroom presentations, which could be interpreted that they feel comfortable with newly learnt communication skills. Lecturers have an obligation to assist learners to prepare properly for a test by facilitating their revision exercises. They also have an obligation to assist them with preparations for their classroom presentations by way of advising them on what aids, such as flash cards, to use. Learner anxiety will be much reduced with the assistance of a supportive English language lecturer.

- The best practices to assist English language learners

From the responses of the lecturers who participated in the study, it became evident that they have individual teaching styles and different approaches to teaching English. The lecturers who participated in the study were all native English speakers, had years of experience in the teaching of English and the necessary qualifications to teach English as a second or foreign language.

By following the communicative approach, lecturers were mindful of allowing learners enough time to interact formally and socially within the language learning classroom, while acting as the facilitators, who could correct mistakes when needed, in order for learners to achieve communicative competence. As fluency and accuracy are both important dimensions of language acquisition, this would also mean overlooking some minor mistakes from time to time to let fluency prevail over accuracy. In this way, learning will be a gradual process, which involves trial and error to ensure a successful outcome.

The lecturers are aware that teaching English to adult male and female learners from different cultural backgrounds varies considerably from teaching in a mono-cultural classroom situation. Lecturers are aware that the local religion and culture strongly influence the language learning classroom, and that family and the social environment should never be overlooked. Therefore, lecturers always have to be careful when grouping learners during group and pair-work, by getting permission from the ladies first, as well as be careful, by avoiding culturally sensitive issues within the classroom.

The adult learner expects the language lecturer to be competent, whether acting as a teacher and doing it from the book in front of a class, or from the back, or acting as a facilitator assisting by correcting mistakes. The adult language learner enter the classroom with a wealth of life experiences and sometimes highly qualified in a specific field, but unable to communicate fluently in English. Therefore, they want to be treated with respect by the lecturer. It is the role of the language lecturer to help these learners to link up their existing knowledge with the newly learnt skills in order to facilitate language acquisition.

## **5.5 Recommendations**

### **5.5.1 Recommendations with regard to teaching adult learners**

The following recommendations with regard to teaching adult male and female language learners are made:

- Lecturers should recognise the individual needs of adult learners.

With regard to motivation towards English language acquisition and strategies employed by adult learners:

- Lecturers should be mindful that learners' motivational level will be reflected in the different strategies they employ to make language learning more effective.
- Lecturers should be aware that personal and situational factors influence the strategies employed by language learners; such factors could include cultural beliefs, personality traits and the preferred learning style of the individual.
- Lecturers should determine strategies already employed by language learners and build on them.

With regard to teaching practices:

- Lecturers should be encouraged to develop their own unique teaching approach, depending on the situation at hand.
- Lecturers should be aware that for meaningful learning to occur, learners need to hear the language as often as possible.
- Lecturers should encourage adult learners to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Lecturers should be made aware, and also never underestimate the importance and influence their subject knowledge has on teaching and its positive outcome.
- Lecturers should be mindful of their influences on the learners, the learners' emotional state and social disturbances during language acquisition and assist the learners to overcome their anxieties in the language learning classroom.

With regard to course material:

- Grammar and vocabulary teaching should relate to topics familiar to adult learners.
- Communicative skills training should be more practical, for example, male and female learners could demonstrate to make Arabic coffee, or prepare their countries national dish.
- Lecturers should refrain from using culturally insensitive course material.
- Learners could benefit from on-line English language programmes, under the supervision of the lecturer.

### **5.5.2 Recommendations for future research**

- This research was conducted with only one English language centre in Qatar. Therefore it is recommended that a similar study be done at other centres in this country, as well as other countries where English is taught as a second or foreign language.
- It is recommended that a longitudinal study be carried out to get the effect of the so called Third Culture Kids (TCK's). These learners are now being taught in English in Qatar; they are able to communicate in their mother tongue, but unable to read or write in it. The effect this inability to read or write in their mother tongue has on their studying English as a second or foreign language needs to be investigated; again it needs to be determined how this inability to read and write in mother tongue would affect their lives back in their respective home countries.
- Learning strategies should be taught in the beginning stages of language acquisition, for them to be effective and to heighten motivation for further studies.

### **5.6 Personal theories on teaching and learning English in Qatar**

Teaching English as a second or foreign language to adult male and female learners in Qatar is from the outset, a very unique experience. This experience should never view in isolation, owing to the diverse cultural backgrounds of the learners. These learners are not just from the local Qatari population, but some are from many other Arabic speaking countries; while other who came to Qatar to seek employment are from various nationalities from all over the world, and now require competence in a language spoken in all spheres of life in Qatar. As such, a lot of English is spoken among non-native speakers, who are not too concerned about grammar and pronunciation, as long as they are understood.

The next realization as a lecturer, is that you are dealing mostly with highly educated learners, like doctors, dentists, engineers, nurses and teachers, to name but a few. These learners have the expertise in their own respective fields, but are just unable to communicate effectively in the commonly spoken language, English.

With regard to cognitive abilities:

To date, there has been no scientific proof that there is a critical age for second language acquisition. As this study involved adult learners, is enough proof that language learning can still take place effectively even at the age of these learners, so long as learners are positively involved. The adult language learner is constantly faced with the “need to know” in respect of what he or she is learning and also with the challenge as to how relevant the learning content is. They therefore want to know what the outcome of the particular learning will be and how it will benefit them afterwards. Therefore, the role of the lecturer is to assist in linking the existing knowledge with the newly learnt language structures and their functions in order to stimulate effective leanings. Quite often, learners can more readily answer the “why” they want to acquire English, than the “how” this is achieved.

In learners’ experience, learners have various ways to acquire English. Some use every opportunity available to speak, irrespective of grammatical errors they commit. Others watch English TV programmes with sub-titles in their native language and others study by reading sections over and over or by writing it down. Within the classroom, the adult learner does better when he or she can relate to subject matter to the real life situations, or when he or she learns the subject content, the context of which is relevant to the activities that were performed earlier.

With regard to motivations towards studying English as a second or foreign language:

English second language learners have different reasons for studying and that influence their motivation towards acquiring the language. Many learners want to acquire English, because it will afford them a promotion at work, and as such, the monetary value attached to it, plays a role. In the researcher’s personal view, the men seem to be more interested in obtaining certificates, that acquiring proficiency in the language; whereas the women seek personal accomplishment. Competition within the classroom, especially among learners from the same organisation such as the Armed Forces, the banking or petroleum industries, sometimes act as a great motivator to study, and this would be equally so for men and women. Learners, who study for personal enrichment, are normally more motivated to acquire the language, because they see the benefit of it when being used outside the classroom.

With regard to strategies employed during English second language acquisition:

As the lecturer of English as a second language to adult learners in Qatar, the researcher was at all times fully aware that learners' cultural values would have an influence on the various strategies they employ to acquire the language. Learners who are from a background where they are used to group and pair-work might prefer strategies applied by others, like independent work.

Direct strategies which directly involve the Target Language (TL):

- Memory related strategies. Learners used that especially to store newly learnt vocabulary in the long-term memory, to be retrieved and applied later.
- Cognitive strategies. The learners used that to link new information to what was already familiar.
- Compensatory strategies. Learners would use guessing from time to time to overcome the limitations in their newly learnt language knowledge and to talk around certain words.

Indirect strategies, which indirectly support language learning:

- Meta-cognitive strategies. The adult language learner has by now developed his or her own style of organizing and planning to take control over learning. Some learners, however, would ask for guidance from the lecturer.
- Affective strategies. As in any normal situation, even the adult language learner will at times be affected by his or her attitude and motivation towards language acquisition.
- Social strategies. At times learners would interact with others in the classroom during discussions, even though he or she might not be aware that such an interaction contributes to learning experience.

The researcher as a more mature person almost stumbled upon the use of colour (memory related strategy) during learning and the effectiveness of employing it in order for learning to occur. Although colour was not widely used by the adult learners, some ladies did and others were even very interested to test this. It seems that learning English was more successful by employing various strategies for the task at hand.

With regard to anxiety towards second language acquisition:

The cause of anxiety in the language learning classroom and the effects it has on the learning process should never be underestimated by lecturers. Considering *situational variables*, the researcher is ever mindful of her behaviour and that it should never be seen as threatening to learners. Although a prescribed curriculum is followed at the language centre, course related items, such as classroom activities and social interaction with other learners are always conducted by taking the learners' cultural diversities and backgrounds into account. The *learner variables* include emotions, motivation and individual personality traits. Family and family matters play a significant role in the everyday life of Qataris. For this reason, when a learner receives a telephone call from a family member about an emergency, this learner would immediately drop whatever he or she is doing, being that in the middle of a lecture, to attend to that.

With regard to the researcher's teaching methods:

The researcher is always mindful of the fact that the adult language learners do not just enter the classroom with a wealth of experience; but might also come from an environment with its own everyday stressful life. So in the researcher's experience as a lecturer, every endeavour is made to create a welcoming, fun-filled atmosphere, but with effective learning as a priority.

In the constructivist classroom, as a lecturer, the researcher organizes information in a manner that all learners will be engaged in an exciting and interesting way. This involves the active participation of the learners through sharing of ideas, and also the intervention of the lecturer through which learners are assisted to develop new language skills and to link them with the previously learnt subject content. By selecting topics that challenge their emotions, lessons are more meaningful. Learning will be effective by linking it to something that is already familiar. Acting as the facilitator, the researcher generally guides learners in using cognitive strategies such as self testing, practising communicative skills, without placing any emphasis on accuracy, and encouraging them to focus on fluency when speaking. In this way, they have ample time to reflect on newly learnt grammar and vocabulary and have enough opportunities to implement what was learnt.

With the above in mind, the following is noteworthy:

- Assessment should not necessarily only be done by way of a formal test, but also involve interaction between lecturer and learner to assess performance.



- Subject matter should be in context of the learners' everyday world, but also presented in a way that lead to step by step discovery of knowledge.
- Learners should regularly be challenged to master a next level of competence in order to develop their language confidence.
- Curriculum should be followed, but allow for flexibility to create a more meaningful learning experience.

Adult language learners, male and female, required opportunities to speak English. They would at times voice their frustration, because of the limited opportunities to speak the language. For this reason, as the second language lecturer, the researcher gives them enough time within the classroom to practice their communicative language skills and in this way, enhance their communicative competence. This is achieved by:

- Interaction between the researcher and the learners during class discussions in English.
- Giving learners enough time for group and pair-work to practice their language skills.
- Encouraging the learners to listen to the language they hear (input) and then emulate to enhance their communicative competence.
- Practicing pronunciation and not be afraid to make mistakes when pronouncing new words.
- Getting learners to pay attention to feedback, but at times allow for fluency to prevail over accuracy to build their confidence.
- Encourage them to speak English as often as possible and not be afraid to experiment.

Great effort is made to explain unfamiliar words to learners. In some instances, where even the best explanation does not clarify a concept to the learner, a fellow learner might be of assistance, using their native language, while ensuring that it is once again explained in English, for the lecturer to hear that the explanation was indeed accurate.

With writing exercises, especially in respect of Arabic speaking learners, their first inclination is to start from right to left, as in the Arabic language. For this reason, they

would instinctively write different letters as they would in the Arabic language, for example, making an 'o' clockwise and not anticlockwise as would be the norm for native English speakers. In the Arabic alphabet, there is no equivalent for the letter 'p'. For this reason, they find it extremely difficult to distinguish between the 'b' and 'p' sound at the end of a word, like 'job' or 'jop'. Besides grammar activities, the researcher always likes to conclude most session by doing a spelling test. In doing this, the researcher is always very careful only to use familiar words that were from related classroom activities of the day, and not to incorporate unfamiliar words at the stage.

For learners who require extra information and learning experiences, the researcher often refers them to online studying. The learners, who make use of additional technologically available learning material in their spare time, show a marked improvement in their overall performance and confidence to speak English.

Normally, learners would choose their own language centre, depending on availability and not necessarily on curriculum content. Companies might however, also have their preferences, and again, as such the learners have no insight into the curriculum. These learners would then almost be "confronted" with the course material, and if their needs are to enhance communicative skills, they get frustrated with learning grammar and vocabulary.

The desire to acquire English as a second or foreign language might not be placed on the same level of the scale of priorities by all learners. By using carefully constructed teaching methods and proper guidance by the lecturer, where the adult male and female English language learner also accept responsibility for language acquisition, learning could be successful.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

This research explored the gender differences of adult male and female learners when acquiring English as a second or foreign language at one specific language learning centre in Qatar. This study was conducted by looking at the gender differences in cognitive styles, their motivation towards studying, the strategies they employ during language acquisition, the anxieties these learners experience, as well as the best teaching practices to accommodate them. The adult learner comes to the language learning classroom with a wealth of information, sometimes highly qualified in a specific

field of expertise, but just unable to communicate effectively and fluently in the target language. These language learners are from the local Qatari population and a variety of nationalities from other Arabic speaking countries, as well as expatriates from around the world. Lecturers have a great responsibility to accommodate these learners in terms of their cultural beliefs, social needs and individual personalities, while at the same time, applying good teaching practices for language learning to be successful.

It is hoped that this study would in future be beneficial to other lecturers from native English speaking countries and that the findings would be insightful to them.

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**Appendix A**

**CHECKLIST for observations**

<b>Lecturer</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
<b>Cognitive Styles</b> (global, analytic, auditory, visual)		
<b>Motivation</b> <u>Instrumental</u> (intensity, involvement)		
<u>Integrative</u> (personal goal)		
<b>Learning Strategies</b>		
<u>Memory-related</u> (sounds, keyword, flashcards)		
<u>Cognitive</u> (reasoning, note-taking)		

<u>Compensatory</u> (talking around missing words)		
<u>Meta-cognitive</u> (organizing, evaluating, monitoring mistakes)		
<u>Affective</u> (feelings, rewarding oneself)		
<u>Social</u> (asking questions, talking with native speakers)		
<b>Anxiety</b>		
<b>Teaching Methods</b>		

## Appendix B

### Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)

This form of the strategy inventory for language learning (SILL) is for students of a second language (SL). Please read each statement and give a number in the response (1, 2, 3, 4 or 5) that tells how TRUE the statement is.

1. Never or almost never true of me.
2. Usually not true of me.
3. Somewhat true of me.
4. Usually true of me.
5. Always or almost always true of me.

Answer in terms of how well the statement describes you. Do not answer how you think you should be, or what other people do. There are **no right or wrong answers** to these statements.

#### Part A

1. I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in the SL.
2. I use new SL words in a sentence so I can remember them.
3. I connect the sound of a new SL word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word.
4. I remember a new SL word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.
5. I use rhymes to remember new SL words.
6. I use flashcards to remember new SL words.
7. I physically act out new SL words.
8. I review SL lessons often.
9. I remember new SL words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.

## Part B

10. I say or write new SL words several times.
11. I try to talk like native SL speakers.
12. I practice the sounds of SL.
13. I use the SL words I know in different ways.
14. I start conversations in the SL.
15. I watch SL language TV shows spoken in SL or go to movies spoken in SL.
16. I read for pleasure in the SL.
17. I write notes, messages, letter, or reports in the SL.
18. I first skim an SL passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully.
19. I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in the SL.
20. I try to find patterns in the SL.
21. I find the meaning of an SL word by dividing it into parts that I understand.
22. I try not to translate word for word.
23. I make summaries of information that I hear or read in the SL.

## Part C

24. To understand unfamiliar SL words, I make guesses.
25. When I can't think of a word during a conversation in the SL, I use gestures.
26. I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in the SL.
27. I read SL without looking up every new word.
28. I try to guess what the other person will say next in the SL.
29. If I can't think of an SL word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.

## Part D

30. I try to find as many ways as I can to use my SL.
31. I notice my SL mistakes and use that information to help me do better.



32. I pay attention when someone is speaking SL.
33. I try to find out how to be a better learner of SL.
34. I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study SL.
35. I look for people I can talk to in SL.
36. I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in SL.
37. I have clear goals for improving my SL skills.
38. I think about my progress in learning SL.

#### Part E

39. I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using SL.
40. I encourage myself to speak SL even when I am afraid of making a mistake.
41. I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in SL.
42. I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using SL.
43. I write down my feelings in a language learning diary.
44. I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning SL.

#### Part F

45. If I do not understand something in SL, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.
46. I ask SL speakers to correct me when I talk.
47. I practice SL with other students.
48. I ask for help from SL speakers.
49. I ask questions in SL.
50. I try to learn about the culture of SL speakers.

## Appendix C

### Individual interviews with learners and focus group participants

Dear Student,

I am presently doing research to complete my Doctoral Degree in Adult Education at Unisa. The research involves exploring gender differences when teaching English as a foreign or second language to adult learners in Qatar, with particular interest in cognitive differences, motivation towards learning a second language, strategies employed while learning a second language and anxieties experienced during this process. The questions asked will be relevant to the above research as indicated.

While participating with the research, I would like to assure you of the following:

- You do not have to provide me with any information that you are not comfortable sharing.
- All information shared will be for the use of the studies and will be kept private and confidential.
- Your anonymity will be protected at all times and no direct names will be used.
- The conversations will be tape-recorded, but will be for use by myself only.
- You have the right to withdraw from the research at any time you want to.
- I will be ethical at all times and respect your wishes.

The research will only take forty minutes to one hour of your time.

The intended title of my study will be:

#### **TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND OR FOREIGN LANGUAGE TO ADULTS IN QATAR: EXPLORING GENDER DIFFERENCES IN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION**

It would be appreciated if you could help me to complete this study by answering the following questions as honestly as possible and give me your permission to tape record the interview. Although the interview will be recorded, you do not need to identify yourself – so no need to give your name. Fifteen other learners will also be involved in this study.

Thank you very much for your time and I appreciate your interest and cooperation.

Regards,

Riana

Participant signature

Date

Interviewer signature

Date

### Questions

1. What professional qualifications do you have? \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
How long have you been studying at the centre? \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
What level are you studying at the moment? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How do you learn English? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Be specific and tell me how you learn, what makes it easier to remember things and do you use any special strategies to make it easier ? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What motivates you to study English? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Do you get anxious before writing a test or speaking in front of others? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What specific classroom situations do you think provoke anxiety? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Who or what do you think is responsible for anxieties in the classroom? \_\_\_\_\_
10. How do you cope with anxiety? \_\_\_\_\_
11. How do you feel teachers are accommodating the learning process, and how is it being done? \_\_\_\_\_
12. How would you like teachers to handle different genders within the classroom?  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. How would you like to be taught English to make the situation acceptable for adult male and female language learners in the classroom? \_\_\_\_\_
14. What additional information about the above mentioned questions would you like to bring to my attention? \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D

### Individual interviews with lecturers

Dear Colleague,

I am presently doing research to complete my Doctoral Degree in Adult Education at Unisa. The research involves exploring gender differences when teaching English as a foreign or second language to adult learners in Qatar, with particular interest in cognitive differences, motivation towards learning a second language, strategies employed while learning a second language and anxieties experienced during this process. The questions asked will be relevant to the above research as indicated.

While participating with the research, I would like to assure you of the following:

- You do not have to provide me with any information that you are not comfortable sharing.
- All information shared will be for the use of the studies and will be kept private and confidential.
- Your anonymity will be protected at all times and no direct names will be used.
- The conversations will be tape-recorded, but will be for use by myself only.
- You have the right to withdraw from the research at any time you want to.
- I will be ethical at all times and respect your wishes.

Answering the questions will only take about forty minutes to one hour of your time.

The intended title of my study will be:

### **TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND OR FOREIGN LANGUAGE TO ADULTS IN QATAR: EXPLORING GENDER DIFFERENCES IN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION**

It would be appreciated if you could assist me to complete this study by answering the following questions as honestly as possible and give me your permission to tape record the interview. Although the interview will be recorded, you do not need to identify yourself – so no need to give your name. Two other lecturers will also be involved in this study.

Thank you very much for your time and I appreciate your interest and support.

Regards,

Riana

Participant signature

Date

Interviewer signature

Date

### Questions

1. What professional qualifications do you have? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How long have you been teaching at the centre? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What levels are you teaching at the moment? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How long have you been teaching English? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Be specific and tell me, in your opinion, how do you think learners acquire English?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. In your opinion, what are the differences in the way men acquire English and women acquire English? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What, in your experience are the differences in cognitive styles of male and female learners in language acquisition? \_\_\_\_\_
8. How do learners remember information? \_\_\_\_\_
9. What motivates them to study English? \_\_\_\_\_
10. What makes it easier to remember things and do you use any special strategies to make it easier for these language learners? \_\_\_\_\_
11. Do you think they get anxious before writing a test or speaking in front of others?  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. Do you feel that teachers are doing enough to accommodate the learning process, and how is it being done? \_\_\_\_\_
13. How do you handle different genders within the classroom? \_\_\_\_\_
14. How would you like other teachers to handle different genders within the classroom? \_\_\_\_\_
15. What else, in your opinion can be done to make the situation more acceptable for all learners to acquire English? \_\_\_\_\_
16. What additional information about the above mentioned questions would you like to bring to my attention? \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix E

### Learners' questionnaire on motivation towards English language learning

Dear language learner,

The purpose of this questionnaire is to determine your feelings about a number of things. Please rate each of the following items in terms of how you feel about it. Each item is followed by a scale that has a label on the left and another on the right, and the numbers 1 to 7 between the two ends. For each item, please circle any one of the numbers from 1 to 7 that best describes you.

1. My motivation to learn English in order to communicate with English speaking people is:  
WEAK 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 STRONG
2. My attitude toward English speaking people is:  
UNFAVOURABLE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 FAVOURABLE
3. My interest in foreign languages is:  
VERY LOW 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 VERY HIGH
4. My desire to learn English is:  
WEAK 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 STRONG
5. My attitude toward learning English is:  
UNFAVOURABLE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 FAVOURABLE
6. My attitude toward my English teacher is:  
UNFAVOURABLE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 FAVOURABLE
7. My motivation to learn English for practical purposes (to get a good job) is:  
WEAK 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 STRONG
8. I worry about speaking English outside of class:  
VERY LITTLE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 VERY MUCH
9. My attitude toward my English course is:  
UNFAVOURABLE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 FAVOURABLE
10. I worry about speaking in my English class:  
VERY LITTLE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 VERY MUCH
11. My motivation to learn English is:  
VERY LOW 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 VERY MUCH
12. My parents encourage me to learn English:  
VERY LITTLE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 VERY MUCH

## APPENDIX F

### Phonologically familiar and unfamiliar spelling words for adult learners

#### ai

afraid  
maintain  
raisin  
waiter

#### au

auburn  
because  
exhausting  
faulty

#### ear

earrings  
fearful  
nearest  
year

#### ight

delight  
flight  
frightened  
mighty

#### ite

excited  
invite  
kite  
satellite

#### oi

appoint  
coins  
ointment  
spoilng

#### om

competent  
competition  
prominent  
promise

#### or

forecast  
foresee  
informed  
pastor

#### tion

action  
administration  
national  
relationship

#### ture

creature  
culture  
picturesque  
puncture