The role of motivational factors in the apparent lack of success in English language learning in Arabic-speaking countries, particularly Oman and the United Arab Emirates

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While registered as a candidate for the above degree, I have not been registered for any other research award. The results and conclusions embodied in this thesis are the work of the named candidate and have not been submitted for any other award.
The role of motivational factors in the apparent lack of success in English language learning in Arabic-speaking countries, particularly Oman and the United Arab Emirates

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the degree to which motivational factors influence the successful acquisition of English as a foreign language in female Emirati and Omani learners. The research participants were female third-level students taking foundation English and English for Specific Purposes courses in a university in the United Arab Emirates and a teacher-training college in Oman, both of which are based on an American model.

Problems frequently occur when learners similar to those described in this study go through higher education, particularly when the institutions in question are based on a Western model. Such problems may include reluctance to assume responsibility for their learning (Ali, 2003) and a perceived lack of successful language acquisition. Undoubtedly, high school education with its traditional emphasis on rote learning and memorising exam questions plays a role (Canning & Bornstein, 2001), as does the sociocultural context, which means that students have almost no opportunity to socialise outside their family environment.

However, in the wider context, Western culture is having an enormous impact on the entire region, primarily due to the media’s reporting of regional and political affairs. Such reporting has also resulted in heightened tension in the region, which have been the subject of demonstrations on university campuses and anxiety in some language classrooms where English language teachers are for the most part native speakers of English.
It is against such a background that changes are taking place in the educational systems across the region, with English assuming more significance as a language of instruction. Arabic is being phased out as the primary language of instruction in many instances. This has an impact on the learners’ motivation to study the English language. Studies have suggested that motivation to learn a foreign language may be affected by attitudes towards the target language community and fears of loss of identity (Lambert, 1979; Pool, 1979; Williams, 1994; Costelloe, 2001; Kharbat, 2002), thus indicating that the macro-context may be one of the motivational factors involved in successful language acquisition. Some recent studies have also focused on the role of power in language learning, arguing that it is one of the factors that affect motivation (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Lightbown & Spada, 1993; Norton, 2000). In English language education, studies have been conducted on linguistic imperialism (Philippson, 1992) and resistance to such imperialism (Canagarajah, 1999) which refer to the impact that underlying political, religious and socio-economic issues may have on motivation to achieve a higher level in the English language.

The results of the study I have undertaken similarly show that participants’ acquisition of the English language was affected by a number of motivational factors, including the macro-context of power relations and culture, as well as the micro-context of the classroom, where the teacher, curriculum and materials all had a role to play. Many of the participants appear to have a clear grasp of how both the macro and micro contexts influence their motivation to study English and achieve a high level in the language.

These findings suggest that in order for learners to achieve a higher level in the English language, language planners and policy makers need to be aware of how both the macro
and micro contexts influence language acquisition. The research emphasizes a necessity for both administration and for instructors in higher education institutions in Oman and the UAE to conduct needs analysis amongst the learners so that their needs, as well as those of other stakeholders, can be catered to. Such measures should support the learners as they strive to achieve a measure of success in English language acquisition. The findings of this research propose that a greater understanding of the role of motivational factors may conceivably have a valuable part to play in raising standards of English language acquisition in Arabic-speaking countries.
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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION
1.0 Background to the research

English language teaching and learning has experienced an unparalleled period of growth. Anyone who wishes to participate in an increasingly globalised and technological world will find it difficult to do so without learning English. Classroom-based research is becoming more common as language educators seek to understand the learning experiences and needs of their students in different educational contexts around the globe. Such research may help inform language planners to devise ways to develop appropriate curricula and improve the standard of students.

This thesis investigates female learners of English in Oman and the United Arab Emirates and some of the reasons for an apparent lack of success in English language acquisition in higher education institutions. The research question is as follows:

What are the major motivational obstacles to learning that prevent Gulf Arab learners, particularly Emirati and Omani learners, achieving a high standard in the English language?

It has been suggested that learners often experience difficulties when they enrol in higher education, primarily as a result of their language learning experiences at high school, where teaching styles focus more on areas such as rote learning (Ali, 2003; Arneson, 2005; Canning & Bornstein, 2001; Costelloe, 2001; Mynard, 2003). Students tend to have high expectations of the level of proficiency they will attain in English, something that is reinforced by high grades in school exams, but are ill-prepared for the study skills required at university level (Parker & O’Sullivan, 2003). When learner expectations of the acquisition of a high level of success in the English
language are unmet, many experience frustration and appear to become demotivated as a result (Altman, 1985; Bandura, 1994; Horwitz, 1989; Jernigan, 2004).

For the learners in this study, English language learning is not a choice, but a requirement if they are to study their major at university. This often entails having to spend a significant period of time in a foundation program, which highlights the lack of choice many learners feel they have in their studies. Coupled with the increasing prevalence of English as the medium of instruction for most majors in the institutions being investigated, lack of choice is often accompanied by a corresponding lack of positive motivation by students to succeed in their English-language studies.

The increasing use of English within higher education in the Middle East is influenced by wider economic, historical and political concerns, all of which may have an impact on motivation. However, there seems to be a dearth of studies concerning how the macro-dimension, or socio-cultural milieu, may affect motivation, as much research concentrates on the personality traits of the student. It is the macro-dimension which serves as the focus of my study, as a deeper understanding of a historical legacy and current political events may serve to inform why many Gulf Arab learners are not currently successful in English language learning.

1.1 Statement of the problem

My study deals with the multiple and complex reasons for the apparent lack of success in English language learning in Arabic-speaking countries, particularly Oman and the
United Arab Emirates. The idea for this arose as a result of my experience of teaching English as a second language in the Arabian Gulf, specifically in Oman and the UAE. I wanted to devise ways to test if my perception was correct that students were becoming less motivated the longer they studied English. This was happening against a background of increased state support for the study of English, which translated into more financial and material resources being allocated to schools and universities. Therefore, students should have been better supported in their studies, but I believed the fact that their level was not high was indicative of a decrease in motivation as they progressed through their studies.

In the institutions where I worked, as well as in other higher education institutions in the Gulf region, there is widespread acceptance that sustained motivation is necessary in order for learners to successfully acquire a high level in the English language (Arneson, 2005; Costelloe, 2001; Semmar, 2006). Nonetheless, I have been unable to unearth much research which pertains to why learners are not being successful in their English language studies. Most research concentrates on acquiring discrete language skills in the classroom or the benefits of technology in learning, but very little appears to relate to how the environment outside the classroom affects English language learning, motivation and successful language acquisition in a Gulf educational context. The sociocultural perspective appears to be largely missing from Gulf studies, which contrasts with research elsewhere (Dörnyei, 2000, 2003; Dörnyei, Csizér & Németh, 2006; Gardner, 1985, 2001; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003; Norton, 2000; Pavlenko, 2001, 2003; Williams, 1994).
1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate what the major motivational obstacles are that are preventing Omani and Emirati students from achieving a high language level, as research that explored the underlying assumptions of students about their learning experience seemed to be lacking. I wanted to give them a forum to speak freely about their language studies so that I could understand their perspectives on motivation and study, and, in turn, help other teachers and myself to inform our teaching practice.

By making use of oral history and first person narratives, I was able to test my perception and demonstrate whether or not the learners were achieving a high level in the English language. Learner perceptions of their learning experiences were utilised in addition to other data in order to show the multiple and complex reasons learners might not have learned as much as they should in English. Data analysis suggests that successful language acquisition is being affected by a number of variables, some of a pedagogical and sociocultural nature, as well as variables of a political nature.

1.3 Significance of the study

This topic is a particularly relevant one given the current climate of heightened tension that exists in the Middle East. There is also some degree of tension between the Middle East and some Western countries, such as Britain and the US. More researchers are now turning their attention to the Middle East, but many have problems of gaining access. In addition, most studies undertaken in an educational environment usually involve
surveys, which tend to focus on seeking ways to improve vocabulary acquisition and IT skills. Very few studies involve in-depth investigations of why students aren’t apparently learning as much as they could – in other words, why their levels of second language acquisition remain relatively low. This is where I decided to focus my efforts.

This study is among the burgeoning number of comparative research studies conducted in the area of motivation with these particular learner groups in Oman and the United Arab Emirates. Studies with Arabic-speaking learners are presently attracting a high level of interest due to the expansion and reform of their education systems. It is my hope that language planners, curricula developers, materials designers and teachers will take more heed of learners’ cultural and educational considerations when designing and implementing English language programs. The findings may also assist those who implement language programs elsewhere in the Gulf and in other Arabic-speaking countries.

1.4 ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS

Chapter 2 – Literature review

The chapter begins with a review of the literature on motivation. Motivation encompasses social-psychological, education and industrial perspectives. Gardner and Lambert (1959, 1972), in the field of social psychology, offer the view that motivation can be both instrumental, to get good grades or a job, and integrative, to become part of the target language community. Motivation therefore appears to be linked to the desire
to do something, such as learn a language, and the reasons for doing so.

In most pedagogical literature the classroom environment is held to be more important than the sociocultural one, but some recent studies (Arneson, 2005; Dörnyei, 2003; Dörnyei et al. 2006) view motivation in terms of a cognitive perspective – in other words, placing the individual at the centre of the learning process but also recognising that the social milieu has an impact on motivation. These take variables such as attitudes and beliefs into account and understand that anyone’s perception of events will influence their subsequent behaviour. I thought this was significant because they allow that how students felt about regional and global events could have an impact on their learning behaviour in the classroom.

Power differentials have traditionally received scant attention from researchers on second language acquisition, but this appears to be changing, partly due to a broad, postmodernist paradigm which brings together discourse, difference, identity and power (Atkinson, 1999:627). However, the literature on motivation has yielded very little that pertains to the Emirati and Omani situations. It is this dimension which I seek to address, as I perceive there is a link between power and language, which has a significant impact on learners’ motivation to acquire a foreign language. My hypothesis is that motivation in the classroom depends to a large extent on learners’ perceptions of events in the wider world, as their interpretation of events shapes their dealings with their teachers and their approach to learning English as a foreign language. Language learning exists in social contexts (Lightbown & Spada, 1993; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991). Studies relevant to the particularities of the Arab
context, which take the macro-context, motivation and specifically, power relations, into account, are largely missing. This was an area I wished to explore in greater detail.

**Chapter 3 – Background context**

This chapter attempts to place the study in context by describing how historical factors and a colonial legacy have shaped education and learner attitudes in the Gulf today. I show that there is a long tradition of outside countries exerting control over Omani and Emirati affairs. I perceive there is a link between power and language, which has a significant impact on learners’ motivation to acquire a foreign language. It is possible that motivation in the classroom depends to a large extent on learners’ perceptions of the wider world, as their interpretation of events shapes their dealings with their teachers and their approach to learning English as a foreign language. I also explain how many Gulf Arabic speakers view the Arabic language as the language of Islam, which may have implications for their motivation to study English, particularly when it becomes a language of instruction for most subjects.

**Chapter 4 – Linking research situation and context**

In this chapter I examine the learners’ cultural and educational backgrounds in Oman and the United Arab Emirates. The institutions where the study takes place are described in greater detail, as are local, national and global considerations which may affect successful English language acquisition. This furnishes the reader with a greater
understanding of the obstacles that may prevent learners from achieving a high level of proficiency in the English language and why the methodology chosen was adopted. Additional information on obstacles to English language learning comes from a previous study I carried out in both countries.

Chapter 5 – Methodology

In this chapter I describe in detail the study; the reason for such a purposely broad research question; the participants in both institutions and the context in which I studied them; the interpretative approach I adopted to data collection and analysis; the data collection methods which included historical analysis, interviews, participant observation, oral history and the study of written texts; ethical considerations; details of the data analysis procedures; and the limitations to this study. I consider grounded theory approaches to the research question and I give a comprehensive account of the techniques associated with this method of enquiry and analysis.

Chapter 6 – Findings

This chapter provides extracts from interviews, observation diaries and exploits class observation data in order to describe more fully the educational experience of learners. In line with grounded theory approaches, and informed by the findings of the literature review, categories emerged from the data, which enabled me to present categories and begin to address the original research question. This allowed me to comment on the extent to which successful language acquisition is influenced by multiple motivational
variables.

I was able to identify some of the many and complex motivational obstacles towards achieving a high level of English, by focusing on how learners construct their experiences. Differences emerged among participants, as Omani participants generally appear to be less successful in their English studies than their Emirati counterparts. The main finding appears to be that pedagogical style and classroom environment affect learning and motivation. This confirms the motivation literature, which suggests pedagogy is the most important variable for learning. It appears that motivation to learn English has been adversely affected as a direct result of the sudden imposition of English as a language of instruction. The sociocultural environment and events in the wider political arena also emerged as a noteworthy factor that has a bearing on motivation and on consequent successful acquisition of English.

Chapter 7 – Discussion of findings

This chapter considers the findings in relation to the research questions and then discusses their implications for local Omani and Emirati policy and planning. The chapter first regards the research question and the way I answered it. A discussion ensues on the importance of various macro issues to the findings and the pressures for preferring the English language to the Arabic language as a medium of instruction.

I also discuss what I believe underlies the attitudes of the Ministries of Education and also the attitudes of fellow teachers. Then I consider the implications of foreign
language planners developing curricula when they have little knowledge of the local environment and rarely consult students and teachers who will be directly affected by the implementation of such policies.

**Chapter 8 - Conclusion**

The findings and subsequent discussion allow me to make recommendations for educators, language planners and administrators when developing appropriate curricula for similar cultural and educational contexts. In addition, I craft some suggestions for further study in this area which would contribute to a body of academic knowledge and conclude with some of my reflections on the research as a whole.
CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW
2.0 Introduction

There at first appears to be a plethora of literature on motivation, from social-psychological, pedagogical and industrial perspectives. Skehan (1989) maintains that after aptitude, the variable which has been constantly shown to affect language acquisition is motivation. Early studies on language learning are concerned with motivation from a social-psychological perspective (Gardner 1985; Gardner and Lambert 1959, 1972), which later gives way to an emphasis on the individual and on the learning situation (Crookes and Schmidt 1991; Dörnyei 1990; Gardner 2001; Gardner and MacIntyre 1991).

What is motivation, and what are the factors that may promote it, or even have an adverse effect upon it? What happens when a learner is not successful? What role does culture play? The development of thinking in the area has led to a divergence of theories. It is this wide range of perspectives and frameworks that will be presented as they relate to the Omani and Emirati contexts. Its purpose is to (i) analyse, by finding the connections between ideas, (ii) synthesise, by rearranging the elements to identify relationships, (iii) distinguish between different arguments, thereby leading to (iv) knowledge, by becoming more aware of the different concepts and their application (Hart, 1998:109-110).

2.1 Definition of Motivation

Motivation has long been viewed as necessary for successful second language acquisition (SLA), but, as has already been indicated, a single definition remains
elusive. Most researchers tend to agree that it is a key factor in learning a second language, but multi-dimensional (Crookes and Schmidt, 1991; Dornyei, 1994; Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993; Gardner and Tremblay, 1994; Oxford and Shearin, 1994). The learner’s orientation towards learning a second language is seen as dependent on the process of motivation. Definitions in the field of psychology have informed and influenced current understanding of motivation.

Max Wertheimer argued in 1912 from the Gestalt tradition that the perception of an object is influenced by the field of forces surrounding that object and the inter-relationships among forces in the field (Weiner, 1992). Lewin’s field theory (1935, 1938, cited in Weiner, 1992:14) dealt with the integration of structural and dynamic constructs for the person and the environment. These constructs were seen as being integrated by tension, which results from a need state. As tension creates a valence around the valued object, a person acts in order to attain the goal object, and, once the goal is attained, tension decreases. Lewin, in his conception of motivation, stressed the perceived, rather than the real world of the subjects as having an influence on motivation. Atkinson (1958, cited in Weiner, 1992:181) linked individual, environmental and experiential (habit or psychological distance) variables together to advance a theory of achievement motivation. Here, achievement-oriented behaviour was seen as a result of conflict between approach and avoidance tendencies. Every achievement-related action was seen to have the possibility of success or failure attached to it. The strengths of the anticipated emotions of pride in success or shame in failure determine whether an individual will approach or avoid achievement. The achievement motivation theory viewed the person as totally rational, aware of all
expectancies associated with all choices, and, as a result, making a choice to maximise personal satisfaction.

Dörnyei (2001a), in tracing of the development of research in motivation in the twentieth century, pointed to the fact that motivation was viewed as being driven by human instincts in the first half of the century. These instincts, or drives, were often subconscious or repressed. Such a view of motivation was most notably expressed by Sigmund Freud.

By the middle of the twentieth century, behaviourist psychology dominated theories about motivation, with the focus being on stimuli and responses, and how the interplay between them results in habit formation. These theories were known as conditioning theories, which were superseded in the 1960s by humanistic psychology. Personal growth and developing capacities people inherit were seen as the principal motivators in peoples’ lives, as was demonstrated by Maslow in his hierarchy of needs (1970, 1972, 1973, 1987). Maslow viewed motivation in cognitive terms, believing that, in order to be motivated, an individual had to satisfy a hierarchy of needs, both physical (air, water, food) and community (security, identity and self-esteem) in order for self-actualisation, or fulfilment, to occur. The lower-level needs in the hierarchy, which are physiological, need to be satisfied before the higher-level needs.

Ausubel (1968) also saw motivation in terms of a cognitive perspective, with the individual at the centre of the learning process, exercising a degree of choice as to goals and effort expended in achieving those goals. The social milieu is involved, as well as
individual choices (Gardner, 1985; Maslow, 1970; Williams & Burden, 1997). For my study, theoretically framing motivation in a cognitive manner seems to have particular relevance, as the social milieu may have an impact on motivation. This takes into consideration such factors as the individual’s attitudes, and acknowledges that the individuals’ perception of events influence their behaviour (see 2.3.3), which is in line with more recent approaches in the psychology of motivation (Dörnyei, 2001a; Jernigan, 2004; Pintrich et al. 1993).

2.2 The industrial psychology approach

As the psychological literature contains many competing definitions of motivation, I found that industrial psychology was an area where the succinct descriptions to be found could be usefully applied to the classroom context. This was reinforced by Gray (2003), who recommended reading business management literature on motivation for practical EFL classroom applications. Studies of industrial psychology by researchers such as Blum and Naylor (1968) provide a link with Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, as they also define motivation in terms of needs, believing that a state of imbalance motivates an individual to fill the void left by unfulfilled needs.

A later study on motivation in the workplace (Lawler, 1973) also recognised that satisfaction of needs leads to performance. Management was seen as having a role in influencing behaviour, as being able to influence the motivation of employees in the workplace means being able to effectively manage organisations. A similar theme is echoed in an investigation of theories and principles of motivation by Beck (2000), who
points to Herzberg’s 1968 two-factor theory of motivation in the workplace, suggesting that people want more from their jobs than pay. Factors such as recognition and the pleasure derived from social interaction are also important. Dissatisfaction occurs when some of these elements are not present, resulting in lower performance. However, external incentives alone are not motivators. This represents a relatively early attempt in industrial psychology to distinguish between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. For second language teaching, the implications are that task achievement alone is not sufficient, as teachers’ recognition that the learner has performed well and providing continuous feedback can also affect motivation.

### 2.3 Motivation in pedagogical literature

Motivation has been defined in the pedagogical literature on SLA as the learner’s orientation towards the goal of learning a second language. Those following this definition believed that the educational environment should be emphasised more than the sociocultural one, when researching motivation (Crookes and Schmidt, 1991:471). Until recently, relatively few studies existed which take into account how the sociocultural context might affect motivation in the classroom, when learning English as a foreign language is a requirement. However, some recent studies which pertain to the study of English as a foreign language in the Arabian Gulf context (Arneson, 2005; Costelloe, 2001; Mynard, 2003, 2004; Semmar, 2006), suggest that a more social psychological approach may be called for (see 2.3.1).

A social-psychological approach places emphasis on attitudes towards the target
language community. Gardner and Lambert have been most influential in this area (Gardner, 1979, 1980, 1983, 1985, 1988; Gardner, Clément, Smythe & Smythe, 1979; Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Lambert, 1967, 1979), as their work has informed most subsequent studies.

2.3.1 The social-psychological approach


One is shifting in attitudes when learning a language, which can result in confusion about one’s personal identity (Lambert, 1979). This may sometimes cause feelings of inadequacy, which can result in a counter-reaction, by denying the accepted image of one’s social group. This can lead to a change in the status and attractiveness of the two ethno-linguistic societal groups. Confusion about one’s identity can lead to a rejection of the target language group, which has repercussions for successful second language acquisition and motivation to acquire a second language. In a subsequent article in
1980, Lambert found that parental attitudes can be passed on to children, which means that, even after spending a number of years in the school system, students may perceive second language acquisition as a double-edged threat, both to their personal and cultural identity. This could in turn lead to distrust and suspicion of the target language and its speakers. Pool (1979), who, like Lambert, was also concerned with bilingualism in Canada, surmises that language is a stronger correlate to identity than religion or ancestry. In a study which could also pertain to the Arabian Gulf context, he found that identity can significantly bear on the degree of competence in a second language, a view echoed more recently by many other researchers (Billig, 1995; Castells, 1997; Norton, 1997, 2000; Norton & Toohey, 2001, 2002; Pavlenko, 2001, 2002, 2003; Rampton, 1995; Yihong et al., 2005).

Gardner (1979) similarly believes that language is a representation of culture. He argues convincingly that a second language in a school situation is not only an “educational phenomenon”, but must also be seen as the imposition of parts of another culture on students. Second language acquisition, therefore, if seen as a process of an individual from one ethno-linguistic group adopting characteristics of a second ethno-linguistic group, pertains to the domain of social psychology:

“It (second language acquisition) not only involves individuals and groups, but also language, culture, and intergroup interaction.” (Gardner, 1979:194).

While Gardner states that SLA always implies some cultural change, a study by Taylor, Meynard and Rhéault (1977), found that in order to become more competent in speaking English, foreign language learners not only need more contact with English
speakers but also need to feel that their own cultural identity is not threatened. Learner and instructional characteristics are seen as functioning hand-in-hand with the sociocultural environment in which a second language learning programme operates. The ability to communicate fully in a second language depends on the degree of non-ethnocentrism of the learner (Tucker & Lambert, 1973:246), as a successful learner must develop “an awareness of and sensitivity toward the values and traditions of the people whose language is being studied.” (cited in Baxter 1983:291). Contact with the “majority group” (Taylor, Meynard and Rhéault, 1977:117) can be perceived as a threat to the learners’ own identity. If contact with the majority group is not seen as threatening by the learners, successful language acquisition ensues.

For successful language acquisition to occur, learners hope to have a return on their investment in learning a language. This could mean, for example, more pay, a promotion or better grades. Such an investment may change over time, as it is not static. Financial conditions, power relationships and notions of identity may change. A learner’s motivation to speak depends on other investments that may conflict with the desire to speak:

“investments that are intimately connected to the ongoing production of the learners’ identity and their desires for the future” (Norton, 2000:120).

Norton (2000) notes that when people speak, they are not only communicating a message and trying to make themselves understood, but also reorganising a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. This echoes Weiner (1992), who, like Norton, believes that if one’s views of oneself and one’s experiences appear to be contradictory, then forces will be initiated either to change one’s self-perception or to
minimise the experience that has occurred.

An attempt by Gardner to link pedagogical and psychological literature resulted in the socio-educational model (1982), which looked at features of SLA in a structured classroom environment. This model was subsequently revised in 1985 and more recently in 2001, where Gardner acknowledges the limitations of earlier models, as criticised by Crookes and Schmidt (1991), who questioned the reliance on the relatively stable motivational attributes derived from social psychology. They made the point that these motivational attributes were not the same as those understood by classroom practitioners.

Therefore, Gardner’s 2001 socio-educational model comprises four sections:

- **External influences** – for example, social and personal variables.
- **Individual differences** – integrativeness and attitudes towards the learning situation.
  
  A motivated learner will exhibit effort to learn the language, desire to succeed and enjoyment of learning the language.

- **Language Acquisition Contexts** – formal (classroom) and informal (outside the classroom) language learning contexts lead to linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes.

- **Outcomes** – linguistic outcomes deal with areas of language proficiency, such as vocabulary, grammar, etc. Non-linguistic outcomes may include attitudes, anxiety and motivation.

Occasionally linguistic outcomes may not only include a lack of SLA proficiency, but
also a corresponding lack of proficiency in the learner’s first language.

2.3.1.1 Semilingualism

Learners’ social identity has been held to be complex (Tajfel, 1974). Ellis (1994: 207) believes that ethnic identity is an important element of language acquisition, and considers that in some cases a low level of success in second language acquisition may lead to semilingualism, defined as a lack of native-speaker competence in either of the speaker's languages (Cummins, 1976, 1979a, 1979b, 1981, 1994; Cunningham-Andersson & Andersson, 2004; Hansegård, 1968; MacSwan, 1999, 2000; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981), caused by the interruption of the development of the mother tongue through language shift. Data analysis in this study indicates fear that semilingualism currently prevails in the Gulf, which will be explored in Chapter 7. There may be a power struggle among some learners to affirm their individualism and ethnic identity when learning a second language. Demotivation may ultimately occur due to loss of face caused by cultural misunderstandings (Choi & Choi, 1994; Lee, 1994; Patai, 1983; Suh, 1996).

The conceptual notion of semilingualism has come under fire from many researchers (Brent-Palmer 1979; Edelsky et al., 1983; Genesee, 1984; Martin-Jones and Romaine 1986; MacSwan, 2000; Spolsky, 1984; Stroud 1978; Troike, 1984), but continues to inform discussions on moral panic (Thompson, 1998; Johnson, 1999). A moral panic occurs when there are “attempts to redraw moral boundaries during periods where societies are undergoing stress, change and/or crisis of identity” (Johnson, 1999: 6).
2.3.2 Motivation as a goal-seeking act

Williams and Burden (1997:120) do not appear to regard the macro-context as a central motivational factor, instead viewing motivation as a state of “cognitive arousal” which provokes a “decision to act”, as a result of which there is “sustained intellectual and/or physical effort” so that the person can achieve some “previously set goal”. Ames and Ames (1989) see motivation as the impetus to create and sustain intentions and goal-seeking acts (also Heckhausen, 1991; Ngeow, 1998). This follows on from earlier studies by Gardner and Lambert (see 2.3.5). If the learner sees that what is being learnt is meaningful, then motivation to learn the language will increase.

Dörnyei and Otto (1998) consider motivation to be a process where a student goes through various phases of motivation when learning a foreign language.

“Students constantly evaluate how well they are doing in terms of approaching the desired outcome, and if they feel that their action is conducive to reaching their outcome they experience a feeling of success, which then provides further motivation.” (Dörnyei & Otto, 1998:58).

This implies that motivation can be generated when the learner has a large element of choice in terms of selection of task. A process-oriented approach (Dörnyei 2001) suggests that motivation can be generated, sustained and reflected upon. This has implications for the teacher, as research can be more classroom-based, which might lead to a narrowing of the gap between theory and practice.

Therefore, it appears that the sources of motivation may include, among other things the importance society places on the importance of learning a foreign language, significant
others such as family and friends, the teacher’s attitude towards the learning process and the method, as teachers and students need confidence in the learning method if successful acquisition is to take place (Harmer, 2001:53). It follows from the above that motivation involves the reason people choose to do something, application to the task at hand and the length of time they are willing to spend on a specified task. These will ultimately determine a learner’s success or failure. Motivation is thus a complex construct.

2.3.3 Learning as a social undertaking

As previously stated, it seems that in current research, the cognitive approach is gaining recognition. A learner’s attitudes, beliefs and understanding of events exert a great deal of influence on learner behaviour, as a learner has to process all of these in a way that makes sense, through a process of interpretation. This assumes that the learning of a language is a social activity (Allwright, 1984; Miller, 2003), inextricably linked with culture (Block, 2003; Campbell, 2000; Gardner, 1985, 2001; Kharbat, 2002; Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001; Norton, 2000). Some research since the 1960s has dealt with students’ attitudes towards the second language (L2), L2 speakers and L2 culture, and how these attitudes affect both desire to learn a second/foreign language and achievement in learning another language. Thus one tradition in SLA puts emphasis on the social context of language learning. However, the emphasis on the social context, or social-psychological approach, has had many detractors. These alternative viewpoints will be discussed in the following section.
2.3.4 Criticisms of the social-psychological approach

Crookes and Schmidt (1991:470) have perceived the social-psychological approach as somewhat limiting, claiming that too much emphasis has been placed on attitudes and identification with the target language community, which is why much research on motivation has been inconclusive. They favour intrinsic motivation, where there is no reward except the activity itself, as opposed to extrinsic motivation, where there is an external reward for successful learning, also suggesting that researchers examine the effects of student self-perceptions and materials/syllabus design, in order to improve classroom practice. Gardner and Tremblay (1994) contradict the view of Crookes and Schmidt, believing that the socio-educational model has been misrepresented, which they attribute to different conceptualisations of motivational constructs in various studies.

Much criticism has been levelled at the studies of Gardner and Lambert (1972) and Gardner and Smythe (1974) studies, which examined the effect of aptitude variables and attitudinal/motivational variables on success in SLA. Even though both types of variables were found to play an important role in successful second language learning, some studies (Chapelle & Roberts, 1986; Oyama, 1978; Purcell & Sutter, 1980; Schumann, 1978b; Strong, 1984) found contradictory results when the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB, Gardner, Clément, Smythe & Smythe, 1979) was used. The AMTB was developed to measure the number of attributes associated with second language learning. Five categories were developed: motivation; attitudes towards the target language group; attitudes towards the learning situation; language
anxiety and other attributes.

It was Gardner (1979) who developed Lambert’s (1974) work on additive and subtractive bilingualism, by suggesting a link between integrative motivation and additive bilingualism, and between instrumental motivation and subtractive bilingualism. This essentially meant that students were successful or otherwise in learning French in Canada according to whether or not they wished to become part of French culture. This was subsequently revised by Gardner in 1982 and 1985, and has since become known as the socio-educational model. Here, Gardner proposed the concept of reciprocal causation, which means that motivation influences language achievement, and language achievement, as well as experiences in formal and informal language contexts, influences attitudes and motivation (Bernaus et al., 2004; Dörnyei, 2001a, 2001b; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003).

Dörnyei (1990) initially disagrees that learner attitudes towards the target language community have a bearing on motivation:

“…foreign language learners often have not had enough contact with the target language community to form attitudes about them.” (Dörnyei 1990:69).

Although it is clear that instrumental motives contribute to foreign language learning motivation (Shaw, 1981), the situation as it exists in the classroom in Oman and the UAE would appear to refute the suggestion by Dörnyei that sustained contact is required with the target language community before attitudes can be formed about the people in that community. Dörnyei mainly speaks about foreign language learners in the U.K, who are very different to English language learners in the Arabian Gulf. As
the West in general, and the U.S. in particular, are highly visible in the region, it would be virtually impossible for any group of learners not to have had the opportunity to have formed judgements about the target language community.

In a subsequent article in 1998, Dörnyei acknowledges a “temporal organisation” of motivation, stating that it involves various processes over time, with the possibility of things happening to weaken or change motivational processes as they happen in time. Thus, in common with Williams (1994), and also echoing Taylor et al (1977) and Norton (2000) language learning is viewed as pertaining to the wider social and cultural domain (see 2.3.1):

“Language, after all, belongs to a person’s whole social being: it is part of one’s identity, and is used to convey this identity to other people. The learning of a foreign language involves far more than simply learning skills, or a system of rules, or a grammar; it involves an alteration in self-image, the adoption of new social and cultural behaviours and ways of being, and therefore has a significant impact on the social nature of the learner.” (Dörnyei, 1998a:131)

In a subsequent 2001 book on motivational strategies in the classroom, Dörnyei further elaborated on the link between language and culture, drawing on his own experience of learning the Russian language in school in Hungary, to suggest that if learners do not like the target language community, language learning will not be a successful enterprise (Dörnyei, Csizér & Németh, 2006). For the purposes of my study, this suggests a dawning of awareness that the macro-context also has a role to play, although a dearth of literature dealing with this context intimates that much research needs to be carried out in this field.

2.3.5 Instrumental V Integrative Motivation/Orientation
Studies by Gardner and Lambert (1959, 1971) introduced the concepts of integrative and instrumental dimensions of motivation, which have since been widely used in motivational research. Generally speaking, learners who want to learn the L2 for instrumental reasons do so for a specific reason, such as achieving good grades or finding suitable employment, whereas those who have integrative reasons for learning a language have a desire to become part of a particular community.

In 1985, Gardner updated his theory of integrative motivation to include three components: integrative orientation, integrativeness and integrative motivation/motive. In this conception of the theory, orientation involves the reason for learning a foreign language, integrativeness reflects interest in language learning and attitudes towards the L2 community, and the integrative motive comprises attitudinal and goal-directed variables.

The instrumental dimension of motivation was held by Gardner (1985) to be a type of orientation and therefore not as important as integrative motivation. Originally integrative motivation was held to be far more relevant than the instrumental dimension (Clément, 1980; Gardner, 1985; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991; MacIntyre et al., 1998; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003; Schumann, 1986).

Higher language proficiency will be shown by learners who combine both linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes (Ellis, 1997). Within this model, motivation is seen to be composed of effort, desire and affect, to the exclusion to a large degree of the wider
context (Norris-Holt, 2001). Effort is defined as time spent studying the language, desire as the level of want the learner exhibits in order to become proficient in the language, and affect as the learner’s emotional reactions with regard to language study (Ellis, 1997; Norris-Holt, 2001). The integrative dimension does not seem to take into account factors outside the classroom that may have a bearing on the degree of motivation exhibited. Integrative motivation is shown by learners who often wish to become bilingual and bicultural, or, at the very least, who like the people who speak the language and also like their culture (Norris-Holt, 2001). The emphasis on attitudes towards the target language community has proved somewhat limiting for some researchers, particularly those outside a Canadian context. Dörnyei and Csizér (2002) point out in a Hungarian study that the original concept of integrative motivation does not take into account how English is used by learners who wish to participate in globalisation.

The traditional approach to integrative motivation also appears not to take into consideration that in many language learning situations, particularly in the Middle East, there is a compulsory requirement to learn the language. This will be discussed in Chapter 7. Many studies do not seem to focus on the issue of power relations, which require learners to study English regardless of desire and affect. This reduces the integrative dimension of motivation by placing an increased reliance on the teacher and the materials.

In such situations, instrumental motivation often happens where little social integration of the learner into the target language community occurs or is desired. This would seem
to be borne out by Costelloe’s 2001 study of Omani learners in a teacher-training college. These learners often showed indifference or antagonism towards Western culture, but male learners in particular showed short-term instrumental motivation (the desire to get passing grades) towards the acquisition of English as a second language. Even though those with instrumental motivation passed the course, it was those who showed signs of integrative motivation (usually the female students in the same class) who consistently achieved higher grades. This finding would seem to tally with the research by Gardner and Lambert, who view integrative motivation as being of more importance in a formal learning environment.

The importance of instrumental motivation is now being more widely acknowledged (Dörnyei, 1990; Ghengesh, 2005; Kyriacou & Benmansour, 1997; McGroarty, 1996; Shaaban & Gaith, 2000; Warden & Lin, 2000), particularly outside Canada (Dörnyei, Csizér & Németh, 2006). Many researchers outside a Canadian environment (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Schumann, 1978b, 1986) refer to instrumental motivation, not orientation, particularly in Arab and Asian cultures (Azzenoud, 2003; Costelloe, 2001; Kyriacou & Benmansour, 1997; Ghengesh, 2005; Semmar, 2006). As Gardner (2001:1) acknowledged, the integrative and instrumental dimensions of motivation would be interpreted somewhat differently by different researchers.

In a motivational study of ninety first year students at a Japanese university who were enrolled on a compulsory English course as part of their studies (Berwick & Ross, 1989), it was noted that students’ instrumental motivation (to pass the exam for entrance to the university entrance) declined upon entry to university. However, after
150 hours of classroom instruction, using a variety of techniques, their levels of motivation increased. One reason could have been an increase in the number of hours of instruction, which may have resulted in higher levels of acquisition (Nida, 1957; Tragrant & Muñoz, 2000). Berwick and Ross also found that the students’ perceptions of the English language and English-speaking cultures underwent a significant change when an exchange programme with a sister American university was embarked upon, involving increased contact with Americans and American culture.

However, some studies hold that increased contact with native English speakers brings about a marked weakening in learners’ positive attitudes towards learning English. For example, Dörnyei, Csizér and Németh, who conducted a longitudinal attitude/motivation survey in Hungary in 1993, 1999 and 2004, found that:

“up to a certain point increased contact promotes language attitudes and motivated language learning behaviours, whereas if the contact exceeds a certain threshold level, it seems to ‘backfire’ and work against positive intercultural relations.” (Dörnyei, Csizér and Németh, 2006:148).

It seems therefore that there is no assurance that if someone displays strong initial integrative motivation, this will be maintained and result in successful second language acquisition, or that if such motivation does not exist, the learner will be unsuccessful (Oller, Hudson, & Liu, 1977). This in turn implies that the psychological barriers to learning a language are many and varied. Sometimes teachers of a different culture (Western) can be directly or indirectly responsible for this, and have an effect on the learners’ motivation as a result.

### 2.3.6 The role of the teacher
The teacher’s role is usually seen as part of the social context. The relationship between learners and teachers has a key role to play in the learners' academic performance (Galguaera, 1998; Shavelson & Stern, 1981; Woods, 1996). However, the ability of teachers to motivate learners can be influenced by dissimilarity between learner and teacher backgrounds (Barnhardt, 1982), which can manifest itself in teaching strategies used in the classroom.

### 2.3.6.1 Teaching strategies

Pedagogical styles employed in the classroom are often influenced by the background of the teacher. This seems to be borne out by some classroom studies, amongst them a study conducted by Canagarajah (1993) of ESL classrooms in Sri Lanka. Canagarajah found that the learners of English as a second language felt disassociated from the English language and also the culture of English-speaking countries. Part of the reason for this was what they perceived as bias by Western teachers towards materials which did not reflect Sri Lankan culture. It was also shown that the learners exhibited a marked preference towards rote memorization, seemingly because it was a practice which allowed them to maintain an element of detachment from the language and also the culture. In another study which appears to corroborate the vital role the teacher has to play, McGinnis (1994), found that communication between teacher and learners was hindered by differing views held by both parties as to what constitutes appropriate pedagogical practice. This has implications for the Arabian Gulf, as expectations on the part of teachers and learners are often very different, in a context where English
language teachers in higher education institutions are overwhelmingly Western.

It follows that differences between the cultures of teachers and learners may affect learner motivation and successful second language acquisition, particularly if the teacher is seen as a transmitter of another culture. Pajares (1992) believes that teachers’ values are reflected in their teaching methodology, which may differ substantially from learners’ previous educational experiences. An example which demonstrates the relationship between teachers’ values and pedagogical practice is the Durham project (Byram et al., 1991). A multitude of classroom observations and interviews with teachers and students took place. The researchers found that the cultural beliefs of teachers had a definite impact on their teaching styles (see also Andrews, 1999; Årva & Medgyes, 2000; Cho, 1990; Tsui, 2003). Language teaching in this instance was believed by a majority of respondents to be enhanced by the teaching of culture, through the use of devices such as cultural anecdotes. This appears to suggest that in some teaching environments learning can be enriched when the learners view teachers as a cultural source, but it should be pointed out that this study concerned the teaching of foreign languages, where there is usually a conscious choice on the part of the learner to pursue language learning. In the Gulf, English is a subject learners have to study, regardless of personal choice.

Canning and Bornstein (2001), in an article on EFL courses in the Arab world, remark that the learning environment is “teacher-driven”, with educational approaches remaining traditional. However, in most colleges and universities, communicative teaching styles are employed by teachers, to the exclusion of rote learning styles.
traditionally employed by most learners. Different education systems to the ones teachers have been used to do not appear to be taken into account by the use of pedagogical styles which are seen as universally applicable in every classroom environment (Schleppegrell, 1997). This will inevitably have an effect on the success of the course, and, by extension, on motivation.

Other researchers have also discussed at length the native/non-native speaker teacher factor (Braine, 1998; Cook, 1999; Crystal, 1996; Davies, 2003; Ellis, 2002; Leech, 1994; Medgyes, 1994; Phillipson, 1992; Widdowson, 1997); highlighting the fundamental role the teacher has to play in promoting and sustaining motivation. Clément, Dörnyei and Noels (1994) found that students will be more involved in learning and motivated to learn a foreign language if a good classroom atmosphere is promoted. Chambers (1999), in a study over a four year period on motivational and attitudinal perspectives of secondary pupils, aged eleven to eighteen, learning foreign languages in Leeds, U.K. and Kiel, Germany, found that in terms of the in-school experience, the teacher is the most influential factor if the student is to sustain motivation. The study also showed there is a marked decrease in motivation as students get older.

The pupils in Chambers’ study said that the teacher, the textbook, the equipment and teacher-made materials contributed to a positive learning experience and made them more motivated. Again, the teacher is seen to have a pivotal role to play in the fostering of motivation amongst learners. Chambers (2000:72) suggests that for this to happen, teachers need to be provided with in-service training, resources, time, support and
technicians. This would in turn recognise that not only does the teacher have a role to play in assisting with learner motivation, but also that the teacher’s own motivation is vital for what happens in the classroom (see also Azennoud, 2003; Candlin & Mercer, 2001; Clément, Dörnyei & Noels, 1994; Gray, 2003; Harmer 2001; Nakanishi, 1992).

What, then, can the teachers do to promote motivation? Perhaps a variety of instructional techniques taking into account teaching and learning styles would be beneficial, although this may not completely overcome reluctance at having to learn a language associated with a widely disliked power. As this comprises one of my channels of enquiry, it will be discussed in greater depth at a later stage. What appears likely from the above studies is that learners may exhibit a preference for instructors from the L1 language background, possibly because they have been through the same SLA process. This will be discussed in greater detail in the following section.

2.3.6.2 How learners perceive teachers from L1 and L2 backgrounds

Learner behaviour towards teachers may be influenced in part by cultural and social stereotypes (Galguera, 1998). This study illustrates how different nationalities and teachers from the target language group are accepted by learners. Galguera found some evidence of a marked learner preference for teachers from the same ethnic background as the students they teach. This contrasts with findings by Jernigan and Moore (1997) which revealed most students prefer native speaker teachers as they felt culture and language would not be altered through their own perspectives. A study conducted in the U.S. by Sergent et al. (1992) which dealt with attitudes towards students of Arab
descent in higher education found that negative attitudes prevailed among sectors of the predominantly white student population towards Arab students. Similar attitudes were evinced towards African American students in another study conducted in the same year by Balenger et al. It is reasonable to suppose, therefore, that some learners in an Arab educational setting might similarly hold negative attitudes towards teachers of a different ethnicity.

Han (2003), in a study of adult learners’ attitudes towards native English speaker teachers and Korean English teachers, found learners believed Korean teachers of English to be more concerned with their learning difficulties in English than native English speaker teachers, perhaps because they had been through the same SLA process. The implication was that some learners believe teachers from an L1 background to empathise with the difficulties in the learning process.

To summarise the above, it seems that learners perceive there are significant differences between teachers from L1 and L2 backgrounds. Some learners view teachers from their L1 background as possessing the attribute of empathy, due to a similar experience of second language acquisition. However, many learners also believe teachers from the same language background use more traditional approaches to teaching. Teachers from an L2 background are often viewed as using the language authentically and employing non-traditional pedagogical styles. However, their cultural beliefs may be seen to be at odds with those of learners, which may have implications for classroom learning.

What is essential to note is that the learning situation can raise or lower motivation, and
that means teachers have a vital role to play. However, the socio-educational model sees the teacher and the students’ backgrounds as secondary factors in language learning motivation. Nonetheless, the above-mentioned studies, conducted since the elaboration of the socio-educational model, suggest that differences in the cultural backgrounds of teachers and learners need to be taken into account in order to understand how culture influences teaching and learning.

### 2.3.7 Learning and Culture

Cultural difference in the classroom has been the focus of numerous studies (Atkinson, 1999; Brislin, 2000; Gumperz, 1986; Hofstede, 1980, 1986; Kim, 2001; Merry, 2005; Norton, 2000; Pennycook, 1989; Tang, 1999). Hofstede, in particular has shown how cultural differences that arise in the classroom can be related to the differences between the social positions of teachers and learners, differences in the relevance of the curriculum for the two societies, differences in the profiles of cognitive abilities between the populations from which the teacher and student are drawn and differences in expected patterns of teacher/student and student/teacher interaction (Hofstede 1986:303-307).

Another aspect of Hofstede’s work which is relevant in order to understand language learners’ motivation and to explain cultural differences in teaching and learning, concerns the elaboration of a four-dimensional model of cultural difference. The first dimension relates to individualism versus collectivism, also mentioned as a principle of culture by Atkinson (1999). In an individualist culture, which pertains in many Western
countries, the nuclear family is the basic family unit, and a person looks after him/herself. In contrast, however, the extended family is at the centre of a collectivist culture, where loyalty to the group makes for a more tightly integrated society. This is a feature of many Arab societies, and will be taken up when discussing the results of the data analysis. The implications for language teaching are significant:

“Furthermore, such articulated knowledge of who students are individually-culturally leads logically to the need to develop appropriate pedagogies – approaches to learning and teaching that dynamically respond to that knowledge. (Atkinson, 1999:643).

The second dimension of the model relates to the concept of power-distance, or the extent to which the less powerful people in a society accept inequality in power and consider it as normal. Such analysis is not usually found in pedagogical literature, with one notable exception being an article by Atkinson in 1999, who advocates a reassessment of the notion of culture in SLA, an area he believes has received scant attention from English language researchers. This will also be explored when discussing the results of the study.

Our understanding of motivation is broadened by the third dimension, the dimension of uncertainty avoidance. This refers to the extent to which people are made uncomfortable by situations they perceive to be unstructured or unclear. In the language learning classroom, acquisition may be impeded if learners are exposed to a new way of learning (a communicative approach, for example). The only way for learners to avoid such a feeling of lack of control is to maintain a belief in a certain code of behaviour, such as, for example, a withdrawal from participation. In practice, this may manifest itself to the teacher as a lack of motivation on the part of the learner. Motivated
behaviour is influenced by pressure applied by social groups to which people belong, and also by opinions and traditions which become part of the learners’ behavioural repertoire through contact with families, friends, educational institutions and the media, among others (Brislin, 1993, 2001; Gallois & Kallan, 1997; Gudykunst, 1994; Kim et al., 1994; Klopf, 1995; Smith & Bond, 1993; Triandis, 1995; Vernon, 1976).

It is also possible, of course, that a learner may accept the feasibility of different ways of thinking and doing things, but if a learner is not used to taking control of his or her learning, perhaps due to a general lack of exercise of power in that society, then confusion reigns due to different cultural frames of reference. How is the learner to make a new behaviour a part of his/her learning repertoire? Language planners, teachers and learners may all be using their own value systems to judge everyone else, while not even being aware of the ethnocentric nature of the process. On the part of the learner, a state of denial may occur, but what may sometimes be perceived as a lack of motivation could conceivably be the learner making sense of events in the only way known. Even for those learners who understand a little more about the differences between cultures, perhaps their way of reconciling such enormous differences is to perceive everything that is not part of their own culture as negative, and reinforcing their belief that everything about their own culture is positive. This illustrates that a more interdisciplinary approach leads to a greater understanding of the multi-faceted construct of motivation.

Hofstede’s work on uncertainty avoidance has been developed in a strand of enquiry on anomie or social uncertainty (de Jong, 1996:14), that occurs when the learner of a
second/foreign language encounters new cultural norms. Communities are usually aware of their achievements, and so may wish to defend them when they are perceived as being threatened from an outside agency. De Jong notes that linguistic communities share a code of behaviours, in addition to a code of language. Language teachers can thus help learners to understand that others may have different types of behavioural norms. However, if learners from collectivist cultures see that their identity is not being threatened by the goal of language learning, there may be little interference with successful second language acquisition. In such a situation, it may in fact be easy for them to learn as a result of choices made by others, such as policy makers or institutions (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999).

The fourth dimension of Hofstede’s Model of Cultural Difference refers to societies that are masculine or feminine. In a “masculine” culture, there is a concern to make the greatest possible distinction between roles for men and women. In contrast, there are relatively overlapping roles for men and women in “feminine” societies. Using this model, many Arab countries can be classified as countries of low individualisation, large power-distance, strong uncertainty avoidance and masculine.

Not everyone agrees with Hofstede, however. His cultural dimensions have been challenged by researchers such as McSweeney (2002), although his theory seems to be borne out by some subsequent studies (Hofstede, 2002; Kolman et al., 2003), including one that pertains to a Middle Eastern context (Ghosn, 2004). For language policy planners and teachers, the dilemma is how to reconcile the teaching of a foreign language, together with a foreign way of looking at the world, with teaching in an
educational environment which has its own, often very different, values. As Kramsch (1993) observes: “Language use is indissociable from the creation and transmission of culture.” In other words, language is culture and is a reflection of culture (Atkinson, 1999; Byram & Fleming, 1998; Jin & Cortazi, 1998; Parekh, 2000).

Brislin (2000:22) expands on Hofstede’s differentiation between individualist and collectivist cultures. He makes a distinction between high-context cultures, where the rules for social interaction and behaviour are known but not stated, and low-context cultures, where questions lead to negotiations. Many Arab cultures can therefore be said to be high-context cultures, which means that any challenge to accepted cultural norms may provoke an extreme reaction. This is to protect one’s sense of identity. Religious beliefs come to the fore where identity is concerned, as they help us “to accept the uncertainties we cannot defend ourselves against.” (Hofstede, 1991:130).

When investigating motivation and attitudes among second/foreign language learners in the Arabian Gulf, the role of religion in culture must be acknowledged (Canning & Bornstein, 2001; Merry, 2005). My search, however, has revealed that such studies are largely missing from motivational literature, possibly because of the difficulties involved in conducting such studies.

Even though the above-mentioned studies would seem to suggest the need for research in TESOL and applied linguistics into the link between the macro-context and language learning (Holliday, 1994, 1996), the fact remains that the context in which the classroom exists has not been dealt with in any detail. Studies pertaining to the link
between the classroom and the macro-context within the field of EFL/ESOL remain relatively few in number. This, in turn, suggests that theories and studies have not been widely disseminated to teacher trainers or teachers. Studies relevant to the particularities of the Arab context, which take the following three factors, namely; macro-context, motivation and specifically, power relations, into account, are also largely missing. It is this issue which I seek to address, as, particularly in the current political climate, a greater understanding of how Arab learners view the learning of English as a foreign language would contribute to knowledge of how the macro-context can affect motivation in the classroom. The role of power will be considered in the following section, as it forms part of the wider cultural and socio-political realm, influencing language attitudes in a part of the world that is still actively involved in nation building.

2.3.8 The role of power

Power in social institutions was detailed by Foucault (1980, 1982), who believed power was involved in all socio-cultural phenomena. Power was seen as being subjective in nature, influencing individuals and their identities. Conflicting views of the world constitute the make-up of an individual’s personality. Foucault’s analysis of how we have become what we are and isolating the possibility of being otherwise than we are was conducted along three axes, namely, knowledge (reflection on oneself and others), power (action on the action of others) and ethics (action on the actions of oneself) (Ashenden & Owen, 1999; Foucault, 1984). In Foucault’s work, ethics are seen as the degree of power the self exercises over itself. He draws attention to the degree which
people are subject to constraints and cannot change those constraints.

By analysing institutions such as hospitals and schools, Foucault shows how power is exercised through discourse to control social groupings and shape attitudes. Discourse, then, can restrict alternative ways of thinking, making it a tool to enforce discipline and comply with the wishes of the ruling elite (Giddens, 2001). The power of any social system can only exist because of the actions of human beings. Even when the intention of a state or an institution is benevolent, the result may actually be a disempowerment of the clients (White, 1991).

In a study on modernity and self-identity, Giddens (1997) states that motives to act stem from anxiety. Motives are tied to emotions, which are in turn linked to early relations of trust. Such trust is engendered by the setting up of bonds of dependence with other people, beginning with the ties developed with caretakers in the family and progressing to ties developed with caretakers in schools (Enzle, 1980; Giddens, 1997). Power relationships are evident here, as what people think is reality is actually socially constructed.

“Human motivation rarely actualizes itself in behaviour except in relation to the situation and to other people.” (Frager, Fadiman, McReynolds & Cox, 1987).

Any study of motivation, therefore, needs to take into account the social construction of reality, particularly as it pertains to culture and the socio-political environment. For example, one wonders what the effect of the anti-French discourse in the U.K. tabloid press may be having on motivation to acquire French among sectors of the school population. Similarly, the presentation of U.S. and U.K. political action in the Arabic-
speaking world must be considered in any study of English acquisition in the area.

Notwithstanding, few pedagogical sources on motivation in foreign language learning have dealt with the concept of power, with one notable exception being a work by St. Clair (1982), who saw a link between power and language attitudes. In drawing structural parallels between language and culture, he noted that power not only defines the language of a nation, but also the social reality of a nation. The establishment becomes legitimised through its exercise of power; therefore language and culture are elements of control, with those who don’t adhere to the prevailing language, either a foreign language or the dominant state language, being labelled as deviant. Such linguistic control can be threatened by contact with other influences. To preserve security in the only way possible, there needs to be an “outgroup enemy” (Billig, 1976:80), to vent anger and aggression against.

In a situation where change is actually desired, usually by those in power, those individuals who want cultural change are in effect arguing for their concept of a system of values to be legitimised and the existing system to be re-evaluated. This has an impact on the language learning situation. There are two possibilities. First, language learners can be powerless in some societies, with no access to the system of power which is in the hands of the speakers of the language to be learnt (Tollefson, 1991). They may want their values to be acknowledged, and may clash with the enforcers of the power system, namely administrators and teachers. Secondly, a society’s social history is directly related to its language attitudes, and, as a result, impacts upon motivation to acquire a second or foreign language.
The link between power and language has been discussed in a number of works (Bourdieu, 1991, 2000; Canagarajah, 1999; Fairclough, 1989; Gal & Woolard 2001; Naysmith, 1987; Phillipson, 1992; Tollefson, 1991, 1995, 2002; Wright, 2000, 2004). When political legitimacy derives from the support of the electorate rather than through the exercise of force the question of language comes to the fore. All emergent democracies have laid great stress on the language practices of citizens, and have encouraged language convergence.

Therefore, the question of language and power is key in nation building, in colonial situations and also in postcolonial settings. Language policy has always been an important element of colonial policy and remains a key factor of postcolonial societies (Pennycook, 1998; Phillipson, 1992). Colonial language policy continues to provide “maintenance of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages in the post-colonial age” (Phillipson, 1992:123). Chapter 3 explores postcolonialism in the Gulf in greater detail, as postcolonial language policy forms part of the discussion in Chapter 7.

Changing language policy allows those in power to achieve their goals. Nationalism, with its emphasis on one single exclusive identity, has developed with democracy and sovereignty of the people, and has been a force for language shift. Groups on the periphery have been encouraged (or forced) to adopt the language of the centre. However, this can create the potential for a system to exclude some of its citizens (Bourdieu, 1991; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 1990; Giroux, 1983; McLaren, 1994;
McNeil, 1988; Willis, 1981). Knowledge and power are closely linked:

\(\text{Knowledge is never neutral, it never exists in an empiricist, objective relationship to the real. Knowledge is power, and the circulation of knowledge is part of the social distribution of power} \) (Fiske, 1989: 149–150).

As Canagarajah (1999) similarly notes in a discussion on linguistic imperialism and language teaching:

“the English language has had a history of imposition for political and material reasons in most periphery communities, often in competition with native languages. It is still deeply implicated in struggles for dominance against other languages, with conflicting implications for the construction of identity, community, and culture of the local people.” (1999:56)

These studies on language and nationalism may be relevant for those seeking to understand foreign language learning in the Arabic-speaking world because the nation states of the area are relatively young and can be seen to be still engaged in the nation building process. By emphasising the importance of L2 education, governments may be accused of oppressive language policies and of ignoring local languages (Breidlid, 2005; Phillipson, 1992).

In another attempt to broaden our understanding of how power informs pedagogy, Lightbown and Spada (1993) examine how the power structure must be taken into account when investigating the role of motivation in language learning. They state it is not possible to directly observe and measure qualities such as aptitude and motivation. Learners who are successful may be highly motivated, but that is not to say that one caused the other.
Motivation can therefore be defined in terms of communicative needs and learners’ attitudes towards the target language community.

“One factor which often affects motivation is the social dynamic or power relationship between the languages.” (Lightbown & Spada, 1992:40)

Languages exist in social contexts. Lightbown’s and Spada’s point is that members of a minority group may have different attitudes when learning the language of a majority group than those of majority group members learning a minority language. This is a point also echoed by MacIntyre and Gardner (1991), who indicated that the 1990s saw the beginning of some articles and studies which recognised the importance of power as a defining factor in motivation. Learning a second language is not always a focal point of enjoyment – for many learners, it is a case for resentment. External pressure may be why many learners have to learn English, but if there is little internal motivation, negative attitudes will prevail.

An individual’s motivation is rooted in his/her social surroundings, as Norton (2000) noted during her two-year study of adult immigrant women in Canada. Social interactions, coupled with power differentials, involve the learner constructing identity. This is inevitably linked to the distribution of resources in society, because it is access to resources that will lead to the articulation of a person’s needs. Power is therefore a concept which is social, as it relates to individuals and communities.

Power differentials have traditionally received scant attention from SLA researchers, but this appears to be changing, partly due to a broad, postmodernist paradigm which brings together discourse, difference, identity and power (Atkinson, 1999:627).
However, the fact remains that my search of the literature on motivation has to date yielded very little that pertains to either the Emirati or the Omani situation.

From a reading of the above literature, it is clear that in a democracy, language is power, allowing participation and debate. In other words, language replaces force. A lot of work has been conducted on this in the context of nation building, post-colonial societies and globalisation. It is the postcolonial dimension in particular which I seek to address, as I perceive there is a link between power and language, which has a significant impact on learners’ motivation to acquire a foreign language. My belief is that motivation in the classroom depends to a large extent on learners’ perceptions of events in the wider world, as their interpretation of events shapes their dealings with their teachers and their approach to learning English as a foreign language. This involves viewing the participants as a product of their particular history (Boas, 1887, 1940; Bunzl, 1996), bringing together an exploration of how historical and present-day forces have helped shape the views of the participants towards learning the English language.

2.4 Significance of the literature for this study

To summarise, this review of the literature was outlined in three sections. Section 2.1 provided some definitions of motivation and provided an overview of the development of the study of motivation over the last hundred or so years. Section 2.2 looked at how industrial psychology deepens our understanding of what constitutes motivation, as much research has been conducted in this area. Section 2.3 examined
the role of motivational factors in pedagogical literature, with reference to how studies in psychology, culture and power have all contributed towards our understanding of the multiple facets of motivation. Methodological approaches used in previous studies were not discussed in this review, as they are examined in Chapter 5. Taken together, this literature review and the methodological literature review in Chapter 5 will bring social psychological and constructivist frameworks together, in order to understand why it is important to understand the background of the learners when considering the design of this study.

Current research appears to lack a more comprehensive examination of integrative motivation theory. Integrative motivation has traditionally been held to encompass national groups speaking national languages. How does this change with an international lingua franca whose mother tongue speakers are smaller in number than those for whom it is an auxiliary language? This is an area I seek to explore more fully.

The following chapter will outline the background context of the study, and will be followed by a discussion of the link between the perceived problem and the context.
3.0 Overview

The purpose of this background chapter is to provide some contextual information about the two countries where the study takes place, Oman and the United Arab Emirates. It also identifies the cultural considerations of the relationship between these two countries and the West, specifically the United States and Britain. A brief overview of the role of Islam is also given in order to provide enriched contextual information which is relevant to the research undertaken.

3.1 Oman background

Oman has a total land area of 309,500 sq. km and a population of approximately two and a half million people, with an additional 500,000 or so foreign workers. These workers are fast being replaced by Omanis, as a result of a policy of Omanisation. As Oman does not produce as much oil as many other countries in the region, its international importance lies in its strategic location, deriving from its control of the southern part of the Strait of Hormuz, a corridor through which much of the world’s oil traverses. The other half of the Strait is controlled by Iran, Oman’s neighbour to the north (see Figure i. p.52). This has resulted in a longstanding British interest in Oman, rooted in the historical British-Indian trade.

Oman has a long maritime tradition. It was Ahmad bin Majid, an Omani, who assisted the Portuguese navigator, Vasco da Gama, in navigating to India via the Cape of Good Hope. Contact with the Portuguese subsequently led to the Portuguese occupation of
Muscat from 1507 to 1639, when they were expelled from Oman. Many Portuguese ships were captured, which were used by Oman to form the basis of its navy and to build an empire of its own on the east African coast, on the island of Zanzibar. Zanzibar became an Omani colony in 1730, which meant that Oman was the only non-European colonising power in Africa. Oman became wealthy, due in large part to its thriving slave trade.

Figure (i) Map of Oman

Imperial policy led to skirmishes with Britain because of clashes on the Indian Ocean between British and Omani vessels. Such conflict sowed the seeds of the first known formal accord between Britain and Oman in 1645, when the British East India Company was granted trading rights in the port of Sohar, north-west of Muscat. Treaties in 1646 and 1659 provided the British with a trade monopoly with Oman (Beasant, 2002; Hourani, 2002).
The Persians briefly occupied Oman from 1737 to 1744, but for the most part Oman was the colonising power in the region. In 1744 the Al BuSaid dynasty, which rules Oman to this day, came to power (Cleveland, 2000). A treaty between Britain and Oman was signed in 1798, whereby Oman pledged to deny French or Dutch ships entry to its ports and buying by these countries. The French were thus effectively prevented from extending their influence beyond Egypt, where the occupying Napoleonic forces threatened Britain’s trade routes with India. This treaty paved the way for the establishment of a permanent Resident British Political agent in Oman in 1800 (Beasant, 2000). Mansfield (1992) notes that this was the point from which Britain exerted significant influence over Oman’s internal affairs. Even though Oman was an independent state, the sultan’s forces were commanded by British forces and administrative affairs were overseen by British civilians.

An 1861 proclamation by the British that Zanzibar and Oman were to be treated as two separate states meant, in effect, that Zanzibar became a British protectorate. The arrival upon the maritime scene of steamships, coupled with the abolition of slave trading in Europe in 1802, meant that Oman’s economy suffered. By the end of the nineteenth century, control of much of the interior was lost, reducing Oman to borrowing money from the British in order to protect its bases on the coast (Cleveland, 2000).

Sultan Faisal tried to improve Oman’s lot by entering negotiations with the French, but this inevitably led to a stern response from the British. Hourani (2002) notes that the
British were formalising their relations with the Gulf rulers in the years preceding the First World War, in order to prevent Russia, France and Germany from gaining any influence in this region. To this end, agreements were drawn up which effectively led to Britain assuming control of their transactions with the rest of the world. Where Oman was concerned, British assistance enabled the sultan to extend his control into parts of the interior, where there was a possibility of finding oil.

### 3.1.1 Discovery of oil

In the 1930s, most Gulf oil was to be found in Iran, but other sources were also becoming available. Before the outbreak of the Second World War, Saudi Arabia and the United States established the Arabian-American Oil Company, ARAMCO. One area they wished to explore was the Buraimi Oasis. In 1949, the rulers of Oman and the Sheikhdom of Abu Dhabi jointly administered Buraimi, a disputed area by both. At the request of both, Britain was involved in an arbitration process.

Shortly afterwards, in 1951, a bitter dispute broke out between Iran and BP (British Petroleum), which resulted in no production of Iranian oil for three years. A Western boycott of Iranian oil not only led to a severe economic downturn and political instability in Iran, but also led to oil companies in the region increasing production in Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Oil exploration was being conducted in other countries in the Gulf. On August 31st 1952, the Saudis occupied the Buraimi oasis, provided with assistance by ARAMCO. The Saudis requested that the American presence in Saudi Arabia intercede on their behalf with the British, so that the British would in turn
dissuade Sultan Said from a firm course of action.

It was not until the end of October 1955 that the Saudi occupation of Buraimi ceased, ended by the British-led Trucial Oman Scouts, with the assistance of some of the Sultan’s Armed Forces. The major oil companies in the region, both British and American, exercised immense power and the oil countries sought to counteract this by founding OPEC (Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries) in 1960. In 1964, Oman first began to produce oil itself commercially, although a further three years elapsed before exports began. Although Oman did not produce as much oil as other countries in the region, nonetheless, oil concession payments signalled the beginning of financial wealth for the country.

3.1.2 The accession of Sultan Qaboos

However, the wealth from oil revenues was not seen to trickle down to other areas in the economy. In 1965 a revolt broke out in the southern region of Dhofar, as Dhofaris wanted to overthrow the sultan, a task that was virtually impossible as long as the British backed his rule. As far back as 1960, the United Nations had formed a committee to investigate the situation in Oman, concluding that foreign intervention had given rise to an international problem (Curtis, 2003:278). This led to the passing of a 1965 UN resolution calling upon Britain to withdraw from Oman, as its presence was preventing the right of the Omanis to self-determination (Wilkinson, 1987).

It was not until 1970 that Sultan Said was overthrown, to be replaced by his son,
Sultan Qaboos, who had received a British education at Sandhurst Military Academy. Although the details are unclear, Mansfield (1992) points out that British involvement was certain, as the British held the key army posts. The new sultan changed the name “Muscat and Oman” to “The Sultanate of Oman”.

However, the accession of Sultan Qaboos did not end the rebellion in Dhofar. As the sultan had to pay the British the prevailing market price for the weapons they supplied, much of the oil revenues went towards suppressing the insurgency in Dhofar. Wanting to bring the situation to an end, and in defiance of Arab opinion, Sultan Qaboos suppressed the revolt with the assistance of four thousand of the Shah of Iran’s troops, a Jordanian task force and a few hundred British soldiers and airmen. A cessation of hostilities was only finally declared in 1982.

The greater part of this history (excepting the particulars surrounding the accession of Sultan Qaboos and what later transpired) is comprehensively featured in the Omani school curriculum. However, the entire history forms part of all Omanis’ cultural background and most would know these details. Recent history covered in the schools deals with the relationship of Oman with its neighbours.

3.1.3 Oman’s relationship with Arab states

Sultan Qaboos has chosen a somewhat different path to most Arab leaders. He supported Sadat’s 1979 peace treaty with Israel, unlike most other Arab states. He has not only kept many military links with the West, but was also responsible for Oman
establishing diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in 1986, the first Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member country to do so after Kuwait. Oman remained neutral during the Iran-Iraq war, although the other GCC states sided with Iraq. Furthermore, Oman refused to join OPEC (Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries), or even its Arab equivalent, OAPEC. However, Oman did join the GCC in its support for military action after Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990. What emerges is that Oman has had a very long history of domination from Great Britain and its government and a tradition of moderate political stance in the Arab world.

3.2 UAE background

The United Arab Emirates has a total land area of 83,600 square kilometres and a population of approximately 4 million (UAE Official website 2004), which includes about 1.6 million foreign workers (FAO, 2005). It borders Oman to the east and Saudi Arabia to the south and west (see Figure ii, p.58). The United Arab Emirates was formed in 1971 from the joining of the former British colonies – The Trucial States. Six sheikhdoms joined, namely Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Sharjah and Umm al-Qaiwain. Ras Al Khaimah, which had originally declined to join, reversed its decision in 1972.

In the sixteenth century the emirates which are now collectively known as the United Arab Emirates owed nominal allegiance to the Ottoman Empire. Situated along the trade route between Britain and India, the Gulf attracted the attention of the British Royal Navy, which was employed to protect ships of the East India Company against
piracy. As in Oman, Napoleon’s occupation of Egypt became the impetus for Britain to seek treaties with the emirates as a means of preventing French expansion in the region. Accordingly, Britain established a Political Agency in Sharjah in 1823 (Mansfield, 1992), which marked the beginning of its official political presence in the emirates. The emirates become British protectorates in 1892, known variously as Trucial Oman, the Trucial States or the Trucial Coast. The term “trucial” refers to the various truces between the sheikhs ruling the sheikhdoms and Great Britain.

Figure (ii) Map of the UAE

![Map of the UAE](http://www.lonelyplanet.com)

The 1892 treaty meant that territory could not be ceded to any other country except Britain, and that the Trucial States would not enter into agreements with any other country without Britain’s consent. In return, the British promised protection from any potential attack. The reality was that British political influence was mostly employed
in solving internal disputes among the rulers of the various emirates, but there was a
realization on Britain’s part that other powers were seeking to extend their influence in
the region, among them France, Persia, Russia and Germany.

Although Britain had a stranglehold on political control in the Gulf, the economic
landscape began to change in the 1930s, when the world came to know of the
enormous oil deposits the region possessed. The United States exerted a great deal of
pressure, both financial and political, to ensure that American oil companies acquired
major oil concessions. These concessions were fought by the British, who used their
political muscle to attempt to prevent American access to oil wealth in the Gulf (see
3.2.1).

After the Second World War the British granted autonomy to the sheikhidoms in their
internal affairs. One fact that complicated matters was the absence of any clear
boundaries delineating which areas were controlled by each of the rulers. A map was
ultimately drawn up by a British Foreign Office employee, in which each of the
emirates owned a small enclave inside the territory of one of its neighbouring
emirates.

In 1968, when Britain announced its intention to leave the Persian Gulf by the end of
1971, discussion regarding a federation began, as each of the emirates was felt to be
too small an individual entity to survive alone. On December 2, 1971, six of the
British Trucial States entered into a federal union known as the United Arab Emirates,
to be joined a few months later by Ras Al Khaimah. Sheikh Zayed became the first
The seven rulers formed a Supreme Council and the constitution provided for a legislative assembly. The UAE has thrived since its formation. Dubai has become a major worldwide financial centre. The UAE has not only used its wealth to improve the life of its citizens, but has also become one of the world’s largest aid donors to poorer African and Asian nations. It retains close political, military, economic and educational ties with Britain and latterly, the US.

In 2004, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, died after a long illness. His eldest son, Khalifa, succeeded him as Ruler of Abu Dhabi and as president of the UAE.

3.2.1 Discovery of oil

An intense spell of oil exploration activity took place in the Gulf in the 1930s with the United States and Britain contending with one another for oil concessions. One reason for this was that in 1932 the Iranian government of Reza Shah Pahlavi revoked the Anglo Persian Oil Company’s concession. Even though the shah and the British later agreed on new terms, the British were convinced that they must find further sources of oil. As the geology of the Gulf States was like Iran, the Gulf States seemed a promising source and started intense exploration. The British had considerable power; due to the various treaties they had imposed, thereby allowing them to prevent access by other countries, especially the United States.

Oil was first discovered in the UAE in 1958 off the coast of Abu Dhabi, followed two years later by the discovery of onshore petroleum. Commercial production began in
1962. Greatly increased revenues resulted. The ownership of land became an issue of primary concern, as oil companies had to pay fees to the owners. British treaties had designated leading families as owners of the land, so they received revenue. These families eventually began to spend some of their newly accrued wealth on infrastructure and the provision of healthcare and education. However, one person who seemed unable to deal with the sudden flow of money was Sheikh Shakhbut, ruler of Abu Dhabi, who refused to allow for any form of cheques or credit. In 1966 he was unseated. The family agreed that he would be replaced by his brother, Sheikh Zayed, and were supported in such a course of action by the British. The latter’s business acumen oversaw the development of Abu Dhabi into a modern, vibrant city, with vastly increased living standards for the population at large.

As tribal boundaries became more clearly delineated, a new sense of identity appeared in gulf sheikhdoms which, coupled with oil revenues, aroused a growing belief that they should rule themselves and dispense with British protection. By the 1960s, with no trade route to India to protect, as India and Pakistan had been independent since 1947, and with financial pressures at home, Britain had no objection to this, having in effect been planning a withdrawal from the area in any case. By announcing its intention in 1968 to leave the region, primarily due to political pressures at home, Britain forced the hand of the sheikhdoms to begin the discussions amongst themselves which would ultimately lead to independence.

3.2.2 The UAE’s relationship with Arab States
The UAE is a generous benefactor to Arab countries. Unlike Oman, but in common with most other Arab states, the United Arab Emirates roundly condemned the 1979 peace agreement between Egypt and Israel. As a result, diplomatic relations with Egypt were cut off, not to be renewed until 1987.

The United Arab Emirates became a founding member of the GCC, which aims towards more political and economic integration between its members, in 1981. The eighties were a turbulent time for the UAE, as events such as the fall of the Shah of Iran in 1979 and the Iran-Iraq war threatened stability. Tensions were heightened in 1990, when Iraq accused the UAE, along with Kuwait, of producing too much oil. This ultimately resulted in the UAE sending forces to assist the international coalition forces during the 1991 Gulf War. Since then, international relations between the UAE and a number of countries have continued to develop.

3.3 Present day relationship with the U.S. and Britain

The United States did not really begin to take an interest in Oman until 1979, following the hostage crisis in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (Cheney, 1984). These events led to the signing of an agreement which provided the United States with military access and Oman with economic and military aid. Oman was the first Arab country to establish diplomatic relations with the United States, as it dispatched a special envoy to the United States in 1840, probably as an attempt to counteract British influence, which was bringing about a decline in Oman’s economy (Beasant, 2002). An American consulate operated in Oman from 1880 to 1915, and, in
1972, an American embassy opened in Muscat (CIA World Factbook, 2002).

The UAE’s relations with the United States have become more important since gaining independence in 1971, specifically where security is concerned. As territorial disputes existed with Saudi Arabia, Iran and Oman, it was recognized that, as a small state with significant oil deposits, security threats would have to be managed by diplomatic as well as by other means. Notwithstanding its criticism of US dealings with regards to the Palestinians, the government of the UAE recognized that the US provided its best means of security against external threats. This led to the UAE joining US forces in the Gulf War of 1990-1991. The Iraqi occupation of Kuwait demonstrated to the UAE that the Gulf Cooperation Council members could not be relied on to guarantee its security, thereby necessitating security arrangements with the United States. In 1992 the two countries signed an agreement allowing the US the temporary use of some UAE bases. Similarly to Oman, the UAE has had a history of domination from Great Britain, and latterly, the U.S. Recently, American and British influence in the Gulf has not only been confined to security and economics, but has broadened to the cultural field.

3.4 Role of culture in Oman and the UAE

The spread of American culture, in the context of globalisation, has caused complex reactions throughout the Middle East (Pells, 2002). Zakaria (2002) believes many Muslims harbour negative feelings towards Westerners, and, more precisely, Americans, but at the same time feel positively towards many aspects of American culture. Globalisation is seen as the root cause of such complex emotions, as Arab
societies are held to be affected by globalisation in such a manner as to be

“open enough to be disrupted by modernity but not so open that they can ride the wave” (Zakaria, 2002:246).

Exploring a need for reform in Islam, Manji (2003) succinctly sums up the negative and positive attitudes prevailing in certain sectors of the Islamic and Arab worlds today, stating that although negative feelings towards the West exist primarily in the political sphere, given the choice, many Muslims openly embrace aspects of Western culture. She cites the enrolment of many Muslim students by their parents in North American and European schools and the fact that more rich Muslim families take holidays in the West than the Islamic world as examples of adoption of Western culture:

“Fact is, if given the choice to embrace or erase Western popular culture, most Muslims gleefully embrace it. Those who can afford it enrol their children in North American and European schools.” (Manji, 2003:113).

Manji asserts that the real reason many Arabs and Muslims exhibit negative attitudes towards America is not because of cultural imperialism, but rather that amongst the goods and services advanced by America in Muslim societies, democratic freedom is not really promoted at all, despite the rhetoric espoused by Britain and the US (Manji, 2003:115). The economic and political ties between Western powers and Gulf Arab governments, particularly those of the Gulf, remain strong, with Western powers often turning a blind eye to inequalities of power that exist where the majority of the population is concerned. While the ruling classes may have no problem with this for obvious reasons, as they wish to maintain their grip on power, most Arabs and Muslims are unhappy with a lack of equality, wishing to have a greater say in the political
This is an area I will explore in Chapter 7, as the results of the study also seem to indicate that the participants wish to have more input in their societies. The accruing of wealth for a relatively large sector of the population has not brought with it a sense of ownership of the political process, which is in sharp contrast to how life for people in many Western countries is perceived by many Gulf Arabs:

“The fact that so many Muslims covet the American way of life holds the key to why they’re also furious with Washington, it’s not jealousy so much as unrequited camaraderie.” (Manji, 2003:115)

This would appear to be confirmed by Tessler and Corstange (2002), who, commenting on a Zogby poll conducted that year in eight Muslim-majority countries, note that the pattern that emerged was that positive attitudes were exhibited towards American people and culture. Such positive attitudes existed side-by-side with negative ones towards American foreign policy:

“antipathy towards the U.S. and the West does not flow from cultural dissonance; it is based not on who we are perceived to be but on what we are perceived to do.” (Tessler & Corstange, 2002:29)

Tessler and Corstange, writing prior to the escalation of violence (the Iraq war), concluded that attitudes are complex and would not remain static, as events in the political arena would shape them over time:

“...it should be clear that religion and culture are not fostering antipathy to Western norms and institutions and that anti-Americanism is for the most part a response to perceptions and judgements regarding U.S. foreign policy.” (Tessler & Corstange, 2002:31)

Armstrong (2002:172) believes that the colonial experience of Arab and Muslim countries has dislocated society. In other words, Arab societies in general, and Gulf
societies also, have been affected by culture in such a way that they are influenced by it on a superficial level by media and consumerism, but do not see that real opportunities have come their way as a result. ‘Modernisation’ can be said in some respects to be superficial, as it has been extremely swift in nature, unlike Europe, where the process took centuries to encompass all strata of society. For many Arab societies, modernisation has been limited to the industrial sphere, and does not include secularism or democracy. An unprecedented challenge to traditional values has left many at a loss as to how to respond to such changes. This has inevitably led to illusions about modernisation being shattered, even as Western and more specifically, American culture have been embraced. The resulting relationship is a complex, many-faceted one that has influenced every sphere of life, including education.

The impact globalisation, and specifically Americanisation, have made in the Gulf have resulted in the culture of people in the Gulf being continually challenged due to the mass dissemination of Western and American goods, thoughts and ideals:

“America stands at the center of this world of globalization. It seems unstoppable. If you close the borders, America comes in through the mail. If you censor the mail, it appears in the fast food and faded jeans. If you ban the products, it seeps in through satellite television.”

Zakharia, 2002:246-247)

However, all of the above focus to some extent on the individual. This is happening in a culture that has traditionally upheld the collective as being of more importance than the individual, thereby causing an unprecedented shift that challenges traditional, cultural and religious beliefs. Everyone in the Gulf, regardless of upbringing, is being affected. Nowhere is this more evident than in the case of foreign workers, who now
comprise the majority of the population in all Gulf countries. Britain’s withdrawal from the Gulf coincided with a worldwide shift of freer movement in the workplace and the decolonization of labor. What were once colonised societies have become, with the acquisition of monetary wealth, apartheid societies where expatriate workers have not been assimilated in any meaningful way and do not have the same rights as Gulf citizens.

As society becomes more materialist, there is a fear in some quarters that spiritual and religious values may ultimately be affected as well. A hadith (saying of the prophet Mohammed) stipulates that one should want the same thing for his brother as he wants for himself. Thus, the individual aspect of some other cultures will inevitably be in conflict with Islam.

3.5 Role of Islam

Islam is the second largest faith in the world after Christianity, with more than 1.2 billion adherents (Jandt, 2001). This represents a fifth of the world’s population. Within Islam, Arabs are a minority. Sunnis make up between 85% to 90% of the world’s Muslims. The United Arab Emirates has a Sunni Islam majority, whereas Oman mostly adheres to Ibadi Islam.

“Not only has that world become the subject of the most profound cultural and economic Western saturation in history – for no non-Western realm has been so dominated by the United States as the Arabic-Islamic world is today – but the interchange between Islam and the West, in this case the United States, is profoundly one-sided and, so far as other, less newsworthy parts of the Islamic world are concerned, profoundly skewed.” (p.27-28)

Said claims that Muslims and Arabs are usually categorised in one-dimensional terms in the West, either as oil suppliers or as militarily aggressive. One aspect of the relationship outlined by Said concerns the difference between Christian and Muslim viewpoints. For example, fundamentalism often appears to be associated with Islam. However, both cultures, Christian and Islamic, contain an element of religious fundamentalism. What is known as fundamentalism actually has its roots in Christianity, specifically in the United States, in the early twentieth century. Armstrong (2002) notes that Islam was the last monotheistic religion to incorporate a fundamentalist element in the twentieth century, and that this only happened when Western culture began to exert an influence in the Arab world in the 1950s and 1960s. What began as the rise of nationalism sometimes became identified with a desire to get rid of the West. Therefore, fundamentalism can be seen as a series of internal disagreements between those who want modernisation and secular culture, and those who fear this, normally becoming more visible when a modernisation programme is already quite advanced (Armstrong, 2002).

As Islam is strictly practised in the Arabian Gulf, it is therefore important to note that all aspects of life are influenced by religious belief, including government, education and decision making. As Canning and Bornstein (2001) note in an article on adult
education in the Arab world, Westerners and Arabs must come to an understanding that religious beliefs must be accounted for when designing English language courses. Islamic values permeate education in Oman and the UAE. In the past, education was in the hands of Mutawa, or religious figures, who were mainly concerned with teaching the Holy Qur’an, as well as mathematics. Respect for the teacher was paramount, as the giver of knowledge. As the study of the Qur’an formed the bulk of students’ educational experience, rote memorization was the main teaching method, an approach which still exists in much of the education system to this day (Canning & Bornstein, 2001; Mynard, 2003, 2004; Arneson, 2005), in spite of many attempts at reform, most of which seek to adopt a western model.

3.5.1 Islam and Arabic

Arabic is considered sacred among Muslims since it is the language through which the Koran is believed to have been revealed. The Arabic language is viewed by many native speakers as the language of Islam (Cubertafond, 1981; Karmani, 1995; Said, 1993; Sardar, 1982) and thus, by extension, as a means of the transmission of Arab-Islamic culture. Classical Arabic brings together Arabs from different parts of the Middle East, as a common medium for educational, religious and political affairs (Al-Khatib, 1995, 2006; Holmes, 1992) even though colloquial dialects may vary greatly. Although the majority of the world’s Muslims come from non-Arabic speaking backgrounds, many Muslims consider Arabic as inseparable from Islam and do not believe that the Qur’an can be properly translated into any other language (Ali, 2003; Mohammed, 2005). An Egyptian Muslim colleague in Oman sent me the following
note soon after we once discussed this topic:

“*And if we had made it a Qur’an in a foreign tongue, they would certainly have said: If only its communication had been made clear? What! A foreign tongue and an Arab?”* (Qur’an 41:44)

Those who do not speak Arabic may not fully appreciate the link between language and religion, but researchers such as Coffman (1995) show that there is a significant correlation between the two. Coffman’s study at two Algerian universities suggested that in times of societal upheaval students tend to veer towards cultural, linguistic and religious referents that they find familiar. According to Coffman,

“*Arabic’s highly charged sacred character increases its coercive power ... It is an emanation of reality and thus the only access to that reality.*”

Such a finding has also been given expression in the works of linguists such as Sapir, Whorf and Bruner, who deem language, through the imposition of categories, to order human experience and communication. Although this stance is contested in Western scholarship, it does seem to have resonance for the situation many learners in Gulf countries find themselves in today, where English is in the ascendant as a language of instruction, to the detriment of Arabic.

Others, including Zughoul (2003) do not focus on language as a mould, but instead concentrate on language as power and as a shaper of ideology (see 2.3.8). He is forthright in his views on the link between colonialism, Arabic and language policies in the Gulf today:

“*In fact, the Gulf States are witnessing now under Western pressure in the post Sept. 11 events and the American occupation of Iraq, a return of the ‘imperialist’ and ‘neo-colonialist’ English medium education ... where Arabic is relegated to secondary status.*”
Education is being profoundly influenced by Western models, specifically American and British ones. The emphasis placed on any particular language in the curriculum is largely determined by factors beyond the immediate environment, according to Howatt (1984) and Stern (1983:278):

“Among these is an almost interpretation of historical and political forces in the wider community or nation. In wartime or in other periods of political upheaval or social unrest these historical and political influences become more noticeable.”

If learning a language involves being influenced politically and culturally (Modiano, 2001: 344), what, therefore, are the implications for Arabic as a means of knowledge, religious and cultural transmission?

3.6 Linking historical context, theory and practice

In the above discussion of history, culture and Islam, I have tried to show that there is ample reason for nationals of Oman and the United Arab Emirates to have at the very least ambiguous feelings towards English speakers. Political and economic exploitation in the past have led to distrust of English language policies in the region today, which may have an effect on learners’ motivation. Although English is viewed by many as necessary to learn for reasons such as employment, the increasing importance of English in the education system is also perceived by some as a form of neo-colonialism. Language education reforms are taking place against a background of heightened international and regional political tensions, namely the Gulf War, the Palestinian intifada, the invasion of Afghanistan, the war in and subsequent occupation
of Iraq, the outcry over the publication of cartoons of the prophet Mohammed in some European newspapers, tension and war between Israel and Lebanon, and terrorist attacks in the U.S., U.K., Bali and Spain. This has resulted in a very tense situation that has led to repeated student demonstrations on university campuses across the Middle East. With the expansion of Arabic-medium news television channels such as Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya, and the proliferation of Arabic language websites often portraying graphic images while providing a forum for many to air their views, an atmosphere of anger and resentment towards the West, specifically the United States and Britain, exists in many situations.

Buruma (2002) and Buruma and Margalit (2002) describe how some of the above-mentioned events are viewed by some in the Muslim world. Occidentalism is defined as a war against a particular idea of the West, noting that the idea is not particular to Islamist extremism but goes back to long before the time of American imperialism, finding expression in Japan’s attempt to replace Western empires in Asia during the Second World War and even earlier, in eighteenth and nineteenth century Germany’s attempt to dismiss the French enlightenment and Napoleon’s military successes. He stresses that Muslim extremists are essentially targeting secularism in their own societies, but that as the source of this secularism is the West, the West too has become a target. Any attempts to ameliorate the situation must be contextually sensitive:

“Violent attempts to force secularism on Muslim societies in the past invited the problem of religious extremism and should not be seen as the solution now. Zealotry was in part a reaction against the aggressive secularism of such regimes as Reza Shah’s in Iran during the 1930s. If political freedoms are to be guaranteed in the Muslim world through popular sovereignty, religion will have to be taken into account.” (Buruma, 2002).
There are inevitable consequences for second language learning, as it may be accompanied by what Taylor et al (1977) described as “fear of assimilation”. Giles et al (1977), in an article on language, ethnicity and intergroup relations, similarly found that in circumstances where fear of assimilation into the target language culture exists, the learner is possibly going to emphasize what Giles et al call “psychological distinctiveness”. In such a case, second language acquisition will only continue until it reaches the point where instrumental needs have been fulfilled. Stern (1983) notes that individual learner factors are influenced by social and historical context in varied and subtle ways. Thus, any attempt to interpret learner behaviour or attitudes will have to take a multitude of factors, historical, political, cultural and societal into account (Dornyei & Clément, 2001; Giles & Byrne, 1982; Harwood et al, 1994).

Phillipson (1992) and Pennycook (1998) see links between the practices and contexts of English language teaching and the history of colonialism, with Pennycook noting that such history has contributed to the production of images of the Self and Other:

“And sadly, there seems to be a loud absence about such connections in applied linguistics and TESOL, showing, I think, the strange isolation of much thinking in applied linguistics from academic and political work going on outside it.” (Pennycook, 1998:19)

He believes that language education and policy are elements of continuing colonial cultural production. Colonial and post-colonial struggles are viewed as “the ground on which European/Western images of the Self and Other have been constructed, the place where constructions of Superiority and Inferiority were produced”. Said, like Foucault, argues that knowledge construction of the Other must be seen as a means of colonial
governance:

“...without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period.” (Said, 1978:3).

Pennycook (see also Wiley & Lukes, 1996) illustrates the danger of making education through the English language compulsory, which is currently happening in the Gulf, for if: “…the study of the English language is forced upon a very large class of students for whom the Government is unable to provide employment”, maybe people, “becoming unfit for their own natural and hereditary professions, remain discontented and disloyal members of the community” (Pennycook, 1998:91). Educational change, particularly when imposed from the outside, will often provoke strong reactions on the part of those who will be primarily affected by such change, the learners (also Holliday, 1992, 1994).

In common with Pennycook, Phillipson (1992) points out that the origin of many ELT theories, including the belief in the importance of only English in the classroom, taught by native speakers, to the exclusion of other languages if possible, lies in the colonial context of British teachers working in other countries. The global dominance of English becomes not just an exercise in colonial policy but also an issue of postcolonial exploitation (Phillipson, 1992). However, Pennycook (1994) finds Phillipson’s analysis somewhat limiting because it treats language as detached from other political and cultural elements. Therefore, he considers that language policy and planning needs to include a broader understanding of the historical context of colonialism and the
contemporary context of culture:

“...rather than identifying applied linguistics books, or books on language teaching, as the primary source of influence on teaching, it is more important to consider the broader context of popular culture as a major source of influence ... what has often been overlooked is that those of us involved in language education are also inevitably surrounded by popular culture, by the everyday images of English. It may be that these are far more influential in the formulation of policies, curricula, practices, research agendas and so on.” (Pennycook, 1998:130/131)

In the following chapter the link between the context described here and the research situation is more fully explained. By understanding the link between political domination by the West in the past, which continues in some respects in the present, and a newer form of domination in the educational arena, the reader will comprehend how the historical context may affect motivation in the present. This will in turn inform the choice of methodology adopted.
4.0 Overview

This chapter aims to furnish the reader with some information about the institutions where the research takes place, the learners’ previous educational experience, and to link this with the background context provided in the previous chapter, showing how the historical context may affect motivation (see Figure iii, p.78). I also refer to previous research I have conducted in both countries which is pertinent to the current study. Indeed, it was this work that prompted me to undertake further enquiry, as I wanted to subject my observations to systematic and rigorous enquiry. I endeavour to link contextual information provided with theories by some authors mentioned in the literature review. As the reader will see, the information I will give is essential to an understanding of why the methodology adopted in the following chapter was chosen.

The study takes place in a teacher training college in Oman and a university in the United Arab Emirates. The first schools offering education outside the Mutawa, or religious schools system, opened in Oman in the 1970s and in the United Arab Emirates in the 1950s. In Oman the first university opened in Muscat in 1986 and in the United Arab Emirates in Al Ain in 1978. The teacher training system in Oman first began in 1975, with teacher training colleges being established in 1984. The national university also offers teacher training courses. In the United Arab Emirates, which was the first GCC country to offer higher education (Coffman, 2003; Nicks-McCaleb, 2005); all teacher training courses are offered by universities. A number of national and private educational institutions have opened in recent years. Access to higher education is seen as a right, rather than a privilege (Baghat, 1999). Generally, Omani
and Emirati citizens have expected state-funded higher education, with guarantees of employment and high remuneration once education is completed. In both countries, there is a perceptible shift towards the Americanisation of education, fuelled in part by the employment of foreign consultants and a move towards American accreditation.

**Figure (iii): Research situation milieu**

![Diagram of research situation milieu]

*Source: Adapted from Holliday, 1994: 17*

### 4.1 Research Situation Milieu: The institutions

Some research suggests second language acquisition is shaped by institutional concerns (Gebhard, 1999; Olsen, 1997). The Omani institution is a teacher training
college offering a four year degree program. The staff is mostly Arab, with Omanis mainly in administrative positions. Currently the college is predominantly Arabic-medium, although English features significantly in IT and Science courses. Some features of an American educational model are currently being implemented. The Emirati institution is a university in the process of being changed into an English-medium institution, following an American model of education, with predominantly Western teaching staff, and a mixture of Emirati, Arab and Western administration.

Attendance is mandatory for all courses in both institutions. In comparison to institutional norms, Arts students are among the lowest scoring students on standardized achievement tests, while Science students tend to score more highly.

4.1.1 Oman

In 1995, six colleges of education started to offer degree courses of four years’ duration (O’Sullivan, 2000). Although the colleges were originally segregated by sex, now four of them are co-educational. This study takes place in one of the six colleges. In order to protect the participants’ anonymity, I have not been specific about the location.

Upon arrival at any teacher training college, learners must take a standardised English language placement test. The English instructors mark these tests and learners are placed into one of two groups, for stronger or weaker learners. General English is studied for the first three semesters, for five hours a week. Each course takes place
over a fourteen-week semester. Reading, listening, writing and reading are the main skills covered, with very little focus on speaking. Having completed the General English component of their studies, learners study ESP (English for Specific Purposes) for two hours a week for the following two semesters, in areas related to their majors, Arts or Science. Learners do not take international benchmark exams. English language instructors are not at present required to have a Masters degree, although a first degree and a TEFL qualification are necessary.

Having often achieved high marks in the General Secondary School Test (Thanawiyya Amma), learners who initially displayed enthusiasm for studying English do not know how to cope when they are placed in a class for weaker students, due to low placement scores. At a very early stage in their college careers, students learn that English may have a disproportionate effect on their studies.

4.1.2 The United Arab Emirates

The university where the study takes place has two main campuses, one for male learners and the other for female learners, with smaller campuses dotted around the city. In order to protect the participants’ anonymity, I have not been specific about the location.

While still at secondary school, learners take a nationwide, standardised English language exam known as the CEPA (Common English Proficiency Assessment). Writing scripts are marked by college/university English language instructors, using a band system similar to that of the IELTS exam (International English Language
Testing System). Exam marks are checked and stored on a computer database, with one of the aims being to place the learners in the appropriate English level in one of the national colleges or universities. Students who do well in the writing section of the exam can proceed directly to the faculties, although the majority will spend some time studying English in the foundation program, ranging from one semester to up to three years in some cases. The program consists of three levels, which prepare learners for IELTS and TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) as benchmark exams. Learners may repeat each level twice if necessary. All English instructors must have a Masters degree either in TEFL/TESOL, Applied Linguistics or Education. Each course takes place over a sixteen-week semester. Learners study English for up to three hours a day, with one hour devoted to writing, and two hours to listening and reading skills. Speaking receives little attention, except in Level Three, when learners have to take a speaking test as part of the IELTS exam.

Similarly to the Omani situation (see 4.1.1), I have learned that many students have achieved high grades in school, which led to high motivation initially, but when learners were placed in low levels which do not appear to correspond to school exam grades, subsequent levels of motivation appear to have been affected.

When the learners have completed the foundation program, during which they are required to reach proficiency in English, Mathematics, Arabic and IT, they may study in the faculties. Then they are required to study an ESP course for four hours a week for one semester, to help them with their subject specialisation. ESP has often been taken by learners in the last semester of university, in order to have them gain some
exposure to English before entering the employment market. This has in practice meant a gap of up to a few years between studying General English and ESP. ESP has until recently been extremely important in the Gulf, as the Arabisation of the oil industry meant an educated class competent in English had to be quickly trained (Cobb & Horst, 1999). This resulted in courses being adopted where the time frame for learning English was reduced, which contrasts markedly with the present educational environment.

Many learners studying at the university began studying their majors in the Arabic language, unaware that organisational changes would occur that would suddenly entail them having to study in English. Increasingly, learners are opting to study ESP immediately upon entry to the faculties, as most faculty courses are now taught through English.

This is an immersion approach, based on the idea that if all course instruction takes place in the target language, learners will be able to successfully acquire the language. The theory is not always borne out by reality, however, as Swain (1991) argues that in immersion programs learners may attain quasi-native comprehension, but their production rarely keeps pace with their comprehension, due to reaching a plateau, or a level beyond which they cannot easily progress but where they can understand each other and the teacher. More consideration therefore needs to be given to the learners’ previous educational experiences and how these can be affected upon entry to higher education.
To do this, I shall draw upon my ten years’ experience in the Middle East, eight years of which were spent teaching in Oman and the United Arab Emirates. I spoke with colleagues who had experienced the school systems, and also with employees of the Ministries of Education and Higher Education in both countries. This allowed me greater insight into their educational systems, as well as cultural insights which were to prove invaluable when conducting interviews with the participants. It was important to speak with these people because of the difficulty in finding relevant research. In addition, most research conducted does not take into account learners’ description of their educational experience (Mynard, 2003).

4.2 Research Situation Milieu: Global considerations

The effect of globalisation on English language acquisition has been extensively documented (Bartlett, 2001; Block & Cameron, 2002; Canagarajah, 1999; Dörnyei, Csizér & Németh, 2006; Hall & Eggington, 2000; Holliday, 1994, 1997; Kachru, 1986; Kachru & Nelson, 2001; Melchers & Shaw, 2003; Pennycook, 1994, 2003a; Wright, 2004). Globalisation has also had a significant impact on Gulf education and language policy.

In the mid-1990s, government policies of replacing the expatriate workforces meant that educating learners to university graduate level became increasingly important. This has resulted in rapid growth in the number of mostly private higher education institutions and the increasing domination of the American university model:

“Gulf universities are being structurally ‘synchronized’ with American
universities, while exposure to Arab, most notably Egyptian, universities, is being considerably narrowed in scope.” (Coffman, 2003:18)

Coffman also notes that the Americanisation of universities in the Gulf is running parallel to “regional and global realignments of strategic military and economic alliances”. Greater American and British involvement in the Gulf in the 1980s and 1990s led to Gulf higher education institutions adopting an American credit point system which undermined Egyptian influence that had until then prevailed in the educational systems in Gulf countries and a continental system based on year-long courses and end of year exams (Findlow, 2005; Mazawi, 2004). This was also as a result of Egypt’s educational influence, whose education system in turn had been influenced by France.

A number of new institutions have been accredited in the past decade. This has taken place against a background of the rapid growth of English as a lingua franca. Many applicants were unable to gain admission because of the intense competition for available places. Some foreign universities, mainly in the United States, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom, took advantage of the rapid expansion of the higher education system and have opened branches throughout the Gulf. At these branch universities, prerequisites are sometimes lower, leading to a perception by some that “bon pour l’Orient” degrees are being granted (Findlow, 2005, 2006). Tuition is much more expensive than that at the public universities, which are subsidized by the government. Despite the high cost involved, these institutions continue to expand.
Until relatively recently, a large number of male learners opted to study abroad at British and North American universities, often believing education there to be of a higher standard than in the Gulf. However, given recent international events, many Gulf nationals view the United States as a dangerous place for them to study. The result has been an even greater demand for education at branches of foreign universities at home, mainly by male students. This also has implications for public university administrations, leading to a state of affairs similar to that enunciated by the 2003 Arab Human Development Report, which stated that Gulf universities, in addition to being overcrowded and under-funded, lacked “a clear vision”.

The rising growth of expatriate populations, primarily from the Indian subcontinent, who comprise more than half of the population of most Gulf countries, also needs to be considered. Many expatriates have lived in the Gulf for a number of years, raising families there. This second generation aspires to be educated to university graduate level (Coffman, 2003). This is a recent phenomenon, as what is currently being witnessed is the first cohort of long-term expatriates seeking a university education. State policies excluded them from entering public institutions of higher education in larger numbers by limiting the courses they can study, which has predictably meant that they incline towards private branches of foreign universities.

Private universities are generally seen as more market-oriented, with most public institutions being seen to be more focused on purely academic training. This has led to a wholesale adoption of policies by public institutions designed to upgrade the quality
of curriculum and qualifications, such as rapidly changing towards having English as a language of instruction for every subject, with a reliance on the American model of higher education.

4.2.1 The American model of higher education

Increasing conformity with American models and standards is also happening through the increasing influence of consultants and adopting American accreditation criteria. Altbach (2003) notes that this headlong rush towards accreditation, although initiated by foreign universities, could have far-reaching consequences for educational policy in other countries in years to come, and, as such, is not to be undertaken lightly:

“Do we want to take responsibility for shaping academic policy in U.S.-accredited universities in countries whose intellectual traditions and higher education context differ substantially? Do we really want to take responsibility for ensuring that academic and institutional standards in other countries match those in the United States? Do we believe that U.S. academic practices are appropriate for other countries?” (Altbach, 2003:5)

Once the accreditation process has begun, there may little room for manoeuvre. Assumptions on the part of American accreditors about pedagogy could lead, according to Altbach, to the “Americanization” of foreign public higher education institutions. By failing to take into account local contextual realities, accreditation could ultimately be the source of problems in the future. Although Altbach assumed that accreditation would take place primarily in the private sector, in the case of the Emirati public institution in this study, the process of accreditation has already begun. All public institutions will be under increased pressure to follow suit, at the expense of local innovation (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991, 1993; Levy, 1999; Zha, 2006).
One reason for this eagerness to adopt the American educational model may be the Gulf’s lack of a historical tradition of academic endeavour, with the exception of Islamic Studies (Coffman, 2003). There has been little debate regarding the adoption of an external model, which reflects the values of an American system, and the effect it might have on learners’ motivation to study in the English language:

“… the Arabs find themselves caught in a dilemma, torn between loyalty to Arabic, out of ideological, cultural, and nationalistic values, on the one hand, and the linguistic concomitants of importing and adopting technology from its English-based sources, on the other.” (Abuhamdia, 1984:28, cited in Fahmy & Bilton, 1992:272).

In addition, learning the language of a community becomes a much more difficult undertaking if the learners do not care for the target language community and generally its policies in the region (Dornyei, 2001b). If language is seen as a representation of culture (Gardner, 1979), then it follows that second or foreign language acquisition may be viewed as a danger to cultural identity (Bracher, 2002; Lambert, 1980; MacPherson, 2005; Pool, 1979; Taylor, Meynard & Rheault, 1977). Thus the role of the teacher becomes increasingly significant.

4.3 Research Situation Milieu: The teacher

The educational tradition in the Middle East has been mainly teacher-centred to date, with heavy emphasis on rote learning (Ali, 2003; Canning and Bornstein, 2001; Mawgood, 2005; Parker and O’Sullivan, 2003). “Product” rather than “process” has been emphasised, with the result that learners and teachers are extremely exam-
oriented (O’Sullivan, 2000; Costelloe, 2001; Armeson, 2005).

Research suggests that teachers’ knowledge and training are essential for successful learning (Azennoud, 2003; Bailey et al., 1996; Chambers, 1999, 2000; Dörnyei, 2001a, 2001b; Freeman, 1992, 2001; Freeman & Richards, 1996; Gardner, 2001; Gray, 2003; Harmer, 2001; Woods, 1996). The majority of learners in Oman and the United Arab Emirates are taught by non-native English-speaker teachers at school. These teachers are usually either from their own country or from neighbouring ones. When they embark on their higher education studies, they find that most teachers are native English speakers. Training is viewed as insufficient for teachers who are regarded as short-term expatriate employees (Al Banna, 1997; Guefrachi & Troudi, 2000; MacPherson, 2005; Mawgood, 2000; Mynard, 2003).

4.3.1 Effects of pedagogical practice

However, informal conversations with teachers in both institutions and in secondary schools in both countries have led me to believe that many teachers are well-trained in general, with teachers in secondary schools well-trained for these particular learners. Nonetheless, due to curriculum constraints, even well-trained teachers are under pressure to get students through exams. This means they frequently resort to giving students tracts of information to memorise, which is known as “teaching to the test” (Bel Fekih, 1993). It has been suggested that the pressure learners are under to get high grades leads to teaching which verges on the unprofessional. Students are not educated but “primed” (Ali, 2003; Mynard, 2003). Rote memorisation is copper-fastened as the
primary learning strategy in some instances.

Those teachers that try a different way to teach often find it difficult to convince learners of its relevance. As can be seen in the diagram on page 90, exams mainly measure learners’ abilities to memorise. This is in spite of research conducted in Oman and the United Arab Emirates which found that not all Arab learners rely on rote memorization as their primary learning strategy (Parker & O’Sullivan, 2003). This contradicts much of the literature available on Arab learners, but confirms a study by Albali (1988), who found that some learners used a deeper approach to learning, as they wanted to understand the deeper meaning of what they were studying. Learners can therefore become motivated in the classroom to use their cognitive skills for successful language acquisition, particularly when a mixture of pedagogical styles is used.

Teaching in different ways becomes more difficult when teachers are exhorted to avoid any topic in the classroom that might be deemed controversial, such as anything relating to current political events. As mainly short-term expatriate employees, teachers are less likely to question ministerial assumptions about what may be taught. The result is that many topics rarely have any bearing on the actual lived experience of learners, which often causes friction between learners and teachers, due to misunderstandings regarding the source of such directives.

Learners want to discuss, often questioning why they are not allowed to debate such topics in the classroom, as they discuss them with their families and friends outside
class. Policy aspirations, that learners engage in independent learning, are seldom matched by institutional realities which severely restrict course content in this way.

Figure (iv) Circle of pedagogy which exists in many Gulf contexts

Teachers are models in the educational system (although Westerners may forfeit this through religious and cultural differences). Some may not realise how their pedagogical practice will affect learners (Byram & Risager, 1999). At university level, learners are expected to form their own opinions, employ critical thinking and participate in class discussion, which many feel uncomfortable with, coming as they do from a background where the teacher’s opinion is the only one that matters (Bel Fekih, 1993; Parker & O’Sullivan, 2003; Paul et al., 1995).
All of this happens during a time in learners’ lives where their own identity is developing. It is logical to suppose that they will make comparisons across cultures, teaching and learning styles. This may lead to many learners experiencing a state of “severe initial shock” upon arrival at university (Kandil, 2003). Some learners quickly adapt, but the majority are left behind by a teaching style which is at odds with their previous experience in some ways.

If the course content is seen as the means by which a learner will develop certain skills (Gardner, 2001), then it becomes apparent that the development of critical thinking skills, identified by policy makers in the Gulf as one of the primary objectives for English language learning (Canning & Bornstein, 2001), cannot occur in a situation where memorisation techniques do not differ in substance from learners’ school classroom experiences:

“...we cannot train students to use deep approaches when the educational environment is giving them the message that surface ones are rewarded.” (Ramsden, 1992:64, also cited in Naqvi, 2001:191)

It seems that teachers are not teaching, but training.

4.4 Research Situation Milieu: The classroom

Large classes are the norm in both Oman and the United Arab Emirates. Classroom atmosphere therefore becomes more salient, as the classroom itself is also a culture and exerts an influence on learner behaviour (Allwright, 1984; Cook, 1996; Ellis, 1985). As there is little space for contact between teachers and learners in such a
teacher-driven environment, any contact is usually derived from the materials used.

4.4.1 Classroom materials

Classroom materials affect learner behaviour (Bel Fekih, 1993; Burden, 2000; Peacock, 1997; Rodiki Petrides, 2006). Textbooks are often culturally laden (Ghosn, 2004; Kumaradivelu, 2002). Current Gulf educational practices mean that computer-assisted instruction is valued as more important than textbook use, in order to equip learners with the skills needed for an increasingly technological age. However, the reality is that a lack of technology in many educational environments means female learners in particular often do not have the same computer access as their male counterparts, despite having to study the same course. In effect, the textbook remains the primary means of instruction and also a means for cultural transmission (Byram et al., 1991; Kramsch & McConnell-Ginet, 1992), which is often imprecise, partly because of ill-chosen topics that have little to do with the students’ own experience (Grady, 1997; Gregory, 1996; Henry, 1970; Hirschfelder, 1982; Kramsch, 1987; Ndura, 2004; Sadker & Sadker, 2001; Sonaiya, 2002; Ueber & Grosse, 1991; Vitz, 1986). Many teachers in Gulf higher education institutions have expressed similar views, pointing out that negative cultural stereotypes are being reinforced by the materials used.

Textbooks in most Gulf schools are almost exclusively Arab in focus, written by authors who have usually spent some time in a Gulf environment. Learners in secondary schools learn about the historical, educational and scientific significance of
Arab culture through Arabic. However, when then they enter the college classroom, most of their knowledge comes from textbooks that often have an exclusive Western, specifically North American or British, focus, extolling Western historical and educational qualities. Examples of textbooks currently in use in higher education in the Gulf include the “Headway” series, “New Interchange” and “Northstar”.

4.4.2 Previous research in Oman and the United Arab Emirates

In 2003-2004, a colleague and I conducted a small scale-study in Oman and the United Arab Emirates, to ascertain what classroom preparation learners had received for higher education and provide more information to school teachers about the cognitive skills required at college level. An interpretative approach was used to analyse data collected from interviews with teachers, students and Ministry officials. Documents and curricula relevant to school, university and Ministry level were also examined. Learner and teacher expectations were explored, with the results showing that learners were often unaware of what was expected of them in the university classroom, due to a lack of formal preparation in schools, and a lack of communication between schools and universities. Students became frustrated over time as expectations were unmet, which in some cases led to a decrease in motivation (Altman, 1985; Bandura, 1994; Horwitz, 1989; Jernigan, 2004). University teachers were similarly unaware that they expected learners to exhibit certain autonomous learning skills that they had not yet developed at school level. This suggested that learners need considerable classroom training and also that university teachers need to have information available about learners’ educational backgrounds, information regarding the challenges of learning
English for Arabic speakers and information about learners’ family backgrounds.

4.4.3 Some difficulties Arab learners face when learning English

Arab learners face many problems when learning English (Abbad, 1998; Abdul Haq, 1982; Rababiah, 2005; Wahba, 1998). As the Arabic alphabet is written from right to left and is highly phonetic in nature, unlike English, this may explain the prevalence of spelling mistakes many Arab learners have when writing English. Grammar is also different, with the verb followed by the subject in a sentence. There is no verb ‘to be’ in Arabic in the present tense, and only one present tense and one future tense are used. Punctuation differences include the more frequent use of commas and full stops than in English, as well as commonly beginning new sentences with ‘And’ or ‘So’.

These combine to make learning English a daunting task for many Arab learners. As many expatriate teachers do not have any knowledge of the Arabic language, their inability to mediate linguistic differences between both languages increases SLA problems.

4.5 Research Situation Milieu: The family

Vygotsky’s (1978) theory of development sees interpersonal interactions as being related to subsequent attitudes displayed by learners, which echoes a sociocultural perspective of language learning. Thus the family is held to exert considerable
influence on motivation to learn (Arneson, 2005; Colletta et al., 1983; Dörnyei, Csizér & Németh, 2006; Gardner, 1985; Gardner et al., 2000; Lee Blair & Cobas, 2006; Yowell, 2000).

Many female learners are the first members in their family at a higher education institution (O’Sullivan, 2000; Mynard, 2003; Arneson, 2005). Parents have a strong influence on the majors their daughters study, even though they themselves often have little or no education, with many illiterate in their mother tongue. Mothers tend to have a higher illiteracy rate than men, since their role has traditionally been within the home, often since marrying in their teens. Today, students in higher education in Oman and the United Arab Emirates are overwhelmingly women (Parker & O’Sullivan, 2003). Men, who have more employment opportunities available, currently leave education at an earlier age than women.

Families in both countries tend to be large in size, so often the space a learner needs to study does not exist. The family group stays together for leisure. With many children competing for their parents’ attention, not every learner may receive the individual attention she needs (Arneson, 2005; Mynard, 2003). From conversations with teachers and learners, it appears that families frequently want learners to miss class due to family events such as weddings. Learners often feel obliged to acquiesce, as family loyalty takes priority over all other considerations, often to the detriment of their studies.

Some learners live in student hostels, which are very closely supervised. Typically,
female learners are not allowed to leave the hostel grounds unless accompanied by a relative. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the study environment in hostels is far from ideal, with little space for students to study.

Very few families allow women to study overseas, as it is rarely permissible for them to live alone in another country, unless accompanied by a male relative. As the expansion of higher education for female learners has been made a priority by various state policies, studying in national institutions has become all the more important for them. Due to family influences they tend to enrol more in public than private institutions. As many parents believe university education abroad to be superior, this leads them to invest in their sons' education at foreign, especially American and European, universities, which may be one factor in the preponderance of female students at public institutions.

Family influence is usually not questioned. Unthinkingly obeying rules, particularly in a hierarchical society, may lead to a situation in the classroom where questioning on the part of learners may not occur, even when the input is new and not understood (Arneson, 2005; Mynard, 2003; Norton, 2000). This may explain why they regard the teacher’s opinion as the most important one (see 4.3.1), even if the result is that, by not querying information, learners may not understand why they are learning something.

4.6 Research Situation Milieu: The community

Social and community relationships take on greater significance than in many Western
societies (Canning & Bornstein, 2001; Hofstede, 1986; Smith & Bond, 1993; Triandis, 1995). Without wishing to depict rigid cultural boundaries, but drawing upon observation and other studies conducted in the Gulf (Ali, 2003; Canning & Bornstein, 2001; Costelloe, 2001), it can be said that many Arab learners are more influenced by the collective group entity than by individualism (Hofstede, 1980), which spills over into the classroom, as mentioned in the previous section. For example, any individual learner not doing her share of the work in a group assignment does not face any negative consequences, as the rest of the group collectively assumes her responsibilities (Canning & Bornstein, 2001). This might conflict with ideas of individual learner responsibility that prevail in current practice at Gulf higher education institutions. Whereas some might think a teacher should criticise the underperforming student, this goes against the grain of “face-saving” (Patai, 1983; Mynard, 2003) which exists in many Asian and Arab societies. This links to the previous section on the family, and might explain some forms of learner behaviour, such as unquestioningly accepting all information given in class. Fear of embarrassment is linked to this, and may clarify why Arab learners generally prefer a teacher to infer their responses, especially negative ones, rather than clearly state a negative opinion. These areas may provide contextual clues about cultural factors that influence motivation.

Another key factor seldom discussed is the concept of time: “Orienting oneself to time takes on a new meaning for the westerner teaching in the region” (Canning & Bornstein, 2001). Hall (1983) refers to the concept of polychronic time, which implies many things at a time. In practice this suggests that punctuality and adherence to
deadlines take on different meanings for teachers and learners. Higher educational institutions in the Gulf insist on a rigidly enforced attendance rule for class, although learners may enter class five or ten minutes after the class has begun without incurring any penalty. One reason most learners fail to appreciate the difference between five minutes or half an hour of missed class may be because Gulf societies are regarded as “present time” societies, with the future being seen as the will of Allah (Canning & Bornstein, 2001). They remind us that the Arabic calendar moves eleven days earlier each season, with resulting implications for holidays and deadlines. This implies that Western educational practices need to take into account local community and national considerations (Canagarajah, 1999; Holliday, 1994, 2002; Templer, 2003). However, those involved in implementing such practices remain largely disassociated from the wider community.

4.7 Research Situation Milieu: National considerations

The Gulf systems of higher education have faced several challenges in the past few decades. The rapid pace of development in all Gulf societies has meant that what were primarily tribal, rural societies have transformed into more urban ones. Incomes have risen for the majority, leading to the emergence of a new elite. Literacy and life expectancy levels have risen dramatically (The Economist, 19/06/04). Such changes could not have occurred without external factors such as globalisation, oil revenues and the rapid spread of technology, which have resulted in the pervasiveness of English in all strata of society, at least in the short term, and which have had a significant impact on education in many countries (Neave, 2000).
Oman and the United Arab Emirates are experiencing an unprecedented expansion of their higher education systems. With over half of the population under the age of sixteen, public educational institutions are under considerable pressure to provide for English language education (Guefrachi & Troudi, 2000).

As both countries are relatively new, which necessitates “national construction” (Findlow, 2006:23), higher education is key to the building of a national identity. Tension may arise while striving to balance tradition with having English language instruction as a modernizing force (Plamenatz, 1976; Findlow, 2006):

“A national curriculum is in a way a sense of constructing a national identity where certain cultural values are promoted, others are not. Such a selection is indeed very contentious because it most certainly means that the cultural heritage of many school children is not being valued” (Breidlid, 2003: 86–87).

4.7.1 How state policies affect female learners

State policies that strive to promote female participation in higher education mean that women’s access to higher education is closely controlled (Mazawi, 1999). Furthermore, degrees from public higher education institutions carry far less status and provide few employment opportunities outside Oman and the United Arab Emirates. University graduates are no longer guaranteed employment upon graduation, which has led to disaffection on the part of many learners who have traditionally relied on government patronage (vom Bruck, 2000). The requirements of the labour force and the skills of female Gulf graduates do not appear to coincide (Al-Sulayti, 1999). 76.6%
of those who registered with Tanmia (National Human Resource Development and Employment Authority) in the United Arab Emirates in 2004 were female (Al Rostamani, 2004; Tanmia, 2004). This may lead some female learners to question the relevance of higher education to their lives and may have a corresponding effect on their motivation to learn the English language.

4.8 Situating the study in context

Organisations cannot be completely separated from what is happening in the wider society (Glor, 2001). With globalisation and the spread of English as the language of technology and commerce, there has been a corresponding need for increased English language instruction in the Gulf. Oman and the United Arab Emirates have implemented policies to train English teachers at home and provide more instruction to all learners in the English language. This would reduce the need to send learners abroad to study, while at the same time lessen the need for reliance on an expatriate workforce.

The expansion of Arab higher education has sidelined traditional forms of education, based on the predominance of religious institutions, which has in effect led to increased state control over public higher education institutions. What is termed “modernisation” usually represents a:

“…conflict-loaded transformation of the existing social bases of power... and the definition of what valid (and therefore politically connoted) knowledge is.” (Mazawi, 2000)
Therefore, language planners must take cultural, historical and political influences into consideration. Implementing educational policies mostly involves employing Western consultants from the US, Canada and Britain to design curricula. The danger in employing policy makers from different cultural contexts is that educational models may be adopted wholesale that were designed for teaching English in a country where it is the first language. Local realities need to be considered (Bel Fekih, 1993; Abuhamdia, 1984; Dubin & Wong, 1990; Fahmy & Bilton, 1992; Holliday, 1994; Kransch & Sullivan, 1996; Maley, 2000; O’Sullivan, 2000; Mynard, 2003). As consultants usually only concentrate on the higher education institutions in question and leave before they can see the effect of curriculum changes, they usually have no contact with schools and are unaware of the skills or the lack thereof that learners bring with them to university, the danger is that the knowledge gap that exists between schools and universities will widen (Fahmy & Bilton, 1992; Parker & O’Sullivan, 2003).

4.9 Summary

The above elements of the research situation milieu can be linked to theories proposed by those such as Dörnyei (2001), who, in the cognitive tradition, believe that the learners’ perception of educational and other events will influence the motivational behaviour they will show in the classroom. In other words, the social milieu is one of the main factors influencing motivation (Clément, 1980; Gardner, 1985; Maslow, 1970; Williams & Burden, 1997). Dörnyei (1998) states that motivation can change
over time, due to outside events. As relatively recent world events, such as the renewed Palestinian intifada of 2000, the attacks of September 11th, 2001, Israeli incursions into Lebanon and the occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq have thrust the Middle East into the world spotlight, Arab learners are aware of the stereotypes held about them by many in the West. It seems reasonable to suggest that the historical and sociocultural contexts may have an influence on the levels of motivation shown by the learner, or at the very least may have shaped their perceptions about learning English as a foreign language.

Therefore, the first stage of this study involved an exploration of the historical and socio-cultural context of English language learning in both Oman and the United Arab Emirates. This in turn meant that I could look at the curriculum of the English programmes at both institutions within the broader context of institutional and national language policies, relating them to the motivational literature as I did so. Data gathering was therefore both objective and subjective, as will be detailed in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 5 – METHODOLOGY
5.0 Overview

Most studies on motivation in language learning appear to focus on surveys, using questionnaires as the main data collection instrument. The relationship between what happens in the micro-context of the classroom and the macro-context of power relations and what this means for successful language acquisition, does not appear to have been addressed, particularly in an Arabian Gulf context. As studies do not generally tend to look at the wider context of learning outside the classroom, there is a gap. The history recounted in Chapter Three and Chapter Four shows that there are legacies from the past, influences from the present, geopolitics and cultural differences that need to be taken into account in a study of motivation in the English language classroom. This chapter will outline my methodological approach, examining how it is informed by the methodology used in studies to date.

5.1 Data collection methods

According to Bloland (1992), the three most commonly used methods of data collection in qualitative research are observation, interviewing and unobtrusive research (which includes the study of artefacts, such as documents). These are the three main methods I employed in my research, and I shall detail each of these methods in turn in this section. Amara and Spolsky (1997) and Spolsky (2000) endorse these methods, observing that they lead to a triangulation of methodology. I also used historical analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 1995), encouraging students to have an opinion on historical analysis.
5.1.1 Historical analysis

Historical analysis has been described as Marshall and Rossman (1995:89) as an account of a past event or combination of events. This method is especially useful in qualitative enquiry for the purposes of establishing general background information (Heath, 1982; Little, 1982; Barr and Dreban, 1983; Cochran-Smith, 1984; Evertson & Green, 1986). As such, it can be used either in conjunction with or prior to participant observation or interviewing. Due to world events in recent years which have had a direct impact on the world in general and the Middle East in particular, a historical analysis, such as that provided in Chapter Three and Chapter Four, was essential to frame the qualitative enquiry (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982; Lincoln and Guba, 1985, 1989, 1994; Seale, 1999). As participants’ constructions of meanings need to be understood in the context being studied, historical analysis must form part of an interpretive, contextual, constructivist approach (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Patton, 1990; Schwandt, 1994; Greene, 2000).

5.1.2 Participant observation

Observation is viewed as “the fundamental base of all research methods” in the social sciences (Adler & Adler, 1994:389). As I have been involved in teaching in the Arabian Gulf, both Oman and the UAE, since 1997, this afforded me the opportunity to observe the groups of learners I wished to study. Holliday (2002:75) refers to this as “a time where she can begin to see where the connections lie and plan strategies for following such connections” and sees it as broadly characteristic of a qualitative
approach, a view echoed by Spradley (1980:34). The observation technique I used is termed participant observation, which is when the researcher becomes immersed in the setting. In my case, as I had been teaching in the Gulf for a number of years and had taught Arabic-speaking students for most of the time since I had completed my teacher training, I considered myself to be immersed in the setting. Such an approach parallels recent views on the nature of participant observation:

“establishing a place in some natural setting on a relatively long-term basis in order to investigate, experience and represent the social life and social processes that occur in that setting.” (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2001:352)

Although my focus was on the learners’ educational experience and how they adapt change in their educational environment, I also made observations on their relations with their families, reactions to the system in which they studied, the state and international political community (Morton, 1995; Wolf, 1996; Denzin, 1997; Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000). Thus I hoped to gather information that would shed light on relationship between the micro context of the classroom and the macro context of poli events, seeing how these have had an impact on the motivations of the learners to acqu high standard in the English language. I kept a diary of my observations of learners’ act and behaviour (Geertz, 1973; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; Atkinson, 1992; Loflan Lofland, 1999; Emerson et al, 2001). This is considered necessary to corrob informants’ stories, which are, according to Riessman (1993:4-5), socially constructed full of assumptions. As the observer also has some inevitable bias, observation needs t used in conjunction with other techniques, especially with interviewing (Warner, 1 Whyte & Whyte, 1984; Kane, 1985)
5.1.3 Choosing interviews

In three relatively recent studies pertaining to the Arab cultural context, notably in Oman (Costelloe, 2001) and the United Arab Emirates (Mynard, 2004; Arneson, 2005), semi-structured interviews were used. The importance of semi-structured interviews was also stressed by Kharbat (2002), using Schumann’s 1978 acculturation model, which recognises that the degree of a learner’s acculturation to the target language group will influence the degree of second language acquisition, to inform a study involving Arab female graduate students in the United States. Among the reasons given for the use of semi-structured interviews was the need to become acquainted with learners’ beliefs and their cultural perspectives.

Interviewing, combined with participant observation (see 5.1.2) is especially evident in grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), with its emphasis on coding data (see 5.2.2). As Gulf Arab tradition is traditionally an oral one, due to its Bedouin tribal roots, I also decided to use semi-structured interviews with the students, thereby letting them tell their story. Interviews have been described as “a conversation with a purpose” (Kahn & Cannell, 1957:149 and Kvale, 1996). The questions were partly determined beforehand, with the questions for the first interview being based on Gillham (2000). Following suggestions by Gillham, I had at first trialled questions on postgraduate students I was teaching on a different campus to the one where I normally taught students at the Emirati university. This enabled me to eliminate some questions that did not appear to produce a reaction, as the postgraduate students were able to give me some feedback. Then I was able
to redefine my focus in a process Gillham (2000:24) calls progressive trialling, whereby I discovered the use of more indirect questions as a means of getting participants to elaborate on a topic, while noting the importance of paralinguistic behaviour. This brought me one step closer to piloting the questions, using students as interviewers. I knew that the pilot would reveal defects that would have to be addressed, but I hoped to ensure that trialling would reduce these.

As I was not present during the Omani interviews, I wanted to ensure that the same basic questions were asked in each interview, but also leave room for the interviewers to ask more questions to draw out participants further. I decided on individual interviews, as I wanted to explore the educational experiences of the participants in detail. Furthermore, there were issues I wished to explore that may have caused anxiety to the participants involved, which would also possibly have made it difficult to find participants for focus group interviews. Gaskell (2000:48) agrees that richer, more detailed information about personal experiences can be provided by in-depth individual interviews.

Following preliminary discussions with both students and staff at the two institutions I was familiar with, it was generally agreed that students would respond more freely to interviews, not questionnaires. One must take into account that these interviews, focusing on motivation, took place during a time of heightened political tensions between the West and the Arab world. A large-scale survey could not be undertaken in the circumstances, circumstances that included student demonstrations at both institutions. If participants had been given a forum while tempers were high, I would
have received invective, which was not perhaps representative of attitudes in calmer
periods. Therefore, in-depth interviews appeared to be the best approach in the
circumstances.

Support for such an approach would seem to be borne out by some relatively recent
studies that deal with Arabic-speaking learners (Costelloe, 2001; Navqi, 2001;
successful English learners in Arab medical schools also appears to confirm the
effectiveness of interviewing as a means of eliciting information. Eleven different
Arabic-speaking countries were represented in Malcolm’s study. Even though the
survey relied on questionnaires, the “beliefs about learning English” section of the
questionnaire was the least informative in terms of results.

While surveys tend to give a somewhat average view of societal attitudes (Caldwell
and Reddy, 1988:3-4), in a rapidly changing educational environment, such as that
which currently exists in the Arabian Gulf, a more detailed picture of attitudes and
beliefs can emerge by interviewing the individuals concerned. Lincoln and Denzin
believe that the overriding concern of the qualitative researcher should be the
following realisation:

“This center lies in the humanistic commitment of the qualitative
researcher to study the world always from the perspective of the
interacting individual...must always begin with the perspectives,
desires, and dreams of those individuals and groups who have been
oppressed by the larger ideological, economic, and political forces
of a society, or a historical moment.” (Lincoln & Denzin, 1994:575)

Interviewing allows us to see from the other person’s perspective. It allows us to find
out things we cannot always directly observe (Patton, 2002:340). When attempting to understand how different people view the same things, Johnson and Weller (2002:499) advocate a more structured interviewing approach, which is endorsed by Richards in a 2003 article on qualitative enquiry in TESOL. Therefore, I decided to use two rounds of in-depth, semi-structured interviews, giving the participants a choice of using either Arabic or English.

Flexibility and adaptability are other notable elements of interviewing as method. Questions can be changed during the course of the study (Thompson, 1981:294). This sees the interview as negotiated text, which ties in with an ethnographic approach, viewing the context as an important factor. The role of the interviewer is also acknowledged:

> “Interviewers are increasingly seen as active participants in interactions with respondents, and interviews are seen as negotiated accomplishments of both interviewers and respondents that are shaped by the contexts and situations in which they take place.”
> (Fontana & Frey, 2000:663)

Any issues that arose during the first round of interviews, and issues which emerged during transcription and initial coding, could be addressed during the second round of interviews.

Interviewing was done through intermediaries in Oman, the point of my initial focus. This was because staff members advised me that learners would not speak freely to an “ajnabia”, or foreigner, particularly a Westerner. Also, as I was no longer working in Oman, but in the UAE, work and visa issues would have made it quite difficult to interview participants at times that were convenient to them. Conducting interviews in
this way, there was an effect of removing the Western woman element from the interview relationship. I wished to find out whether learners were demotivated because of having to study in the English language. I felt that being interviewed by their peers would make them feel more at ease with the interview process. Also, my former head of department felt that participants would probably be more honest with their accounts if they had a choice of language to use. By doing this, I hoped to elicit opinions that would not be diluted or angled because of the interviewer being an outsider.

Later, having completed transcription and initial coding of the first round of interviews with Omani students, it became apparent that a comparative study involving interviews with Emirati students would yield a more complete description, in order to explore a range of opinions of the issues raised about education in the Arabian Gulf. Changing the size of the sample during research is characteristic of what is known as purposive or theoretical sampling (see 5.1.3.3). Following discussions with colleagues and my supervisor, I decided to also interview twelve Emirati students, also giving them a choice as to what language to speak in. As I was working in the UAE, it was possible for me to personally conduct the interviews, so that I did not have to rely on or train intermediaries. Although I was still a foreigner, the participants’ teachers felt that they would speak freely with me, as many students openly queried why nobody ever interviewed them about anything, instead relying on questionnaires. I was nervous of interviewing students in Arabic, but quickly realised that in my daily dealing with students, we used a mixture of Arabic and English, to facilitate understanding. This also proved to be the case during the interviews.
I felt that interviews were a particularly good way of data gathering at the university where I worked in the UAE, as students exhibited a marked antipathy towards questionnaires, due to being required to fill in various questionnaires at the end of each course. If they did not do this, they would not be allowed to enrol on a subsequent course. Students in the classroom frequently voiced the negative feelings this produced. Interviews would provide more flexibility of participant response, as the participants did not have to conform to a predetermined set of categories. The quality of the study was strengthened through the nature and number of interviews.

The main disadvantage of interviewing with a small group of participants is that such a group is not obviously representative. Those who took part were well disposed towards me, as, by associating with me, they were risking university studies and future careers. I agree that such students are likely to be the most positively inclined to learning English. We could imagine that other students would voice their reluctance more stridently. This would need to be borne in mind in the analysis.

The research in Oman and the United Arab Emirates is small scale, but nonetheless useful because it makes available reliable data in an area where little exists.

5.1.3.1 Oral/Life Histories

Motivation studies have mainly concentrated on the person and small groups (Gardner and Lambert 1972; Norton 2000; Poole 2001), with a major exception being Dörnyei, Csizér and Németh (2006). There have been few attempts to relate
small group oral histories within historical analysis, with an aim to link the micro and macro contexts. Such an approach, together with participant observation, can provide multi-methodological data.

Lawless (1991) points to the increasing importance of using the oral history method in feminist research to tell the stories of women who reflect on their experiences, particularly in cultures that have hitherto relied on masculine interpretations, something that is echoed by Gluck and Patai (1991), Arneson (1993) and Fontana and Frey (2000). Wolf (1992) sees reflection as emblematic of feminist thought, whereby the relationship between power and powerlessness is examined in detail. Richards (2003:41) believes that “Classrooms offer a pre- eminent example of the unequal distribution of power and raise wider institutional and societal issues”, which may have relevance for this study.

Arneson (2005) used the oral history method of interviewing to investigate the pathways taken by successful female students at university level in the UAE. This method of interviewing is also called life history, and has been used across the social science disciplines in such fields as history, psychology, education, sociology, and political science. It can be particularly useful when the material is sensitive and there is a probable reluctance on the part of the participants to commit views to paper. The aim is to give the reader an insider’s view of culture (Edgerton & Langness, 1974; Randall, 1978; Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Marshall and Rossman note that:

“Life histories are valuable in studying cultural changes that have occurred over time, in learning about cultural deviance, and in
gaining an inside view of culture. They also help capture the evolution of cultural patterns and how the patterns are linked to the life of an individual – their significance and the individual’s reactions.” (1995:88)

Mandelbaum, (1973:176), complements Dollard’s 1935 work, which sees oral histories as essentially trying to understand the growth of an individual within a culture, defines oral histories as emphasizing “the experiences and requirements of the individuals—how the person copes with society rather than how society copes with the stream of individuals”. Oral histories are concerned with aspects of the individual’s lived experience (DeFina, 2003; Heller, 2000; Parry, 2001; Pavlenko, 2001; Pennycook, 2003b; Piller, 2002). This method focuses on the relationship between one stage of life and the next, and how the individual adapts to this.

5.1.3.1.1 Turning points

The concept of turning points used in this methodology is highly relevant to the present. Turning points are the main transitions in a person’s life due to important events and experiences, and are characterized by new roles, new social relations, and a new self-image. These experiences may be the result of a single event such as serious illness, the result of an experience such as beginning university, or may reflect change that is caused by something more gradual, such as becoming an adult. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) emphasize the importance of capturing these defining moments in the individual’s life, be they events or experiences, in ways that place value on the individual’s own reflection of perceptions and beliefs. By doing this, the researcher can use each turning to help define the problem and gain new understanding by
showing how the individual reacts.

### 5.1.3.2 Piloting

My former head of department in Oman had at first suggested that some of his Arab colleagues could conduct the interviews, together with some students. Researchers such as Cannell & Kahn, 1968; Gorden, 1987; Seliger and Shohamy, 1989; and Bartholomew, Henderson & Marcia, 2000 all note that the disadvantage of interviews is that respondents may be reluctant to freely express an opinion in front of someone they do not know very well. In addition, I believed that teachers could be regarded as power figures and that students would have greater freedom of expression in front of their peers, but was informed that a mixture of teacher and student interviewers would be used. As I was dependent on the cooperation of all involved, I acquiesced, even though I had misgivings. Chief among these misgivings was that the teacher interviewers were men, which I felt might have an impact on any information volunteered by the female participants. The vast majority of the teachers at the college were male, even though the students were female.

Subsequently, two student interviewers and two teacher interviewers were trained to conduct the interviews, which involved me travelling to Oman and meeting them. The student interviewers were former students of mine from the Science strand, as their level of understanding in English was higher and they had completed their English language studies. The teacher interviewers taught Science strand students and had published papers in the English language. I explained a little about my study, but
found that the interviewers were only interested in the fact that I was a doctoral candidate. This appeared to be enough to ensure their cooperation.

Each interviewer would interview two students, asking the questions in the same order. Using guidelines from Fowler and Mangione (1990:136-137), I gave specific instructions to each interviewer about how to deal with the question and answer process, and advised them as to what constituted effective prompts and probes. As inexperienced interviewers can have greatly varying skills, I endeavoured to minimise differences among them by scripting the questions and training interviewers not to deviate too much from them (Patton, 2002). All interviews would be taped. By training the interviewers in interview procedure, I hoped to avoid such basic problems as placing microphones too far away or batteries running out (Gorden, 1987; Matteson, 1993; Bartholomew, Henderson & Marcia, 2000).

As I wanted to create an atmosphere of trust during the interviews, I instructed the interviewers to not sit directly opposite the participants, but at a ninety-degree angle to them. This is recommended by Gillham (2000:33) in order to avoid excessive eye contact that might reflect an interrogation more than an interview. Body language is not only important to note in participants, but is also a necessary element of the interviewer’s approach. Leaning forward, for example, can indicate interest or a desire for the participant to elaborate on a topic. I also encouraged the interviewers to contact me at any time should they have any queries of any kind. Thus I hoped to achieve a degree of consistency by ensuring the interviewers were rigorous about their task.
Piloting took place in November 2003. There were a few obvious problems; the most notable being that the novice interviewers did not give the two interviewees much time to respond. This was problematic, as I wanted in-depth interviews that would yield rich data. I knew some students would not be capable of speaking in English for any considerable length of time and had hoped that they would be more comfortable in expressing their thoughts in Arabic. Gillham (2000:35) believes that becoming a listener, rather than a talker, is the single biggest problem in interviewing training, which seemed to be borne out by the pilot interviews. I spent more time explaining what I wanted, including explaining about follow up questions. The student interviewers responded well to this and asked questions so that their understanding could be clarified. By contrast, the teacher interviewers seemed unhappy at being asked to make adjustments to their interviewing technique, particularly as they had doctorates and I did not. One of them politely mentioned this to me.

However, there was a more urgent problem that needed to be addressed. This was the fact that the teacher interviewers elicited hardly any information of value. When I listened to and transcribed the tapes, there appeared to be marked hesitation on the part of the participants to respond to the questions posed in any depth. Additionally, the questions were asked by the teacher interviewers in such a way that they resembled an interrogation. This was not what I hoped to achieve, as Cannell and Kahn (1968:560) stress the rewarding effects of interviewing on the participants:

“*The opportunity to talk to a good listener, to find one’s opinions of serious interest to another person, to see that person making a real and successful effort to understand rather than to evaluate or to criticize, to*
As I was unsure if my interpretation was correct, I sought the opinion of an Arab colleague at the university where I worked in the UAE. She is a qualified translator who is a member of the Institute of Applied Linguists in London, and her help in translating and transcribing was to prove invaluable throughout the study. She confirmed my interpretation and also confirmed that perhaps the female students were wary of being forthcoming in an interview with a male teacher. Thus it appeared that Denzin’s assertion that “gender filters knowledge” (1989:116) was borne out by what had transpired in this instance, in that the interviewers’ gender, as well as status, and that of the participants did make a difference in this cultural context.

I contacted the head of department at the college, who enquired as to how the interviews had progressed. Thanking him and the interviewers for their cooperation, I said that while I appreciated the contribution of the teacher interviewers, I felt the participants seemed more comfortable to express their opinions freely in front of their peers. He agreed to have the students do the interviewing. Then, almost diffidently, he asked me if I would help one of the teacher interviewers who wished to conduct some research in the UK, but needed information on British universities. At last I understood the reason for his earlier insistence on having teacher interviewers, as I had encountered this kind of scenario many times before in the Gulf: it was a quid pro quo situation, which involved a reciprocal relationship between two parties, the idea of each helping the other. Relieved to know that from now on students would conduct the
interviewing, I gladly agreed to help the teacher interviewer. In this way, nobody was under an obligation to anyone else. Now I could proceed with data collection.

5.1.3.3 Sampling

I initially selected the participants by a process known as snowball sampling (Richards, 2003). This is a process whereby one contact leads to another. First I spoke with faculty and students who gave me the names of students who they thought might be interested in participating in the study. These students, in turn, gave me the names of other students who were interested in taking part.

Later, as my approach moved from a relatively open one to a more focused one, a degree of theoretical sampling was introduced. Theoretical, or purposive, sampling, used by many qualitative researchers, allows for the use of the process of constant comparison (Charmaz, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 2000; Dick, 2005; Janesick, 2000; Silverman, 2001; Strauss and Corbin, 1990, 1998), where the categories that emerge from analysis of the data are constantly reformulated in order to acquire a more in-depth understanding of every aspect of the phenomenon being studied. This in turn informs data collection:

“As the project moves into a more interpretive phase where major themes and issues begin to emerge, linked to broader theoretical perspectives, these will also inform data collection (and therefore involve an element of theoretical sampling).” (Richards, 2003:126)

Silverman (2001:250-252) defines theoretical sampling as choosing a case because it contains an element of a feature or process that interests the researcher. Three common
features of this kind of sampling are choosing cases in terms of the researcher’s theory, choosing ‘deviant’ cases (see section 5.1.3.4) and changing the size of the sample during the course of the research, as the emergent themes from the data are revealed. Strauss and Corbin (1998) stress that theoretical sampling occurs where they are “looking for events and incidents that are indicative of phenomena” (1998:214).

5.1.3.4 Participants

I chose the term participant, rather than respondent, interviewee or informant, because I wished to avoid the idea of a power relationship which respondent, interviewee or informant might unwittingly imply. I was also conscious of Said’s (1978) perspective on the orientalism of Western ethnographic observation, where the cultures that have been studied have been objectified, a point also noted by Marcus (1992) and by Coffey, Holbrook and Atkinson (1996). Coffey et al call for the “rediscovery of rhetoric”, which involves the removal of distance between the subjects and objects of an inquiry (Coffey, Holbrook & Atkinson, 1996:3). What I hoped to achieve was a study that was collaborative; that is, where the researcher, interviewers and participants were all participating together in gathering this information.

As I was no longer teaching in Oman, I needed permission to interview students. Following consultation with the head of the English department at the college, it was decided that twelve interviewees would be selected, six from the Science strand, and another six from the Humanities strand. There are two main strands of study at the college, Science, which attracts students with higher grades and where reading articles
in English is a necessary part of their studies, and Humanities, where students often specialize in Arabic or Islamic Studies, with no seemingly obvious need for English language study. I felt that this would give a wide range of opinions, as I wanted to see how the opinions of students with a greater need for English would compare to those of students who have little need for English.

Given the sensitive nature of the study and the “danger” to participants (ranging from being reprimanded by Ministry and college officials to difficulty in gaining employment upon graduation, should their participation become known), the decision was taken to keep the numbers small. Many learners who were approached at the outset declined to take part once they were aware of the nature of the study. Holliday concurs that a large number of participants is not always the overriding factor. Instead, the focus should be on showing the workings:

“The importance of showing the workings of qualitative research is brought home to me when a student comes to see me with such a question as, ‘Can I base my data collection on interviewing three people?’ My response to this is, ‘You can if you can articulate the justification for doing so’.” (Holliday, 2002:66-67)

I also interviewed twelve participants, six from the Science strand and six from the Humanities strand, at the university where I worked in the UAE. This gave me a total of twenty-four participants for the purposes of my study. I was fortunate in that I could match quite well the participants in terms of age, gender, subject specialisation and number of years of studying the English language. It might be asked why I interviewed so many students from the Science strand who were more successful at achieving higher grades in English, as the main focus of my research was why the majority of
learners are not quite as successful. The answer lies in the fact that I wanted to seek out negative or deviant cases (see section 5.1.3.3), an important component of constant comparison and grounded theory. Silverman (2001:53) defines deviant cases as “negative instances as defined by the theory with which you are working.” However, I also believed that a greater awareness of the experiences and perceptions of successful learners would enable me to achieve a better understanding of how less successful learners could be helped to achieve a higher standard in the English language, a view echoed by Naiman, Frohlich, Stern & Todesco (1978:8).

The participants in my study came from both urban and rural backgrounds. They were all female, aged between eighteen and twenty-two years. Some of the participants had at least one parent, usually the father, who had completed a university education. Others had parents who had completed secondary school. The remainder, approximately half of the participants, described their parents as having received little or no education, meaning that they had either not gone to school or otherwise had done so for just one or two years. All of the participants had completed general English courses and were either studying ESP (English for Specific Purposes) or had recently completed their ESP course. None had received private schooling prior to further education, as all had studied in the state school system.

Having considered the degree to which the participants reflected attitudes and beliefs in the learning contexts I was seeking to describe, I feel similar beliefs might have been expressed by other female learners. These participants can be seen as a key group of informants, as they are likely to be influential in the future through holding positions as wives, mothers, members of various professions, teachers and possibly may even have a political role. Even though my approach was interpretive, I feel that the results obtained could conceivably lead to some generalisations in other Gulf contexts. By describing the background of the participants, context is provided for a
more in-depth understanding of how they contrast their learning experiences. This, coupled with thick description, led to validity and reliability in the study.

5.1.3.5 Ethical considerations

Due to the sensitive nature of the research, a relationship of trust between researcher, interviewer and participant was of paramount importance, as the data resulting from interviews would form the basis of my study. Lather, (1993), Lincoln (1995) and Lincoln and Guba (2000) all comment on how an ethical relationship is linked to the validity of a study. Among the criteria for validity and quality in the epistemology/ethics noted by Lincoln (1995) is the extent to which the research relationship is reciprocal, rather than hierarchical, which Lincoln refers to as reciprocity.

As the quality of the data relied on the goodwill of the participants involved, they had the right to expect that I, as the researcher, would behave ethically (Silverman, 2001:267). The participants were assured of confidentiality, which appeared to be their primary concern. Patton (2002:408) distinguishes between confidentiality, which means the researcher knows but will not say anything, and anonymity, which means the researcher does not know, as, for example, when questionnaires are returned anonymously. Each student was asked to sign a consent form (Appendix i), indicating they understood the data would be tape recorded, used as part of a study, and that their privacy would be protected (Spradley, 1979; Arneson, 2005). In addition, it was agreed that their names and the names of the institutions would not be used nor would any revealing demographic data be reported, as I did not wish to jeopardise their study or job prospects.
Most students expressed concern about who would listen to their recorded voices. As some of the interviews were conducted mainly in Arabic, I enlisted the help of an Arab colleague to ensure the reliability of translation and transcription. I explained to the participants that one other person would listen to their voices on tape apart from me. They were happy to participate once they were assured that, due to the sensitive nature of some of the issues being explored, the tapes would be destroyed upon completion of the study. Recent studies in the Arabian Gulf, which have involved interviewing as a means of data collection, also destroyed interview tapes once the studies were completed (Mynard, 2004; Arneson, 2005). This minimises potential risks to participants.

As I wanted to emphasise the voluntary nature of the participants’ contribution, I assured them that they could drop out of the study at any time without being affected in any way. One Emirati student and one Omani student opted for this, after transcription had taken place and I had afforded them the opportunity to view their transcribed interviews for their comments. They asked that their interviews not be used as part of my study, and I complied with their wishes. I located two other participants, thanks to two students who had already participated in the study.

5.1.3.6 Interview procedure

The two rounds of interviews were conducted at times and places which were convenient for the participants, in their free time. As most of the participants were residents of the college and university hostel during the week, this provided the
physical setting for most of the interviews. The remaining interviews in the UAE were conducted in a room on campus that I had booked in advance. In choosing the interview settings I was endeavoring to reduce variability as much as possible, while at the same time remaining sensitive to the needs of participants (Bartholomew, Henderson & Marcia, 2000). Voice-activated tape recorders were used, due to the in-depth nature of the interviewing process and the fact that the interviews were afterwards transcribed and translated. This helped me to more accurately capture the participants’ emotions and thoughts on tape, as well as any pauses or changes in the tone of voice that may have been significant.

As the Omani interviewers and I interviewed the participants, I made slight adjustments in the nature of some questions as I observed themes begin to emerge. The development of the interview design depended to a large degree on what the participants themselves had to say (Williams, 1986; Richards, 2003). Respect for the participants’ view is central to the design of qualitative research, as “the participant’s perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it, not as the researcher views it” (Marshall & Rossman, 1995:80).

The aim of the study was to build a detailed description of Emirati and Omani learners’ experiences of English language learning and to understand what the major obstacles are that prevent them from achieving a high standard in the English language. This would come about by describing the connections between themes that had emerged from an analysis of the data available.

5.1.3.7 First round of interviews
Radnor (1994) suggests that interviews allow researchers to use the perceptions that participants have of their experiences to make inferences about their behaviour. In Oman, the students I had trained in February and March 2004, over a period of six weeks, conducted the first round of interviews. I endeavoured to ensure that the questions were reliable measures by making sure they were scripted and meant the same thing to every respondent, standards proposed by Fowler and Mangione (1990). What I wanted was not to count a large number of opinions, but, rather, to explore as wide a range of opinions as possible (Gaskell, 2000). At the beginning of each interview the student interviewers and I attempted to establish a rapport with the participants. The participants were all aware of what to expect, as the written consent forms were also explained verbally, so that the voluntary nature of their participation could be reiterated. When the interviews were completed, my Arab colleague, a qualified Arabic-English translator, assisted me with translation and transcription. We each checked what the other had translated. My initial findings seemed to bear out my choice of methodology, as most of the students interviewed were voluble.

The first round of Emirati interviews was conducted over six weeks in December 2004 and January 2005. This time I was able to conduct the interviews. Transcribing and translating took on more meaning for me, as I had made notes throughout the interviews about such elements as paralinguistic features and pauses.

The aim of the interview was to encourage the students to describe their learning experiences with a view to comparing their experiences at school and
college/university level. I also wanted them to start to analyse their experiences at a deeper cultural level, to begin to move from the micro to the macro context in order to see how different events or experiences in their lives might have had an impact on their motivations for learning English. In essence, what I was attempting to do was to encourage a form of reflexivity, in order for them to make meaningful sense of their experiences. I wanted to use the themes that would emerge from the data as a basis for the questions I would use for the second round of interviews.

In every instance the participants wanted information about my study, as they seemed to be genuinely interested. They were then able to give me a lot of rich contextual information. I had made some adjustments in the design of the questions from the Omani interviews, as I wanted the focus to develop from what the participants had to say (Williams, 1986; Richards, 2003). It was the first time any of them had participated in an individual interview.

In order to gather information, I used the questions below, but let the students’ perceptions lead the course of the interview. I started with a premise similar to Melia’s 1997 study of the life of student nurses, where interviewing was the main means of data collection. Melia believed that the experience of student nurses could be understood by asking them questions, so that they could convey an understanding of their lives through means of their own descriptions. The researcher’s interpretation can add an extra dimension to this firsthand account. The participant’s perceptions can lead to quality of data (Tripp, 1983; McCracken, 1988; Patton 1990; Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000; Kozulin, 2002). Marshall and Rossman (1995:81) believe that the most
important aspect of the interviewer’s approach is managing to convey to the participant that his or her information is valuable.

The questions I used are grouped as follows:

**Career aspirations**

- Was this course of study your first choice?

**Describing their study environment**

- Can you tell me about your English courses at university?
- Have your university English classes been different to the ones you studied at school?
- Are the English courses you study at university different in any way to the other courses you study here?
- Have your university English teachers been Arab or Western?
- What classroom activities do you like/dislike?
- What do you feel you’ve learned most from your English courses at university?

**The future**

- Do you think studying English at university will be helpful to you in the future?
- What do you hope to do when you graduate from university?
- Would you like to continue your studies after you graduate?

As well as asking the above questions, I also followed guidelines by Gillham (2000)
regarding the use of prompts and probes, especially for the more open-ended questions, as I wanted to make sure that key points were covered. The use of prompts, defined by Gillham as noting similar main points participants make, so that the interviewer can make use of prompts such as “What about…?”, ensures a form of comparability from one participant to the next, so that some form of standardisation can be achieved (Gillham, 2000:45-46). Probes are seen as supplementary questions in order to get the participants to reveal more information and should display simplicity, clarity, directness and potency (2000:47-50). What was important for me to realise during this process was that it was the accounts of the participants that were the most important thing:

“If you have a clear grasp of the principle that the interviewee owns the content and that your job is to help him or her to express that then the appropriate response will emerge almost naturally.” (Gillham, 2000:51)

A complete transcript of the first round of an interview conducted in Oman and an interview conducted in the UAE can be found in Appendix iii.

5.1.3.8 Second round of interviews

Once the first round of interviews had been completed and transcription and translation had taken place, I was then able to use the themes that were emerging in order to have a more focused question design for the second round of interviews.

The second round of interviews took place in the UAE in April and May 2005, again over a six-week period. I conducted the interviews in almost the same conditions as I had conducted the first round of interviews, with regard to setting and time. This time,
perhaps because the participants had more confidence in their ability to speak in English during an interview, all of the participants used more English during the interview. I was a little unsure as to how they would react to the sensitive nature of some of the questions, so one of the techniques I used mirrored one I had seen my students demonstrate on many occasions in the classroom, whenever they wanted to make an observation that they deemed sensitive or might cause the teacher some stress. This involved phrasing a question by asking something along the lines of the following: “Some students have mentioned A. How do you feel about that?” Again, I wished to avoid conveying the atmosphere of an interrogation. Also, I had notes from the first interview in front of me, to ensure the interview maintained a focused direction. The questions asked were quite similar to those I had asked in the first interview. My approach allowed the participants to evoke the wider context, but without being led.

The full set of questions I asked is grouped as follows:

**Detailed background of the participants**

- When you were growing up, were there any people in your town/village from other countries?
- Tell me about your best teachers in English. What made them special?

**Reflecting on their university experience**

- When you got to university, what was your orientation like?
- At university, what guidance is provided to students regarding their abilities and career? Who can they talk to?
- Do you think that English language teachers need orientation? What are some
of the things you think they need to know?

Reflecting on the role of Arabic and English in education

- What are your feelings regarding the increasing importance of English in education?

- What do you think the role of the Arabic language will be in education in the future? Will it be more or less important than the English language? What are your feelings about this?

- Do you think students have a high level in the English language here? What are the reasons for this level, in your opinion?

- Why do you think English is such an important language in the world nowadays? What do you think are the reasons for this? What are your feelings about this?

The future

- How do you see your role/position in your society in the future?

I also arranged that the second round of Omani interviews would be conducted at approximately the same time as the Emirati ones and e-mailed my former head of department at the start of the second semester of the academic year in February. He asked me to contact him again closer to the time I wished to have the interviews conducted, with the list of questions. I again e-mailed him in mid March, this time with the list of questions, but did not receive a reply. After a week, I e-mailed him again, assuming he had not received my earlier communication. I still did not receive a reply, so, at the end of March, I e-mailed a colleague, explaining my predicament.
He agreed to speak to the head of department. Later the following day, he contacted me, saying that the head of department had behaved in a very agitated manner when approached about the interviews, telling my colleague that he was extremely busy with work, and would contact me about in due course regarding this matter. I feared that the interviews would not take place at all, as I did not receive any communication. This was something I interpreted as meaning that the head of department was unhappy with the interview questions. Unsure of what to do, as the June summer holidays were approaching, I again e-mailed him, asking him if it would be convenient for him to meet with me if I travelled to Oman to the college. He replied that it was not, but that if I contacted the student interviewers, I could discuss the matter with them. I took this to imply that he did not wish to be associated with the interviews in any way, but that I could proceed as long as he was not involved.

After this, I contacted the student interviewers, who were willing to conduct the interviews. The interviews took place over a condensed two-week period in May 2005, again in a mixture of Arabic and English. The interviews were translated and transcribed with the help of the same native Arabic-speaker colleague who had helped me with the first round of interviews. We were in e-mail contact over the next few months in order to complete transcription and translation.

A complete transcript of the second round of an interview conducted in Oman and an interview conducted in the UAE can be found in Appendix iv.

5.1.4 Unobtrusive research
Unobtrusive evidence is also known as mute evidence (Hodder, 2000:73), or the study of written texts and artefacts. Lincoln and Guba (1985:277) distinguish between records, an example of which could be university regulations, and documents, such as memos, which are closer to speech; on the basis that interpretation depends on whether the text was prepared for official reasons (university regulation) or for more personal reasons (memos). They note that records involve “a full state technology of power”.

Different views can be explored in unobtrusive evidence, which makes it relevant to qualitative researchers. The main advantage is that I was easily able to check facts, and I did not need to disturb the setting in any way (Gottschalk, 1979; Marshall and Rossman, 1995). For the purposes of my study, the unobtrusive evidence I studied included university regulations, departmental memos, exams, grades and test scores, newspaper articles and photos. I was able to confirm that learners’ grades have progressively become lower in most instances, lending credence to their perception that their standard in English is not high. This enabled me to build a profile of the learners, matching the records with what participants said and continue to deepen my understanding of the learners’ context.

5.2 Data Analysis

Data analysis was an ongoing part of the study from completion of the first interview, as it helped to generate strategies for better questions for the second round of interviews.
Miles and Huberman, 1984; and Wolcott, 1994; have outlined a procedure for data analysis which includes the following: keeping a diary in which to record impressions and themes after each interview; transcribing tapes as soon as possible after the interview; and completing a Contact Summary Sheet on each interview. The contact summary sheet included a description of the location and time of the study, a summary of the important details given by the participant and the focus required for the next interview. The student interviewers in Oman provided me with contact summary sheets with the location and time of the interviews and a summary of important details provided by the participants.

5.2.1 Transcribing interviews

Silverman (2001:162) sees the advantages of tapes and transcripts as being threefold, namely; that transcripts are a public record of what has been said, repeated listenings lead to improved transcripts and actual sequences of talk can be preserved. This is echoed by Hammersley and Heritage (1984) and by Seale (1999:148) who advocates:

“recording observations in terms that are as concrete as possible, including verbatim accounts of what people say, rather than researchers’ reconstructions of the general sense of what a person said, which would allow the researchers’ personal perspectives to influence the reporting.”

There seems to be a general consensus on the importance of transcribing (Brown & Yule, 1983; Cohen & Manion, 1985; Van Lier, 1988; Gillham, 2000; Richards, 2003; Arneson, 2005). The words the participants speak to ascribe meaning to their experiences is seen by Edge and Richards (1998) to be one of the core issues that need to be addressed in qualitative research in the TESOL context.
Each transcript was clearly labelled and identified. I typed questions in bold and also used different typing fonts for the first interviews (Comic Sans MS) and the second interviews (Book Antiqua). This allowed me to see how the passage of time may have influenced what the participants said. I also used Microsoft Word functions to assign a different colour to each of the participants (Mynard, 2003). This meant that I could change the colour of the entire transcript, which would prove extremely useful when copying and pasting extracts of what the participants had said into different documents, so that I could more easily keep track of which abstracted statements could be attributed to each of the participants.

The interviews for each participant produced up to twenty pages of transcripts, depending on the length of the interview. In general, the transcripts for the second interviews were longer than those for the first interviews. When I had transcribed each of the interviews, I sent a copy to the participants by e-mail. I encouraged them to comment on my representation of what they had said, adding that they could change anything they wished to. Six participants had comments to make, four Emirati and two Omani. These comments resulted in further additions to the transcripts. By seeking respondent validation (Silverman, 2001:233), the validity of my account was enhanced. I wanted to represent the contextual phenomena to which the participants’ accounts referred as accurately as possible, which Hammersley (1990) refers to as an important component of validity.

As I did not want to simplify too much, I took the suggestions of Brown and Yule,
1983; Van Lier, 1988; Silverman, 2001 and Richards, 2003 on board regarding the use of transcription symbols. This enabled me to try to fulfil the three criteria proposed by Richards (2003:199-205) for good transcription; namely fitness for purpose, adequacy and detail. A list of the transcription symbols I used can be seen in Appendix ii.

Once this process had been completed, I was then able to work with the raw data in order to conceptually code them. Grounded theory, which helped with this process, is described in the following section.

5.2.2 **Using elements of grounded theory**

Theory as defined by Strauss and Corbin is a set of developed categories that are related to form a theoretical framework that explains “some relevant social, psychological, educational, nursing or other phenomenon” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:22). Raw data alone cannot generate theory. First:

> “The incidents, events, happenings are taken as, or analysed as, potential indicators of phenomena, which are thereby given conceptual labels…. Only by comparing incidents and naming like phenomena with the same term can the theorist accumulate the basic units for theory.” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:7)

Next, the concepts are, in effect, grouped together in order to represent more complex categories, before finding relationships between categories and concepts, which are known as propositions (Pandit, 1996). My approach is similar to constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2000) in some ways (see 5.2.3), as I wished to make interpretive sense of the data in order to understand a situation from the participants’ perspective. I am also concerned with the emic perspective, which involves a thorough
understanding of the meaning perspective of the participants involved (Richards, 2003).

One of the ways in which my approach differs to Glaser’s conception of grounded theory is in my use of transcripts of the interviews. As is noted by Dick (2005), Glaser (1992) does not recommend transcribing interviews, preferring instead to rely on note taking and recording in interviews. I felt this would not be conducive to my study for the following reasons. First, there was the language factor to consider, as I was not entirely sure if my understanding of Arabic would be correct. Secondly, I wished to ensure there was an element of standardisation of interviewers, as I was not the only interviewer, and had no way of otherwise knowing if the other interviewers’ interpretations would be correct. Finally, I was familiar with Janesick’s (2000:389) assertion that “Staying close to the data is the most powerful means of telling the story.”

In addition, unlike the original formulation of grounded theory, I began this study with a specific research problem in mind, as I wished to investigate the reasons for the apparent lack of SLA success among learners in Oman and the UAE. However, Strauss and Corbin later acknowledged that a phenomenon to be studied can be indicated by a research question (Haig, 1996). This was certainly the case with my study.

Two studies conducted by Mynard with female students in the UAE (2003, 2004) deal with the potentially advantageous role of computer technology to facilitate
motivation and learner autonomy in the study of English as a foreign language. One of the main means of data collection involved the use of semi-structured interviews, the analysis of which incorporated the use of some aspects of grounded theory.

Glaser and Strauss (1967:3) originally defined grounded theory as “a strategy for handling data in research, providing modes of conceptualisation for describing and explaining.” Although it has undergone many changes over the years, grounded theory was originally conceived as theory that emerged from data. In order to explain the phenomenon under study, the emergent nature of theory was stressed, as conceptual, or explanatory, categories would evolve from the use of the constant comparative method of data analysis. The conceptual categories were integrated around core categories, allowing data to emerge (Melia, 1997). “Theoretical sensitivity”, as described by Glaser and Strauss, happened when data collection and data analysis simultaneously occurred, until a core category appeared and was then “saturated.” Theory groups concepts in order to explain the phenomenon under study, and has been defined by Strauss and Corbin (1994:278) as consisting of “plausible relationships produced among concepts and sets of concepts.”

Since then, Glaser and Strauss have moved in somewhat different directions (Glaser, 1978, 1992; Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1990, 1994, 1998), although Charmaz (2000) notes that they retain common elements of positivism and objectivism. Glaser assumes there is an external reality where the neutral observer discovers data and reductively manages it, whereas Strauss and Corbin propose a set of procedures in order to verify the data, which gives more voice to the
respondents, indicative of a more post positivist approach. While Glaser questions whether concepts emerge or data are forced into them, Strauss and Corbin appear to have disregarded ‘saturation’ of categories in their 1990 work. Forcing the data or whether the data emerge seems to be the main point of difference between Glaser and Strauss, although Strauss and Corbin (1994:283) believe it is feasible to have differing views of grounded theory:

“..no inventor has permanent possession of the invention – certainly not even of its name – and furthermore we would not wish to do so....a child once launched is very much subject to a combination of its origins and the evolving contingencies of life. Can it be otherwise with a methodology?”

Charmaz (2000) takes the argument a step further, as she recognises the joint creation of knowledge by the researcher and the researched. By aiming for a more interpretive understanding of the respondents’ meanings, also supported by Guba and Lincoln (1994), she advocates a more constructivist grounded theory. Further support of this approach would appear to be forthcoming from the main proponents of grounded theory (Glaser, 1994; Strauss, 1987, 1995), who admit that their approaches have changed over time and have become less positivist in nature. Grounded theory would also appear to have become more practical (Charmaz, 1990; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lonkila, 1995), as the aim is to understand the experience of people “in as rigorous and detailed a manner as possible” (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). The most important feature to note is that grounded theory does not test a hypothesis, but instead theory emerges from the data.

One of the major components of my data analysis involved using aspects of grounded
theory to develop a coding system as a means of organizing the information, so that concepts and themes could be placed in categories. The fundamental tasks associated with coding are identifying themes, building codebooks, marking texts and identifying relationships among codes in order to construct meanings about blocks of texts (Ryan & Russel Bernard, 2000:780). Codes have also been described as categories (Miles & Huberman, 1984:56). I formed the codes based on the themes that evolved from the participant’s telling of her own story. Literature reviews also informed code building, as did my own experience within the contexts being studied.

When I began to code the transcripts and other data conceptually, I did limited sentence and paragraph level analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This helped me to formulate hypotheses (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1994, 1998), which could be modified as new data was collected and in turn analysed. In order to do this, I read through each of the transcripts line by line, which is part of becoming grounded in the data, according to the grounded theory approach.

When all of the interviews, from the first and second rounds, were transcribed, I examined each transcript numerous times. I began by proofreading the transcripts and highlighting the substantive statements. This helped me to identify potential themes, referred to in the literature as “open-coding” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Bogdan and Bilken, 1992; Ryan & Russel Bernard, 2000). By also using the suggestions of Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Arneson, (1995) I was able to draw on what the participants themselves had said in order to enable me to identify emerging themes, which is known as “in-vivo coding”, I was able to use the constant

“Open coding”, a procedure associated with grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), involved a thorough reading of each line of transcript, abstracting extracts from the transcripts and copying and pasting them into new documents, using them to demonstrate phenomena, which were then labelled as concepts. This led to “axial coding” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), which involved comparing concepts so that categories could be developed and relationships between the categories could be identified. The aim was not to quantify data, but to categorize it. By examining the properties and connections between categories, I was able to use the data to explain the phenomena under investigation. Then the categories could be refined over time, which is known as selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This involved identifying and expanding poorly developed categories and dropping excess data in other categories. Using some grounded theory approaches provided for rigorous analysis of the interview data in order to make the participants’ implicitly held beliefs more explicit:

“To seek respondents’ meanings, we must go further than surface meanings or presumed meanings. We must look for views and values as well as acts and facts. We need to look for beliefs and ideologies as well as situations and structures. By studying tacit meanings, we clarify, rather than challenge, respondents’ views about reality.”

(Charmaz, 2000:525)

5.2.3 Constructivism

Constructivism, within a pedagogical framework, views reality as something that is
socially constructed, through seeking to understand how meaning is created (Richards, 2003:38). In other words, individuals behave in different ways at different times, based on factors such as their prior lived experience, knowledge and how it is construed, and reflexivity. My study is informed by a constructivist epistemology, as I recognize that both researcher and researched create knowledge, and seek to understand the participants’ meanings in an interpretive manner, an approach also advocated by Charmaz (2000). Denzin and Lincoln (2000:157) define epistemology as asking questions about how the researcher sees the world.

As constructivists believe that knowledge is constructed rather than transmitted (Jonassen, Peck & Wilson, 1999), this means that the importance of the learners’ constructions of meanings of events and experiences have a direct effect on their motivation and learning.

The first task of a constructivist approach is to seek to understand the meanings given by participants to their experiences in the context being studied. Greene (2000:986) notes that such constructions are influenced by historical, geopolitical and cultural practices. This section, by outlining some of the methodological approaches used in previous studies, has argued for personal statements to be taken from the learners, in line with current constructivist approaches that view the meanings participants attach to their experiences as relevant. In essence, social psychological and constructivist frameworks complement each other, acknowledging that the background of the learners is important to understand when considering the design of this study.
If constructivism focuses on the meanings that learners construct in the classroom, or the micro-context, a social-psychological approach recognises the influence of the wider world outside the classroom, or the macro-context. Researchers such as Packer and Goicoechea (2000) and Mynard (2003) comment on the usefulness of incorporating both approaches. Bruner (1996) would appear to argue against this, saying that the two perspectives have arisen from two very different worldviews and epistemologies, but my reading of the literature seems to suggest that a social-psychological approach informs more recent versions of constructivism.

Therefore, I have argued for looking at the ways in which the approaches previously discussed complement each other, in order to provide a deeper understanding of motivational factors involved in SLA in the Arabian Gulf context. Because of the context of my study, and given recent events on the international political arena, resulting in the worsening relationship between the West and the Arabic-speaking world, it is not only necessary to consider the cultural background of the learners I am studying, but also the political situation in which they are studying. I consider this to be an important element of my research. As has already been considered (see 2.3.1, 2.3.3, 2.3.5, 2.3.9, 2.3.10), motivation has been influenced by the cultural context, especially when the learner has been placed in a new college classroom environment, where different cognitive skills are expected.

Learners from Arab countries have been reported to experience difficulties when studying at institutions in other countries due to differences in educational approaches (Naqvi, 2001; Kharbat, 2002). One of the reasons given is that they have to adapt to
different cognitive strategies involving critical thinking and reflexivity, which may differ from the main strategy they used in their home educational environment, rote memorisation. Might not this also be the case when Gulf Arab learners enter college, particularly when pedagogical approaches are becoming more Western in nature? This could affect motivation.

Pennycook (1994, 1997) advocates awareness of cultural and political contexts, and the effect attitudes about the target community have in the classroom, where students may be angered by associations. This will enable me to understand how power relations inform pedagogy (see 2.3.10), and how this may influence motivation.

One of the most important points to consider when choosing a methodology is that the research method be compatible with the questions being asked (Bloland, 1992). Also, it should suit the environment being studied (Holliday, 2002). By deciding on a qualitative research methodology, I felt it to be appropriate for a “person-centred enterprise” (Richards, 2003) that is particularly suitable to the fields of TESOL and language teaching. I believed such an approach would be effective at eliciting learners’ perceptions of their experiences and motivations of learning English as a foreign language. The oral history method of seeking to understand questions about groups and cultural contexts through placing value on how the individuals view their experiences was used, which Bogdan and Bilken (1982:10) refer to as “understanding the subjects’ world”. What I wished to do was to offer my interpretations of this particular language-learning context, based on the beliefs and perspectives of the participants, which is characteristic of an interpretive approach.
In so doing I took into account Kuhn’s (1962) demonstration of the dualism of subject and object and Hansen’s (1958) assertion that a researcher can influence what is observed by the background knowledge he or she possesses. My worldview would inevitably become part of the representation of the participants’ meanings as I sought to understand their perceptions in the context being studied. This approach is constructivist and interpretive (Greene, 2000:986). In essence, what I was attempting to achieve through understanding the meaning of the participants’ beliefs was a more holistic understanding of their language-learning context (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Patton, 1990; Greene, 2000). There is no one single methodological tradition I am working under because I am looking at different levels, namely the micro level of the learner, the meso level of the classroom and the higher education institution, the macro level of policies in Oman and the United Arab Emirates and the super macro level of world political events. Therefore, the methodology I would choose needed to be appropriate for different levels.

5.3 Research question

This research deals with the multiple and complex reasons for the apparent lack of success in English language learning in Arabic-speaking countries, particularly Oman and the UAE. I began with a deliberately broad research question, following the suggestions of Strauss and Corbin (1998), in order for the categories and the theory to emerge from the data. The question was:

What are the major motivational obstacles to learning that prevent
The broad research question served a multitude of purposes. By combining an investigation of the learners’ attitudes and beliefs about their educational experiences with my own observations, I hoped to paint a picture of how individual, cultural and societal values interact in a rapidly changing societal and educational environment, and have an impact on learners’ motivation to achieve a high standard in the English language.

5.4 Limitations

Many of the limitations to this study have already been identified and discussed above, but I shall provide a review of them here. In doing so I shall refer to a discussion of limitations in the literature and outline my justifications for proceeding in the way I did.

Anecdotalism, (Silverman, 1997, 2001; Kozulin, 2002) is one of the main criticisms aimed at qualitative research, but I believe that, in this instance, the study conducted needed to understand how the participants view their experiences and influences. The participants provided perspectives in interviews that might not otherwise have been identified by the researcher (Miller & Glassner, 1997; Kozulin, 2002).

The point may be made that I could have used a larger number of participants. However, I do not feel that more participants would necessarily have contributed to a greater understanding. The qualitative methodology I employed, particularly
participant observation, added rigour to the inquiry (Flick, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), and strove to describe the uniqueness of the phenomenon as fully as possible. I do not believe I would have found widely different views by using more participants, given that the participant profile I am looking at is most positive. As the interview accounts had themes in common, which Silverman (2001:104) describes as “interview-as-local-accomplishment”, I did not wish to reach a point of having too many accounts reveal diminishing returns.

More than two interviews could have been conducted with each participant, which would certainly have resulted in more data. However, repeated readings of the transcripts resulted in saturation of data, as nothing new emerged in the participants’ accounts. Marshall and Rossman (1995) state that an awareness of the limitations means problems can be circumvented. In this case, a multiplicity of data collection methods was the way in which I acknowledged the potential weakness of what could be perceived as a relatively small number of interviews.

The issue of researcher control is possibly one of the greatest limitations of this study. Choosing both participant observation and interviewing as data collection methods meant that I had a direct effect on the context being studied. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) and Atkinson and Silverman (1997) note that interviewer and participant collaborate together in order to represent a view of reality. Denzin and Lincoln (2000:872) point to the emergence of a consensus within qualitative research that the researcher inevitably has an effect on what is being studied:

“... all research reflects the standpoint of the enquirer... there is no possibility of theory-free knowledge. We can no longer think of
I sought to represent the participants’ perspectives on their learning experiences as fully as possible by getting them to voice these perspectives through interviews (Cohen & Manion, 1985; Charmaz, 1995a, 1995b, 2000; Baszanger, 1998). By adhering to a code of ethics, I endeavoured not to distort the participants’ accounts. Constructivism takes into account that knowledge is something that is actively and mutually created both by the researcher and the participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Charmaz, 2000). I encouraged the participants to probe deeply into their learning experiences, as was necessitated by my research question, but at all times stressed the voluntary nature of their contribution. By offering the participants the opportunity to view and edit their interview transcripts, I sought to reduce what could have been construed as a researcher’s biased interpretations of what they had said by seeking their views on how I had represented their accounts.

This ties in with grounded theory methods, which offer a set of flexible strategies:

“The relevance of grounded theory derives from its offering analytic explanations of actual problems and basic processes in the research setting. A grounded theory is durable because it accounts for variation; it is flexible because researchers can modify their emerging or established analyses as conditions change or further data are gathered.” (Charmaz, 2000:511)

My data collection methods enabled me to collect a body of data that I was then able to analyse so as to identify some of the motivational reasons for a lack of SLA success. In the following findings chapter I will display how an analysis of the data allowed me to interpret concepts that emerged from data reduction, a process defined by Miles and
Huberman (1994) as the researcher’s choices of concepts, research questions and cases. I have attempted to reduce researcher bias while at the same time representing the participants’ accounts in as accurate a manner as possible.
6.0 Overview

This chapter presents the findings of the data collection. By employing the grounded theory techniques of open and axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), I was able to form themes and extract salient points from the data so that the strength of the patterns can be clearly seen. Themes emerged naturally as a result of the participants relating their experiences. For example, a main focus was on the participants’ frustration at lack of information from university administrations. Codes were then developed to describe these feelings. A code is defined by Miles and Huberman (1984:56) as an:

“abbreviation or symbol applied to a segment of words—most often a sentence or paragraph or transcribed field notes in order to classify the words—codes are categories.”

I have drawn on the interview data, historical analysis (see Chapters 3 and 4), participant observation and unobtrusive research (see Chapter 5) and will present them at relevant points throughout this findings chapter. These will serve to provide depth of analysis to the codes that are presented in the following sections. I will use the following fonts throughout to represent interview data extracts:

- Examples of participant quotations from the transcribed interviews

- My comments and questions from the transcribed interviews

- Extracts from my observational notes

As the main focus of the research was to examine which motivational factors were most significant in preventing learners from achieving a higher standard in the English language, I will not measure the learners’ motivation. The emphasis is on how learners construct their experiences. Through rigorous examination and analysis of the data, six
main themes were identified: pedagogy, role models, top down approach, instrumental variables, integrative variables, the Arabic language and super macro variables.

6.1 Pedagogy

The main finding appears to be that the pedagogical style and classroom environment affect learning and motivation. This theme is closely intertwined with three others: the top down approach, instrumental variables and the Arabic language. This section describes the pedagogical elements viewed by the learners as the primary factors that have influenced their motivation to learn English and the way they link with other factors.

6.1.1 Teaching strategies

Many of the participants express a strong desire to learn English but feel that the teaching strategies employed in the classroom hamper their chances of successful acquisition and achieving a higher level in the language. Emirati learners generally exhibit a more positive attitude towards a variety of class activities than Omani learners do.

Most participants assert their belief that not all types of methodology can be used, at least not without some form of introduction or explanation, as learners usually have a very different type of learning experience in school. Khaseeba’s comment serves to reinforce the need for better explanation of different ways of learning by teachers in
Oman:

67. I prefer female teachers, because most of our male teachers were crazy. Such as the teacher who taught us in year two he asked us To DRAW! Which is absolutely irrelevant to the course.

Johara, on the other hand, is not acknowledging difficulty in adapting to new methodologies at university in the United Arab Emirates. Her initial reaction was fear, not of the methodologies employed, but fear of asking for help. However, she persevered and has been relatively successful as a result:

98. when we came to university. Some of the material that we have taken at university was the same material that we were taught in school but we didn’t remember it. A good student in secondary high school may not do well at university because they just memorized things without understanding and making necessary connections in their thinking. We did not work on problems that showed that we understood anything about the subject. hhh When I came here, to this university, I saw that my English was so weak. This made me sad. But I was afraid to ask anything because I thought I would be punished, so I think I did not ask for help like I should have. However, I did ask a few questions and people were helpful, so I thought maybe it would be ok.

From the above we can perceive that the methodology employed at school level does not always foster questioning or independent learning, which can make university a daunting and challenging experience. Even though Johara was afraid to ask for help when she encountered a new system at university, she bravely conquered her fear and took responsibility for her learning.

Not everyone feels that university teaching strategies differ from those in the schools,
however. Fakhera does not explicitly say that she sees the relevance of employing a range of methodologies; she says that the claim to use a range of provocative teaching methodologies does not actually happen:

300. at university, because when I came here I thought I would
301. have more opportunities to use my language in the class.
302. But, you know, what happens is that the teachers tell us
303. that we must think in a different way and think when we
304. use the language and think when we write, but then they
305. give us lists and lists of things, of vocab. and things like
306. that, to learn for the exams. That means we are learning
307. things by heart for the exams, which is exactly the same
308. thing we did when WE WERE AT SCHOOL! So this
309. has to be changed.

Fakhera believes that at university, pressure of assessment means that in many instances teachers resort to the same rote memorisation techniques used in schools. Therefore, claims to use different teaching strategies are merely empty rhetoric. This can send conflicting messages to learners regarding the benefits of different methodologies. As one teacher remarked in the United Arab Emirates:

“I no longer feel like a teacher. Every day for the past two weeks I’ve been throwing vocabulary list after vocabulary list at these girls. I have no choice, as they need to know it for the exam. So much for communicative methodology and critical thinking – how is this different to what they do in the schools?” (extract from observational notes, February 2005)

Of the Omani participants, Jokha and Khaseeba expressed the most dissatisfaction with the methodology used in the classroom, revealing how their expectations were not borne out by reality. Jokha found her motivation suffered as a result:

115. Were your expectations right?
116. No. In the beginning, I expected that by the end of year
117. three, I would be very good in English. What
118. happened was we did not learn anything! We even
Jokha’s assertion that her level became lower turned out to be correct, as an examination of her exam grades in English at college revealed her level became progressively lower during her studies. Most participants had high expectations of study at university level, even though by their own admission they had received little to no preparation for higher education in the schools. Learners hope for a different experience, and when university does not live up to their preconceptions, their motivation appears to decline over time.

In the neighbouring United Arab Emirates, Sara believes that once learners accept life at university differs from that at school, progress will be made. Again, the ability to adapt successfully to change appears to positively influence motivation and therefore second language acquisition:

173. and I think students who come to university have to
174. realize that it’s not the same as what high school. Here
175. we have to take responsibility for for ourselves. Yes,
176. it’s difficult at first, but it gets easier. Anyway,
177. it’s good to do things in a different way.

What Sara seems to request is a more comprehensive system of orientation for learners, so that when different methodology is used in universities, it can be explained in such a way so that learners can process it:

97. have experience of the system. Students who come here at
98. first have no idea what’s happening and it is very difficult
99. for them the teaching methods, times of classes, doing
100. research when they come here from school, they are
101. used to having everyone help them as much as possible, but
102. here, there is nobody to show them the way, to show
Ultimately, perhaps the best solution to the dilemma for learners of teaching strategies is proposed by Mariam, who proposes a combination of traditional and more modern methods in Oman:

144. In school I thought my teachers were great, even though their methods were not always the best, but maybe there should be a combination of new and old methods, not just modern ways, because group work and these things are not always suitable to our situation.

This parallels an observation I made during my first semester in Oman, when teaching a class that did not seem to respond to the group work promoted by the textbook:

“I decided to do something different with the girls today, as they didn’t seem to be responding too well to a communicative style of teaching. So I mixed it up a little, using some methods they were more familiar with from their schooldays. For the first time this semester, I got a genuinely positive response. This isn’t what I’ve been trained to do, but it’s what works.” (extract from observational notes, October 1997)

If learners respond to what is familiar, then it makes sense to use some of what they are familiar with in classroom materials to enhance motivation to learn and succeed.

### 6.1.2 Classroom materials

Most of the participants expressed the view that many of the materials currently in use in higher education institutions in the Gulf are culturally unsuitable. The textbooks are usually either North American or British, designed for multicultural settings and smaller class sizes. Basma comments on the unsuitability of some cultural topics for the classroom in Oman and reveals the approach of the ministry to some of the
pictures the textbooks contain:

88. sometimes the materials are not suitable for our culture,
89. because we use books from other countries that talk
90. about going to the pub and things like that.
91. Sometimes the Ministry puts black on the pictures or
92. something that they don’t want us to see, which is silly.

I once taught a general English course in Oman using the Headway series. Basma is correct in stating that many pictures were blacked out. An unintended side effect of this was that learners were stimulated to seek out original copies, with some measure of success! However, another Omani participant, Hind, points out that even when material about Arab cultures is discussed in the classroom, it is still irrelevant to the reality of learners’ lives today:

345. our level. Of course, we also need better books that are
346. more suitable for us. It’s useful to learn about other
347. cultures from the Arab teachers, but we always learn about
348. Arab cultures in history, and I want to learn more than that.
349. History is important, but I also want to learn about the
350. world today. We need better books that relate to our lives
351. today and tell us about the Gulf, not just life in America and
352. Europe. Some of us will never travel to other countries,
353. so I think we should concentrate on what’s familiar to us.

Hind would like to see the inclusion of materials about Arab culture in the world today, as Arab culture is usually discussed in the classroom within a historical context. This is a point that many learners have raised with me in informal conversations in both countries, as the following extract from my observational notes illustrates:

“Had an interesting conversation with F…. this afternoon after class. We’d been talking about the contribution of Arabs to Science and Maths and she made the point that this was partly a history lesson. She’d like more discussion of the contribution of Arabs to Science and Technology in the Gulf today, so I asked her to help me find the information.”

(extract from observational notes, March 2003)
By working together, we were able to find material to stimulate a fruitful class debate. I subsequently employed this idea with other classes and many learners participated in the gathering of interesting information. This is just one example of how teachers can also influence the degree of motivation exhibited by learners. An examination of this follows below.

6.1.3 Teacher influence

The important role the teacher has to play in the classroom also reflects theoretical points in the literature review. For many participants, the stark contrast between the role of the teacher in school and at university causes a vast difference in their learning experience.

6.1.3.1 Teacher-learner relationship

Fakhera relates the relationship between teacher and learner to the motivation she has to study English:

132. it depends on teachers, you know, most of the time I 133. think it depends on the teacher. I think a good 134. teacher can create an excellent classroom atmosphere. 135. When this happens, as I think it often does in English 136. class students can achieve anything if they work 137. hard. This doesn’t always happen when the subject is 138. taught in Arabic, as a lot of these teachers just sit and 139. lecture, with no interaction between them and the 140. students. With English teachers, the relationship 141. between the teacher and the students is very important, 142. and I think that this is a good thing.
What appears in the participants’ accounts of learning English is a difference in how they perceive the relationship between teacher and learner in school and university, which may account for the high expectations they have upon arrival at university. In the United Arab Emirates, for example, Fatma depicts her relationship with her English teachers in school as one built on fear:

63. Primary school wasn’t very good. I don’t remember much about it, except that the teachers were very strict and they would beat us if we didn’t remember something. They didn’t have good qualifications, and I didn’t like it at all. 67. They made us afraid to say anything, because if we got the answer wrong, then they would HIT us. They just wanted us to learn everything exactly from the book, we weren’t supposed to use our minds at all.

The harshness of her school experience was mirrored by many participants from both groups. For Fatma, learning at university is a more positive experience and she now enjoys learning English. Her abhorrence of punishment is in stark contrast to how Sara views the punishment meted out to pupils in schools:

62. In secondary school There was a good teacher in second grade. She made a big impression on me, as I learned many things from her. She had a wonderful personality and used [makes a sign to indicate a stick]. 66. She used a stick? 67. Yes, she used the stick to beat the students and make them learn. The reason she punished us was to make our level better, higher, to educate us. This was very good, especially for my class, because they didn’t care about their studies. This is what happens in most schools here, because the students have to be made to learn. This is how it works. Discipline is important. It helps to make them better, to remember. Of course, she only did this in class only, not outside the class! [laughs]
As we can see, Sara indicates a degree of wider acceptance of methods of harsh punishment as a means to make students learn. She sees this as a sign the teacher truly cares. Many participants comment on wishing to please the teacher, as this is what they learned in school.

Amna also comments on the differences between school and university, noting that the focus on independent learning may be one reason why the teacher-learner relationship is different at university:

64. her, I did only with her. Uh, also she knew a lot about
65. grammar and structure, and, more importantly, she knew
66. how to teach it so that I remembered it. She made it
67. interesting. Her way of teaching was new for me, totally
68. new, really learning English. She had a big effect on me
69. because I wasn’t afraid to speak English. She helped me to
70. love the language. Then I came to university, and I thought
71. it, I thought, hoped it would be the same, but I was
72. wrong. In university, the, the first, the first semester, I didn’t
73. really like it at all. The teachers were different, nobody
74. helped me and I didn’t understand anything that was going
75. on. In school, people always helped me to understand,
76. helped me if I had a problem. I felt confused, as I thought
77. university would be different.

Fortunately, good communication with one university teacher led to a move towards independent learning for Amna, which has helped her to feel more motivated to learn English:

100. I wrote what I thought the teacher wanted me to write, even
101. if I had a different idea about something. I was writing to get
102. a good mark in exams, that’s all. My mind wasn’t open
103. about, my mind wasn’t open to writing about my ideas, to
104. write what I wanted, what my opinion was. In this period, I
105. thought a lot in ESP class. I used my ideas, not other ideas.
106. My teacher in ESP told me that my ideas were just as good
107. as anyone else’s, she really encouraged me to do my best,
108. not to write what I thought she wanted me to, but to write
what I wanted to. Nobody had told me anything like this before. She praised my ideas, helped me to organize, corrected my grammar, but the ideas were mine. And I think this was a very big step for me, to do things independently in writing. Now I feel I am close to a point where I’ll love writing.

Communicating with someone in another language can also promote feelings of freedom and thus enhance the teacher-learner relationship, as mentioned by Fakhera:

234. different knowing English can make me feel free
235. sometimes, because I know I feel I can say things in English
236. that I can’t say in Arabic, you know? Like when I talk to
237. a teacher here that I talk to a lot. She is Western, and I
238. don’t know, but I can tell her things in English that I can’t
239. tell my friends in Arabic. Some of my friends feel the
240. same way, I’m sure, maybe because in your native language
241. there are some some things that prevent you sometimes
242. from saying how you feel, so if you say them in a foreign
243. language, in English, it feels ok. I like English because
244. of this.

Israa is of the opinion that the relationship between teacher and learner is directly affected by the way university administration treats teachers:

389. many students don’t respect the teachers. My father is a
390. teacher and my culture tells me I should respect them a lot,
391. because they teach us many things, and this is what the
392. Qur’an tells us too, but if the university doesn’t respect
393. them, the students won’t and this will create many problems
394. for learning.

According to her assertion, a lack of respect for teachers at university by the administration will filter downwards into a corresponding lack of respect for teachers by learners. Respect becomes particularly salient when participants expand on how they view teachers who come from a different national background to teach in the
Middle East, as the next section illustrates.

6.1.3.2 Teacher ethnicity

For the majority of learners, the first time they encounter non-Arab teachers is when they arrive at higher education institutions. Basma exemplifies the strong preference for Arab teachers of English in Oman, citing greater cultural understanding:

66. Arab, definitely. Because we Arabs can understand each other, whereas some problems might occur when the teacher is foreign. For example, when any misunderstanding happens, there will be tension, because students might try to overpower him, whereas this cannot be done with an Arab teacher. We have more CONTROL over foreign teachers because they don’t have any power at all in the college not like the Arab teachers. We will respect both teachers, but I prefer an Arab teacher.

In addition, she shows an understanding of the power politics at play and intimates that Arab teachers have greater control over learners in the classroom.

Although most Emirati learners reveal a marked preference for non-Arab teachers of English, Lamya remarks that the relationship between Arab teachers and Emirati learners is a stronger one than exists between non-Arab teachers and learners:

65. that, uh, that Arab teachers, Arab teachers, too uh, are different from Western teachers, because Arab teachers, uh, have the time to talk about themselves and talk about their lives, but, uh, Western teachers, some of them not all Western teachers, talk only the subject. That’s all they talk about yeah, some of them. This is not part of our culture, you know? More Western teachers should learn how to communicate with the students. This is part of our learning. Western
If communication is impeded, it stands to reason that eventually a learner will stop making a sustained effort to communicate with the teacher. Without a shared understanding, the motivation to communicate declines markedly. Conversely, while Safeya acknowledges that Arab teachers are better able to communicate with learners due to a shared language, she nonetheless prefers to have to try harder to communicate in English:

58. Foreign teachers of course. This way, the student will
59. have to address the teacher in English. Some Arab
60. teachers use Arabic in the classroom if the students fail
61. to understand the meaning in English. That is why I
62. prefer foreign teachers.

This contrasts markedly with the view held by Rabeiah in Oman, who is especially sensitive about the relationship between teachers and learners who hail from different cultures:

159. they’ll help us and we’ll be better students. They should
160. understand that just because they come from America or
161. wherever, THEY AREN’T BETTER THAN US because we
162. have a better history than them, so WE’RE BETTER THAN
163. THEM and, uh, we, we have a history of education and
164. Science and literature, so they should treat us with more
165. respect.

Intercultural communication may be an issue here, as may a belief on the part of some learners that teachers see themselves as imparting knowledge from a more advanced civilisation. Rabeiah believes non-Arab teachers behave in a manner that indicates
they feel themselves to be superior to their students. As she does not display a high
degree of motivation to learn English and her grades in English have declined over
time, it is possible that her willingness to exert effort in her studies has been
compromised by the chasm she observes between non-Arab teachers and learners.
Jokha considers that communication between Western teachers and Gulf Arab learners
could be improved by greater background knowledge by teachers about their students’
lives and education:

76. so maybe this is something that could happen. Foreign
77. teachers should know a lot more about us. Then they
78. would be better teachers. These teachers come from
79. America or Canada or Britain and they want us to study
80. in their way, which isn’t suitable for us. Why do they
81. think they’re the best?

Nonetheless, she shares with Rabeiah a perception that Western teachers behave in a
superior manner. Khaseeba is even more forthright in giving her reasons for preferring
Arab teachers of English:

73. Foreign, all of them, and useless. They had no
74. conscience at all, whereas Arab teachers were much
75. better. All students know that. They were foreign,
76. so I don’t know about their qualifications or where they
77. taught before Oman. I never want to have a foreign
78. teacher again.
79. Do you know where they were from?
80. Irish, British, American, there was also a Canadian who
81. used to be a jailer in Korea. They have no formal
82. academic qualification in the language. It is just because
83. English is their native language that they bring them
84. here. They should not bring them here if they have no
85. qualifications to teach us.
86. Do you prefer Arab or foreign teachers?
87. I prefer Arab teachers, because they know our abilities,
88. whereas foreigners think that either we don’t know
89. anything, or we know everything. They have no common
90. sense. I don’t think most of the students want foreign
91. teachers.
As we can see, she has strongly negative views of non-Arab teachers, believing them to lack the necessary qualifications. This leads her to lack respect for them, which she seems to link to the motivation to learn English.

Not all of the participants feel the same as Khaseeba on this point. Fawzia’s view is that non-Arab teachers are often unfairly maligned:

388. better level in all their subjects. The problem isn’t only
389. with English, you know our level in all our subjects is
390. low. The students often blame the teachers for their level in
391. English, saying American and British teachers are bad, but
392. what about the other subjects? They have Arab teachers for
393. those subjects and STILL THEIR level is low, so maybe the
394. students have to realize they must study a lot harder.

According to Fawzia, learners need to delve deeper into the reasons why their level is not as high as it could be in subjects other than English, which are taught in the main by native Arab teachers. She advocates that learners take more responsibility for their own learning instead of merely attributing a low standard of English language acquisition on non-Arab teachers.

What the above shows is that national background is quite a contentious issue that evokes strong opinions. Learners have been accustomed to being taught by mainly female Arab teachers at school. This changes upon entering higher education.

6.1.3.3 Gender
For the vast majority of female learners, university furnishes them with the opportunity to study with male teachers for the first time. Again there exists a considerable difference between the preferences of the two groups.

In Oman, Aysha, when asked to expand on her preference for male teachers, expresses the following sentiments:

40. Because we have more respect for them. Their qualifications are better and they know more about their subject. Also, they understand us better and if we ask them to change something, often they will do this.
41. Female teachers are very strict and don’t understand our problems. There’s always a conflict of some kind. I don’t know, we have a better relationship with male teachers in this college, because they understand us better.
42. Female teachers don’t like us and always treat us like children, always telling us what to do and expecting everything to be done quickly. They are so tough when it comes to exams and will never change our attendance records. Male teachers listen to us and try to make things easier for us.

For Aysha, who is training to be a teacher, male teachers prove to be more understanding, as well as being better qualified. She is not only talking about preferences but is very revealing about the belief of the group that they can manipulate male teachers. Given that learners may not find employment in the region they live unless their marks in English are high and that employment upon graduation, unlike the situation that existed until relatively recently, is no longer guaranteed, this gender comment is relevant because of the perception that male teachers may be more susceptible to pressure brought to bear by learners to change exam marks. Aysha believes that female teachers are stricter with students compared with male teachers, a view contradicted by Mariam:
62. understanding of the students. Students usually say 
63. female teachers are stricter. But I think male teachers 
64. are. That’s not to say a female teacher can’t be good. 
65. Well, she can, but female teachers are more busy 
66. with household chores and other responsibilities which 
67. would lessen their focus on their duty as teachers.

Nonetheless, Mariam also believes male teachers to be more highly qualified, even 
though she is also training to be a teacher. A cultural perspective comes into focus 
here, with a supposition by most participants that women are more concerned with 
household matters than with work matters. Lubna, who agrees with the general 
assessment, tries to analyse her beliefs and thinks that family pressure on women may 
lead them not to seek higher qualifications:

100. male teachers have more time to spend on research and 
101. things like that. They are usually more qualified because 
102. they have the time to do it. For women, it is much 
103. harder because they have their families to take care of 
104. and maybe their families don’t want them to have higher 
105. qualifications.

My own observations lead me to believe that women working in higher education hold 
the same qualifications as their male colleagues, but learners hold a different 
perception:

“It happened again today. My female Arab colleague, B…., an assistant 
professor, was addressed as “Miss” by the students who came to see her in the office, whereas D…., a male English teacher who doesn’t have a 
doctorate or a masters degree, was addressed as “Doctor”. B…. was 
clearly annoyed but told me that Omani students persist in doing this, 
even though they are aware of her qualifications. It’s almost as if they can’t help it; it’s instinctive.” (extract from observational notes, April 2001)

Basma also has a cultural perspective on her preference for male teachers, but her 
reasons for preferring male teachers differ from those of the other participants:
teachers. We might come across different situations, and because women are of a shy nature, I think I would learn to be more confident if I had to deal with a male teacher. Our work, in the future, will have to include men, therefore it would be useful to be able to talk to a man in a learning environment, before we start working, especially when most female students are reluctant to participate in class because of the teacher's gender. Thus, they will have to.

This shows that Basma is thinking more about the future, as she understands that gender segregation in the workplace is not as prevalent as heretofore. Therefore, she views college as a place to become accustomed to new modes of behaviour. As the interview data suggest she exhibits a high degree of motivation, this again implies that successful learners adapt to changing circumstances more easily than others.

In the United Arab Emirates, where the majority of participants prefer being taught by females, Khawla cites a greater feeling of relaxation as her reason for enjoying study with female teachers:

61. Maybe in Math, you know, I have to [makes a sign to indicate putting a veil on her face] veil. I cannot, uh, I cannot, uh I cannot speak comfortably with a man, because, you know, I don’t feel comfortable and because I’m shy. I can’t with a man, because, you know, you know, they can’t see my face, which you need to see to form a relaxed relationship with someone.

A significant proportion of female learners in the United Arab Emirates wear a *naqab*, or veil, unlike Oman, where wearing a *shayla*, or headscarf, suffices. Many learners remove their veils in the presence of a female teacher, but very few tend to do so in the presence of a male teacher. Khawla considers face to face communication a beneficial
aspect of learning with female teachers.

The views expressed by participants in the previous three sections are influenced by their cultural background, which teachers from outside environments may not be aware of. As the extracts below show, cultural awareness on the part of teachers is vital.

6.1.3.4 Orientation

One point made by many participants concerned learning the Arabic language. Badria firmly believes some form of orientation is necessary to facilitate intercultural communication:

395. Ok when they come to the university, they absolutely 405. come from. We like knowing about them. But the 406. teachers don’t know Arabic and we don’t know how to 407. speak communicate with them, so they must learn some 408. Arabic, to be able to communicate with the students. 409. They should know about us if they are going to teach us 410. and live here. Ok?

Although Badria is learning English as a lingua franca, she indicates that Arabic is also a language of cross-cultural communication. Therefore, she believes the university should offer teachers orientation upon arrival in the United Arab Emirates. In fact, an orientation program does exist, which Emirati learners are largely unaware of. No such program exists in Oman, however.

All of the participants believe that some level of basic competence in Arabic is
important, but many also raise the subject of religion and associated attitudes and values. Religion features heavily in the relationship between teacher and learner and will be discussed at length below.

Doa elaborates on the need to respect Islam by dressing appropriately:

133. so they should learn about Islam, about Ramadan, the 134. sunna, to know about how we live so that they can do the 135. same as we do. This is very important. Uh (x) and 136. clothes, clothes, because in other countries they have a 137. different style of dress. This is very important because 138. this is an Islamic country. And not only the clothes they 139. wear, but hijab. 140. Hijab? 141. Yes, they should also wear hijab [headscarf]. Yes, the female 142. teachers should wear hijab, because, because in countries 143. such as Oman, all the women there, the Omani women, wear 144. hijab. It’s part of the religion, so they should do this, even 145. Western women, I think. Dressing the right way is very 146. important. There are some teachers who dress in a very 147. good way, and we appreciate this, but there were some 148. teachers who didn’t dress in a good way at all. It’s not good 149. to wear short sleeves. Everyone should wear long sleeves. 150. This is better. It’s better to wear abaya [cloak-like garment, 151. usually black] or something because this is what the students 152. do. Even the female Arab teachers should dress in a 153. better way, but at least they wear hijab. If there is a new 154. Arab teacher who doesn’t cover, we complain about it and 155. then she must cover.

Dressing appropriately denotes respect not only for Islam, but also for Gulf Arab culture. If learners experience discomfiture at a teacher’s mode of dress, in an environment where modesty in dress is expected, this could easily affect what transpires in the classroom. The point the learners make is that respect for cultural norms and religious traditions is extremely important to them. Hanan recounts an incident which caused her embarrassment at university in the United Arab Emirates:
Ok, some knowledge about the learning styles of the students and culture, because when I arrived here, I had one male teacher. When I saw him, he said salaam aleikum, but he didn’t only say hi, he [makes a gesture of shaking hands]

He shook your hand?
Yes, he shouldn’t have shaken my hand, but this is only some teachers, because Muslims don’t do this, Muslim women don’t shake hands with a MAN.

The opinions learners hold about their teachers are influenced by what they perceive as a lack of awareness on the part of teachers of their cultural, educational and religious background. Hence it becomes apparent that a comprehensive orientation for teachers would be advantageous, as many arrive to teach in a very different environment to what they may have been accustomed to. In addition, learners are most likely influenced by the opinions of family members and society in general (see 6.2). Such perceptions may have a considerable impact on students’ motivation to learn English in higher education institutions.

**6.2 Role models**

Women are being actively encouraged to enrol at higher education institutions in both Oman and the United Arab Emirates. Societal tradition, which traditionally emphasized that women should stay at home, is being presently challenged by new modes of behaviour, which may lead to identity confusion. Therefore, role models from their own families and communities assume increasing importance for learners who are amongst the first females to have widespread access to higher education in Gulf countries.
6.2.1 Family support

When the participants described their home environment, they spoke about the influence their families have had on their education. Two Omani participants and one Emirati participant were the first ones in their families to attend university and others were the first females in their families to do so. It became apparent that the encouragement of their families is a positive motivating factor for the participants.

6.2.1.1 Parental support

Many of the participants described strong encouragement from their parents to study at university level, even though many of these parents had received little or no formal education. Aysha explains how her parents differ from many others in her community in Oman because of the interest they take in her education:

19. brothers and sisters. They can both read and write, maybe
20. not very well, but not bad. They’re very interested in
21. what we study and they always make sure we do our
22. homework, which is good, because in many families they
23. don’t think about this. For example, if a visitor comes or
24. something, the ones who are studying must always put
25. away their books. My parents are different because they
26. think that our homework, our study comes first.

By placing a high priority on her education, Aysha’s parents have proved to be positive influences, though they did not experience higher education themselves. In the United Arab Emirates, where four participants had a father who completed a university degree, Fakhera describes how her parents have supported and guided her:
My parents have a high level of education. My father did really well, as he graduated from university and works as a teacher. I’m so proud of him, because he works so hard. My mother finished secondary school, so I think that’s wonderful for someone of her generation, as many women didn’t go to secondary school at all, you know. What I like is that they both understand what it’s like to be a student. This means they can give me good advice, but, of course, the downside is that I can’t pull the wool over their eyes, because they know what the system is like! My father especially encourages me to do my best. He has high hopes for me, so the last thing I want to do is disappoint him. However, I think he’s happy with my grades, let’s hope that continues! [laughs]

Of all the participants, Fakhera exhibits the highest level of self-confidence and motivation, which has allowed her to acquire some autonomy over her studies:

much. I liked it a lot in high school. My father asked me to study law, but law takes a lot of time, a lot of concentration, and I wanted to do something I liked and enjoyed. And how does your father feel now about your choice?

Actually, he’s ok with it, as he sees it’s what I want to do. He tells me it’s ok as long as I get A grades, and have a GPA of 3.6 or higher! [laughs] He’s really very supportive of my choice. I’ve managed to keep him happy so far. So far, so good! [laughs]

Some participants believe that university study is a more difficult prospect for learners whose parents have not experienced the challenges of the educational system. However, Lamya illustrates that even when parents have not had much formal education, they can exert a positive influence on their children’s motivation to study. In her case, her mother has in turn been encouraged and motivated by her daughters to continue her education:

My parents where my father is concerned, he completed his education in the third grade in secondary school, and
then his education stopped. However, he’s very interested in our education and always tells us how important it is to get a good education. So this was always important to us. I think this also had an effect on my mother. My mother completed her education in the first grade of secondary, and now, we, that is to say, my sister and I, have persuaded, have persuaded her to complete her study [smiles]. We’ve been trying to do this for a long time, and now we have succeeded.

Seeing her daughters experience a world she had no knowledge of proved to be a motivational catalyst for Lamya’s mother to complete her education. The influence of family members is clearly reciprocal in this instance.

### 6.2.1.2 Sibling support

Having older siblings at university was a very positive influence on many participants because of the encouragement that they received from these brothers and sisters. Rabeiah spoke about how much her older sister was able to help and motivate her by helping her increase her self esteem:

38. with them. My other sisters have degrees from
39. university. One of them is a teacher in secondary school and
40. she loves it. She’s the one who encourages me when life is
difficult here and she’s the one who made me want to be
41. a teacher. She tells me so many stories about it. She loves her
42. students so much and cares about all of them. I really
43. want to be like her.

Rabeiah’s sister has exerted a powerful influence over Rabeiah’s persistence with her studies. Basma, who is the first one within her extended family to attend higher education, believes the absence of sibling support can make it more difficult to pursue
one’s studies:

17. **So you’re the first one in your family to go the university?**
18. Yeah even my cousins don’t go to university. I don’t know there was no one to encourage me. I hope to be able to encourage my brothers and sisters and help them if they need it. Sometimes it’s difficult because there’s nobody who understands what it’s like, but I have friends I can talk to. There are many students in the college who are in a similar situation, as they are also the first to be in higher education in their families even if they have older brothers and sisters. It’s usually the girls who are the first to study in college in these cases, maybe because it’s easier for a man to find a job, but a woman needs an education if she wants to get a good job.

Luckily for Basma, she remains motivated because of friends at college who have also had a similar experience. In Gulf countries, most learners at higher education institutions are female, as women need to be more educated than men if they are to succeed in the employment market. In a society where the role of women is being continually redefined, female role models from the community can provide additional encouragement.

### 6.2.2 Community role models

It emerged during the interviews that only one Omani and one Emirati participant had teachers from their countries at school.

Sheikha believes that motivation amongst the wider female learner population would be greatly enhanced as a result of having school teachers from the community:

360. very good one. I think it’s important for my pupils to see an Omani teacher who teaches them. When I was in
school, we DIDN’T HAVE ANY Omani teachers. Now this is changing and that’s a very good thing. I’d like to see more Omani teachers in the colleges and universities, especially women, because already there are some men there, but not many Omani women who teach at this level, ESPECIALLY English teachers. I think that would be good for students to see, so that they know they can do anything they want, if they work hard.

Then perhaps the national background of teachers would not be such a contentious issue (see 6.1.3.2). However, as Jokha points out, the expansion of teacher-training programmes is beginning to fill the community role model void:

also need to train teachers in a better way. I know now there is a programme for Omani teachers of English to study for a bachelor’s degree at a university in the U.K., and they can do this while they are teaching. I think this is a really good idea, to make our qualifications more international, so that we can be as good as students from any country in the world, and also so that Omani students can travel to other countries to study. That’s a very good thing, it’s important.

This is indicative of a desire by some participants to participate in globalisation. With the increasing Omanisation and Emiratisation of teachers, some role models are currently being provided to younger learners, at least in the schools, if not at higher education institutions. In the United Arab Emirates, a lack of Emirati teachers of English is also prevalent, particularly at university level, where few English teachers are native Arabic speakers. Participating in an interview brought this fact home quite forcefully to Jamila, even before the interview had begun:

way I study. I'm quite patient and I like to talk to people, but, you know, when I came to your office today, I don't know what happened, but I felt shy. I felt shy because everyone there was foreign all of them were foreigners. Not a single one was Arab, no
15. Arab nationalities, and this made me think, just today.
16. about studying English and trying to become an English
17. teacher.

Jamila was profoundly affected by the realisation that there was not a single Emirati
teacher of English in the department and was motivated to do something about it.
Some months after our interviews had been completed, she transferred to another
department and is now training to become an English teacher.

From the above, we can see reasons why learners should be motivated to learn
English. Why, therefore, are many not learning when there is an increasing emphasis
on language policy? This will be examined in the following section.

6.3 Top-down policy making

What became apparent during the course of the interviews was a sense of frustration on
the part of the participants at a top-down policy making approach to higher education
which exists in both countries, which results in a corresponding lack of consultation.
Participants consider that English, despite the rhetoric, is not regarded as an important
subject. There seems to be an apparent lack of status given to English by the
institutions. Consultants are viewed by many as the ones who dictate language policy.
As consultants are mainly from other countries, participants voice their concern about
the reliance on outsiders for innovation.

6.3.1 Lack of information
Communication within faculties was mentioned by many participants, who believe that the result of a lack of information leads to confusion regarding university policies, particularly regarding the English language and its place within the university, as Sara explains in the United Arab Emirates:

246. but not all of them are good. Nobody talks to the
247. students; they just change things suddenly, change the
248. rules and make things more difficult for us. When
249. you come to the university, they tell you the rules, and then
250. they change them every year. This makes it very difficult
251. for us, because not all the students are good at English.

If confusion exists as to what is happening on campus due to a lack of information regarding frequent top-down changes, conflict may result in the classroom. This could ultimately have a negative impact on motivation to study. Dhanina suggests that one way to prevent the alienation of learners is to have a handbook that can be consulted whenever necessary:

87. … Sometimes when we go to an
88. office there is nobody there. I think they should have a book
89. that is clear, with all the information we need, so students
90. could use it all the time they are at university. We need
91. to talk to people at different times of the day, because all the
92. students have lectures at different times. I know we
93. must depend on ourselves to do many things and that’s OK
94. I don’t have a problem with that. But sometimes
95. everyone needs to talk to someone about a problem they
96. have, or to get advice from someone.

With so many changes occurring at regularly spaced intervals of two years or so, sometimes even more frequently, clear and explicitly detailed rules and procedures are necessary. In many cases they exist but are not communicated to faculty or the student
population. The perception among many learners seems to be that there is a lack of control of general education policy, which manifests itself in the debate concerning the language medium.

6.3.1.1 Language medium

As has already been discussed in some detail in Chapter Four, English is fast gaining ascendancy over Arabic as a language of instruction, particularly in the United Arab Emirates, where English often replaces Arabic as the language of instruction for a major during the course of a learner’s university studies. Such a change will place new demands on learners who already have to adapt to a new system that differs significantly to school. As Badria warns, it could ultimately have a negative effect even on those learners who like the English language and have previously harboured positive feelings towards it:

375. Ok. I want to say that if the university continues to 
376. do this, to force us to learn English, to have all subjects 
377. taught in English, we have to do what they say, they think, 
378. but we won’t accept it. It’s not that we don’t accept 
379. learning the English language, ok, but they have to do 
380. something to have this happen gradually. It has to be in 
381. steps. A lot of us like English, like to learn the English 
382. language, ok, but that doesn’t mean we want to have all the 
383. courses, all the majors, taught in English. If they make 
384. us do this, it will make many students hate the English 
385. language you know, even if they liked it before. Why 
386. can’t we have both languages? We could study some things 
387. in English and other things in Arabic.

Badria intimates that there are many learners who seem to have no problems with motivation on a macro level, as she signals a willingness to learn English. However,
she also clearly states there is a difference between learning the English language as a subject on its own merits and having English as a language of instruction for every subject in her major. Although she queries the reasoning behind this, wondering why Arabic and English cannot be deemed equally important, she does not take the macro pressures into account, in common with some other participants. This is something I will discuss in the following chapter.

Badria notes that changing the language of instruction may cause some learners to be afraid of learning English, for fear of negative consequences, such as failure in exams or not getting the job they want. Her solution is to allow the learners at least some element of choice:

380. Yes, If a student has the choice to study in English or
381. Arabic, then she will do her best. If some students choose
382. English, they will study hard and get good marks because
383. they want to study in this language, so their level will be
384. very high. Some students who don’t like English or are weak
385. in English can choose to study in Arabic, so their Arabic
386. level will be high. I think that would be a good solution
387. because if you make students study in a language they are
388. not good at, maybe they won’t have a high level in
389. anything, so I think the university should realize that not
388. everyone is good at learning English.

Israa concurs, stating that motivation and willingness to learn English has been adversely affected as a direct result of the sudden imposition of English as a language of instruction. She also points out that the learners were not consulted at any stage and were not given the help and resources they needed to view the situation in positive terms:

333. Yes, I think that when they changed it from Arabic to
334. English, they did it too quickly, and we were shocked by
that. They have to be, they have to change it step by step. I, I think that they did it very, very very quickly. All the students think this. Maybe if they did it more slowly, everyone would want to learn in English, but because they didn’t ask us about it and made no offer to help us to become used to it, many students don’t want to study in English. I want to become better so I’m willing to study in English, but it would be better for everyone if people helped us more along the way, you know, if they helped us to get used to things and see the advantages instead of just standing over us and telling us we must do something. It’s silly to expect us to suddenly learn everything in English, when we studied in Arabic before and we only studied one subject in English.

The above extracts show the incomprehension of learners when faced with unexplained top down decisions. Many also comment on the disparity between the situation in the schools, where only one subject, the English language, is studied through the medium of English, and the current situation at university, stating that it is unreasonable to expect learners to adjust to studying every subject in their majors through English without prior training of some kind.

Hanan’s comments reflect the debate about which language medium to impose. She believes there is a lack of consistency as a result of top-down policy making. Through a process of providing information and consultation, a healthier atmosphere than the one which exists in Hanan’s description could be fostered:

Arabic language. Maybe I should either study everything either all in Arabic or all in English. Don’t study English for something here, and Arabic for a subject there, changing all the time. They always change their minds, it’s very confusing and the students don’t know what they should do, because FIRST they are told one thing AND THEN they are told no, it’s wrong, to do something else.
Lamya, on the other hand, differs from most participants insofar as she believes it is a positive development to have many courses taught through English. She is the only participant who received an offer to study at a university in the United States, but chose to stay in the United Arab Emirates because she firmly believes that she can receive a high standard of education in her home country. Although happy to study all her subjects in English, she nevertheless warns of the negative effects on those learners who find the language difficult:

334. It makes me for me, I feel it’s good, but for many  
335. students it’s bad, I think, because they don’t know what  
336. they are doing. They will leave the university if this  
337. continues because of English. This makes me very sad,  
338. because I don’t want all these people to leave. After all,  
339. I made the decision to go to university in the Emirates and  
340. not go abroad. Many of my friends have left the  
341. university. It’s not good for so many young women to leave  
342. the university, because they need an education, a good  
343. education. What will they do if they leave university?  
344. They won’t do anything because they won’t have a  
345. degree.

As we can see from her comments, Lamya shows quite a broad understanding of the consequences for society of implementing a policy of English only at breakneck speed, raising the issue of how comprehensively policy planners researched the consequences of their decision to change the language of instruction to English. It is ironic that while every effort is being made to encourage women to study at higher education institutions, many of them might leave because of being coerced into studying through a language they find difficult, which would be detrimental to their chances of advancing their status in society.

The situation is not all that much different in Oman. Doa, for example, while freely
acknowledging that she finds English difficult and is not motivated to study it, queries how changing the language of instruction to English will help many learners who do not find English an easy language to learn in the first place:

182. *English is becoming more important in education these days. How do you feel about that?*
184. English is very important at this time. That’s a fact, but no, I am not happy about this, not happy, because I don’t understand English. Because all the (x) all of the books here are changing from Arabic to more English, they have more English words. English is a difficult subject for me, so I don’t like this at all. If you go to the LRC, you will see so many books in English, but many of the students don’t read them, because we can’t understand any of the information. How can this help us? It’s very stressful.

Even when the college provides facilities in the English language, her lack of language means she cannot benefit from the facilities, which may ultimately affect motivation to learn English. Aysha, who also admits that English is a difficult subject for her, nonetheless feels positively about knowing a little of the language. She makes the point that being happy that she knows some English does not necessarily mean that she wants to study every subject in the language, as all learners are not automatically good at languages, but have different strengths:

181. … Not every student is good at languages. Some of them are better at Maths or Computers, so they should concentrate on what they are good at, what they’re interested in. That would be better for everyone. So, uh, I think we need to have a choice in the subjects that we study, because then we’ll choose the one’s we’re really interested in and we’ll work harder in those subjects.

Although English appears to be gaining ground as a language medium, a widespread perception persists amongst participants that the English language is not regarded by
university administrations or Ministries of Education as an important subject. Learners often receive conflicting messages about its importance. Safeya points to a change in the system in Oman, where English does not have as many credits as other subjects, and also cites a lack of resources as reasons not to study English:

35. The only time I study English is just before the exams.
36. You see, now the system has changed and it is just a pass or fail course. Before, we got grades, but now it is different. The credits aren’t as high as for other subjects, so maybe this is a reason not many students take it seriously. Also, I don’t think the Ministry is serious about learning English, because we don’t have a lot of resources, not like some universities, so this makes learning difficult.

Doa concurs with Safeya’s assessment, relating that English language teachers are often undermined by teachers of other subjects. She questions why she should be motivated to study if the message received on different levels is that English is not an important subject:

33. boring and not very useful. We only study for a few hours a week, so I don’t think the Ministry is serious about it.
34. Also, if another teacher wants to give an exam or an extra class during English class, they can do this, so this doesn’t give me a very good impression. If the other teachers don’t take it seriously, why should I?

Having class time taken over by teachers of other subjects was an issue for me on many occasions during my time in Oman, as the following extract illustrates:

“It happened again today, for the third time this semester. I went to class to find nobody there. A note was left on my desk by one of the students, telling me that Dr. A… was giving them a Maths exam. The students were obviously too embarrassed to tell me, as their Maths teacher hadn’t. When I went to see him about this, he just laughed and said something like ‘What’s the problem? It’s only English!’ My head of dept. said not to take any notice. What kind of message does this give to
Learners question why concrete steps have not been taken to improve the standard of English, surmising that words have not been matched by actions. This can lead to the alienation of students. A discussion of what I think underlies the attitudes of the ministry and fellow teachers will take place in Chapter 7.

6.3.2 Alienation of students

What emerged from the data was that students feel increasingly alienated as a result of policy making in which they play no part. This is increased by a lack of control over personal decisions, such as, for example, having no say in what major they study and not being able to choose which foreign language to study. And in addition to not being able to influence the language used as medium of study, students report they are also contained in their choice of foreign language.

6.3.2.1 Lack of choice of subject major

During the course of the interviews, when participants described the lack of choice they have in their subject major, the participants expressed a realization that there is no choice in this matter if their society wants access to technology and employment for its nationals. It became apparent as the interviews progressed that motivation was directly affected as a result of a lack of participant choice during the course of their university studies.
Many Emirati participants were fortunate enough to obtain their first choice of major to study. This contrasts markedly with the Omani participants, only two of whom succeeded in obtaining their first choice of major to study. Even then, as Lubna, one of the Omani participants, recounts, her choice was somewhat limited:

23. I have considered my options very carefully before I
24. decided on this major. Although I was doing Humanities
25. subjects in high school, I chose Science for personal
26. reasons. Also, my family said it would be a better
27. subject and easy to get a job, because there’s some
28. unemployment these days and not every teacher will get
29. a job. I was thinking about other majors, but when we
30. entered college, we found that there are two options
31. only, either Science or Humanities without the
32. freedom to select the subjects. Therefore, the
33. subjects, such as Biology or Chemistry, were part of the
34. package. I’m glad though, as I can do a lot of study by
35. myself. I want to learn about as many things as
36. possible. It isn’t fair that we don’t have a lot of
37. choice, but this is the system, and it’s the same for
38. everyone. More pupils are going to primary schools,
39. so the Ministry needs more teachers.

This illustrates the pressures of the employment market on university study, particularly in Gulf Arab societies, where a system of guaranteed employment upon graduation no longer exists.

Not being afforded any choice in terms of her subject major had a profound effect on Khaseeba. Of all the participants, she demonstrated the least motivation to study English. To shed light on this, she describes her feelings upon arrival at college, when she finally found out what she was allowed to study and the realisation of the effect it would have on her future:
101. ….. We
102. didn’t know what we were going to study until we came
103. here, and then WE WERE SHOCKED to learn that we could
104. only study Science or Humanities, and that we didn’t have a
105. choice even about this. They just put us in groups and
106. told us what we would study. Before, the students
107. could decide when they were studying if they wanted to
108. specialize in teaching at elementary, preparatory or
109. secondary school. However, we learned when we
110. arrived here that the course we studied would qualify us to
111. teach in elementary schools only, the Basic Education
112. schools. This was an even bigger shock than anything
113. else, as we couldn’t say anything, we couldn’t do anything.

Even when there is the prospect of employment in a given field, such as law, learners
are being urged to study majors seen as being traditionally more accepted for women.

As Johara, one of the Emirati participants, shared with me during one interview:

6. Actually, my first choice was law, to be a lawyer, but
7. when I was accepted here at university, they told me
8. that it would be impossible to do that as a woman here in
9. the UAE, because women women wouldn’t be
10. accepted here, they wouldn’t be able to find jobs.
11. Then I chose translation. Also I asked about jobs after
12. graduating, and they told me there were no opportunities
13. for this in the UAE. They said if you study translation
14. for four years you would be working as a secretary or
15. something like that. So, uh, I like Science, and the nature
16. of Science, so I chose this major.

Of course, there are female law students and practising lawyers in the United Arab
Emirates, although the number of female lawyers remains low. Fortunately for Johara,
she enjoys learning and is quite happy in her major, remaining motivated to do the best
she can. Israa also sees a link between the major one studies, the language of
instruction and the needs of the job market after she graduates, which influenced her
choice of course of study:
14. Yes, I wanted to study this major because I wanted to study some things through English, as I want to be a schoolteacher in the future and know how to teach a little in English. This will be very important in the future. Also, if I go to a foreign country, I’ll know how to communicate with people there. That’s the main reason I chose this. A lot of students who graduate from the university who study their majors in English find work easily. Students who study other majors have problems with unemployment. There’s a lot of unemployment. It’s a problem these days, you know?

What Israa makes explicit is that there is a link between lack of choice and studying the English language. Top down decisions therefore influence the major learners study, as well as the language of instruction. Israa was fortunate in that she could choose her major and is obviously motivated to study to achieve a higher level, as she perceives the relevance of English to her future. What becomes perceptible from what Israa reveals, however, is that learners may not only be unable to have a choice as regards their subject major, but also have little choice regarding the language of instruction.

However, as has been stressed by many participants, not wishing to study all their subjects in English does not mean they are not motivated to study a foreign language.

6.3.2.2 A choice of studying languages other than English

Many of the participants expressed the desire for a greater choice of foreign languages in the curriculum. In Oman, English is the only foreign language available to them to study. Some participants, like Doa, indicated a desire to learn the French language,
influenced by the origins of their instructors:

140. We have to study a subject which is very hard and irrelevant. We don’t have a choice, we must study it. I think this is crazy. It should be an elective, so that students who don’t like it don’t have to study it. In other universities students can choose what they want to study. Anyway, why is it only English?
146. Why can’t we study other languages? A lot of students would be interested in studying French.
148. We have teachers here from Morocco and Tunisia, so maybe they could teach us French, which would be different. Why is it only English, especially when I am not going to need it in the future?

As can be seen from the above extract, Doa believes English should be optional, particularly as she finds it not only difficult, but irrelevant to her future life. However, even if given the choice of studying a language other than English, might not most learners opt to study a language which is widely perceived as being useful to them at some stage in the future? Sheikha certainly seems to suggest that this is the case:

287. Maybe we could learn French or another language, although I think if this happens, then probably most students will choose English because they know it’s more useful to them.

Furthermore, she understands that not having a choice about which foreign language to study is connected to not having a choice as regards which major to study. This in turn has a secondary effect on every subject, which may lead to problems with motivation generally, not only in the English language.

In the United Arab Emirates, an element of choice is gradually being introduced into the curriculum, as there is now the option of studying French. Sara, however, lends
credence to what Sheikha says about learners opting to study English before French:

305. … They
306. have started to teach French at the university, which is a
307. good thing, but only a few students study it, because they
308. know they need English for everything in life. It is good
309. that they now give us more of a choice at the university,
310. because some students want to study another language, not
311. English. Maybe they could introduce more
312. languages in the future, as many students want to learn
313. something different. I would like to be able to study
314. another language, but I must study English, if I want to
315. have a good career.

The demands of the job market dictate that most learners will continue to study
English for instrumental reasons (see 6.4.1.2). The participants thus demonstrate
practicality, signalling that there is no choice if they wish to have access to the job
market upon graduation. This has resulted in some cases in a lack of motivation to
study, as pressures from outside dictate their course of study. This extends to a
resentment of outside consultants, as can be seen in the following section.

6.3.3 Alienation due to using outside consultants

Those who formulate the policies, usually consultants brought in from North America,
Britain or Australia, rarely have contact with those who are directly affected by their
decision-making. Some of the participants expressed disquiet with the role of
consultants who often have no prior knowledge of Gulf education systems. Khawla
believes this leads to a homogenisation of education and intimates that replicating
other education systems is not beneficial to many Emirati learners:

304. is what happened to a friend of hers. The university
305. wants only English because people come in from outside
and tell them to do this.

People from “outside”? I think they come from America, because this is the country that is changing education everywhere in the world. It is a big country and is the most important one and they want us to be like them, to have their language and their culture. This is what they did in many countries so that every country is now the same. I think they tell the university what they want and the university just does everything they say. This is wrong, because education here can be good without all of this.

While Khawla is of the opinion that consultants spearhead changes in the educational system and in effect impose these changes upon Emirati universities, Mariam, in Oman, believes that college management must take responsibility for any changes which cause problems during the implementation stage, as they do not allow consultants access to teachers or students:

and things like this. Sometimes they bring people here from other countries just for a day and they prepare nice things for them and they make them think everything is good, but they don’t really talk to the students or the teachers, so these people then think everything is fine.

The following extract from my observational notes while working in the United Arab Emirates illustrates the consequences for any who wish to become involved in a consultative process:

“Y… was very agitated this afternoon. Apparently, he attended a meeting with consultants, having been requested to do so. What he didn’t know was that at the last minute he was sent an e-mail and told not to attend, as he was already on his way to the meeting. He told them about many concerns teachers and students have, which they didn’t seem to know about. Not long afterwards he was called into a meeting with the director, who threatened him with dismissal from his job and told him that on no account was he supposed to speak with consultants. The request to go to the meeting was a mistake!” (Extract from observational notes, Sept. 2004)
In this instance, the consultants did not appear to know what was required to raise the level of teaching and learning at university, as they had until then not spoken to teachers or students. Needs analysis appears not to be a priority. The implications of this will be discussed in Chapter 7.

### 6.3.3.1 Insufficient needs analysis

While learners in the United Arab Emirates formally evaluate courses and teachers every semester, this has never happened at the institution under study in Oman. Basma queries why learners’ input is never requested, pointing out that a lack of consultation and a lack of transparency lead to confusion about policy aims and may ultimately have an effect on motivation:

359. I feel very confused about it sometimes, because I don’t understand what is happening, why we have all these changes. Nobody talks to us about it or explains it, we must just do as they say. I think this isn’t very good because the students understand more about education than many other people, so they are the ones who should say what will happen, at least give some ideas about how to make the situation better. They must ask the students, that’s important.

Asking the learners for feedback, however, can also lead to negative feelings, if learners feel that their views are not subsequently taken into account, as Israa explains about the United Arab Emirates:

373. no say, no one who will listen to our ideas. Every semester we fill in questionnaires, questionnaires for this, questionnaires for that, for evaluating courses, teachers,
We have to do these and we hate doing them, but we don’t have a choice. We wouldn’t mind doing them if we thought that it would be any good, that the university would listen to us and change at least some things, but they don’t care at all. Why do they do this to us, tell us to do things or we will be penalized, but then ignore everything we say? It’s not fair on us and it doesn’t help us to want to learn, you know?

At the university in the United Arab Emirates, course and teacher evaluations are mandatory for each learner, as nobody can register for courses for the following semester unless they do so. Understandably, this can cause resentment, or, in Israa’s case, even lead to a lack of motivation to study, particularly if learners feel nothing will change as a result of what they say.

Again it is apparent that the reasons for studying English are primarily instrumental in nature. These reasons will be discussed in detail in the next section.

6.4 Instrumental variables

The participants demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the instrumental reasons for learning English. This finding reflects some points in the literature review. The reasons given for studying English by the participants are personal reasons and societal reasons, both of which will be discussed below.

6.4.1 Personal reasons

Of the personal reasons to study English discussed by the participants, three emerged.
as significant motivational factors for the purposes of this study, namely: success in university studies, opportunities for employment and advancing their status as women in a fast-evolving society.

**6.4.1.1 Success in university studies**

All of those interviewed believe that competence in the English language is vital for success in education. Not having a high level of English therefore leads learners like Hind to have problems regarding accessing information in order to have good grades. However, this is not the only problem Hind encounters:

291. Sometimes, when I have to use the Internet in English, when
292. I type a wrong spelling because my level isn’t very good, I
293. get bad sites instead. This makes me feel embarrassed
294. and ashamed, because if my English was good, this
295. wouldn’t happen. It’s the same for other students.

It therefore becomes apparent that not having a high level in English can cause anxiety, which makes the task of accessing information a daunting one for many learners, particularly when using computers. There is a significant disparity between the language employed by both groups of learners when using computers, with English far more popular as a means of accessing information in the United Arab Emirates than in Oman. One Emirati participant, Amna, recounts how knowing English leads to greater access to information:

247. good in some ways, because it can help me sometimes when
248. I study or do research, for example. Uh, for example, I
249. did some research about the city of Tokyo for a project.
250. When I first did this, I understood English, and they
251. they understand English, so I can know about this city.
252. If there was no English language, probably the information
would be in Japanese or in Chinese, so I wouldn’t understand. I would never be able to find this information in Arabic, but in English I can, without any problems. Also, I can find information on the Internet, because I know English and most of the websites I need are in English, not Arabic.

Thus, having a high level in English can help to achieve high grades, which reflects their school experience (Mynard, 2003; Arneson, 2005). What happens, therefore, when grades at university are often lower than those learners achieved at school, as has been indicated by an examination of records at both institutions? Fawzia, who has positive feelings towards English as a language, articulates the negative effect lower grades have had on her motivation to study:

27. I like English. It is useful to communicate with foreigners you meet in the Sultanate. I liked it while we were in high school. But now in university, our English became very bad, while our grades in high school were high. I know a few words and phrases. The grades here are becoming lower every year so the teaching must be bad too, maybe. I don’t know why, but the grades don’t seem to reflect the work that we do. I’ve tried to study, but my grade in English isn’t very good, so now sometimes I don’t feel like studying it any more.

These last two examples show that the girls appreciate English allows them contact outside their own society and not just with native speakers. Lack of English language competence means that learners cannot access the information they require. This, coupled with studying through the medium of English results in low grades, both of which affect students’ motivation to succeed at university. Most university learners in the Gulf initially have high expectations regarding exam grades. When this expected success is not rewarded, negative feelings result. Although many learners are allowed
to repeat courses even if they have passed the exams, in order to achieve higher grades. Khawla believes the effect of this is that studying in English impedes success. This is because many Emirati learners have to spend longer at university in order to graduate with good grades:

374. quickly. Some students are studying at this university
375. for six years or more, and I think that is too long, because in
376. other countries they can finish in three or four years.
377. Here English is what keeps us back, so something about this
378. must change to help us.

However, another Emirati participant, Fakhera, differs from the majority of participants, as she believes that studying in English does not necessarily lead to a low level of success. She cites her own experience, verified by her exam results, as an example that sustained effort can lead to an expectancy of success being realised:

115. You know, most of the girls say that when you study in
116. your major, you won’t don’t get high grades, if you study
117. in English, but, for me, I’ve got good grades.

Being highly ambitious, Fakhera believes that English is not only crucial to success in her university studies in the United Arab Emirates, but will also be necessary for the studies she hopes to undertake abroad:

312. But I am ambitious. I want to study for
313. higher degrees, a masters and a doctorate. I think this
314. can help me a lot because not very many people in the
315. Emirates study for these degrees. I think it would be
316. great to study abroad, maybe like my brother in America.

As we can see, Fakhera is an excellent example of instrumental reasons for studying English, which have led, in her case, to considerable success in her studies. As new opportunities for some Gulf learners to study abroad become available, usually for
those who do well in their studies at home, motivation to study can be enhanced.

The effect of having to study English on learners for whom it may be a difficult language is considered by an Omani participant, Lubna, who notes the difference in level between students who study different majors:

368. … I think the students who study Science generally
369. have a higher level in the language than the Arts students,
370. because they seem to study more difficult material and
371. many of them are better at speaking English. This may
372. be a coincidence, but I think this is what’s happening.
373. Also, when you study Science, you have to do a lot more
374. reading in English, so this could be the explanation. You
375. see, Arts students study Islamic Studies and Arabic Studies
376. these subjects so of course the Arabic language is the
377. most important language for them and they won’t have the
378. opportunity to use English as much.

Science majors generally need a higher level of English for their specialisation than Arts majors do. This often means they are more motivated than their Arts counterparts to study the English language, as they can perceive its usefulness to their careers in the future.

6.4.1.2 Employment

A knowledge of English is essential for a competitive job market. Fear of being unemployed is primarily what spurs Jokha to study English. She understands that she needs English if she is to find employment near her family, in a culture where it remains unusual for women to live away from the family home. She displays a remarkable degree of fortitude and is willing to do whatever it takes to realise her
aspiration of being a teacher:

245. If we want to have a good job, then we need English. Now
246. it’s more difficult to get a good job in Oman because more
247. young people are going to school and they all need jobs
248. when they leave. Before, if you went to university,
249. then it was ok., you would find a good job easily, but
250. now, even if you go to university, there’s no guarantee. I
251. know some students who graduated last year who still don't
252. have a job. They don’t want to live far away from their
253. families, but I think we must do these things if we want to
254. work. Also, they told me that if they had better English,
255. maybe it would be different. So I think there’s a lot of
256. competition for jobs now, so the people who have good
257. English will get the best jobs, especially for teaching,
258. because English is now important for education.

As we can see from the extract below, Badria, a Science major, is remarkably practical
about the necessity of having a good level of English in the job market and is willing
as a consequence to rise to the challenge:

331. English will take the place of Arabic, in the university and
332. outside the university because everywhere when you
333. want to find a job, they will ask you if you speak any
334. foreign languages. They don’t mean French or Italian.
335. English is what they mean. If you don’t have a good
336. level in English, they will say “Ok, bye bye. See you. We
337. don’t have any place for someone who doesn’t have
338. English. We want someone who has English, so that they
339. can write, read and communicate with others.”

Most participants view English as a necessary job requirement, which becomes a
motivational factor when studying. Doa, an Arts student, is an exception to this
generally received view, as she is not convinced that English will be relevant to her
career:

163. But, you know, my major means I
164. study a lot about Arabic Studies and Islamic Studies, so
165. I can’t see how English can help me in the future. I mean,
I’m going to be a teacher and I’m going to teach these subjects in Arabic. I’m going to teach about religion, Islam, things like that and for this I need Arabic, not English. I don’t really like English as a subject, so I don’t see how it will be very useful to me.

Doa’s motivation to study English is not very high, as she harbours negative feelings towards the language as a subject and as a career tool.

Many participants, like Aysha, fear that their level of English may prove to be more of a barrier than a means of access to employment. She enunciates her point of view quite forcefully:

ashamed of my level. So I think if there’s a situation or a job where I need to have a high level of English, then English won’t help me because I don’t speak it well. Anyway, everyone studies English now, so if everyone speaks it, then I don’t think it can help everyone to have what they want. It won’t be something special. It will just be something normal, usual. I think this is something many people don’t think about. They think, uh, if they have English everything will be ok, they’ll be able to do anything they want, but this isn’t true. Everyone will have English, so maybe then the people who speak another language are the ones who’ll have a really good position. For example, if someone speaks Arabic and English and another language, then they’ll be in the best position. I also think that knowing a language isn’t as important as many people think. Why? Technology is MORE IMPORTANT because we use computers for everything now, so the people who are really good at computers, who do lots of courses, are the ones who don’t have to worry.

Aysha states that even those who have a high level in English will not necessarily have an advantage when they seek employment, as everyone will have studied English as a basic skill. Therefore, she believes that technology is equally important, a view shared
by other participants, who believe they need to study something in addition to English in order to have that edge in the marketplace. This is particularly relevant for young women in societies which have traditionally frowned on careers for women outside the home.

6.4.1.3 Advancing one’s status as a woman

Mariam reflects on the advantages learning English can bring her in Omani society, not only in terms of employment, but also as a woman in a climate of societal change for Gulf women in general:

333. I think if you know English, you can have a
334. better job and a better position in society. Everyone
335. wants you to know English these days, to have English. If
336. you don’t know it, you can’t get a good job, maybe you will
337. have to stay at home and just get married. hhh I don’t want
338. to just stay at home, because there are many things I want to
339. do with my life and I want to study more and maybe travel
340. if I can. Many things here are difficult for women but it’s
341. changing slowly. English will help me a lot in some ways

She is motivated to study English partly because she believes it may help her as a woman in the future. One participant, Doa, believes education will have a positive effect on the marriage prospects of women in Oman, which appears to be a motivating factor for her to study:

195. Education is more important these days,
196. especially for women. Many husbands want their wives to
197. be teachers or have a good level of education, as this
198. means they will have a good salary. So I think I need to
199. study more.
The standard of living is not as high in Oman as it is in the United Arab Emirates, which means it is considered more economically advantageous for women to work in order to contribute to the family income. Women who wish to be productive members of society can be positively motivated to learn.

6.4.2 Societal reasons

Learners are keenly aware of the needs of society, which has influenced their belief in the necessity of studying English. These instrumental societal reasons, namely development and the prevalence of English as a lingua franca will be discussed in this section.

6.4.2.1 Development of society

Gulf societies have been undergoing modernisation and development at a swift pace in recent years. This has served to focus the participants’ thinking about the importance of English as a contributory factor in development. As Safeya understands:

189. ... Globalisation means
190. that everyone speaks English these days. If you want to be
191. successful, in this world of technology, in the twenty-first
192. century, you need to have English. It’s all about
193. economics, because the most important countries in the
194. world do their business in English. You can’t be good at
195. marketing without it. So this is why everyone speaks it
196. and they need to know it, otherwise it will be very difficult
197. for them economically.

Lubna would like to see the Oman take its place among other developed nations in
every field, which has influenced her motivation to study English in a positive way:

152. In one way, I think it’s a good thing, because English is the
153. number one language in the world and we must know how
154. to speak it and communicate with foreigners if we want
155. to develop and be a modern country. In Science, for
156. example, a lot of research is in English and the articles we
157. must read for our subjects are often in English. If you
158. want to publish something in a journal, you must use
159. English. I see teachers at the college doing that, so it’s good if
160. we can be more international.

Amna, an Emirati learner, also believes that the level of development of a country
influences the language that will be important in society:

336. them. They will be strong economically. Maybe it’s
337. economics that’s the important factor. The reasons for
338. the importance of English are technological and economic, in
339. my opinion. When we, when technology came to this part of
340. the world, to this area, everybody wanted to learn how to
341. use this technology, and some people, the people who’ve
342. developed technology, want to keep everything to do with
343. technology in their language. They don’t know our
344. language, so they don’t know how to deal with us, except in
345. English. We want to learn about technology, so we must
346. deal with them. So language well, I think that our
347. English language will improve because all of us want to
348. learn about this technology. Chinese, the Chinese also have
349. technology, but I think it started in America. It belongs to
350. them originally, and the Chinese have improved on it. So,
351. when we, when they want to sell it to us and to other Arab
352. people, they want us to have a language which we, they
353. want to deal with us in a language which we both know. So
354. that’s why the English language is important. There’s a
355. high economic value on the language.

According to Amna, English is important because much technological innovation
originated in America. This has led to English being economically important. If Amna
wants to be part of this development, she believes it will be necessary for her to learn
the English language. English therefore emerges as the primary means of
communication in technically developed societies.

### 6.4.2.2 English as a lingua franca

Lubna sees how English has become pervasive as a means of communication in all spheres of life in Oman:

259. hear this all the time, and it’s true. When I go to Muscat, I 260. can go to American or British shops and buy the same 261. things as someone from London, for example. The people 262. in the shop know how to speak English, even if they are 263. Omanis working there. When we import things, we use 264. English. When we deal with banks, we must know English. 265. Everyone in business all over the world uses English. 266. Even when we buy things from Asia or Italy, France, 267. anywhere, we all use English to communicate, maybe 268. because that’s the language everyone learns. So even 269. if English is not the first language for any of us, we use it to 270. communicate.

The importance of English language competence for communication with the large expatriate community in daily life was mentioned by most of the participants. The necessity of understanding others may provide a powerful motivational impetus to study English. For Johara, studying English can be a positive thing, particularly if she has a level in English which allows her to communicate with others outside university:

375. It’s ok, you know, at least in some ways it’s a nice feeling, 376. because everywhere you go, you see English. If you travel in 377. any place, you’ll see many people speaking English, and 378. it’s nice if you can understand it and speak with people, 379. communicate with them. ok.

Having to communicate in English on a daily basis in one’s own society, therefore, can promote positive feelings towards studying the language, particularly when
learners see that communication is reciprocal. Fawzia takes this one step further, believing that learning English has advantages for communication with countries on an international level. She indicates an awareness of power politics:

259. people speak the other world languages. English is the most important one, so we must learn it. All the big countries in the world speak English America, the U.K., Canada, so we must speak English if we want to communicate with them. I think IT’S GOOD that English is important because this is the language I’m learning, so for me it’s useful.

Learning English seems to provide Fawzia with cultural capital, as she is part of an elite group in the United Arab Emirates studying English in order to be part of a world elite. Again, this appears to confirm the motivational literature.

Aysha shows an appreciation of English as a lingua franca by outlining a compelling reason for studying it:

281. Anyway, it’s good to learn English to know what people are saying about you. If they are saying bad things, then you can tell them they’re lying. The Qur’an says we should know other people, to know what they’re saying about us, so how can we change people’s ideas about us unless we speak to them in their language?

It is evident that Aysha takes a broader societal view of the advantages of communication, showing that she is very much conscious of recent world events by wanting to refute much of what she feels is being said about the Islamic and Arabic-speaking world at large. Communication through English is for Aysha a powerful means of expression of who she is, a means of defence against ill-formed opinions. Thus English has emerged as an important means of communication in the Gulf, fast
becoming a lingua franca even within the Arabic-speaking world in some instances.

This is confirmed by most of the participants, who reveal through their interviews that the significance of English as a lingua franca means it is a useful language to study. This can either be a motivational impetus or obstacle to studying the English language.

As Doa surmises:

337. I want to tell students that they have to study harder, study
338. more English. This is something we need, so they have to
339. do it, even if they don’t like it. At this point in time, all
340. the countries in the world speak English. In the future, in
341. the future (x) because in the future all students in the world
342. will speak English, if they work in companies, as teachers,
343. anything they do.

Regardless of inclination, Doa believes that studying English will emerge as an even more significant societal requirement in the future. Many participants point to the advantages of knowing English in a world of increasing globalisation in technology, business and access to information.

Safeya agrees with the importance of English as a world lingua franca, noting that in her experience English is the main language of communication anywhere in the world:

173. Because English is the language of all over the world. It’s the
174. second language of not only Oman, the UAE and countries
175. like these, but the second language of THE WHOLE
176. WORLD.

While Safeya describes English as the second language of the world, Jokha, when discussing the reasons for the importance of English, ascribes even greater importance to the language:

227. I think there are two reasons. The first one is because it’s a
228. world language. The world is now like a small village, also
229. globalization means that English is more and more
230. important. When we import and export things, we
231. must use English to deal with these people, even if they are
232. from other countries, China, Japan, for example. We don’t
233. learn other languages, everyone in the world learns
234. English, so it’s like the first language in the world because
235. of this. People, uh (x) don’t learn other languages.

From the above, it is evident that the participants perceive that the English language
has also influenced Gulf Arab culture, due to its pervasiveness in many spheres of life.
This can be a powerful motivational factor to learn English, but can also lead to
conflicting feelings about the place of Arabic in society (see 6.5.1.3). An exploration
of this and other integrative variables follows in the next section.

6.5 Integrative variables

Integrative motivational variables also emerged from the interview data. Many
participants are outward-looking learners who love learning languages. Learners in
this study who exhibit integrative motivation seek out opportunities to practise, while
at the same time feeling secure about Arabic, as Amna illustrates:

475. time. For my part, I like the English language. I try to learn
476. it, try to listen in English and speak in English and practise,
477. but, but at the same time, I also believe in using Arabic.
478. You can like another language without losing your own
479. language.

She exemplifies the inquiring attitude shown by learners who display integrative
motivation, which suggests that integrative motivation can be sustained given the
appropriate effort and support. Then maybe more learners will meet with the success
of Fakhera in the United Arab Emirates, who seems to have had the most positive experience with English language learning amongst all the participants.

250. Anyway, the most important reason I decided to learn
251. English to be able to communicate with all kinds of people
252. and when I speak to them and when I feel travel it makes
253. me feel good. It’s great when you can speak to someone
254. in their language and not have any problems. I don’t
255. know, I like it so much.

Fakhera’s wish to use English as a lingua franca is not integrative in the old established sense – that is, exhibiting a liking for society and a desire to be accepted by the people, to join the group. Integrative motivation in this sense did not emerge from the interviews. However, perhaps Fakhera is demonstrating a new form of integrative motivation, to join the elite band of people who are now using English as a second language (see also 6.4.1.2, 6.4.2.2). This is something I will discuss below. What implications does this have for the Arabic language?

6.5.1 Arabic language

Although many learners really want to learn English, problems arise when they see that the Arabic language is not being protected. They strongly reject the idea that Arabic will be replaced by English, citing its importance as a language of education, religion and culture. However, they also believe that Arabic needs to become a language of innovation. Many participants are unhappy with the lack of Arabic language competence by the expatriate community.

Many learners seem to want to learn English, but, as English becomes more prevalent
in education, they see cultural traditions being eroded. Participants are saying that Arabic is part of their identity and that too great a shift to English will affect this. This is the obverse side of wanting to learn a language to join the group. This is wanting to conserve the original language to remain part of the group. Wanting to retain their original identity can be seen as the opposite of integrative motivation. These points will be discussed in detail below.

6.5.1.2 Arabic language in education

All of the participants interviewed were schooled in Arabic in primary and secondary level. Nonetheless, many are concerned about the implications for Arabic as a medium of education in the future, due to current educational reforms in both countries.

Sheikha reiterates the view of many learners when she opines that English will remain important in education for the foreseeable future, but Arabic will eventually be reinstated as the most important language in education:

189. *If English is becoming more important, what do you think will happen to the Arabic language in education in the future?*
190. This is the big question. My friends and I think Arabic will be less important for a while, but then people will realize that they need more Arabic and Arabic will become the most important language again. Everything changes all the time. Now English will be more important but this won’t continue forever. Subjects will be taught in Arabic again and maybe another language will also be important. We would NEVER accept English for every subject all the time. This is impossible, because we need to have a high level in Arabic before any other language.
She draws attention to the many recent changes in education in Oman, changes which lead her to believe that as soon as any lowering of the level in the Arabic language is detected, corrective measures will be taken to re-establish its importance in education. In the United Arab Emirates, Badria advocates a balance between both languages in education:

226. that because English is a nice language. Besides, I want
227. to say that if we have the Arabic language side by side with
228. English, it will be great. Many students feel the same
229. way. We like English, but what I would like to see a
230. balance between the two languages. If we can continue
231. to study in Arabic, and to have some courses in English,
232. this will help us I think to improve our English and to keep
233. the Arabic language also. This would be acceptable to
234. all of the students here. Ok, English is a language we
235. will learn, must learn, but if it destroys the Arabic
236. language, we will not, I will not accept it. ABSOLUTELY
237. NOT. We want our language to be side by side with
238. English. I don’t think this should be a problem.

She manifests positive feelings towards English, as long as Arabic is protected and is also studied at university level. For this to happen, Sara feels that teaching methods in the Arabic language classroom have to change in order to keep pace with the increasing prevalence of English words in Arabic language conversation:

185. I feel sad, quite sad, because you know, Arabic and
186. English, English words are being used more and more in
187. Arabic, so Arabic isn’t growing in vocabulary. I feel
188. worried because maybe there will be no place for Arabic in
189. the future. I feel sad because Arabic is the language of
190. the Qur’an, not English. We should have more
191. vocabulary in Arabic, not only take words from English.
192. Even if we are in a class that is in Arabic, many
193. English words are used. Our vocab. is becoming poor,
194. poorer every day.

Hanan indicates that if a learner feels that Arabic is being replaced as a language of
education, this will affect motivation to achieve a higher standard in English:

371. It’s not that I am saying it is bad to study English because it can help us but it will be difficult to study in English if we know the university is trying to cut out Arabic from everything. We will want to study more and learn more if we know we can do this in Arabic also, because how can a student want to study and do her best when she knows her language is being taken away?

In common with many other participants, Fakhera believes Arabic and English can exist side by side without too many obstacles, citing Canada as an example. However, negative feelings are also coming through:

195. … I feel angry too. I love English, I’m not saying anything about that, but of course I love Arabic too, because it’s the language I spoke as a child. It’s my first language, the language I learned to do everything in, you know? Why don’t we do something to prevent this language from being ignored? Surely the government must stop this from happening? Why can’t we have the two languages together? In other countries, they manage to do this. Look at Canada they speak French and English together, in one country. Maybe they have a few problems, but they have two languages in one country, and they manage. We could have the same here. It doesn’t have to be one language only. If the university could understand this, they would help people a lot, because NOW what is happening is that some people are graduating from university and they don’t have a good level in English or a good level in Arabic.

The danger of changing to English medium education is, according to Fakhera, a lack of competence in both English and Arabic upon graduation. This relates to Badria’s earlier point on student fears of semilingualism (see 6.3.1.1). As learners have repeatedly mentioned, having a high grade point average is of the utmost importance to them – finding the job they want depends on it. If studying through the medium of
English means they graduate with low marks, and university records seem to indicate this is increasingly the case, it could easily affect their motivation to study English.

Many participants consider that less importance attached to Arabic as a language of education has a corollary effect on the teaching of religion. Arabic, therefore, is also important as a means of transmission of culture and religion, which I will discuss below.

### 6.5.1.3 Arabic as the language of Gulf culture

The participants were unanimous in their assertion that English should not be allowed to eclipse Arabic, due to its role as a purveyor of Gulf Arab culture. Khawla illustrates the fear of some that acquiring more English will mean losing part of their culture:

> 244. this in English. But English is the most important language in the university now.
> 246. How does this make you feel?
> 247. [laughs]. I (x) I think very, very bad because it’s my culture and it’s my language. Arabic is my first language, the language of Islam, so it is very, very important and we must keep it. In some countries they lost their language when English becomes the number one language in education.
> 248. I saw this on TV, about some countries in Africa that this happened. We will lose many things about our culture.

Not everyone agrees with this assessment, however. Jamila, for example, rejects the idea that the Arabic culture will be lost:

> 292. good solution. I don’t think that if you learn something, you will lose something. You are learning not to lose. You are learning to be more open to others, to the cultures, to the world, so how do I learn something, why are we learning Mathematics? We don’t lose our culture.
When we learn anything, we don’t lose our culture. We learn words, we learn another language, but we don’t lose our culture or anything that is very (x) very that is not logical. So I don’t think we lose, I think we add to what we already know and it helps us to become better, to know more about things.

She believes that steps are already being taken to preserve the Arabic language and Emirati culture:

- Time, Arabic, I think that we will make a new plan to make the Arabic language more important, I think, maybe in schools, so as to make a balance between these two languages. Yes, and in this period I think that, I feel that people in institutions, in social institutions concentrate on traditional things they make traditional villages, and in the summer students and also children learn about their heritage and about their culture and lots of stories, so this will continue. I suppose what I am saying is that while the English language will continue to be important, it won’t take the place of the Arabic language. I really don’t see that this will happen.

The belief that the Arabic language and Arab culture will be preserved if either is perceived to be in danger of being eroded is echoed by a few other participants who are confident that Arabic will remain the language of Gulf Arab society. However, some participants point out that although efforts are being made to preserve Gulf culture in general, they nonetheless feel there is a gradual erosion of tradition, as Badria forcefully explains:

- They want to DELETE the Arabic language from our lives, from our education. That’s what they want. That’s what the university also wants, but we won’t accept this, ever. How do you feel about this? I am angry, because my first language, which is Arabic, they want to destroy it. When I meet my friends, I say “Hi”, “bye” “How are you?” things like that, in English. I will use some words in English, I don’t use Arabic words
all the time. But, you know, this will I think destroy our first language. I should use Arabic all the time to speak with my friends, but we don’t do that we always speak a little in English. It’s cool, we hear it on TV, so we use English, not Arabic. This makes me angry. I should not do this, but I do.

English phrases are in widespread use in everyday conversation around the world in many languages. For Sara, however, the consequences are potentially serious:

be a big problem, I think, as the students won’t have a high level either in Arabic OR in English. Students will be lost between two languages, lost between two cultures.

Sara, while not rejecting the usefulness of learning English, nonetheless feels strongly that the United Arab Emirates’ development depends on Arabic as much as English. Like many participants, she is apprehensive about the impact of current language policies on future generations:

you see, the language could cause problems within families. Parents want their children to learn English, but they don’t want them to forget who they are, forget their language.

Sara points out that much of the current emphasis on English as the language of education stems from her parents’ generation, many of whom have little formal education. As the present generation of learners feels the impact of such language policies on their Arabic language ability, it is natural that they will think about the implications of this for future generations, which will in turn affect their motivation to
study English in the present.

### 6.5.1.4 Arabic as the language of Islam

The link between Arabic and Islam was stressed on numerous occasions by the participants involved, although two different views emerged as to the danger posed to Islam by the increasing importance of education in English. The first view articulated is that, as Arabic is the language of Islam, reading the Qur’an means the level will remain high, as Jamila believes:

183. important thing, read the Qur’an. It is good for us to read
174. the complete all the Holy Book, so also we should read
175. the Sunna. I don’t know if you know Sunna all of them
176. are in Arabic, so our religion which is half, or more than half
177. of our lives, in Arabic, so how can we study only in English?
178. So, you see, Arabic will not be lost if we remember our
179. religion because Arabic is the language of Islam. If we
180. are good Muslims, we will not lose Arabic because we will
181. use it every day, in our daily lives, and we will keep our
182. language. Our level will be good in this way because we
183. will read and speak and use it with our families, our
184. friends. So if people are good Muslims they
185. shouldn’t worry about losing their level in Arabic.

However, many participants reveal that any negative feelings towards using more English in education are perhaps indicative of a deeper fear, as Sara discloses later during our second interview:

461. So, the Arabic language is related to Islam?
462. Yes [nods emphatically]. If you change one thing, the
463. danger is that you change the other thing. I think this
464. is the real reason many students do not feel happy about the
465. English language becoming more important. Why don’t
466. other people understand this? It’s not so much thinking
467. about other things, you know, but thinking about our own
468. culture, our religion. This is the situation. This is the
danger. We must preserve our language.

Dhanina voices the fear some learners appear to have, which is that by focusing on the English language in education to the detriment of Arabic, Islam may ultimately be affected:

185. But now, what is
186. happening is that everything is in English, so in schools, in
187. universities, everyone will study English. If this
188. continues, maybe nobody will study Arabic, nobody will
189. study subjects in Arabic. Then, if nobody cares about
190. this language, maybe Islam will be destroyed and also
191. maybe the Arabic language will be destroyed.

The feelings aroused by this emotive issue are complex and diverse, but what is clear is that for some learners, motivation to achieve a higher level in English is inevitably affected if learners feel Islam may be adversely influenced. Arabic therefore needs to adapt to new and challenging circumstances.

6.5.1.5 Arabic as a language of innovation

Some participants feel that Arabic needs to become a language of innovation, instead of merely translating ideas from other cultures. Safeya believes this would lead to a resurgence in Arabic in Oman:

225. language. I would like us to be stronger, to produce
226. more things, to be better in technology, so that then people
227. will learn Arabic. I don’t want us to just take
228. everything from their culture.

We can see that Safeya does not believe the Arabic language is being aided by a
society which uses technology but does not take concrete steps to become involved in its production. In contrast, Hanan believes that development has been slowed down by not translating enough into Arabic:

294. new ideas and new ways of thinking. What is really,  
295. really necessary in my opinion is translation. Through  
296. translation, through translation of scientific journals,  
297. translation of technological articles, all of these things.  
298. Because now they are in English?  
299. Yes, they are all in English. But when people want the  
300. Arabic language to improve and be more important, they  
301. should translate more and more English works into Arabic.  
302. That’s a very good point. People should translate.  
303. Medical articles, scientific articles this is something  
304. which has been neglected and we can see the result.

Later in the interview, however, Hanan seems to suggest that once the relevant aspects of Western, specifically American technology, have been translated, then, instead of being simply consumers of products, the United Arab Emirates can use its technological expertise to improve upon such products and thereby begin to produce for the home market. She cites the Japanese model as an example:

328. If Japanese people can take good things from America  
329. and still speak Japanese and study in Japanese, why can’t we  
330. do the same? This is what I think, we should take the  
331. good things from America and from their technology and  
332. inventions and then translate what we need into Arabic.  
333. That way we can improve on it and make it better, not just  
334. do things the same way and not improve at all, not  
335. modernise.

Translating from English into Arabic to stimulate production becomes an issue of wider debate when one considers that the most employees in both countries are non-Arab. This in turn raises questions as to their competence in the Arabic language.
6.5.1.6 Lack of expatriate competence in Arabic

A number of participants cited a lack of expatriate competence in the Arabic language as a reason to learn English. Anger surfaced amongst some of the participants, possibly because they view this as a lack of respect for their culture. This could conceivably lead to a corresponding lack of motivation to learn English, as Hind demonstrates:

258. English. We see this everywhere. Even in Muscat most of 259. the foreigners don’t speak Arabic, so we have to talk to them 260. in English. They are the important ones so we must learn 261. their language. This causes many people to be angry and 262. some people won’t speak with them in English, only Arabic, 263. because this is Oman and our language is Arabic.

It is somewhat unclear if by “them”, Hind means those who speak English as a lingua franca or those who speak it as a mother tongue. Usually, however, it means native speakers. What is evident is that Hind’s comments indicate resentment on the part of some at having to speak a foreign language in their own country in order to make themselves understood. She also intimates that some expatriates believe themselves to be superior to the people in whose country they are guests and that this belief manifests itself in a lack of willingness to learn the language of their hosts.

Amna relates that a lack of Arabic language competence amongst both Arab and non-Arab expatriates is a factor that motivates her to learn English, so that she can explain the Arab world and Islam to “English people”, which is often how all native English speakers are categorised:
think then I think it might be an idea to teach English
people in our culture. This is the age I live in. When I
want to tell them about religion, about Islam, if I don’t know
English, how can I tell them about these things in Arabic?
Lots of people who live here don’t know Arabic. They
don’t understand our culture, not only the English teachers,
but also the Arab teachers. When the Arab teachers ask us
about Islam, they ask us why we wear this [points to her
abaya/cloak and shayla/headscarf]. They ask us why we wear
these clothes. I can’t explain very clearly this idea in English,
so I want to learn more, to speak. I’ll explain better. I
think our religion we have to explain this religion to
others. I need to explain about Arabs. These days, most of
the world, they they have bad ideas about Islam. So, if I
don’t learn English to speak with them, who will do that?

Mariam is more concerned with the effect that marrying women from non-Arabic speaking countries will have on children’s ability to speak Arabic in the future. She displays a very strong national feeling:

important in this way when their babies grow up,
here, in this country, they should speak Arabic, ok? I
don’t think any other people should have influence over the
(x) the language we speak. Mothers should teach their
children Arabic. The problem is if a child has a mother
from India or somewhere, then they will have weak Arabic,
yeah, they won’t be able to speak Arabic very well. But
it’s ok if the mothers and fathers are both from Arab
countries, as they will be able to speak Arabic very well at
home, ok, and speak English at school.

Until relatively recently, it was quite common for Omani men to marry second wives from non-Arabic speaking countries, particularly India, which caused some concern in government circles that the Arabic language was in danger of being diluted. Measures were then adopted which now make it increasingly difficult for Omani men to marry women from other countries. This practice concerns men marrying foreign women, as, due to societal norms, it is almost unheard of for Omani women to marry foreign
nationals.

In the more affluent United Arab Emirates, where many families employ housemaids mainly from India, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, Fatma also worries about the Arabic language competency of children:

308. thinking. Everyone needs to study English and have a good level, especially women, even if they are at home,
309. because how will they speak to the housemaids and tell them what to do? Most housemaids come from Indonesia or Malaysia, and they don’t speak Arabic. So,
310. they speak English, and when they take care of the children,
311. they speak to them in English. I think children will grow up to speak more English than Arabic.

Lack of Arabic language competence amongst the expatriate community, therefore, does not only have an impact on their ability to assimilate into Gulf Arab culture, but also has potentially serious consequences for future generations. As a traditional way of life is fast disappearing, what are the lessons that can be learned?

6.5.1.7 Learning from history

The participants exhibit a pride in their linguistic heritage, pointing out that Arabic was once regarded as the language of Science and Mathematics. Some, like Aysha, also caution against dwelling too much on past glories:

273. Uh, ok., I don’t like it that English is the most important language, but I understand some of the reasons. I think there are some good things about this, but I think we must stop looking at the past, talking about how good we were in historical times, because now we are in the twenty-first century and we should be looking toward the future, not the past. I don’t feel as angry as other people, because I
don’t think this will help anyone. I just know it and then I try to do my best.

According to Aysha, no useful purpose is served by using anger at the waning of Arabic as a language of global importance as a reason not to learn English. History shows the importance of languages can ebb and flow with the tide of development and modernisation. Jamila is of the opinion that if people re-examine their history carefully, they will come to a realisation that the Arabic language will survive:

In the ninth century, the Arabic language was the first in the world. English speaking people came to Arabic countries, learned here, learned the Arabic culture, oh sorry, the Arabic language, so I’m I’m thinking about that. I’m thinking about English now being the first language in the world. In that period when Arabic was the first and English people had to learn, English people didn’t lose their language, so, when I think about this, sorry, to answer your question, I think that, I don’t think that Arab students would lose their language. I don’t think that we will lose our language, no, I don’t think so. People feel afraid but I think they must learn what happened in history. It’s just how the world works, you know? First one culture is important and invents many things and has science and literature, things like that. Everyone else in the world wants to know about that because they are not so developed.

THEN the second culture becomes important because they have learned from the first one and then everyone else will want to learn about them. So, if English people didn’t lose their language the first time, now Arabic people won’t lose their language, I think.

Europeans learnt from Arabic tradition in the Middle Ages. The lessons of history suggest that perhaps a language other than English may assume worldwide importance in the future, according to Jamila, who indicates an awareness of the rise and fall of lingua francas.
6.6 Super macro variables

The data presented in this section show that learners were able to reflect on the impact events in the wider world have had on their learning experience and motivation. They were often able to comment on how power and politics have an impact on language policy and how learning about other cultures has influenced their motivation to learn English.

6.6.1 How power influences motivation

A recurring feature of the interviews was the participants’ understanding of power politics. Omani participants were more forthcoming than Emirati ones, who were perhaps embarrassed to discuss this issue in front of me, although it is not clear if they would have been more open with other interviewers. Nonetheless, some of them did open up on the subject to some degree, particularly regarding colonialism and what many perceive as neo-colonialism.

6.6.1.1 Colonialism

Many of the participants expressed the belief that colonialism in the past is responsible for the global spread of English today. Mariam, who echoes the view of other participants by considering English teachers to be a by-product of past colonialism, supposes this is why so many learners have to learn English in Oman:
Pupils are taught a little about Britain’s past involvement in the Gulf at school, which may influence their opinion towards learning English. Lubna makes reference to current events in the Gulf region, linking them with the past as well as with contemporary English language policy:

238. Maybe because uh many years ago because
239. many countries, foreign countries continued to divide the
240. world into poor countries and weak countries, so they I
241. don’t know (x) so poor countries should speak their
242. language. Countries were colonized, that’s what I think.
243. I think this still has an effect today. So this is the effect
244. of history. Foreign countries, English speaking countries
245. wanted everyone to learn their language so it would be
246. easier for them to communicate, because these countries
247. didn’t know how to speak Arabic. It was too difficult for
248. them. They brought teachers here and that’s what we
249. still have today.

271. the second reason, as I said before, is history. Colonization
272. in the past happened in many countries in the world,
273. because Britain went to these countries and took control.
274. They fought the people there and they won, so they told
275. everyone to use English to speak to them. So everyone
276. had to learn how to speak English. America is doing the
277. same thing today in the Arab world, especially in Iraq. I
278. heard they are changing all the books in the schools into
279. English, not Arabic. So now everyone must study in
280. English. I’m not saying I agree with this, because I think
281. it’s wrong to invade another country and make them do
282. things in a different way. Ok? They should not do this
283. but nobody can stop them. Britain and America are the
284. strongest countries in the world. Nobody can touch them, I
285. think.

Events in Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine were repeatedly mentioned by the participants, who were very emotional on the subject. For example, Dhanina considers that what is currently happening in Iraq’s education system could happen in the United Arab Emirates:
196. America [*laughs*] comes to this part of the world to steal oil, things like that, what it does in Palestine, steal oil, like in Iraq. Now in Iraq, America has changed its mind many times. They are also changing the subjects that are being taught in schools did you know that? Maybe they’ve spent about sixty million dollars or something like this on changing school subjects in Iraq. There are no Islamic subjects and there are no sentences or sayings from the Qur’an in the textbooks. (..) They’ve been removed. I worry that the same thing will happen here, that they will remove these things from our books. Many students, my friends are very angry about this, very angry [*laughs*]. They don’t want to study English. Well, they want to study the English language but they want to learn their subjects in Arabic. They don’t want to study their majors in English. They feel very, very angry about this. Me, I love studying English as a language, though.

Fear of change which would involve a less visible role for the Arabic language and Islam leads to feelings of worry or anger for many. As Dhanina exemplifies above, this fear can manifest itself in overt anti-U.S. discourse and possibly a lack of motivation to study English. Dhanina is trying to reconcile such negative feelings with her genuine liking for the English language. A possible solution to this predicament may lie in the suggestion of Israa, who advocates greater freedom of discussion in the classroom:

277. and not just one or two. And we need to be able to talk about what is happening in the world, because I think the university doesn’t want the teachers to talk to us about what is happening in the Arab world, about Iraq or things like that. It’s good if we can discuss and if we can hear other points of view, because, if we don’t do this, many students will keep bad feelings inside until they grow and grow, and then they just explode. It would be good if we could discuss things in English, if the university is not afraid of this.

Israa correctly surmises that university teachers are told not to discuss current affairs.
However, according to Lubna, this can lead to negative feelings towards teachers:

370. First of all, a lot of students are against the teachers,
371. especially the Western teachers, but I think this is wrong.
372. They don’t like them because of America and what is
373. happening in Palestine and Iraq and Afghanistan.

Khaseeba’s comments about the presence of America and Britain in the Gulf lend credence to the idea that feelings about regional political events could subsequently lead to motivation to study English being affected:

274. everywhere. Look at what you see on TV in Iraq,
275. Palestine, Afghanistan everywhere you look there are
276. Americans and British telling them what to do. They
277. change the systems there and they want people who will do
278. exactly as they say. We know this is happening and we
279. are very angry about it. They are taking away everything
280. from our Muslim brothers and we must fight them. They
281. are taking everything away and they can’t speak Arabic.
282. They don’t know anything about us. They don’t know
283. how to deal with us and they don’t know about our
284. religion. They think we are all just terrorists and stupid.
285. They can’t speak Arabic so, uh, they make us learn
286. English so they can communicate with us, uh, because
287. English is easier to learn for us. They can’t speak any
288. languages and they don’t know anything about our history.
289. We have long memories. We know what they are
290. doing, what they did before. They want to change
291. everything and they tell us they want to help us, but this is
292. all lies. They only want to help themselves and they want us
293. to always need technology and things from them. They
294. want to change everything about our lives. They bring fast
295. food and movies and things here and they want to change
296. our education. In Iraq they’re changing the books and
297. there’s no Arabic in them, so they think this means everyone
298. will study English. They think we’re all stupid, but we
299. know what they’re doing. My friends and I talk about this.
300. EVERYONE talks about this. Everyone is angry but
301. most people are afraid to say anything. Even the students
302. will not tell you about it, but I’m not afraid.

Changes in Iraq’s educational system are frequently cited by students in everyday
conversation as proof of what changes in any educational system in the Middle East are leading towards. Some participants are cynical about the declared motives for such change.

In the United Arab Emirates, Badria appeared reluctant at first to broach the subject with me, possibly because of my position as a white, Christian, European researcher. However, later in the interview she opens up a little about the link between power, politics and language, although she, like Khaseeba, signals the delicacy of the subject by stating that most people will not discuss it openly:

357. choose English and learn it. I think that politics and
358. geography in the world have a great deal to do with English
359. being so important. There is something political,
360. because when they communicate, when they have a war,
361. they do they use just English in the Arab world. This will
362. become policy, to control all of the world. That’s how I
363. see it. It’s about control, the aim is to (x) to control us.
364. The aim of learning English is to control all of the world in
365. one language. That’s what it’s about. As I see it,
366. English speaking countries powerful countries want to
367. control us. Maybe people won’t say this, but this is what
368. they think, because we know it’s true. Ok, look at TV
369. what is happening now in the Arab world. Countries
370. are being controlled by English speaking countries. We see it
371. every day. This will happen in other places, too, in the
372. future. Nothing can stop it. We can’t stop it. Only
373. if we have English can we do something.

This is a typical reaction to US/English speaking hegemony among Arabic speaking groups. Badria believes using the English language as a medium will allow others to put their views across in the global media space. Then English can be used as a weapon of resistance against the power of the English speaking West. It seems that there are two ways of looking at the skill: learn a useful global lingua franca or learn
English because it is required by dominant nations, i.e. learn the language of oppressors, as has always been the case in history. Participants reveal differing views but signal that the wider cultural environment needs to be considered when implementing educational change.

6.6.2 Learning English involves cultural comparison

Sophisticated Arab and Western media now permeate all sectors of what were recently still feudal, tribal societies. Gulf Arabs can access uncensored information about topics such as current affairs and Western light entertainment directly in their homes, not only in Arabic, but also in English, with television stations such as Al-Jazeera broadcasting in both languages. The Arab media are broadcasting in English to get information across – not necessarily to mother tongue English speakers, but to the millions who use English as a lingua franca. The ‘battle for hearts and minds’ is being played out on a daily basis in living rooms across the Middle East, which accounts for the discernible hostility some respondents display towards the West.

All of the participants believe that learning a foreign language involves learning about different cultures. Aysha is the only participant who believes that she does not make cultural comparisons:

149. in college, compared to school. I think it is important
150. to know more about other cultures and how other people
151. live, and their social life and family life and how they
152. deal with each other. Not to compare it with our
153. culture of course, but it is good to know more about the
154. positive and negative sides of their lives, then I can
155. judge for myself what is right and what it wrong. I
156. think that’s a good thing, not just to tell me things, but
Although she does not believe in comparing cultures, Aysha nonetheless states that she can “judge” for herself what is right and wrong, which belies her assertion that she does not compare other cultures with her own. Jokha, on the other hand, openly equates language learning with culture learning and displays strong anti-integrative feeling:

159. Learning a language, or about a culture, will add to my common knowledge. As to how others live, I don’t think that will be of great use, unless I had to deal with foreigners or how to speak to them. I don’t like foreigners so I don’t think that I will really have to speak to them all that much. I think their culture is not like ours. I can see this on TV and I don’t want to be like them.

She has already decided that she does not wish to communicate with native English speakers any more than strictly necessary. The central fact here is that she does not like outsiders, which is a key factor in the low motivation she exhibits.

Mariam appears to confirm that learning about a language also involves learning about culture, which does not always meet with the approval of learners:

84. means we could learn about different cultures, which I think is good, although many students don’t like this because they think American culture is all bad.

We can perceive a dislike of the other culture, which can result in low motivation. Lubna, however, began to make comparisons that were somewhat unfavourable to
Omani culture. She nonetheless retains a balanced view, stating that one should not immediately jump from the particular to the general:

   168. I learned how to deal with Westerners. I learned
   169. that, for example, they are very punctual, and time is
   170. very important to them. It is something that we
   171. would have to learn. They are also very keen on reading in
   172. their leisure time. They also go early to bed. Whereas
   173. Arabs, alas, most of them are not punctual, they don't
   174. read a lot and they don't respect other peoples’
   175. opinions. Some Arabs, unfortunately, don't sleep until
   176. dawn. I don't like to generalise, because there are other
   177. examples on either side.

Hind, meanwhile, details an incident that enabled her to see how culture can influence people negatively as well as positively. This incident occurred during Eid, which is the colloquial name given to any religious holiday. Each Eid has a specific name, an example being Eid al Fitr, which is the holiday that occurs at the end of Ramadhan. Hind’s story reveals a fear of cultural loss:

   272. very bad. I see this in many ways. Ok., last Eid I was in
   273. Muscat and I saw young boys asking foreigners for money
   274. for Eid. This is wrong. We don’t do this. It’s usual for
   275. relatives to give children some money for Eid. But the
   276. children should never ask for it, and they shouldn’t behave
   277. like this. These boys don’t know to to behave in a
   278. good way and they will give people the wrong impression.
   279. We are losing the most important things in our culture
   280. and these boys behaved badly because of English. They used
   281. English. I was SO SHOCKED by that. I think it’s
   282. necessary to learn English, but not if we change who we are.
   283. Then I won’t learn any English if this is the result.

This episode is significant to Hind because the English language was used by children to behave inappropriately and she is blaming English-medium culture for their mercenary attitude. Her motivation to learn has been directly affected as a result of
what she witnessed. An occurrence such as that related by Hind is clearly not the
image anyone would wish to project of their society, especially in times where the
cultural stereotypes that Arabs and Westerners have of each other sometimes border
on caricature.

Johara relayed an anecdote by one of her teachers about a conference presentation he
gave in Dubai. He said Westerners there were unwilling to acknowledge the fact that
he was an Arab who gave a presentation in English, and that his reception was
lukewarm as a result:

239. Because everybody, and here, think that Arab people are so
240. so, I don’t how to say this, not bad, but they only care
241. about fighting and they have that stereotype about us. Ok?
242. You know?
243. And do other people have stereotypes?
244. Yes, they have, but I see that Arab people have a great desire
245. to know foreign culture, but foreign people, they don’t like
246. to learn about us, they don’t need to learn about us, just a

This clearly upset Johara, as she told me about it during our interview, and
subsequently refused to elaborate on her feelings about it, asking for a change of
subject. Many participants feel that there is a perception of them as being of less than
normal intelligence (see 6.1). Israa, however, differs on this point, as she feels that
most non-Arabs do not hold such negative stereotypes:

146. different. What is good, though, is that most of them don’t
147. have a bad idea about us, even though their TV gives them
148. bad ideas and tells them lies about us. Most of them
149. want to understand, so I think we should help them as
150. much as we can.
This exchange was typical of my meetings with Israa, who only once during my interviews with her expressed the belief that her culture is superior to others, when discussing the role of English in the education system in the future:

309. I think it will be more important. I think that if we
310. learn about their culture and compare it with our culture, I
311. think that, sorry sorry about this, because I know you are
312. Western, but we feel that you understand us, but I think
313. that we are better than them, that our culture is much better
314. than theirs, so I will preserve my culture. I’m happy, I’m
315. very happy to learn about their culture and about their
316. language, but that also makes me preserve my culture.

Cultural comparison is therefore inevitable for most learners when learning another language, particularly when that language assumes greater importance in their society and when much of the population is comprised of English-speaking expatriates.

6.7 Summary

In this chapter I have investigated how learners’ perceptions of their learning experiences and the events that have shaped those experiences contribute to an understanding of the educational and wider environmental factors that influence motivation. This understanding is facilitated by the main categories which emerged from the data: pedagogy, top down approach, role models, instrumental variables, integrative variables, the Arabic language and super macro variables. Within the data there are numerous possible motivational causes for why many learners have achieved so little in terms of language proficiency. Chapter 7 will present my interpretations of the results presented in this chapter and also address the original research question.
CHAPTER 7 – DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS
7.0 Reviewing the research question

The research question presented in Chapter 5 was:

What are the major motivational obstacles to learning that prevent Gulf Arab learners, particularly Emirati and Omani learners, achieving a high standard in the English language?

As outlined in Chapter 2, motivation remains a multi-dimensional construct (Crookes and Schmidt, 1991; Dornyei, 1994; Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993; Gardner and Tremblay, 1994). Current thinking in pedagogical literature has traditionally been shaped by a social-psychological approach (see 2.3.1). The present research seeks to see whether there are further motivational factors which may act as a stumbling block to learners and why these latter have achieved so little (see 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.3.1, 4.4). To be able to answer the research question, the learners’ perspective on language learning is analysed and set within the wider context: institutional, societal and global.

This chapter contains six sections, including this introduction. Section 7.1 deals with the data gathered on the learners. The data gathered on the staff and the educational establishment will be examined in greater detail in section 7.2. In section 7.3 I will consider the implications of implanting an alien American model of education. Section 7.4 discusses the data gathered on the wider environment. Section 7.5 will provide a brief summary. All of these sections will underline how there are numerous possible causes for why these learners seem to uninspired to study English.
7.1 The learners

The current position of the English language as a lingua franca means that instrumental reasons for studying the language dominate (see 2.3.3, 2.3.5, 6.4). Those who are more successful, however, also demonstrate signs of integrative motivation (see 2.3.4, 2.3.5, 6.5). Many also show signs of hostility at worst and ambivalence at best towards the West. Interestingly, they react more strongly to Westerners in the education system than to Western society in general (see 6.6.1.1, 6.6.2). Hostility and ambivalence are also displayed toward the increasing widespread use of English in the education system and what it means for their societies (see 6.5.1.2, 6.5.1.3, 6.5.1.4, 6.5.1.5. These areas will be discussed in further detail below.

7.1.1 Instrumental motivational factors

The learners display strong instrumental motivation (see 6.4.1, 6.4.1.2, 6.4.1.3, 6.4.2.1, 6.4.2.2), as they are aware English may help them get a job. The prominence they accord to their studies explains this. They know that they have to jump through the English language hoop to get their qualifications, although they are not always happy about this. It is understandable that the motivating impetus for increasing their English language proficiency levels comes from the realisation of its importance to success in their university studies.

Although instrumental motives have not featured to any great extent in the studies of Gardner and his associates (see 2.3.5), perhaps this is because their research largely
ignored motives such as achieving good exam results, which features as a priority for the participants in this study (see 4.3.1, 6.4.1.1). Learners are aware that assessment focuses on form, not meaning or underlying thought processes (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Findlow, 2006). Assessment at the end of English medium education tests English as much as wider educational development. Because of this, perhaps, participants have focussed heavily on pedagogy in their responses to questions about motivation. They understand the importance of the support they may or may not receive to help them jump these hurdles.

The importance of instrumental factors reflects research findings in recent years in Arab and Asian societies (see 2.3.5) which strongly suggest instrumental motivation is viewed by many learners as being of more relevance to their studies than integrative motivation (Ghengesh, 2005; Shaaban & Gaith, 2000; Warden & Lin, 2000).

7.1.2 Integrative motivational factors

Integrative motivational factors did not feature to the same extent as instrumental factors in this study, in common with other studies in a Gulf context (Arneson, 2005; Costelloe, 2001). This illustrates that more studies need to be conducted that recognise that for a large sector of the world’s population, English is a compulsory subject, not an elective one, which some studies in the literature appear to ignore (Ellis, 1997; Norris-Holt, 2001). Nonetheless, learners in this study who exhibited some degree of integrativeness (see 6.5) were capable of taking responsibility for their own learning. When faced with a different educational environment, they were able to apply
strategies to progress in their studies. Interacting with native speaker teachers and having the opportunity to travel to an English-speaking country were effective motivators for a few participants, although most of those who showed integrative motivation also expressed the wish that Arabic continue to represent cultural capital in their own society (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 1990). These learners also believe that the English language may contribute in part to their being seen as modern young women (see 6.4.1.3).

Emirati learners generally appear more motivated to learn English and are more successful in achieving a high level than their Omani counterparts. As the Emirati institution in the study is located in a city, which is a more multi-ethnic environment, contact with native English speakers is much more frequent than in the town where the Omani institution is located. When the native speaker community is more of a known entity, as has been the case for a number of years, it may mean that motivation to study the English language is higher. In contrast, in a small town, attitudes towards acquiring a higher level and motivation to study may be adversely affected by fear of losing part of one’s identity or heritage (Dörnyei, Csizér & Németh, 2006; Taylor, Méynard & Rhéault, 1977; Costelloe, 2001).

This seems to tally with my original perception that learners in the Omani institution were more highly motivated to study English to begin with, but exam results suggested their level progressively decreased, which happened to coincide with an influx of more native English speakers not only in institutions of higher education, but also in Omani towns in general.
Original definitions of integrative motivation in the literature (Clément, 1980; Gardner, 1983, 1985, 1988, 2001; Gardner et al., 2004; Schumann, 1986) where people are seen to wish to become more like the community of native speakers (see 2.3.5) do not seem to fit all learning environments. Learners in this study are perhaps displaying integrative motivation towards the users of English as an international language rather than the users of English as a mother tongue (see 6.4.2.2). Many appear to be integratively motivated to learn the language as a lingua franca. However, as traditional conceptions of motivation do not seem to take this into account, integrative motives do not feature as prominently as they might do otherwise.

Maybe, as suggested by Dörnyei and Csizér (2002), a new definition of integrative motivation is needed (see 2.3.5), one that deals more with the speakers of English as a global language than a community of mother tongue English speakers. This would mean that attitudes towards native speakers of English would be a less significant factor affecting motivation and L2 acquisition (Spolsky, 1969). The English language would then become representative of a more global than Western culture (see 6.4.2.2), which might encourage some learners to become more motivated to learn the language. Perhaps differing perceptions of the integrative motivational concept might go some way towards explaining participants’ feelings of ambivalence about Western society and education reform, which will be discussed below.

7.1.3 Hostility/Ambivalence about the West and anti-integrative feelings

Most participants in this study do not criticise the West in general but instead criticise
those from the West whom they meet in the educational environment. Remarkably, they do not seem to be affected by general prejudice that can be found in their societies (Muslim, Arabic speaking), but they are affected by individuals whom they judge (see 6.1.3.1, 6.1.3.2). This finding links to that on integrative motivation in the previous section, as increased contact with native English speakers in their societies apparently leads some of these participants to become less motivated. They express a desire to become more like a community of people who speak English as a lingua franca (see 6.4.2.1, 6.4.2.2), as many realise that increased contact with native English speakers shows that they are not in tune with the values of the target language group. In such cases, many learners learn the language simply to gain the qualification, as Poole (2001) noted in a study in Oman:

“... there is a danger at present that some students in higher education feel they are simply obliged to learn the language of a culture which may seem distant or even corrupt, simply in order to gain qualifications and a better job.” (Poole, 2001:126)

Low motivation to learn a language then becomes part of the wider environment, as learners do not always identify with the users of English as a first language (see 2.3.1). Participants who exhibit signs of integrative motivation wish to become more competent so that they can communicate with foreigners of different nationalities, thereby seemingly displaying integrativeness towards the users of English as an international language. However, although they recognize the value of having a high level in English, they still remain unsure about what education in English will mean for their societies.
7.1.4 Feelings about the social system English-medium education introduces

Some ambivalence about the two tier system that English medium education introduces (see 4.2, 4.2.1, 6.5.1.2) is evident in this study. On the one hand, the English language is associated with innovation and whatever is new, primarily through the production of media images that focus on computer technology, tourism and the financial sector. Increasingly, English is being associated with educational technology. This constant bombardment of images emphasizes the role the English language has to play in bringing about changes in society, also suggesting that English is a language that will bring about social equality. Such associations appear to have become indelibly printed on the minds of most sectors in society. English is viewed as providing better access to information, as well as improved educational and employment opportunities for men and women (see 6.2.1.1, 6.4.1.1, 6.4.2.2). This makes studying the language an attractive proposition for many.

On the other hand, it is increasingly evident that only those who have a measure of proficiency in English may participate in the developed society (see 2.3.8). Some participants feel that they are being left behind, which leads to negative ways of thinking about the usefulness of learning English (see 6.4.1.1). Lack of English language ability can lead to inequalities in the education system, as some learners are eclipsed in terms of exam results and employment opportunities by those who are more successful in their studies (see 6.4.1.2). Then language becomes a way through which learners’ futures can be controlled, as access to participation in society is
conditional upon studying English. This makes English more important than other gatekeeping qualifications. Again, this emphasizes the instrumental reasons for studying the language for many learners.

It seems, therefore, participants fear that education through the medium of the English language may only provide access to modernisation and equality for some, not for all (see 3.4, 3.6, 4.7.1, 4.8, 6.1.1, 6.4.1.1, 6.4.1.2, 6.5.1.2). Even though many learners may not like the idea of an English-speaking “elite”, possibly they realise they need to become part of it. Perhaps this is why many of the participants view the importance of English as something they cannot change. They mainly believe it is a necessary condition of university study, which means that for many the reasons for studying the language will remain instrumental, not integrative.

Although current educational policy is moving towards English for all, as noted above, it is inevitable that some learners will not succeed as well as others. Language policies may thus be responsible for the dominance of one group over another, which means the English language cannot be separated from an understanding of how language is linked to power (see 2.3.8):

"To understand the impact of language policy upon the organization and function of society, language policy must be interpreted within a framework which emphasizes power and competing interests. That is, policy must be seen within the context of its role in serving the interests of the state and the groups that dominate it" (Tollefson, 1991:201).

English becomes a means of controlling the shape society will take and can also serve
to disenfranchise some of its members (Bourdieu, 1991). English language education could be said to militate against the participation of many people in debate, democracy and government (Pennycook, 1994). This means that the imposition of English as a language of instruction may result in economic, cultural and political capital for a very small elite, thereby reproducing old, previously existing inequalities and power structures (see 2.3.8). There are corresponding implications for learner motivation, which may be adversely affected for some. Motivation to acquire a high level of English is thus linked to the wider social and political context.

In the following section, I will examine factors in the educational environment that relate to the levels of motivation and subsequent language acquisition exhibited by learners. I will also inspect how the educational environment influences learners’ views of the West and of the societal system that education through English establishes.

### 7.2 The educational environment

The institutional context in which English acquisition is taking place also has an important role to play in the motivation of the learners. The institutional effect has three aspects: first, there is a tendency to employ native speakers rather than Arabic mother tongue speakers who have studied English. Learners have no role models to help them adapt to different teaching styles and they often encounter inappropriate behaviour. Second, the new teaching styles have been brought in after discussion with
foreign/Western consultants. Learners have no say as to whether the American curriculum is appropriate or not. Third, the imposition of western styles of education does not go as far as permitting full freedom of speech. Learners are being asked to accept a part of the foreign educational tradition but not being given the full benefit – they only encounter the disadvantages, not the advantages.

7.2.1 Native-speaker teachers

The support of their university teachers is regarded by the participants as a pivotal factor in their motivation to do well in their English studies. This is not surprising as teachers are the people with whom the learners are likely to have the most regular contact outside their home environment. It therefore follows that they exert influence on learners’ motivation, as they are, in effect, examples of ‘significant others’ as described in the literature (Williams & Burden, 1997). The positive motivational effects of teachers on the learners are evident, as they are largely responsible for creating a favourable classroom atmosphere in which learners feel encouraged to increase their English language proficiency. Positive feedback encourages them further.

The implementation of education reform programs requires teachers to have a high level of proficiency in the English language in order to teach most subjects in the curriculum through the medium of English. This invariably means that native speaker teachers are more valued by the education ministries than non-native speaker teachers
The ability of teachers to motivate learners can be influenced by a difference of national backgrounds (see 2.3.6, 2.3.6.1, 4.3, 4.3.1). Learners display a noticeable preference for teachers from their own culture (see 2.3.6, 2.3.6.1, 2.3.6.2, 2.3.7, 6.1.3.2, 6.1.3.4). The main reason given for this preference is that native-speaker teachers use some forms of communicative teaching styles that are at odds with their culture. This contrasts with more traditional styles employed in the schools (Canning & Bornstein, 2001). It is possible that some learners may react to the imposition of new ways of learning by frequently resorting to rote memorisation and other ways of learning they have been used to (see 4.3.1). This may be seen as lack of motivation by teachers, but maybe some learners feel that rejecting new ways of learning is simply a strategy which allows them to retain an element of aloofness from the English language and culture (see 2.3.6), as Canagarajah found in a 1993 study in Sri Lanka.

If such is indeed the case with some learners, this provides an additional reason to supply learners with a greater number of role models from their own culture (see 6.1.3.2, 6.1.3.3, 6.2.2), particularly as government policies officially promote...
Emiratisation and Omanisation. Widdowson (1997) takes the native-speaker teacher argument one step further by arguing that non-native teachers of English may have a more in-depth perspective on the difficulties involved in successfully achieving a high level in the English language, due to greater detachment from the language. Bilingual or multilingual non-native teachers of English, either from the Gulf or other parts of the Middle East, are not only valuable as role models, but also provide learners with concrete examples of teachers who are still learners of English (see 2.3.6.2). Learners express a clear wish for teachers from their community as role models (see 6.2.2), explicitly linking this to motivation, which ties in with other research in the field (Canagarajah, 1993; Medgyes, 1994). Such role models are viewed by learners to be more aware of teaching styles that exist in the schools and do not need to be trained regarding cultural codes (see 2.3.6.2, 2.3.7, 6.1.3.4).

However, the fact remains that non-native-speaker teachers constitute a tiny minority of faculty in most higher education institutions, although they have, in common with their students, the experience of learning English as a second or foreign language. Native-English-speaker teachers continue to be preferred by the education ministries, perhaps because there exists a widespread perception that educational qualifications gained abroad are superior to those gained in Arabic-speaking countries (see 4.3, 4.8, 6.1.3.2). The assumption that there is only one acceptable way to teach and learn English is highly ethnocentric (Ghosn, 2004). The learners’ culture and educational experience are being effectively ignored (see 2.3.6, 2.3.6.1, 2.3.6.2, 2.3.7, 4.2.1, 4.4.1, 6.1.1).
Hence it becomes obvious that teachers, regarded in the literature as part of the wider social context (see 2.3.1, 2.3.6) have a major role to play in motivating learners (see 2.3.6, 2.3.6.1, 2.3.6.2, 2.3.7, 4.3, 4.3.1, 4.4, 4.4.1, 4.4.2, 6.1.1, 6.1.3.1, 6.1.3.2, 6.1.3.3, 6.1.3.4, 6.2.2) and it follows that an examination of what underlies their approaches to teaching, learning and living in an environment different to that which they have been used to is needed.

7.2.1.1 The underlying attitudes of teachers

Teaching in another country inevitably involves importing a different set of cultural values into the language classroom (Tsui, 2003). This can lead in some cases to cultural and pedagogical conflict (see 2.3.6.1, 2.3.7, 4.2.1, 4.3.1, 6.1.2, 6.1.3.2, 6.6.2). Of course, in many instances the result is also greater intercultural communication and understanding. As Fakhera explains (see 6.1.3.1), learners may actually feel more at ease expressing their opinions in a foreign language, and English can provide learners with the freedom to express ideas and thoughts they might not feel comfortable expressing through the medium of the Arabic language.

However, in some cases misunderstandings also ensued, as the pedagogical styles used by teachers elicited a negative reaction from learners, due to its unfamiliarity in terms of style and culture (see 6.1.1, 6.1.2). All too often it appears that teachers believe that what works in their home environment can be uncritically transplanted to other
cultural and educational contexts (see 2.3.6.2, 2.3.7, 4.3.1, 4.4.1, 6.1.1, 6.1.2). This mirrors other research concerning the difficulties teachers encounter when the teaching styles they employ in the classroom reflect their own culture (Byram et al., 1991; Pajares, 1992). Pennycook (1998) believes that the practice of using only English in the classroom reflects colonial policy, which can cause tension amongst learners (see 3.6). It should logically stand to reason that “any methodology in English language education should be appropriate in the social context within which it is to be used” (Holliday, 1994:1).

Not only do many teachers view their teaching style as the one that works best, but many also routinely characterise Arab learners as passive and as relying almost exclusively on rote-learning (see 2.3.7, 4.3, 4.4.2). Categorising people in such a way, which, according to Said (1978, 1997), has often been a feature of Arab societies, does these learners a grave disservice, as many clearly demonstrate a capacity for assuming responsibility for their own learning and the ability to carefully weigh up different sides of an idea before deciding what to believe (see 4.4.2, 6.2.2).

Not allowing learners to experience different teaching styles and voice a diverse range of opinions, as is frequently the case in Oman and the United Arab Emirates, a situation often transpires where learners do not acquire a high level of English language proficiency (see 2.3.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.3.1, 6.1.1). Considering that they have studied English for approximately eight years before entering higher education and then study more intensively, receiving lower grades than they believe their degree of effort merits, it is hardly surprising that motivation may suffer, when the result eerily
resembles what the Burney report found in Hong Kong in 1935, almost a century ago:

“... not only do pupils commonly speak English badly after their eight years’ course, but even their understanding of the spoken language is so poor that they have to be given further special training, on admission to university, before they can listen to the lectures with profit.” (Burney, 1935:11, cited in Pennycook, 1998:194).

However, the teaching styles employed in the classroom are not always the choice of the teacher. This is increasingly evident in the Gulf, where practice in the language classroom and in other parts of the curriculum places more value on the American model than on any other (see 4.2, 4.2.1, 4.4.1). It then becomes apparent that in many instances teachers feel they have no choice but to teach in a certain way, regardless of what they feel constitutes appropriate pedagogical practice and despite the motivational consequences for learners.

Policy certainly affects practice, but so do the beliefs teachers hold about learners, for these may be viewed as placing extensive limitations upon Arabic-speaking learners. Participants in Oman, for example, can barely conceal their irritation at being asked to do so little in class and being given what amounts to unrewarding and unchallenging remedial work in class which focuses on elements of basic English language grammar of which they are already very much aware. This limits the quality of student-teacher interaction and proves to be demotivating for learners (see 6.1.1, 6.1.3.1).

What emerges from the above discussion of the underlying attitudes of teachers to pedagogical styles is that in most circumstances, cultural orientation would benefit many teachers who arrive in the Gulf to teach for the first time. This was pointed out
by the participants themselves (see 6.1.3.4).

7.2.1.2 Intercultural communication training

Many teacher training courses continue to focus almost exclusively on communicative teaching styles as being the best ones to use in the classroom, to the virtual exclusion of other styles learners may be used to (see 2.3.2, 2.3.6, 2.3.6.1, 2.3.7, 4.3.1, 4.4.1, 4.6, 4.8, 6.1.1). Materials abound which are designed for use in Western cultural contexts, materials which are not always appropriate for every teaching context (see 2.3.6.1, 2.3.7, 4.4.1, 6.1.2). The data provide a micro-example (see 6.1.3.4) of the consequences of such forms of cultural thinking. Neo-colonial attitudes abound, which writers such as Phillipson (1992) and Pennycook (1994) believe permeate the educational environment in many countries. The confidence of some teachers in their “civilising mission” and cultural entrenchment can be seen in the way they teach and do not accept difference.

Teachers, regarded in the literature not only as part of the educational environment, but also the wider social one (see 2.3.6), need training to become aware that, by employing a variety of teaching styles, even if some of them seem to be counter to the precepts learnt in Western communicative teacher training (see 4.1.3.1), they are more likely to motivate a greater number of learners, which might result in a higher level of success in English language acquisition.

In addition, it seems some teachers remain unaware of the inherent conflict between
raising learners’ level of second language acquisition and attempting to increase learners’ cultural sensitivity on the one hand, while, on the other hand, continuing to live in a culture which they do not understand, never learning Arabic to communicate (see 2.3.6, 2.3.6.2, 4.4.3, 6.1.3.4, 6.5.1.6). If teachers continue to remain detached and isolated from Emirati and Omani society, might some learners not resent the monolingualism of their teachers, questioning why learners are expected to become motivated to achieve a high level in English when their teachers do not reciprocate? This is suggested by the data, as some participants view the lack of Arabic linguistic competence by teachers as evidence of a belief by teachers in their cultural superiority and proof of neo-colonial attitudes to teaching and living in the Middle East.

Most of the world’s teaching and learning of English as a second and foreign language takes place in monolingual cultures, but native speakers of English in particular are trained in environments where classes consist of multi-ethnic groups of learners. In addition, in most monolingual cultures, the majority of teaching and learning takes place in school, university or company classrooms where there may not be a choice on the learner’s part as to what language to study. Training would enable teachers to realise that language learning is not so much a conscious choice on the part of the learners as an institutional or governmental requirement, which can easily become a motivational obstacle preventing some learners from achieving a high level in the English language. Some teachers may easily lose sight of this fact, as many have been accustomed to teaching learners who study in a foreign language environment through choice. Those who pay for their courses or are being funded by companies or governments have an added motivational incentive to successfully acquire the English
language, which teachers should take into account. Many school and college learners in monolingual environments do not have or do not consider such an incentive. Training and orientation were repeatedly emphasised by the participants (see 6.1.2.4), who believed such training be provided by the universities and ministries of education. The following section explores the attitudes of the ministries and how such attitudes have a direct bearing on the lack of motivation on the part of many learners.

7.2.2 The underlying attitudes of Ministries of Education

Education in public higher education institutions in the United Arab Emirates and particularly in Oman is tightly controlled by government ministries. With the relatively recent proliferation of media forums for Arabic-speaking populations to express opinions on a wide range of issues, there are implications for the continued existence of a system that relies on the Arabic language as a means of instruction. The Arabic language is a means of providing fast access to information that may have once been suppressed by governments. A prime example of this is the explosion of media sources, especially television channels such as Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya, which beam constant images and streams of information into most homes. Arab governments have not universally welcomed this development, probably because they no longer exercise the same degree of control over exactly what their citizens are allowed to know and thus think (see 2.3.8). Print media has also benefited from the widespread availability of information and debates on topical issues have become increasingly prevalent in the Arabic language. The attitudes of the Ministries of Education, as government agencies, to language policies are inevitably influenced by such changes
These changes have brought about the preponderance of a model of education that is different to the traditional model of education. All sectors of education are undergoing change, more than at almost any other time in the Gulf’s history, due to the widespread availability of higher education for the current generation of learners. The emphasis on mass education which typified earlier approaches to higher education in Oman and the United Arab Emirates is giving way to a demand for greater quality assurance, so that these two countries can become more developed (see 4.2, 4.7). Globalisation and the power that the English language wields economically means that, for the foreseeable future at least, the Omani and Emirati Ministries of Education, at the behest of their governments, will continue to instigate and maintain language policies in all sectors of education that favour English over Arabic.

To this end, successive university administrations have invited consultants from Western countries, usually Britain, Canada or the United States, to join their management teams to develop and oversee strategies that will involve the achievement of these objectives (see 6.3). The result has been the implementation of policies that are widely disliked by learners. An example of one such unpopular policy is the compulsory requirement of English only in the classroom (see 6.3.2, 6.3.2.1, 6.3.2.2, 6.4.1.1). Students are forced to take subjects through English, leading to low grades (see 4.1.1, 4.1.2) and a lack of choice regarding what foreign language to study. Thus the English language is not acting as a gateway or motivating factor in success in studies and careers, but as a barrier, not only to educational or career success, but also
Motivation is inevitably affected, as Gardner’s (1982, 1985) concept of reciprocal causation illustrates. Reciprocal causation (see 2.3.4) proposes that motivation influences language achievement and that language achievement, in turn, is influenced by experiences inside and outside the classroom, which have a corresponding effect on language attitudes and motivation. This pertains to the domain of social psychology, as learners hope to have a positive return on their investment in learning the language, such as success in their studies, if successful language acquisition is to become a reality.

Industrial psychology approaches to motivation are also relevant to the study. One such approach views task achievement alone as not being enough to guarantee and sustain motivation (see 2.2). Learners also need feedback on their performance – assurances that they have performed well (Beck, 2000). When negative feedback ensues, or, as in the case of the learners, poor exam grades, motivation levels are subsequently affected. Industrial psychology also recognises that management influences the motivation of employees in the workplace. Being able to influence motivation in a positive manner is seen as being able to effectively manage an organisation. By contrast, having a negative impact on the motivation of learners has resulted in a half-implemented educational model in the institutions in this study (see 7.3).
However, education ministries continue to listen to outside consultants with little local contextual knowledge or experience, which has resulted in the language policies that are currently being implemented. This is partly influenced by the belief that education consultants coming from developed countries bring more efficient methods of education with them which can be usefully applied in their entirety to the local context. This results in a form of collusion between the ministries and consultants as to what constitutes appropriate pedagogical models.

7.2.3 The underlying attitudes of consultants

For the foreseeable future the American model, as recommended by consultants, will continue to be emphasised as the way forward, replicating a system designed for a very different educational environment. Perhaps one reason for this is due to the fact that, as Altbach (2003) points out, it is far easier for consultants to travel abroad to implement accreditation for universities where the language of instruction is English. It has already been established that many consultants lack relevant local background knowledge (see 4.2.1, 4.8) and language skills. Therefore, by recommending that education institutions change to English as the means of instruction, their jobs are made easier by working in institutions which operate in English, not Arabic, and where academic achievement and traditions are measured by foreign, instead of local standards (see 6.3, 6.3.1.1).

Insisting on a foreign model as being the correct educational model and refusing to
sanction a different way of doing things is a form of cultural superiority. Acknowledged as “experts” by the education ministries, many are convinced they know how to apply their expertise to local language programs, so as to modernise local education systems. This is similar to the belief of some teachers in the applicability of communicative teaching styles to all situations (see 6.3.1.4), and provides a further example of neo-colonial attitudes towards education in the Middle East (see 3.5.1). Although it is not quite a form of Huntington’s (1996) clash of civilizations, it is nonetheless perhaps a small step on such a path.

By adopting the American model of education wholesale, instead of selectively adapting it to take into account local realities, the result of such a change for many learners is their disempowerment. Their chances of success in their university careers are affected by having to study in a foreign language. Motivation is inevitably affected, as once again the instrumental reasons for studying English are highlighted. Learners are not consulted at any stage. The results of such a lack of contribution for the learners are discussed below.

7.2.4 Learners’ lack of input to the educational process

During the interviews, some participants forcefully voiced their concern that Western language consultants lacked any in-depth knowledge of the local culture and educational systems (see 6.3.3, 6.3.3.1), although they did not appear to consider or be aware of the implications of this. This section looks at what such implications might entail, focusing on the repercussions for the education system when learners have no
influence and consultants without any knowledge of the local environments have too much influence and power.

Some learners may regard this inequality in power and influence as entirely normal, in line with Hofstede’s (1986) model of cultural difference. The second dimension of this model relates to the concept of power-distance, which he believes is a feature of many Arab societies. Some learners may be used to being excluded from a process of consultation, in line with societal norms. Therefore, they might not even question why they are not consulted.

Recent pedagogical research, however, has emphasised the cognitive approach to motivation (see 2.1, 2.3.3), which places the individual at the centre of the learning process. Subsequent motivated behaviour is affected by the learner’s understanding of events. Events in the social milieu are also taken into consideration. One of the most important features of the cognitive approach is that the learner has an element of choice as to learning goals (Dörnyei, 2001a).

In the learning situations in this study, many learners are highly articulate as they elaborate on what it means to have very little choice in any area of their studies (see 6.3.2, 6.3.2.1, 6.3.2.2). What often transpires is that consultants, when deciding on the implementation of curricula, pay more attention to the exit level they want students to attain instead of grounding their reforms in a realistic acknowledgement of the level the students have upon university entry and, for students who spend time in a foundation program, faculty entry. By not seeking the input and views of the learners,
the level of competency of learners is being adversely affected (see 2.3.1.1, 2.3.6.1, 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.3.1, 6.5.1.2).

Not being free to choose what to learn or to engage in debate with teachers about topical issues of the day means that, for the learners, the classroom focus is on language form, rather than use. Needs analysis is not conducted, with the result that discrete language skills which focus on vocabulary instead of vocabulary in use may be stressed, or greater emphasis may be placed on an opinion essay than how to use different sources to research a paper. The language ceases to be a complex one that applies to students’ cultural and educational experiences and instead becomes one that is devoid of meaningful expression. The results of some of the participants together with their articulation of their problems leads to the conclusion that they do not possess the necessary linguistic skills, either in English or in Arabic, necessary for success in their university studies: they are, in effect, semilingual (see 2.3.1.1, 6.5.1.2). This decline in language skill implies the curtailment of cognitive development and risks the quality of degrees, as many teachers resort to simplistic discourse so that students can pass their courses (see 4.3.1).

This is in marked contrast to what consultants wish to achieve, which is in effect a near-native English proficiency amongst learners. Imposing such expectations on learners has implications for motivation, as those whose goal is to learn English enough to use it in its role as global lingua franca (see 6.4.2.2) find themselves resenting having to learn a language which has native speaker proficiency as a goal and which might provoke a change in cultural identity if they were to be successful
Research which highlights the importance of motivation as a goal-seeking act (see 2.3.3) does not therefore seem to apply to many of these learners. Williams and Burden (1997) believe motivation arises as a result of “cognitive arousal” so that a set goal may be achieved and do not regard the macro-context as a significant element of motivation. However, when the learners have no choice because of externally-imposed criteria by consultants whose world view differs considerably from that of the learners, the macro-context becomes more relevant. The learners do not always view what is to be learnt as meaningful, as they rarely exercise choice in terms of topic or task selection.

This relates to Vygotsky’s (1978) concept of self-regulation, which holds that learners need to have some input into the curriculum and task selection. Intrinsic motivation is promoted, as learners gain a greater understanding of different ways of learning by focusing on what is meaningful to them. If they do not have confidence in the teaching method, as many explicitly state (see 6.1.1), then it follows that successful acquisition to learn will not take place. Motivation will also be affected, with instrumental reasons once again governing the learning of English.

Thus, the educational environment appears to be the most important factor in motivation to successfully negotiate learning a second language (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991). However, unlike Crookes and Schmidt, who did not find the sociocultural environment to be as important as the educational one when researching motivation,
the data in this study show that the two are inextricably linked; in common with other recent studies which have been conducted in an Arab context (see 2.3).

As stated previously, consultants rarely have an intimate knowledge of the local cultural or educational environment. Nonetheless, most recommend the introduction of an American model of education in an Arab context. The implications of this are examined in the next section.

7.3 An alien educational model

The increasingly rapid pace of educational reform in the Gulf has resulted in the American model of education replacing the European and Egyptian ones that have dominated in the past (see 4.2). This has led to a greater focus on individual learning, which is in striking contrast to more group-oriented approaches the learners have been used to (see 4.6). Many learners feel at odds with a model of education that has not been explained to them (see 4.2.1, 4.8, 6.3.2), as they do not comprehend why the individual takes priority over the group. This links with Hofstede’s (1986) first dimension of the cultural difference model, which says motivated behaviour is influenced by the social groups to which people belong (see 2.3.7). As Gulf Arab societies have by tradition placed priority on the group, a new model of education which sidelines the collective communitarian tradition may provoke a negative reaction by learners (see 3.6, 6.1.1), especially when the rationale behind it is not explained to them. This engenders fear in some learners that the introduction of a prescriptive American educational model in their institutions will lead to
distinguishing Gulf cultural characteristics being eroded.

An unfamiliar educational model, imposed from outside, provides a concrete instance of neo-colonialism, according to Zughoul (2003). This means the power and knowledge bases in society are being transformed, as Tollefson illustrates:

"To understand the impact of language policy upon the organization and function of society, language policy must be interpreted within a framework which emphasizes power and competing interests. That is, policy must be seen within the context of its role in serving the interests of the state and the groups that dominate it" (Tollefson, 1991: 201).

A new educational standard for the Gulf is being positioned as an American standard. This highlights the prospect of exacerbating cultural differences, not minimising them. Instead of focusing on English as a lingua franca, the Anglo-Saxon dimension of the language is being underlined. As the following section shows, the implementation of the American education model will inevitably be in conflict with traditions in Gulf Arab societies.

7.3.1 Rules imposed by societal norms

Although a central component of the American model requires students to think independently and evaluate many competing arguments, the reality in the Omani and Emirati classroom is that discussion of any potentially contentious issues is immediately stamped out (see 4.4.1). Learners inevitably link English with events in the international and political arena, such as discussion regarding American and British policy in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine and wish debate regarding
such issues to take place in the classroom. This is, however, routinely stifled. The participants in this study used English to convey their perspectives on language learning and multifaceted issues of politics, religion, culture and motivation.

Very few participants elaborated on their success in learning English and being able to communicate their views in a coherent fashion. Many commented on the difficulties in learning the language and how they thought their level was low. However, the notable absence of talk about their success in speaking, instead stressing their frustration at their perceived lack of proficiency could be explained in terms of culture. A distinctive characteristic of Omani and Emirati culture seems to be the maintenance of the collectivistic ideal in both societies (Hofstede, 1986). Closely related to this is the concept in Arab culture, particularly for female learners, of modesty. As a general rule, being modest is supposed a virtue whereas boldly proclaiming one’s own talents is less valued. Such cultural characteristics might shed some light on why learners are quick to describe what they perceive as their failure to attain a high level in English but are less likely to tell the interviewer when they are successful language learners.

Evidence of a reasonably high spoken level was apparent during some interviews. Many commented on the fact that they had never been asked their opinion about such cultural and political matters until the interviews. Being able to communicate their feelings on emotive issues proved to be a motivating factor for many of the participants to use English as much as possible during the interviews. However, they are tested almost exclusively on their reading comprehension (usually of texts which bear little relevance to their studies) and writing ability, which lag far behind their oral
production. This reflects research which suggests that using English in a meaningful way increases motivation to learn the language. If these participants were able to voice their opinions in English, it is logical to suppose that many other learners are similarly capable of successfully discussing complex matters in the English language, which is necessary if they are to be able to cope with an American model of education.

Denying learners the opportunity to tackle challenging issues that are relevant to their lives leads to a situation where their learning is incomplete. Freire, a writer, whose works are, incidentally, banned in the United Arab Emirates, points out:

“No philosophers, no scientists, develop their thought or systemize their scientific knowledge without being challenged and confronted by problems. Challenge is basic to the constitution of knowledge. It is through critical thinking, problem posing, discussion, dialogue that students are able to reflect on the world, their being in the world and to explain this relationship. To reject problem posing and dialogue is to “maintain an unjustifiable pessimism towards human beings and to life.” (Freire, 1973:125-126)

As noted by Phillipson (1992), limitations on what may be taught can provide educators with an excuse to avoid wider cultural issues, while believing they are actively helping to develop countries and democracy. What becomes perceptible is that the classroom environment reflects the power relations referred to in Kachru’s (1986) centre. Learners who feel powerless to influence the subject matter may not feel motivated to study (see 2.6.3.1, 4.3.1, 4.4.1, 6.1.2, 6.3.2, 6.3.2.1, 6.3.3.1).

7.3.2 Frustration for learners

The situation for learners is extremely trying. What becomes obvious is that although
many students possess an innate ability to reflect, discuss and debate, they are actively prevented from applying these strategies in the classroom, not by teachers, as many believe is the case, but by the education ministries. At the same time as the modern nation state holds out the tantalising promise of individual rights, it seems that it retains control over the lives of its citizens (Foucault, 1980), which mirrors the way in which education ministries exercise control over learners’ education. Omani participants, for example, point to a situation where English is given fewer credits than other subjects (see 6.3.1.1), which furnishes them with another example of how the actions of those in power affect their university studies.

When learners do experience freedom in terms of task selection in the classroom, they are motivated to communicate (see 6.1.3.1). This means they can be motivated to use their cognitive skills if the education system allows for this. As the American model does allow this, then what needs to be looked at now is how this model is being implemented.

7.3.3 American educational model only partially implemented

A lack of information regarding what exactly the American model of education will entail for the institutions and learners (see 6.1.3.1) in a different cultural environment leads to widespread confusion. Learners are being told they need to adapt to this model, but nobody has explained to them why it is being recommended. This will result in learners not knowing why they are learning in certain ways. As some participants point out (see 6.3.1.1), change has been the only constant feature of their university studies,
which leads some to believe the sudden change to an American model will be reversed in favour of another one at some future date.

The speed of change in the educational system has led to resentment, as well as confusion. Learners do not seem to know what to expect (see 4.4.2), as they see that in spite of this model now being imposed, the classroom environment, where approaches to teaching remain traditional in many cases, has not really changed (see 3.5, 4.3.1). What frequently happens is that pressure on teachers to cover a curriculum for which their students are ill-prepared means that they resort to using teaching styles more commonly associated with students’ school experience:

“The more simply and docilely students receive the contents with which their teachers “fill” them in the name of knowledge, the less they are able to think and the more they become merely repetitive.” (Freire, 1973:125).

Confusion as to policy aims and why the American model is being adopted when many of its central tenets are being blithely ignored is the inevitable result. Promoting more communicative forms of teaching and emphasising critical thinking skills have not led to a corresponding change on the form of assessment, which remains rooted in its traditional focus on discrete items. This only serves to highlight the necessity of achieving good exam grades, which cements the reliance on instrumental motives for learning.

Implementation of the American model of education in the Gulf context is therefore
proceeding in a way that its proponents would never have envisaged. The dearth of culturally-relevant materials and unsuitability of pedagogical styles may lead to Emirati and Omani culture being undermined (see 2.3.6, 2.3.6.1, 2.3.7, 6.1.1, 6.1.2, 7.4.2.1). Learners feel strongly about this point, which may account for the dissatisfaction and hostility voiced by some participants towards teachers and university administrations.

It therefore becomes evident that the macro-context has a significant role to play in motivation, as it affects what happens in the educational environment and subsequently relates to their motivation to succeed.

### 7.4 The wider environment

While English is the language of higher education, science and international exchange, it is not the language of intimacy, religion or Arab national feeling. The inherent danger is that English as the language of modernisation will oust Arabic from use in some prestigious functions. This is beginning to provoke fear in some quarters for the future of the Arabic language (see 3.4, 3.5.1, 3.6, 4.2, 4.2.1, 6.5.1, 6.5.1.3, 6.5.1.4). Learners fear a shift, but this is probably unlikely.

They are concerned that there is a problem of semilingualism, believing that they do not have high enough language skills for higher education in either Arabic or English. While exam grades have become lower, mainly due to pressure applied by university administrations, oral skills have improved, as some learners are now able to take
international exams which have a spoken component, such as IELTS or TOEFL. Due to the adoption of a new model of education, language curricula have become more comprehensive in scope.

In this section, I attempt to examine the factors in the wider environment that are largely responsible for the motivation revealed by learners to learn English. The sociocultural perspective has its historical roots in Vygotsky’s theory of development. According to Vygotsky (1978), all psychological phenomena originate through interpersonal interactions. Thus, the social and cultural context is crucial to understanding how students learn (and why they may have failed to do so).

As we can see below, learning English is viewed as a positive indicator of economic and social progress by many learners, who are aware of the many benefits conferred by learning the language. Yet, there is a widespread and persistent belief that a growing reliance on English-medium education will signal the devaluation of Arabic as a language and as a cultural symbol. They fear the effects of this on future generations of Arabic speakers.

7.4.1 Learning English as a cause for optimism

Participants have generally positive things that they say about the need for English for development and modernisation (see 6.4.2.1, 6.4.2.2), although they remain largely unaware that this belief in the necessity of learning English is constructed and disseminated through policies that associate English with technology and global trade.
They identify the many advantages that learning English provides them with, including being able to travel outside their own societies and use English as a language to communicate with people all over the world (see 6.4.1.1, 6.4.1.2, 6.5), thus reinforcing the need for a wider definition of integrative definition of motivation which would encompass learning English as a language of international communication with the world community at large. Instrumental reasons, though, continue to govern their attitudes, as the English language is a crucial component of university and career success.

The learners do not appear cognisant of the extent to which they reinforce inequality by stating that the Arabic language is stagnant, unable to serve as a language of a state that engages in commercial production. One participant, Hanan, believes that Gulf states should merely translate from Arabic into English (see 6.5.1.5), thereby unintentionally demonstrating that a colonial legacy still holds sway (see 3.3, 3.5.1, 3.6, 4.2, 4.2.1). However, these learners are by no means demonising the West, as is evident by the many positive things they have to say about learning English. Instead, they compellingly demonstrate that they want to be part of global interaction (see 2.3.1, 2.3.3, 2.3.4, 6.4.2.1, 6.4.2.2), as well as being seen to be modern women in a modern world (see 6.4.1.3).

It is clear from the data that the participants have both positive and negative attitudes towards the West. Indeed, some of the participants can be said to be fairly forthright about their feelings about the West. Remarkably, only a minority of them seems to be actively against the West in a macro way (see 6.6.1.1), which is noteworthy, given the
current political situation (see 3.3, 3.4) and the historical legacy (see 3.1, 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.2, 3.2.1, 3.3, 3.6). Participants’ attitudes are not static. They develop as a result of their direct experiences of interacting with Western people, primarily those they encounter in the educational environment. In the literature, learners’ attitudes toward a target language group are seen as either generally positive or generally negative. This may be because many studies have been quantitative (e.g. Gardner, 1985). In contrast, the qualitative data obtained from this study reveal that positive and negative attitudes can exist at the same time in any learner, which shows that attitudes are not fixed. This affords insight into the constantly changing nature of motivation in second language acquisition.

Of course some participants may have not revealed their feelings towards the West because they might have wanted not to offend, particularly when I was interviewing, but they were being interviewed by other Arabic speakers as well and therefore could have been more critical without giving offence to the interviewer. The fact that only a small number forcefully expressed anti-US discourse, explicitly linking learning English with unequal power relations (see 6.1.1) means that the participants are practical in their outlook about the instrumental value of learning the language and are not overly concerned with the idea of ‘American hegemony’.

Such pragmatism can be seen in their understanding of the cyclical nature of language importance (see 6.5.1.7). Participants frequently cite the global value of Arabic in the past, as opposed to the weight accorded to English today, as evidence that different languages will be emphasised at different points in history. English language
education in the Gulf cannot realistically be separated from wider cultural, economic, historical and political concerns (see 2.3.7, 2.3.8).

Nonetheless, the learners hint at their uneasiness about the dominance of English in the education system. The causes of their apprehension will be looked at below.

7.4.2 Learning English as a cause for concern

Although the social-psychological approach to language learning motivation has been criticised (see 2.3.4), recent research seems to indicate that the macro-context may have a greater role to play in successful language acquisition than previously thought (see 2.3.4). This awareness would appear to be lacking in Oman and the United Arab Emirates, where there has been very little discussion about what the promulgation of policies that emphasise English over Arabic as a language of instruction mean for the future development of the Arabic language and of Omani and Emirati culture. By associating “modern” pedagogical styles with the English language and “traditional” pedagogical styles with Arabic, perhaps some might view the Arabic language as a language of instruction of inferior quality to English.

The association between Arabic and Gulf identity is investigated in the following section.

7.4.2.1 Linking Arabic to identity

The increasing global prevalence of English is reflected in national language policies and may ultimately generate fear of identity shift. Those who are uneasy about the
increasing use of English worry about the future development of education and what it might mean for local culture. It seems that research pertaining to the use of English and cultural difference (see 2.3.6.2, 2.3.7) in the classroom is being ignored. This means that misunderstandings and a lack of information prevail regarding the consequences of increased English language instruction for the Arabic language as a symbol of identity.

As the social-psychological approach to motivation states, language is a strong correlate to identity (see 2.3.1, 2.3.1.1, 2.3.7), which is borne out by the participants’ statements (see 6.5.1.3, 6.5.1.4). However, as Findlow (2006) notes, what has transpired over recent years is that Arabic has become the weaker language in the Arabic-English dual language infrastructure that exists in both Oman and the United Arab Emirates. An increasingly diglossic situation makes learners fearful that their cultural integrity is being compromised (see 3.5, 3.6, 6.5.1, 6.5.1.2, 6.5.1.3). The role Arabic plays for them as sacred language exaggerates this (see 3.5, 3.5.1, 6.5.1.4). Any challenge to accepted ways of doing things in the educational arena may therefore provoke strongly negative reactions, as a method of identity preservation.

Loyalty to one’s social group is held to be one of the defining features of high context cultures (Brislin, 2002), also known as collectivist cultures (Hofstede, 1986). This in turn influences motivation shown by learners. It is what the learners observe that forms how they subsequently behave. Therefore, if they believe that their culture is being threatened, as the data show most of them do, they need to protect their identity.
by finding ways of reinforcing the positive aspects of the culture. This can manifest itself in the classroom as viewing the learning of American or British English in a negative manner and analysing everything that is not part of their culture, such as new ways of learning, or learning through a second language, as undesirable. What they are doing is finding ways of responding to the uncertainty that the new educational environment provokes, a coping mechanism known in the literature as uncertainty avoidance (DeJong, 1996). If learning English was instead viewed as learning a lingua franca, attitudes might change.

In the Gulf, therefore, it appears that, by the continued imposition of English as a language of instruction and to relegation of Arabic to an environment outside the classroom, many learners feel alienated from the learning process and subsequently exhibit low levels of motivation (see 6.5.1.2). As they feel they are not being consulted or being listened to, many feel their level of proficiency in English will continue to decline, and that younger learners in particular will lose part of their distinctiveness, due to policies that prefer English language instruction to instruction in Arabic increasingly dominate in the schools. These views may reflect similarly espoused views by students’ parents, siblings or other acquaintances (see 2.3.7, 4.4, 4.6, 6.2.1.1, 6.2.1.2, 6.2.2), all of which play a significant part in the attitudes and motivation to study shown by students towards education in general and the successful acquisition of a high level in English in particular.

The participants’ fear of a loss of certain aspects of their culture echoes the assertion by Sapir (1949) and Whorf (1956) that language is closely allied with culture and identity (see also 2.3.7). Although the more extreme Sapir-Whorf position has been
challenged, there are many who subscribe to a weak version, holding the view that language has a strong role to play in constructing culture. In more recent research, language is viewed as creating cultural reality. As Wright (2004) explains:

> language of a group expresses its social and cultural reality. New facts, ideas and events necessitate new language and new ways of looking at old ideas facts and events cause speakers to recalibrate the way of talking about them. Meanings are constantly negotiated. Thus the language of a group is constantly creating cultural reality as well as simply expressing it.” (Wright, 2004: 115)

Then, the increasing use of the English language in education as well as in other spheres of life would mean a cultural change, as a different way of seeing the world would become the norm. Learner perceptions of the learning situation are influenced by the sociocultural environment. Social-psychology holds that language learning involves the imposition of parts of another culture on the learners (Gardner, 1979). This has a significant impact on SLA, as it relates to identity confusion and protection (see 2.3.1). This might trigger anxiety, dissension or even resistance on the part of some learners, although most participants in this study seem motivated to achieve a high level in English, as long as they can preserve the Arabic language as a symbol of their culture (2.3.4, 2.3.5, 2.3.7, 6.5.1, 6.5.1.2, 6.5.1.3). As the literature holds that a society’s social history is directly related to its language attitudes, learners want their values to be acknowledged. If they perceive that this does not happen, they may clash with the enforcers of the education system, i.e. the teachers.

The attitudes of students towards the increasing use of English as the primary language of instruction reflect attitudes in society as whole. On the one hand, they perceive there are advantages to learning a language they associate with scientific and technical
knowledge which will help them take their place in the global community. On the other hand, however, the Arabic language is widely regarded as conferring a cultural character which they want to preserve as something that is uniquely Omani or Emirati. In addition, the role that the Arabic language plays as the language of Islam in the minds of students must not be underestimated (Canning & Bornstein, 2001). The Arabic language remains the dominant symbol of Gulf Arab and Islamic culture. The possibility is that if students are continually marginalized from discussions about the future direction of education, many may become more openly disaffected as a result, which could have negative consequences for their acquisition of English and other subjects, if they consciously erect barriers against becoming proficient in the English language. In such cases, learning will only continue until instrumental needs, such as university qualifications, have been met.

Policy planners do not seem to have taken this into account, as the focus appears to be mainly on training, to the neglect of issues in the wider cultural environment that also have an impact on education.

The lack of a concerted cultural focus on Arabic by those involved in educational reform has not gone unobserved by learners (see 7.2, 7.3). This emotive issue of cultural change is linked to motivation, again reinforcing the evidence of power relationships, as learners may feel coerced into learning everything through English. Learners point to the colonial attitudes that pervade the curriculum in the Gulf educational sphere today, although they remain unaware of another form of colonial attitudes that exists in the school educational arena.
In secondary school curricula, too, a particular view of the role of Arab countries in world history is constructed, one that also favours elite groups. As the participants state, in history classes in schools, for example, Arab countries are portrayed as countries from which some of the world’s greatest scientific and mathematical advances originated. This history also deals with how they were exploited and colonised by the West, whereas their own role in similarly colonising parts of Europe, Africa and India has been glossed over in terms of how they contributed to civilisation in these countries. Arab culture is promoted as wholly positive, although, as the data show, the stress on the historical role of the Arabic language and Arab culture means that learners fear that education through English means the potential of Arabic to modernise is being stifled.

Some learners, however, realise that the importance of learning certain languages at certain times is something that is a recurring feature in history. This may help them to minimise fears that their culture is being diluted through the implementation of an education model that differs substantially from their own tradition, as they examine how the Arabic language conferred a modernising character at one point in time, which is now happening with the English language. By allowing learners to remain loyal to their culture while also recognising that learning English can bring about benefits, motivation will not be adversely affected.

Instances where motivation is negatively influenced usually involve a comparison of cultures. Some participants blame the imposition of a foreign language and culture for instances of inappropriate behaviour in their own society (see 6.6.2). This allows them
to safeguard their own cultural values by immediately blaming English-medium culture for any changes in society. In effect, they are using the strategy of viewing everything about foreign culture as negative so that their own sense of cultural identity is not threatened.

What is evident from the data is that apprehension about cultural, identity and language change is a very real concern for Emirati and Omani learners. The participants are aware of the disadvantages of their own language not being the language of instruction in the educational sphere. As we can see in the following section, this leads many to speculate as to the consequences for their competence not only in English, but also in the Arabic language, with corresponding implications for motivation in SLA.

7.4.2.2 Learners’ fear of semilingualism

Some of the participants in this study fear that moves towards the increased use of English as the main language of instruction could conceivably lead to semilingualism. Semilingualism here is not seen by the participants as being solely concerned with students lacking proficiency in the English language, but also as lacking proficiency in their native language, Arabic (see 2.3.1.1, 6.5.1.2). Semilingualism is a claim that individuals do not know either the language of their community or the L2 to native speaker standard. This fear is based on the notion that the English language is seen as of inherently higher value than Arabic in the education systems of both countries, and that they are being pushed into the Anglophone system to the detriment of their
competency in their native language.

Learner fears of semilingualism seem to be borne out by poor exam results. Lack of success in English is more apparent in Oman than in the United Arab Emirates. A sample of exam results that were made available to me reveals that the percentage of ‘A’ grades in Oman steadily decreased from 15% in 1998/1999 to just 4% in 2001/2002. The picture is not so clear cut in the United Arab Emirates, where a sample of exam results shows the percentage of ‘A’ grades in English declined from 9% in 2002/2003 to 6% in 2003/2004, but rose again the following year (2004/2005) to 8%. Results in other years were not made available to me, as I was not working at either institution during that time. The Omani data in particular seem to underpin my original reason for starting this research, which was that the marks in English seemed a poor result after more than eight years of study.

These results seem to reflect the learners’ perception of what English-medium education will mean for them. As their perception of events has been shown to affect their motivation to learn English, their fears need to be acknowledged.

With Gulf governments and Ministries of Education apparently exhorting universities to educate learners to a near-native level of proficiency in English, there is a possibility that learners who are primarily instrumentally motivated to study English, as is the case in this study, will resent the forced imposition of English as a language of instruction, viewing it as a cultural and linguistic imposition. They fear their identity may be threatened, which would lead to some angrily rejecting any language
which might be perceived as having a detrimental effect on Arabic (see 2.3.1). Fear of loss of cultural authenticity goes hand in hand with fear of a corresponding loss in first language use.

Learners believe that such a change would take place over time, so that English would replace Arabic as the main language of communication in the second or third generation. Researchers such as MacSwan (1999, 2000) reject such a position, as they posit that the focus should be on the individual, not society. Yet, as has already been noted, Arab learners in general place more emphasis on the society than on the individual (see 2.3.7, 3.5.1). Therefore, participants’ fears cannot be dismissed, as their attitudes and feelings influence their subsequent motivation (see 6.5.1.2, 6.5.1.3, 6.5.1.4).

The work of Gardner (1979) and Lambert (1974) on subtractive bilingualism, where L1 is being replaced by L2, suggests that as a bilingual learner in a language minority group develops skills in L2, competence in L1 will diminish. Despite a general fear because there is so much English, I have not uncovered any convincing evidence to suggest that Omani and Emirati learners are really becoming less competent in Arabic.

Some participants point to the fact that code switching is now a common feature of Arabic conversations, as confirmation of their fear that they are becoming weaker in Arabic. In practice, this is probably not as indicative of a move towards semilingualism as they believe, but shows simply that they have moved to English for
certain domains. Arabic is not forgotten, however and the data have not revealed any evidence which supports the claim that learners do not have a sound grasp of their language. Where they are code and tag switching with their peers, it is usually a matter of choice. In the few cases where switching takes place because the girls do not know a word in Arabic, this demonstrates that Arabic is not being used in certain domains and therefore vocabulary is not being developed, rather than the girls’ deficiency in their mother tongue. There are similar problems in almost every language group, except perhaps Chinese, French and Spanish.

Learners are worried their level in the Arabic language might be declining, due to exam results in subjects studied through the Arabic language. This points to curriculum and instruction in subjects other than English also feeding into learner feelings of dissatisfaction with the educational environment, and indicates that the fears of learners may be related more to lack of academic success than lack of Arabic language proficiency.

7.5 Summary

This chapter looked again at the central research question regarding what the major motivational obstacles are that prevent learners from being successful in their English language studies. Factors in the wider social environment have been seen to influence those in the educational environment. How learners perceive events inside and outside the classroom appears to affect their subsequent motivation to learn another language. The informants’ motivation to learn English appears to be rooted in instrumental
factors rather than integrative.

In Section 7.1, the reasons why participants demonstrated more instrumental than integrative motivation were documented. Their ambivalence towards the West was discussed, as this was held to be partly responsible for the absence of traditional integrative motives for learning English. Their aversion to the idea of an English-using elite in society was juxtaposed with their need to be part of it.

Section 7.2 examined the educational environment, concluding that learners have no say in an educational process where the education ministry listens to consultants and teachers from outside. Participants in the study intimated that ministry policies and teaching styles influenced their levels of motivation and consequently had an effect on their learning results. Therefore, this section revealed what I believe might be responsible for the underlying attitudes of the Ministries of Education in both countries and also explored the underlying attitudes of teachers and consultants to English language education.

The implications for motivation due to the adoption of an unfamiliar American educational model which cannot be fully implemented in societies where traditions dictate what can be discussed in the classroom were observed in Section 7.3. Section 7.4 considered the impact of the wider environment on learner motivation, holding that although learners are mainly positive about the advantages of studying English, at the same time they fear there might be negative consequences for Arab culture and Arabic-language proficiency.
This study contributes to academic research in three possible ways. First, what emerges is a need to modify existing definitions of ‘integrative motivation’, to take into account that learners may wish to become more like a community of speakers of English as an international language, rather than native English speakers. Secondly, there is a need to look in greater detail at the social and political contexts when implementing language policies. Finally, the finding that contact with the individual and not response to the macro political event is influencing these women to be critical may allow for greater understanding of how learners’ motivation to succeed in language learning is shaped.

The following chapter will present my conclusions and reflections, as well as signal areas of potential interest to future researchers.
8.0 Answering the research question

There are multiple reasons for a lack of success in English language learning in the Gulf. Not only must the educational environment be taken into account, but also the influence of wider social and cultural concerns, which not only exert varying degrees of influence on pedagogical styles employed in the classroom, but also on a learner’s motivation to become proficient in the English language.

Data on motivation were collected through semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. The participants were encouraged to reflect on their own learning experiences in some depth. This method was revealed to be productive, as it afforded rich qualitative data on the motivational factors which influenced the second language acquisition of these learners and should complement research gained from quantitative methods. As I am aware of the subjective nature of learner accounts, I sought to validate their perspectives by broadening the data collection procedure. By gathering unobtrusive evidence, mainly in the form of exam results, and also by using historical analysis, I hoped to minimise any potential problems and provide triangulation (Denzin, 1978).

The findings of this small-scale, in-depth study show that Arabic-speaking learners in Oman and the United Arab Emirates are more inclined to be motivated to study the English language because of instrumental motives. It must be reiterated that the participants in this study were those for the most part interested in the English language and in communicating their perspective on education in their countries. The
nature of the study meant that disaffected learners would not have been interested in taking part. My original perception that students were not learning very well was tested and subsequently proved to be correct. English language study is not going very well for the vast majority of learners in Oman and the United Arab Emirates. If a lack of success can be detected amongst learners who exhibit a rather high level of motivated behaviour, one wonders what a study of less motivated learners, who most likely constitute the majority of learners, might reveal. This study has only uncovered the tip of the iceberg. As illustrated by Khaseeba (6.6.1), when it comes to expressing hostility, most students feel anger and hostility towards the changes in the education system, but few will openly discuss such feelings. We must bear in mind that the participants in this study are students who are more well-disposed towards English than many of their peers. Therefore, conclusions must be drawn with care, as it is possible that motivation is a result rather than a cause of language proficiency. More research should be done on learners who are not well-disposed towards English so that we can have a clearer picture.

There appears to be a conflict of cultures where education and English language acquisition are concerned, as suggested by the literature review and a study of how historical forces have shaped present English language policy in the Gulf. As the literature mainly deals with the pedagogical and, to a lesser extent, the cultural aspects of language learning, I hope to contribute to academic research by linking pedagogy to what is happening in the wider environment. Policy makers, administrators, teacher trainers and teachers must deal more explicitly with the super-macro level, especially as the participants in this study explicitly link the study of English to postcolonial
factors and Anglo-Saxon hegemony. Many learners believe there is a danger that they will lose at least some Arabic language ability and are fearful of what this will mean for their cultural identity, which prevents them from being more motivated to reach a higher level in the English language.

This means that integrative factors are less likely to feature as a motivational impetus for Arabic speakers in the Gulf to study English than instrumental factors are. Policy planners and teachers need to be aware of this so that they can facilitate both types of motivation. Teachers, as action researchers, should be given the support and encouragement of the institutions they work for to try to conduct more research on the effects of language policies on learners’ motivation in the classroom.

Although this study found that academic research in the Gulf is growing, the majority of research seems to focus on the successful acquisition of discrete language items. While lively debate has been stimulated by the nature of teaching and learning in Oman and in the United Arab Emirates, there seems to be very little discussion regarding the nature of curricula, and even less discussion regarding wider macro issues. The rapid pace at which curricula in education seem to change in the Gulf has engendered considerable confusion amongst learners as to the underlying rationale for such changes, but many do not have a forum to discuss their concerns.

The following section discusses some of my reflections during the course of this study, including the contributions I believe this study can make towards furthering our
understanding of how learner motivation and language proficiency are influenced by a variety of factors which must take the wider context into account.

8.1 Reflections

It is hoped that findings from this small scale but in-depth investigation will contribute to an understanding of motivation in second-language learning in public education institutions where learning English is a requirement, and particularly in countries where educational reforms are being implemented. The present study may also have implications for institutions in countries where English is the first language and where many Arabic-speakers travel to study, as it can provide information about the motivational factors that influence the rate of SLA by such learners.

Data from the present study consistently point to the fact that instrumental goals, especially success in their university studies and future career development are viewed by learners as of greater significance than integrative goals, or at least integrative goals in the traditional sense. This confirmed other recent findings that Arabic-speaking learners tend to display more instrumental motives towards learning English as a second language than integrative ones (Arneson, 2005; Costelloe, 2001; Semmar, 2006). Where integrative motivation appears to be a factor, this is not because participants wish to be more like mother tongue speakers of English, but because they wish to be more like speakers of English as a second language in other countries in the world, to learn English as a lingua franca. As the participants who displayed this kind of integrative motivation generally appeared to be more proficient in English than
others who did not display such motivation (Gardner, 1989; Au, 1988), the findings appear to sustain earlier findings in the literature that both types of motivation contribute to successful second language acquisition (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1991).

According to Gardner (1985), motivation is related to attitudes, and attitudes do not remain static. They can be changed. Teachers can raise learners' integrative motivation by focusing more on the advantages of learning English as a lingua franca for communication with people in many countries, not just countries where it is the first language.

Apart from raising Arabic-speakers’ level of integrative motivation, teachers can be allowed to improve the teaching methods, classroom activities and materials to increase learners’ motivation in language learning. Furnishing the learners with information regarding the purpose and rationale of English language instruction can help to influence their motivation in a positive manner. Research suggests that increasing learners' participation is a good way to increase their interest learning a language and thus increase their motivation (Crookes and Schmidt, 1991). Language planners and teachers can help by providing for a curriculum that is more relevant to the needs of the learners, a variety of teaching styles and classroom materials (Arneson, 2005).

Teachers also should be supported and offered additional training where necessary, as most are presently viewed as short-term contract employees. Research suggests that
this would in turn promote and sustain learner motivation (Chambers, 1999; Clément, Dörnyei & Noels, 1994; Galguera, 1998; 2001; Nakanishi, 1992; Shavelson & Stern, 1981; Woods, 1996). A more stable workforce would have the time and motivation to become more linguistically and culturally proficient, which would go some way to halting the criticism levelled at expatriate teachers and removing some of the resistance to learning.

Although I have made some critical comments against the efforts of hard-working and well-intentioned colleagues who are genuinely concerned with the education of Emirati and Omani learners, I hope that these criticisms will be understood as being made in the interest of fostering educational policies that are aimed at making second language acquisition a more meaningful experience for Arabic speakers in the Gulf. I have suggested, for example, that consultants and teachers may have entrenched cultural beliefs as to what constitutes appropriate pedagogy and that these values, in turn, may have a negative affect on learners’ motivation and linguistic proficiency. If such is indeed the case, then changes are in order for both teacher training programs and for educational research and reform in the Middle East.

Educational reform, with its corresponding focus on the role of the English language in education, will continue to be influenced by the expansion of private higher education institutions. Language education in Oman and the United Arab Emirates has come a long way in the relatively short time frame since its inception. For the masses, education is now a reality instead of an undreamt of possibility. Now the spotlight must shift to the provision of quality. Currently, it seems that training is being
favoured, to the neglect of education.

Students are aware of the issues, the problems and also the opportunities. They express a deep-seated wish to learn, but state that this becomes difficult when their voices are stifled in the classroom and their views are not taken into account. Motivation is affected by a number of variables, but what many seem not to discuss in relation to the Omani and Emirati contexts is that a historical and colonial legacy continues to shape language education in the Gulf to this day. Students acknowledge this, so maybe it is time for the other stakeholders in education to do likewise.

It seems clear from the data provided in this study that motivation can be directly linked to forces outside the classroom, such as events in the wider political arena. As events in the Middle East attract exhaustive commentary in many media circles, it appears logical to suggest there is a corresponding spill over effect into the educational environment, even if university administrations do not wish to acknowledge this fact and prohibit a classroom discussion of such issues.

However, this study makes it clear that educational practice is tied up with matters connected to the wider environment. English language education does not exist in a value-free space. It is my hope that this study will stimulate fruitful debate and perhaps provide a springboard for some to reassess educational policy and language planning issues.

Consequently, this study can potentially assist policy makers and language planners in
the Middle East to reflect more on how their policies shape the educational perspective of learners. What most of the participants appear to agree on is that there is a need for English language education that has relevance to their future careers, but that they want to be consulted so that they can understand the underlying rationale for the implementation of an American educational model, and in particular the language immersion model. It is likely that greater transparency on the part of policy makers would have a corresponding positive affect on learner motivation and serve to increase levels of successful English language acquisition. Currently, English language education is widely perceived by the participants in this study as leading the way to success only for some, while acting as a stumbling block and as a barrier to success for countless others (Canagarajah, 1999; Phillipson, 1992).

Thus, it becomes clear that the implications of importing Western pedagogy wholesale into classrooms in the Middle East and perhaps other contexts need to be fully considered before embarking on any language education reform program. Any discussion on education in Arabic-speaking countries cannot realistically take place without considering colonial, post-colonial, cultural, economic, historical, political and religious issues. Learners’ fears regarding the dilution or erosion of local culture need to be addressed by those involved in such reform, as well as their subsequent effect on learners’ motivation in the classroom.

A greater understanding of motivational factors at play in SLA in the Gulf can be supported by more widespread studies in the educational environment. The following section suggests possible areas for future research which might have a beneficial
impact on language education.

### 8.2 Areas for further research

Recent educational reforms have promoted the adoption of English-medium education in the schools sector, as well as in higher education sector. To improve our understanding of the pedagogic situation, perhaps a longitudinal study involving tracking learners through the education system, from primary through to completion of university, would furnish educators and researchers with an in-depth understanding of how well learners do in their studies when studying through English in the education system, while speaking mainly Arabic at home. A comparative study involving learners who study mainly through the Arabic language could also be initiated, as well as a comparative study involving learners from different Middle Eastern countries.

What becomes apparent from the present study is that more studies are necessary, not only across institutions and from primary through to third level, but also studies involving male learners. Given that much education in the Gulf is segregated, a study comparing single sex and mixed institutions would also offer greater cultural insight into the differences between levels of acquisition among male and female learners. Although anecdotal evidence suggests female learners do better in their studies, little research has been done in this area to confirm or deny this assumption.

The wider environment has been shown in this study to have a significant role to play in motivation shown by learners to study a second language. A fertile area for further
research would entail a comparative study involving universities from the Gulf, the West and Asia. This would be of immense benefit to further our understanding of motivation in different educational environments. Only then can a more comprehensive picture begin to emerge that will inform us about the motivational forces at play that are preventing Gulf Arab learners of English from achieving a high level of proficiency in the language.
APPENDICES

Appendix i

Voluntary Consent Form for Interviews

Dear Student,

As part of my research for a PhD, I would like to interview you twice and make a tape recording of the interviews. I would be very grateful if you will agree to be part of the study. My research is about things that help or prevent students from having a high level in English, such as motivation.

This is research which I hope will help people understand about how students learn and what helps them be successful learners of the English language. I hope this can help students and faculty in this university.

If you do not want to take part, or you would like to stop at any time, there will not be a problem. It is completely up to you if you want to take part or not. There is no problem if you do not want to do this. There is no penalty if you do not want to take part.

Any data I collect from the interviews will be confidential. This means I will not use your name. I will not use the name of the university. I will not give the location of the university. This means you cannot be identified.

I will tape record the interviews but these tapes will only be used by me and the person who will help me with translating and transcribing. All of the tapes will be destroyed when the study is completed.

Thank you very much for helping me!

Kathy O’Sullivan

Please tick the appropriate box:

☐ I agree to take part in the study and that the data be used in Kathy O’Sullivan’s doctoral thesis for Aston University and any future publications
I do not agree to take part in the study and that the data be used in Kathy O’Sullivan’s doctoral dissertation for Aston University and any future publications

Source: Adapted from Silverman, 2001
Appendix ii

A list of transcription symbols

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SYMBOL</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>Questioning intonation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>!</td>
<td>Exclamation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>,</td>
<td>Continuing contour e.g. “I did this, that, and that”</td>
</tr>
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<td>Non-verbal features or transcriber’s explanation</td>
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Source: Adapted from Val Lier, 1988 and Silverman, 2001
Appendix iii

A complete transcript of the first round of one of the Emirati interviews

Participants:

Amna

Kathy O’Sullivan

1. Good afternoon.

2. Good afternoon.

3. I’d like to ask you some questions.

4. O.K.

5. First of all, I’d like you to tell me about your major.

6. I’m in the Science Faculty. I want to be a teacher, so I want to

7. transfer to the Humanities and Social Science Faculty. I did an exam

8. and am waiting for the results.

9. When do you get the results?

10. Soon, I hope!

11. Did you want to study in the Humanities Faculty when you were in

12. high school?

13. In high school, I wanted to be a teacher a university teacher. I

14. had to have, uh, I think 70%, or even higher, to register at university.

15. So, if you just get 70%, does that mean you don’t automatically

16. get a place at university?

17. No, you get a place, there’s no problem about that, but some colleges
18. at university want higher marks. So, the students who get the
19. highest marks, they go to, because they have good results, to I.T.,
20. Information Technology, some of them go to do Science, some also
do their major in Economics. In English, I mean, the English major,
21. there are a few students with high marks also.
22. So, you’re going to study Humanities. Why did you choose to
23. study this?
24. Uh, I chose this college I chose this college because I can study
25. English there. This is what I want to study; it’s something I’ve
26. wanted to study since I was in school, when I was young.
27. Did your family agree with this?
28. Yes, they encouraged me to do what I wanted to do. They encouraged
29. me in every way.
30. That’s good. Can you tell me what happened when you came to
31. university? Can you tell me, for example, about the course, and
32. the books?
33. The first course I took was difficult, really difficult, because this
34. was my first time at university. It was so (x) different from what
35. I’d done in school.
36. Different?
37. The book, the way of teaching, in. Everything, EVERYTHING.
38. Can you give me an example?
39. Ok. Well, in school, for example, we didn’t study for tests in
40. listening. The first time I studied listening skills was in university.
42. And, uh, writing, we didn’t try, they didn’t teach us in a good, uh, a
class for writing, only, also we did writing in the school exams only,
but we didn’t know anything about it, about introductions, conclusions
we, we just did cloze tests, for example. So, what I learned at
university was how to organize things.
47. Did you enjoy the English courses in university?
48. The first course, no, I didn’t, because I didn’t understand anything. I
had, uh, I had some language, but, because maybe I was afraid of
university, I, I said to myself that I couldn’t understand. Maybe I
didn’t try to understand, to understand, but then it changed. In
the second semester, I tried to get high marks. In the first
semester, I tried only to understand what was happening, to know
what was going on, that’s all.
55. I see. And what about the ESP course?
56. Oh, the ESP course helped me to write reports, because in in
Levels One, Two and Three, I learned how to write paragraphs, but,
uh, but in ESP, I was taught how to write a report. I also learned how
to do this for other subjects, so, when I took ESP the same
semester I had a subject in which I had to write a report for the
mid-term. So, I found ESP useful, to prepare me for my faculty
courses. I was able to compare what I’d done in ESP with what I was
doing in my faculty courses.
64. So, generally, your English courses helped you?
65. Oh, yes, definitely.
66. Mm. Have your English teachers here been Arab or non-Arab?
67. In the university?
68. Yes.
69. Uh, for me, my teachers, no, I didn’t have any Arab teachers. All of
70. them were Western.
71. And which do you prefer?
72. I, I don’t (x) don’t know, I want Arab teachers, because sometimes I
73. want to tell them something that maybe I didn’t, uh, I can’t, I could
74. not explain in English. But I also want Western teachers because
75. I want to listen to how they speak, to their pronunciation, their
76. language. I want to speak with them, I want to have to speak English
77. with them. This means I would have to speak English with them, so
78. on balance, I prefer Westerners. This means I would try, whereas
79. Arab teachers speak Arabic, so I think I would speak Arabic with
80. them, only Arabic, and improve in Arabic!
81. Have your English teachers at university been male or female?
82. Both male and female.
83. And which do you prefer?
84. I think female teachers are better.
85. Female teachers are better?
86. Because, uh, I’m studying and learning a language, and in language, the
87. English language, I have to speak with somebody, with people, so, if
88. the teacher is a man, I’ll only speak a little bit because in class,
89. the time is short, uh and I will only speak in short sentences.
However, with a female teacher, I can speak, even if the teacher is Arab, I have, I can speak with them about problems outside of university or something. I can speak with them; I can sit down and talk to them.

You don’t feel you can do this with a male teacher?

No, NO, NO [shakes her head]. Even if I have a question in, about a course, I will only ask one easy question and keep the other questions to myself. You see, I feel shy. I want to study and learn in the best way.

You want to study hard.

Of course I do. I didn’t before, you know, but now, yes, I do. (x) Yes. Yes, I feel I, I think I’ve improved, made a huge improvement. In school, didn’t really have the opportunity to learn in a good way in English. When I came to university, I my English improved a lot in every way, in how to study, in how to speak, to read, to write.

How have your English courses here been different to what you studied in school?

Well, before I came here, I had the idea that it was very difficult to study. When I came, the first semester I was here, I was afraid of speaking, afraid to speak, and I thought my, that my English was VERY bad. But then, I, I can say that I realized I have some language ability, even if my language level is not the best, but I have, I use it all the time. In school I never used it, never, only Arabic. Maybe this was because my school was not that
good, maybe the teaching wasn’t great. So, in other words, my idea
that it would be difficult was not correct. It was easier than I
imagined.

What do you feel you’ve learned from your English courses here?
I’ve learned how to deal with them with foreign people, because,
uh, the, the kind of people I dealt with in school were Arab only, not
Westerners. I only saw Westerners on TV [laughs]. I went home and
saw them on TV, but, when I came to the university, I HAD to deal
with them, I had to speak with them every day. This was a very
big change, a very big change. It has been a good change.

Can you give me examples of activities you like and dislike in the
classroom, when you study the English language?
Uh, uh, I like, I like listening, yes, but I think we have to we have
to listen more, as this is only a small part of what we do in class.
Where writing is concerned, in Level Two and Level Three, the
teacher, the teacher spoke about (x) the teacher thought we knew
how to do this how to write, so they told us to write down our
ideas. But we did not, we did not know how to write, how to do
things like write an introduction, how to organize our writing.
They thought that we knew these things, so they didn’t really need
to teach us these things for the first time. They thought they
could teach us as students who already knew how to do things.
We didn’t have ANY IDEA about writing! Group work. Sometimes
it’s good, but sometimes it’s just a waste of time, because students
sit. The teachers say “Speak English” or “Share ideas”, but the students just sit there, talking about what happened yesterday, or what’s going to happen tomorrow, all in Arabic, of course. The teacher sits there, and after that you finish. The teacher asks us if we’ve finished. We say yes, we’ve finished, but all we’ve really done is waste our time.

What about computers? Do you use computers a lot? In the levels, yes, but not in ESP, because maybe I have other subjects. But, you know, even in the levels, I didn’t really use them all that much. However, for other things, I use them a lot, especially now.

What language do you like to use when you are on the computer? I use mainly English, which is not a problem. Even if I don’t know a word, know the meaning of the Arabic word, I know how to find out the meaning in English. I don’t use e-mail a lot, just my university e-mail. When a teacher sends me an e-mail at university, the e-mail is in English, so I can understand. It’s useful to know English, to learn English, because these days, everyone knows English, and, if I don’t know English, I would feel strange, feel stupid, so I could not study in a good way.

Do you think studying the English language here at university will help you in the future? Yes, I do. When I graduate from university, I will need English.

It’s a good language to know. I will be able to speak with people. I will
use it in my job, to help my family, because people in my family just know Arabic.

What do you think you will do in the future, when you graduate from university?

Uh, I hoped to be a teacher in the same school I studied in before I came here. But, after I finished in the levels, I decided I wanted to be a teacher at this university.

Does this mean that you will continue your studies?

OH YES. I hope to get a Masters degree first of all, and maybe later on I’ll get a doctorate.

Where would you like to do that?

I think I’d like to study for a Masters degree at this university as that would be the easiest thing. I don’t know where I’d like to get my doctorate from. I really don’t have any idea about this. Maybe this is a step for me, because at first, when I studied in school, I had a very, very kind teacher. When I needed anything or wanted to do anything, she encouraged me, and she also encouraged me to write in English. She told me I was one of the best students in the school in English. So, maybe that’s what first gave me the idea. I like reading English stories. In school, I read stories translated from English into Arabic. Still, I liked the writing style of these stories.

When I came to university, though, I tried to read stories in English, in the English language. I went to the ILC, but not in the first semester, in the second semester, when I had to study for
In ESP, I didn’t use the ILC, not from then to now. If I try to go, and I have tried a few times, I find it to be too crowded, full of Level One and Two students. That doesn’t make me feel comfortable, because now I’m studying my major. I need a quiet place to study.

Do you feel English language courses at the university are different to other courses?

Yes, I think English is completely different.

Can you give me an example of this?

We, we, (x), we, in English courses, we work and study in the English language. In other subjects, for example, in Math, I didn’t have any real problems, because every time there was a problem, a problem to solve, I could just ask my teacher to translate into Arabic. But, in the English courses, I needed to know the meaning of English words. Sometimes, I, I read, I read the English words, but after some time gave up, as it was too difficult for me, the vocabulary. Still, some of the vocab. I learned has been useful to me in the faculty, but only some of it. I’ve forgotten the rest of it. I kept all of my vocabulary papers with me [laughs].

Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experiences of learning English?

Uh, I think, uh, I think that the schools and the university do not, (x) do not communicate, as we study mainly the same things here that we studied in school. They need to add more things for
us to study in English, new things. Also, the faculties should give us more information. They should do this while we are still studying in school, and then remind us of it when we get to university. We shouldn’t repeat so many things, but this isn’t the only problem some things we study, our teachers are sure that we’ve already studied in school, but we didn’t learn it. We need more communication between schools and universities, and the faculties. This is a very big problem. I don’t know if we can find a solution, but there should be a plan of some kind, as a first step. This could be applied in school, and also in university, because sometimes students graduate from university with a degree, but they’ve forgotten ALL their English. Only a few students remember their English, but that’s usually just to write or to read, as they can’t speak. For me, it’s good to improve my language and know many things in English, so studying most of my courses in English is ok. But for other students, for example, for those whose major is Arabic studies, I think they can’t understand many things in English, so they should study everything in their major in Arabic, not in English. They may want to speak sometimes in another language, but their thing is Arabic, and this is the language they want to study in. For them it’s a problem, but not for me. In the faculties, in my major, some of my teachers are Arab and some of them are Western. They are all quite good. What’s important is their teaching ability, and I think it’s good. [indicates she has nothing else to say]
Thank you so much for speaking about these issues.

A complete transcript of the first round of one of the Omani interviews

Participants:
Mariam
Omani student interviewer

Interview Mariam 1

1. Good afternoon.
2. Hi.
3. We’ve talked about this already, so can I start to ask you some questions?
4. Sure.
5. Please tell me about your major.
6. I study Humanities. We do different subjects, psychology, a little Arabic Studies, Islamic Studies, things like that. I like it because I have to find information about all kinds of things. It will teach me a lot, I think.
7. How did you choose this major? Was it your first choice?
8. It wasn't my first choice. I chose it by chance. Now I like it.
9. Sometimes students don’t get their first choice, because even though their grades are good, the Ministry decides what they should study. I was lucky, I suppose, because I like what I am doing.
Tell me about your English course. What is your opinion of it in general?

English is becoming an international language. It is very important. The textbooks include a lot of new vocabulary and grammar, set in different layouts, such as stories, paragraphs about interesting subjects. It lacks focus on grammar, I think. I spend about two two and a half hours studying, maybe more during exams. I think there should be more grammar and more vocab. We also need more speaking practice, as speaking is easier than reading or writing. What’s good is that we don’t just read stories, like we did in school. We do different activities. We speak a lot, discuss things. This is good because it gives us a chance to say what we think and communicate with other people. The course in general is ok. and inclusive, but not focused enough. We’re expected to do research and find out lots of things in the library, but they forget that we are not used to this, because most of us didn’t have libraries in the schools. I think we need courses on how to do research and how to study at university, things like that, because it’s a completely different system to the schools.

Is your teacher a male or a female?

Now male, but usually I have female teachers.

Which do you prefer?

Actually, male.

Why?
Because male teachers are more experienced in life, and have more freedom to travel, and have more experience in teaching methods, because they have no other responsibilities. Students will respect them more. They might be more strict with the students and we will have to respect them. Male teachers use interesting methodologies in their teaching. They have better qualifications and they seem to have a (x) a better understanding of the students. Students usually say female teachers are stricter, but I think male teachers are. That’s not to say a female teacher can’t be good. Well, she can, but female teachers are more busy with household chores and other responsibilities which would lessen their focus on their duty as teachers. Besides, students will not respect her as much as a male teacher. That is a fact, not only for English teachers, you know, but with teachers of every subject. I know we are training to become teachers, so maybe this sounds strange, but our female teachers who have children are always worrying about their children, which means they can’t give enough attention to their students. It’s different for men.

Is he Arab or foreign?

Foreign.

Do you know from which country?

U.S.A.

Which do you prefer?

Foreign.
64. **Why?**

65. Because he would be a native speaker of the language, and that means better language. We will also pick up the correct accent too.

66. Arab teachers could be alright, but in the end, the native speaker will be more competent, not because he would have a higher degree, but because it is his mother tongue, so he will know more about it. He will be also more interesting because he comes from a different cultural background. This means we could learn about different cultures, which I think is good, although many students don’t like this because they think American culture is all bad.

67. **What are the classroom activities that you like and don’t like?**

68. Group activities and reading are things I don’t like. Because usually in group work what happens is that the students would rely on one student, whom they believe to be better in the subject, to do most of the work, while the others do very little. Also, group activities encourage students to chat, of course in Arabic. As there are many students in the class, it’s difficult for the teacher to see who is talking in Arabic or English. Reading is very boring, as there’s no interaction at all. I like it when we have discussions, debates, because people can give their opinion. If it’s different to your opinion, that’s good, because you can learn a lot in this way. I think that the methods need to be changed sometimes, to encourage the students to be more active in class.

69. **Do you use Arabic or English language when using the computer?**
88. Both.

89. **What do you use English for?**

90. E-mail, because it is all in English, things like inbox, outbox, forward, send, etc. Also, for projects and things, most of our research work information is in English so when I browse the Internet, I use English. There’s a bigger choice of websites and you can get more information that is not outdated.

95. **What do you use Arabic for?**

96. I use it for programming, in our major. Some websites as well.

97. **Do you think that the course is useful?**

98. Yes. It has a lot of new terms and useful expressions. It is also well organized, like in the beginning of the course, the terms were easy and the sentences were short, but by the end of the course, we are now studying more difficult terms and expressions that are more suitable to our level. I think the vocab. will help me with the other subjects in my major, and, if we do MORE conversation and things like this, I think it could help me when I speak to foreigners or I have to deal with people in English.

106. **How did you expect the course to be? Were your expectations right?**

108. I expected the course to be more effective than it is. I hoped that it would be much more useful to us, especially the spoken part. We need to learn more details and the course to be more specific. My expectations, unfortunately, were not right.
112. **How could this be improved?**

113. I think we need more people specialized in course design to

114. reorganise the course for us, to have more feedback from the

115. students through surveys (x) not only questionnaires, but talk to the

116. students, to see what they specifically need, to focus more on

117. spoken English, rather than grammar. This way we will be able to

118. make the most of our course. We need to have teachers who

119. have the most useful teaching methods. In school I thought my

120. teachers were great, even though their methods were not always

121. the best, but maybe there should be a combination of new and old

122. methods, not just modern ways, because group work and these things

123. are not always suitable to our situation.

124. **What do you think you are learning from the English course?**

125. The textbook helps us learn grammar and a lot of vocabulary,

126. through topics from Western culture. For example, a paragraph that

127. helps us learn to write, summarise or learn vocabulary, informs us

128. about other cultures, their customs, ideology and technology,

129. therefore it is very useful. It’s also good to be able to express

130. my ideas when I speak, because this helps me to be more confident,

131. even when I give presentations in other subjects. I think many

132. things we learn are good because this way we learn about other

133. cultures, but it does not reflect our culture. I think I can

134. benefit from this course in many ways. For example, I hope

135. that I will be MORE FLUENT in speaking, my writing will be
better, also I will have more information about Western culture.

This should help me in my own major.

Is the English lesson different from other lessons?

Yes, totally different because we study (x) do very different things in the class.

What do you have to do during the lesson?

I have to be very attentive, as the teacher is speaking a different language. I have to pay attention to every detail, that might not be repeated later on. The lesson is not always very interactive. I spend so much time listening and trying to understand that often I have no idea what the lesson is about.

Also, when there is just reading, it can be quite boring. It depends on the teacher, though, because some teachers really make you interested in the lesson and they want to know what you think, so you forget about your mistakes and you try to communicate.

There are usually more activities than in other classes, although this is changing a little, I think. Now there is more focus on exams, whereas before there seemed to be more focus on communication. I don’t know why, maybe this is something the university or the Ministry wants. Of course, now we don’t have as many Western teachers as before, I don’t know why, so maybe this is the reason. Who knows?

Do you wish to continue your higher education?

Yes, I hope so, in my major, especially Arabic Studies or something
like this, because it’s important to have a good education, especially these days, when it’s so difficult to find a job. I am quite ambitious in this way. I would like to do a masters degree or something like that. It would be great if I could do it in Oman or an Arab country, because I think it would be difficult for me to live anywhere else. First, let’s see if I can graduate with high grades!

Thank you and good luck.

Thank you.
Appendix iv

A complete transcript of the second round of one of the Emirati interviews

Participants:

Amna

Kathy O’Sullivan

1. Good afternoon.
2. Good afternoon.
3. We’ve already had one interview. Today I would like to ask you some
4. more questions.
5. Sure.
6. First of all, can you please tell me about your parents’ level of
7. education?
8. Uh, my mother and father are of the same level. They did not have a lot
9. of education. When they were children, I think they went to Mutawa,
10. well, at least my father did, because he seems to know more than my
11. mother, who stayed at home for most of her life. My father knows a lot
12. about many things. We don’t really talk about it at home. People
13. didn’t go to school before. Now it’s different.
14. And what about your brothers and sisters?
15. My brother I have a smaller brother who is now in seventh grade in
16. school. At least, I think he’s in seventh grade, he’s in secondary school.
17. My other brother is in second grade. You see, my brothers are younger
18. than me. I have two sisters at this university, one studying Information
Technology and the other studying Islamic Studies. I also have two sisters at school, one in eleventh grade and the other, I think, in tenth grade. I also have one sister who’s working. She graduated last year in Economics, from the Business faculty here. She did well, as she was able to get a good job. She’s now working in a hospital here. That’s my family.

Ok. So, tell me, when you were a child, were there any foreigners who lived in your town?

Oh YES, I remember many people from other countries, mainly from India and Pakistan. Also, there were quite a few Asians, but no Westerners. These days, you can find people from all over the world, but, when I was a child, it was a little different. There were only people from a few countries, mainly teachers and office workers.

Tell me about your best teacher/teachers in English, either at school or university? Can you describe some of the qualities that made them special?

The way they taught us. The best ones knew our level, what we were able to understand and the information we could not understand, because of our level. In secondary school, our teachers, all of them, couldn’t speak or didn’t speak English, I’m not sure which! They taught us English grammar, but whenever they taught us in class, they spoke in Arabic. So we didn’t practise speaking, but our understanding of grammar was good. The teachers helped us a lot, so that helped me like English. Yes. I like English, and then, when I was in tenth grade, a new teacher came. She was from Tunisia. She’d studied in Britain and she was able to
teach us to speak in English. She was the first teacher I had who did this.

This changed many things for me. She would encourage us to speak for
five or six minutes in class to speak, speak about anything we liked. We’d
never been able to speak about anything we liked in class before, just learn
grammar. So, this made me very happy. I’m not sure I can say the same
for my friends because maybe they weren’t too happy about this.

You see, some of them didn’t like English. They weren’t interested in it,
they thought it was difficult to learn. As far as I was concerned, I was very
happy when she taught me because I loved English. She taught me
something new, something I hadn’t learned before then, speaking. I
learned how to speak. I’d never learned it before, never really tried it
before, but with her, I did, only with her. Uh, also she knew a lot about
grammar and structure, and, more importantly, she knew how to teach it
so that I remembered it. She made it interesting. Her way of teaching was
new for me, totally new, really learning English. She had a big effect on
me because I wasn’t afraid to speak English. She helped me to love the
language. Then I came to university, and I thought it I thought, hoped
it would be the same, but I was wrong. In university, the, the first, the first
semester, I didn’t really like it at all. The teachers were different, nobody
helped me and I didn’t understand anything that was going on. In school,
people always helped me to understand, helped me if I had a problem. I
felt confused, as I thought university would be different. Maybe that
wasn’t so nice for a while, but after, I had one teacher in Level Three.
Things began to change. She was a female teacher, you see, so I could
speak with her, talk to her a lot, even if I didn’t have the words she understood me. She understood all of us. Before that, some of my teachers were male. This teacher she, she sometimes she would take one hour of class time to speak with all of us. This was GREAT, speaking with all of us in English, about anything under the sun. Everyone got a chance to speak, so even the students who were weak in English had an opportunity to speak. We all loved her. So, I like to speak in English, I like to write, I like to do all kinds of things in English because it’s my opportunity to use it, to practise, to speak it, you understand. This was one teacher. After that, I studied ESP. I had a new teacher in ESP. Before she taught me, I didn’t really think much of my level, I didn’t think it was very high, I don’t know why. I hated writing [laughs]. But, when she taught us, I felt, I felt that I could, that I can write in English, write a lot in English. Before, I could only write, write, I think, about basic, elementary ideas. What the teacher told me to write, I wrote. I didn’t know what I was writing about. I did it because the teacher told me to. Maybe I wrote what I thought the teacher wanted me to write, even if I had a different idea about something. I was writing to get a good mark in exams, that’s all. My mind wasn’t open about, my mind wasn’t open to writing about my ideas, to write what I wanted, what my opinion was. In this period, I thought a lot in ESP class. I used my ideas, not other ideas. My teacher in ESP told me that my ideas were just as good as anyone else’s, she really encouraged me to do my best, not to write what I thought she wanted me to, but to write what I wanted to. Nobody had told me anything like this.
before. She praised my ideas, helped me to organize, corrected my
grammar, but the ideas were mine. And I think this was a very big step
for me, to do things independently in writing. Now I feel I am close to a
point where I’ll love writing. Most students hate writing because
they think it’s difficult, but, if they are taught by good teachers, using
good methods, maybe they will learn to like it, maybe.

That’s good. We’ve spoken already about the difference between school
and university.

Yes.

When you came to university, what orientation, or help, did you
receive?

It gave me an opportunity to learn a language because I think
it’s so different to school. Here, you have to do everything yourself.
In school, teachers always help you whenever you have a problem.
Here, it’s completely different; it’s the opposite. Often, there’s
nobody to answer your questions, to tell you what to do, so you
have to do things for yourself. This can be good in one way, as
it helps you to be more independent, this can help you in many
areas of your life. I love the subject of English, so I had the
opportunity to use it to find out things for myself. This was a good
opportunity for me to learn many new things. Actually, yes, the
university did help me in some ways, but only about the best way to
study and how to choose my major. But, as for speaking, or
information about the subject of English, for example, there was no
information, so what we were told was general, not very detailed.

This was a problem, as we had many questions, but there was nobody to give us the answers. We were only given exam scores, nothing else. We didn’t know why we had these scores.

Sometimes, when we thought we did good exams, our scores were very bad and we didn’t know why, even when we had the correct answers. Also, there was this class, this lecture, at 7pm, which was a very bad time for me. I had a lot of classes that day, SEVEN hours with no break. I couldn’t attend for this and other reasons, and nobody was helpful regarding this. They told me to go to this office, to that office, but nobody would help me, just send me to lots of offices and tell me it wasn’t their problem. You understand that I’m talking about my major only. But when it came to university procedures, how things work, when I needed something, yes, there was information available. I think the different colleges need to be more helpful to students who have individual problems. Also, many people in the colleges are never there in the afternoons when students have a problem. We can only go there, to their offices, sometimes in the afternoons when we have a break, because we have classes always in the mornings, usually without a break.

And what about the English language teachers who come to this university? Do you think they need orientation?

Uh, first, first, I think, (x), I think they need to know about us, yeah, about our culture, how to deal with us because it’s a different culture for
them, so it’s better that they know what to do, how to behave, how (x)
to deal with us. It’s better for them, so that they know how to
communicate. Uh, about me, my teachers know, I think they do
know us. My teachers make a big effort to learn about me and their
other students, so that they can know how to help us in the best way.
They are better than us. We are in the wrong here. Some students
DON’T BEHAVE in a good way with the teachers and they say bad
things about them. They think that they are better than the teachers.
I’m sorry to tell you this. Teachers when I hear my friends say,
or example, that one teacher deals differently with the students who
wear naqab (veils), they are angry, so angry. They say that they are
very good students but the teachers don’t like this way of dress,
or they think, or maybe they think that the student is not good, she doesn’t
study, so she won’t get good grades. These are some of the things that
students say, I am sorry. But you know, sometimes there are some
students who are very difficult; they believe things like this of the teachers.
But I think that it is the students that are the ones who can be very bad.
I don’t know why they think differently. Maybe they don’t want to be at
university, or maybe they got bad grades because they didn’t study, so they
blame the teachers, not themselves. But, as for me, I don’t deal with many
students like these or teachers like these because all of my teachers (x)
are good.

So, if you want advice or help with your major or your career
these days at the university, who can you talk to?
Uh, there are advisors for each college, for my college. Each college has an advisor to help you to choose your subjects, things like these. However, for careers, there is nobody to advise us, nobody I can go and talk to about careers. This is not good, especially because it is more difficult for students who graduate now to find jobs than before there is a lot of unemployment. Now, though, they’ve got a subject that deals with something like this. This is a new thing; we didn’t have it before. I took one of these subjects. It its title was “Careers 1”. There was another course I could have taken after that, “Careers 2”, which deals with interviews, the process of applying for a job, reading the newspaper adverts, to know about choosing good jobs, but not about different kinds of jobs, exactly. Also, I think it’s not, well, the idea was good, I think, but when they tried to do it, it wasn’t the teacher did not didn’t know how to approach this, didn’t know what information to give us. Maybe this is because this was a new subject. Maybe the teachers had never taught this subject before nor have good information about it. Anyway, we didn’t really understand it. Some things were good, but as a first step. I don’t think many of the students who attended found it helpful; they were mainly bored. Hopefully, after a few years, they’ll improve this. Now, it’s not very good, though, so I hope it gets better. I took “Careers 1” and I didn’t take ‘Careers 2”. However, some of my friends who took ‘Careers 1” and “Careers 2” said, they said that ‘Careers 2”
and “Careers 1” are the same, the same information, the same style, a waste of time. Why did they do this? It could have been very good, very useful for all the students, because this is something we need to know about. Maybe they will improve, but it’s a good idea to have a subject about careers. It’s a good idea to have this subject, but maybe the method of teaching and the content need to change. The university should think about this.

Ok. Let’s change a little. English is becoming more important in education here. What are your feelings about this?

Uh, well, it’s an important language in the world. You can’t really survive without English these days. Everything is in the English language the Internet, magazines, books, TV; when I watch something, for example, about, on the BBC, maybe, I like this, as I can understand a lot. But, when I listen, something is I think of it as something I am losing. Yes, sure, I get new ideas, uh, but you understand that there are some programmes in Arabic, as well as some Western programmes, and they are not the same at all. I can get more information in another language, in English, more information than in Arabic. This is something I don’t understand; I don’t like it. Not like Japanese, I can say, or Chinese, because it’s limited. In English it’s very also, you can acquire more than one culture. This is because all cultures translate their ideas into English, into one language, so it has become like the language of the world. This can be good in some ways, because it can help me sometimes when I study or do research, for
example. Uh, for example, I did some research about the city of
Tokyo for a project. When I first did this, I understood English, and they
they understand English, so I can know about this city. If there was
no English language, probably the information would be in Japanese
or in Chinese, so I wouldn't understand. I would never be able to find
this information in Arabic, but in English I can, without any problems.
Also, I can find information on the Internet, because I know English and
most of the websites I need are in English, not Arabic. You see,
English is the language of the world. Many, many people speak this
language.
So, if the English language is becoming a world language, what is
going to happen to the Arabic language? How does this make you
feel?
About in Islam, for Muslims, Arabic is, is the first language,
because it’s the language of the Qur’an. When we read the Qur’an, we
will not read it in English. We will read it in Arabic. Uh, this is
because it’s an Arabic world. This is important to understand. Of course,
I know there are some copies of the Qur’an in English. But when I
read it in Arabic every day, even if I am not studying my university
courses in Arabic, but studying them in English, I’ll find the Arabic
language in the Qur’an. So, it’s the language of our religion, everything,
is Arabic, so it’s our first language. Our SECOND language is English,
even if maybe some Muslims prefer to use English and some of them
forget Arabic, but the whole idea is that Arabic is the first language of
235. the Arab world and the first language of Muslims. Do you understand
236. what I’m saying? The second language for us is English. But for
237. work, I think English is the main language, not Arabic. We need English
238. for work, also for study. However, we will not lose our Arabic. We
239. will keep it, insh’Allah, but I can say that some Muslims and Arab
240. people, after they speak in English, they forget Arabic. I see this at
241. university with some of my teachers who are Muslim and Arab, from
242. other countries, who studied in America or the UK. But I think they will
243. move back to Arabic. They will go back to Arabic. I am sure about that.
244. Arabic is our language; we can’t forget it, it is the language of the
245. Qur’an. I don’t know if Arabic can be the language of work,
246. maybe.
247. You say that you don’t think you will lose Arabic. Some students
248. think they might lose it. What do you think will happen to the
249. students’ level of Arabic, in general?
250. Oh, maybe they, they will have a low level. I think their level will be
251. lower than now, because when you the things that you learn, you
252. will keep, remember. But the things which you don’t practice, you
253. will lose. I don’t think students practice English in their daily lives. For
254. example, when I go home, or when I am on holiday, I don’t speak
255. English very much, unless someone can’t speak Arabic. But Arabic, we
256. will use it in our daily lives. Even if we don’t, we don’t study it, maybe
257. we will not study some of the Arabic language, the details, maybe we
258. will lose that, but not all of it, not the whole. We will lose some of it,
259. but we will eventually return to the language and make it whole again.
260. But, but we will not lose, we will not lose it, IT WILL NOT BE
261. REMOVED from our lives. We will we will keep and preserve
262. it, and maybe we will go back to knowing everything about it.
263. Why do you think English is such an important language in the world
264. today? What are the reasons for this?
265. Uh, because, because many people know English. It’s like a (x) a
266. common point of communication in the world. It’s the language of
267. technology. I think so. Because technology has come from America
268. and Europe, and has developed there, not in Arab countries. If we
269. had developed technology here, if technology had started here, it would
270. be Arabic. Computers all over the world are in English. We just
271. translate. The resources are in Arabic, sorry, in English. This is how the
272. world turns. Look at what happened in history. We started with this,
273. because, historically, when every subject in education was in Arabic, it
274. was in Arabic. Every, everyone, Indian, Pakistani, also Europeans, came
275. here to study, so they all, they all had to learn Arabic. They learned
276. about Science and Mathematics. This was how it was at that time, just
277. like now, when everyone has to learn English. However, we lost our
278. prominence in education. When we declined, the Americans dominated,
279. so the language of education changed. So, you see, that is why I say that
280. maybe Arabic will become important again. My teacher of Global Issues
281. said China is a fast-developing country, so I think, well, I think that if
282. China becomes one of the most important countries in the world, it will
283. be the Chinese language that will be the world’s most important one.
284. Then everyone will have to learn Chinese, if we want to communicate
285. with them. They will be strong economically. Maybe it’s economics
286. that’s the important factor. The reasons for the importance of
287. English are technological and economic, in my opinion. When we, when
288. technology came to this part of the world, to this area, everybody
289. wanted to learn how to use this technology, and some people, the people
290. who’ve developed technology, want to keep everything to do with
291. technology in their language. They don’t know our language, so they
292. don’t know how to deal with us, except in English. We want to learn
293. about technology, so we must deal with them. So language, well, I
294. think that our English language will improve because all of us want to
295. learn about this technology. Chinese, the Chinese also have technology,
296. but I think it started in America. It belongs to them originally, and the
297. Chinese have improved on it. So, when we, when they want to sell it to
298. us and to other Arab people, they want us to have a language which we,
299. they want to deal with us in a language which we both know. So
300. that’s why the English language is important. There’s a high economic
301. value on the language.

302. **Do you think that students here have a good level in the English
303. language?**

304. Uh, I think no.

305. **What do you think the reasons for this might be?**

306. Well, I don’t know. Ok, maybe the reasons for this go back to
education in the schools, because there are public and private
schools. That means the best students study in private schools and they
are more educated. They have a better level in English than students in
the public schools. That’s what I believe. The teaching methods in public
schools are old-fashioned and many of the teachers don’t have good
qualifications. Students come to the university from private schools
have a higher level in English. So, I can think you’ll find that some of
them have a good level and know the language. Students who come to
the university from public school usually don’t have a high level. Of
course, some of them do have a high level, but not many. Also, some of
them go to private classes outside the university, so you can find that
these students also have a high level in English. However, this is a small
number of students who have a good level in the language. Most of
them are somewhere in the middle I can’t say their level is bad, it’s
somewhere in the middle.

So, what improvements would you suggest, to make the level of
these students better?

I think that that they should practice. When we speak more, we can
learn more. When we write more, we can learn more. When we read
more, we can learn more. When we listen more, we can learn more. So,
uh, at university we only study English in class. We don’t use it for other
things. When we go outside class, we do not speak. When we go
outside class, we do not read English. Did you know that? Students
like to read stories, magazines and things. I see this, even though
331. some teachers say we do not read at all. They like this, but all of
332. this is in Arabic. Only when teachers say “You must read it”, maybe
333. they’ll read it in English, only then, but even then, not always. I can say
334. they don’t practice the language at home or in any other part of their
335. lives, only in class. THIS is the problem, and this is why the level is not
336. very high. The university needs to do things to help the students to like
337. English, not just change all the courses into English. Even me, I’m like
338. them [laughs], but now, sometimes, I tell myself to sit down and read a
339. paragraph in English. After this, I will understand. I try to study hard. I
340. want to do well in my studies. I want to get a good job, to help my
341. family, to help my country; I need English to do this.

342. What do you think your position will be like in Emirati society in the
343. future?

344. I think I will have a good position because of the English language. I
345. chose my major because I like it and I hope I will get a good job. I know
346. our society needs us to work with English, we need English, whether we
347. like it or not. That’s a fact. They’ve changed the way they teach English
348. in schools in recent years, so I think it has become more important. This
349. is a good thing, because now there is a big difference between learning
350. English in school and learning English in university. Now the teaching
351. methods in the schools are different, better than before. They want
352. everyone to have the language. Everyone must have it, and I understand
353. this. This is not a problem for me, but maybe it’s a problem for others,
354. if you speak to them. I accept the situation, it’s my choice. But I want
to have a really good level, a good position in society, so I’ve chosen to be
a university teacher, not a teacher in the schools. I think this will be
a higher level position. Now we have more Emirati teachers in the schools,
but we don’t have so many teaching in the universities, mainly foreigners.
I want to help change this. I am quite ambitious.

And what do you think will be the position of the English language in
education in the UAE in the future?

Uh, I think time will see English becoming more important in many
things. The university, all the university, I think maybe in university
English will be everywhere. Everyone will study in English. Already
the university is trying to make everyone study in English. I think in the
future it will also be the most important language in the schools.
However, I don’t agree with this idea in the schools, because they are
children and they won’t want to learn Arabic, if everything is in
English. It’s important to learn English, but Arabic is our first
language, the language of our culture and I think it is important for
children to learn this. Maybe they will make sure that the subject of
English is in a strong position. I think this is a good thing, but I
wouldn’t change the language for subjects such as Geography, History
or anything like this. I wouldn’t teach them in English, as I think they
should be taught in Arabic. I don’t think it is important to teach them
in English. English should be important, true, but students should learn
Arabic too, a lot of Arabic. I would make the subject of the English
language stronger and make the teaching methods better, more modern,
as they’re not that good now. So, students can learn Arabic and English
can learn, well, they can learn the basics of English, and
concentrate more on learning Arabic. Arabic should be a strong
language. We can learn more English, but it doesn’t mean that Arabic
should be less important. So, when they come to the university, they can
learn more English because they already have the basics. This would
work; wouldn’t be a problem. They should also keep the Arabic
language here, because this is the language they’ve learned as children.
It’s the first language they learn. We shouldn’t forget the language of the
Qur’an, which is Arabic. That’s the best thing. So I don’t
know, maybe they will have all school subjects taught in English, but I
don’t agree with that. I don’t think that would be a good thing.
Maybe some students don’t like studying English because they are
afraid they will lose something from their culture, but I think that, in
society, some students have already started to change their culture. It
has already directly affected them. The things they say, the way they
dress, the food they eat, for example. Some of them speak in English,
instead of Arabic, on campus. You can hear them all the time. I’ve
asked them “Why are you speaking in English, when both of you are
native Arabic speakers? Why don’t you use your mother tongue? It
would be better. When you need to, speak in English.” Uh, others
don’t like to study English, maybe because they think Arabic will be lost
if they do. Maybe they don’t like to hear other girls speaking in English
all the time. For my part, I like the English language. I try to learn it, try
to listen in English and speak in English and practice, but, but at the same time, I also believe in using Arabic. You can like another language without losing your own language. Until now, I like to read books in Arabic. I (x) don’t this is my hobby, and when I am tired or something like that, I like to read in Arabic. It’s my hobby. I will read something, I will balance, I can say reading. For example, I read some books in Arabic and some books in English, because I think there are some subjects I can understand better in Arabic. I only need English to read those books which are not translated into Arabic. I then read them to improve my language ability. But, I some books are not in Ar, in the English language. For example, books like like religion, Islamic studies. These books are not in English. Well, they are in English for Western Muslims, but they are also in Arabic. So, when I am, when I study Arabic, I say alhamdullileh, thank God, because some Muslims, English. They are crying. They say “You are better than us. You can read the Qur’an. I cannot read it”, they say. I’ve seen this on TV, so I can I thank God so much because I know Arabic. There are many books, and Muslims are working hard to translate them, the Qur’an and books like that, but they. In Arabic I think it’s better. Some of them cannot learn Arabic. They want to read it in Arabic. There are translations, but maybe, I don’t know. Maybe they like the language of the Qur’an, so they want to read it in Arabic, but they understand everything. There are books in English. So, I think that for me, I can balance the two languages. I like I can say
that I like Arabic more than English, but I like English too.

428. Is there anything else you would like to add?

429. I can say that the second. I like English, but when I think that Arabic
430. maybe will be lost. [looks away] My friends speak to me sometimes in
431. English, but they then speak in Arabic, because this is their language
432. and they say they want to preserve it. I can understand their feelings
433. because these are the same as my feelings. They are afraid that
434. Arabic will be lost as a language and they want to study their language,
435. so that they will understand the Qur’an better than they do now. This is
436. what they tell me. I think most of the students think like this. This
437. makes me ask myself why I’m not studying more subjects in Arabic, as
438. well as studying the Arabic language itself. However, I don’t have a
439. choice, not if I want to get a good job, not if I want to teach at university.
440. It’s better in English, for me, to study, so that I can translate lots of
441. Arabic books for people who don’t want, who don’t want Arabic.
442. They try to learn English instead and do everything in English. But
443. English people will want to speak with people who know more Arabic
444. than they do, to receive advice from them. So, I think, then I think it
445. might be an idea to teach English people in our culture. This is the age I
446. live in. When I want to tell them about religion, about Islam, if I
447. don’t know English, how can I tell them about these things in Arabic?
448. Lots of people who live here don’t know Arabic. They don’t
449. understand our culture, not only the English teachers, but also the Arab
450. teachers. When the Arab teachers ask us about Islam, they ask us why
451. we wear this \([points\ to\ her\ abaya/cloak\ and\ shayla/headscarf]\). They ask us
452. why we wear these clothes. I can’t explain very clearly this idea in
453. English, so I want to learn more, to speak. I’ll explain better. I think
454. our religion, we have to explain this religion to others. I need to
455. explain about Arabs. These days, most of the world, they have
456. bad ideas about Islam. So, if I don’t learn English to speak with them,
457. who will do that? This is the. That’s all I want to say.
458. Thank you very much indeed. You have said a lot, and I am very
459. grateful.

460. Thank you for listening. It was good for me to explain my feelings.
A complete transcript of the second round of one of the Omani interviews

Participants:

Mariam

Omani student interviewer

1. Good afternoon.
2. Good afternoon.
3. Thank you for coming. We’ve already discussed some issues in the first interview. Now I would like to ask you to continue that discussion, if that’s ok.
4. Of course.
5. My first question is about your parents’ level of education. What can you tell me about that?
6. Uh, I think, uh, well, my father is dead now, so I don’t know about that, but I think he didn’t go to school, because I never saw him write anything or read anything. I always, we always read the papers for him. He, I think he, uh, maybe he learned at a school for the Qur’an, like, his, uh, his grades weren’t good, like 17 out of 100 or something like that. So I think that’s what happened. But he was good at Maths, uh, because he could count, some things like that. Uh, my mother also can’t read or write. She married my father when she was young and came to live here. She tried, uh, she tried to go to school after she got married, but, you know, with the house, and being married, she couldn’t go outside the house every day to school. Something would always happen, you
20. know, somebody would call her and say, you know “your mother-in-law,
21. your son, are asking for you”, or “your daughter is asking for you”
22. you know, things like that would happen, so she couldn’t continue her
23. education. But she can’t read or write anything. I read for her.
24. **What about your brothers and sisters?**
25. Uh, ok, I have five brothers and four sisters. My brothers, I have three
26. older brothers, none of them has higher education. My oldest brother he
27. stopped studying when he was in the third grade of preparatory school.
28. He likes to read, but he doesn’t like to stay in class and listen to a
29. teacher. He doesn’t like the idea of this, as he thinks it’s stupid, not
30. interesting, but he likes reading many, many books and he likes history,
31. things like that, geography, things that interest him. So that’s my big
32. brother. I think he is 32 now, he is married. The next one also he, I
33. think he was working hard, he had to work hard when he was younger,
34. so he couldn’t continue his schooling. I think he completed second or third
35. grade in preparatory school. My third brother also, I think he also
36. completed second or third grade in preparatory school. I think he
37. failed Maths, which is why he decided to leave school. He left school and
38. joined the army, but he stays at home now, because he is ill, ok. I have
39. two other brothers who are younger at me. They are still at school. One is
40. in secondary school and one is in preparatory school. My, uh, my sisters.
41. I have four sisters, three sisters have graduated from university. The
42. oldest one, uh, she used to teach disabled people, but then she got married
43. and decided to stay at home. My, the second one also graduated from
When you were growing up, did you notice people living in your town who were from other countries?

Uh, I think, I think yes, there were people from Egypt, Syria, and Sudan, from countries like these. I noticed them. Many of them were teachers.

Can you tell me about your best English teacher/teachers? What made this teacher/these teachers special?

Ok, I think the best one was, the first teacher who taught me. I think she was from Syria or somewhere like that, she wasn’t from the Gulf. I know she was so very kind with us when she taught us. She taught us so much, we learned so much from her, she spent a lot of time with me, I learned so much from her, I loved her a lot. I remember when we, like it was yesterday, when we went on a trip to the park, she asked us the names of the animals in English. When I answered her, she encouraged me and praised me, she told me how good I was, how I was excellent, really she was an excellent teacher. But in Oman, you know, at that time, you couldn’t study English until you were nine or ten, so I learned English for a short time. I went to a government school. Then, in the first grade of preparatory school, I had a teacher who had taught my sisters before, so she liked me. She took care of me and I liked her. Then I had a good teacher in secondary school. No, I don’t
think so, uh, in third grade in secondary school, yes. She was from Egypt; she always encouraged me to do my best. You know, the level of English teaching in Oman, they are weak in English, so if you make any effort to speak, people will tell you you are very good, you are excellent, something like that, so that encouraged me. Actually, in the second grade of secondary school, there was a teacher from Tunisia who I liked very much. She gave us lots of vocab. She didn’t give us words just from the book, she gave us words from life, things she thought were useful, things she thought we’d always use, things like that. Also, she knew how to speak the French language and sometimes she would teach us a few words in French. You know, Arabic is different from country to country. She wanted us to know about this and to know other languages, something like that. She was good to me. The teachers I liked encouraged me to study hard outside school, to read stories, things like that, that’s what my teachers did. So, when you came here, what advice or help, orientation did the college give you?

When I first came I don’t know, really, because that first semester I don’t know, but maybe they didn’t give me enough advice, really because maybe I (x) understand what they said, but I didn’t understand everything I was supposed to do, things I shouldn’t do. I was used to depending on myself in school, so that wasn’t something new for me, it’s not something new for me to ask my teachers what I should do. I see the teachers and I know what they like, what they
want me to do, I know immediately. You know why? I grew up in a family that got angry very quickly, so I learned when I could speak, how to speak to them, how to ask if I want something. I learned that from my family [laughs in an embarrassed way].

What are the things that the English teachers who come here from other countries need to know?

From outside uh, hmm, I don’t know, because I was surprised when I met one teacher, especially one teacher. He knew EVERYTHING about the Arabian Gulf, what we wear, what we eat. Another teacher told us that before she came here, to find out about it, she read books, she used the Internet, to find out about the culture, education, things like that, so I don’t know, I can’t say something to these two teachers because they know, maybe they are older than me, so they should know what they need, they know what they should learn. Not every teacher is like that, though. You know, some of them come and they have no idea about anything. They wear bad clothes, they don’t know the culture, they don’t know any Arabic. Really, I don’t understand why they come here if they want to be like that. They can be so bad.

Sometimes I can’t look at them and what they wear. It’s shameful.

Right. So, to come back to the advice that the college gives you, now that you have been studying here for a while, is there anybody at the university that you can talk to if you need advice about something?

Uh, I went many times to the advisor. I asked many questions about the college, about careers, about studying, things like that, that,
but maybe my teachers can also help me. I like to speak to people, ok, to listen to what they say. I’m interested in things like that, so I will talk to people, but NOT my sisters.

Why not your sisters?

I have sisters who have studied at university but they tell me some of the teachers are so boring, the subjects are not interesting, they are boring, there are so many things to do. When I ask if I should study another subject, they say, oh no, it’s not interesting. I think that’s because maybe by the time they finished studying at university they were really tired of studying, so all they really wanted to do was stay at home and get married. I don’t like this because I haven’t been studying as long as they have and I want someone to encourage me, to help me, things like that, so when my sister talks to me in the morning, I go like that, tell her to go away because I think it’s better to talk to my friends. I prefer ok, like talking to my friends to talking to my sister.

English is becoming more important in education these days.

Yes.

What are your feelings about this?

No reaction, because I think this language is ok. I learn it, so it’s ok. If I know English, if I learn English, it’s good to speak with other people, foreign people, to know about their education, a little their culture, how they think, something like that, but it DOESN’T mean, no, I’m not interested in the Arabic language.
140. So what do you think will happen to the Arabic language in education in the future?

142. Uh, it’s not important, I think, because we’ll still speak Arabic at home, because we need English, for international relations, things like that. We’ll still need Arabic. Arabic is important, so it will not die.

145. What do you think will happen to students’ level in Arabic?

146. So yes, why not? Because they, they spend more than maybe ok eight hours a day, or less, at university, but most of their time is spent at home, so they have to speak Arabic. It’s not important, but it’s going to become important in this way, when their babies grow up, here, in this country, they should speak Arabic, ok? I don’t think any other people should have influence over the language we speak. Mothers should teach their children Arabic.

153. The problem is if a child has a mother from India or somewhere, then they will have weak Arabic, yeah, they won’t be able to speak Arabic very well. But it’s ok if the mothers and fathers are both from Arab countries, as they will be able to speak Arabic very well at home, ok, and speak English at school.

158. Why do you think English is the number one language in the world today?

160. Uh, I don’t know, I don’t know. I think very carefully about this a lot of the time, I think maybe because it’s easier than other languages, to learn English. It’s easier than other languages, yes, because foreign people say Arabic is very difficult, even a lot of
164. Arab people are very weak in Arabic. I am weak in Arabic grammar and things like that, and I’m Arab, but I’m good at English grammar; so even other Arabs find that Arabic is difficult.
166. Maybe English is easier than Arabic. Also, Chinese is difficult to learn. I think this is the first reason, the number one reason.
169. Any other reasons?
170. Maybe because, uh many years ago, because many countries, foreign countries continued to divide the world into poor countries and weak countries, so they, I don’t know (x) so poor countries should speak their language. Countries were colonized, that’s what I think. I think this still has an effect today.
175. Do you think students have a high level in the English language?
176. Uh, no.
177. Why do you say this?
178. Uh, because we didn’t, we didn’t study it as an important subject.
179. We didn’t pay enough attention to it. We don’t study in a good way. When I began to learn English, we began with ABC.
181. Then we had things like: “What’s this called? It’s a chair”. We didn’t study other things, such as how to talk to people. Until third grade in secondary school, you studied stories, stories, stories, pictures and stories, nothing important. Nothing was learned, nothing told us how to speak with people, how to ask someone something, ok, things like that. We should depend on ourselves, we should learn how to do things by ourselves, things like that, how to speak to other (x)
people. THEN, when we were to go to university, they told us we
had to learn these things, that we would speak to foreign people there
once we got to university, that we should know English, but no one
actually taught us how to speak, how we should speak English.
They always just taught us the names of things, what they were
called, and stories, just stories, stories, stories, nothing important.
And in the class, we had a small part of the class as discussion
between two, two students, you know, ask and answer. Boring.
That’s not important, these were the only questions we asked, they
were not important, and if we said this to the teacher, we were told we
could leave it and go to another question. So, what we learned in
class was just stories, we didn’t exactly learn how to write, how to
write something. How we wrote was, before we wrote, we had
listening. I am good at listening, that was ok in Oman, you become
good at listening only in school, because also from six years of age you
have only listening, listening, listening, and we listened to British people
and they spoke so, so fast, so that’s the only thing that’s any good
here. But, in writing, we, we return to listening, Listening 1, Listening 2,
something we do together and then we write from this tape. Ok? You
know, you understand? Not something from ourselves, that’s not
what we write, that’s not how we write, no, we just copy the
information, just put “the, an, she”, just this. In my opinion,
maybe the first thing they should they should make English into a
stronger subject. Children should study English from the time
they go to school, NOT when they’ve already been in school for a few
years. The books really need to be changed, not to have so many
stories. It’s not good just to have stories, stories, stories. We need
things to discuss. We need to have more vocab. We didn’t really
have any vocab. in school, nothing new, just the same vocab. year
after year. So, I think we should change all these books. It’s
beginning to happen, but I don’t know, I think this would help a
lot, as we don’t forget what we learn when we are young, even if
we meet new people, know about new things, we don’t forget any
what we’ve grown up with, so this would be better. Some people
say that maybe we will forget our culture if we learn English when
we are young, but I don’t believe this. We need English for the
future.

How do you think knowing English will affect your position in
Omani society in the future?

Ok, my future in Oman, yes, English will help me. Firstly, you
know, I will live in Oman, but maybe I will work in the Emirates. I have
relatives there, so maybe I can do this. I think my future will be
good. Every major needs English, we need to know English so that
we can speak with people. I am a Humanities major, you know, so I
need English for this. I also just like meeting people, talking to them
some people. Even if I don’t have a job, I think it will be
interesting to know two languages, to speak two languages, to have
relationships with different people. I think if you know English, you
can have a better job and a better position in society. Everyone
wants you to know English these days, to have English. If you don’t
know it, you can’t get a good job, maybe you will have to stay at home
and just get married.

How do you see the role of the English language in education in the
future?

Yeah, I think yeah, the English language will become more and more
important. It will be the first language in the schools. Everyone
will have to learn it. It’s good to study, to have a lot of certificates.
I myself would like to study for a higher degree, maybe a Masters, I
really hope to do that. If I want to, I need English. Everyone needs
English, this can be a good thing, I suppose. I’d like to study
French, to know a different language, not only English, but we don’t
have this choice. We should study English, but using new books,
new methods, so that we can speak, not only listen and read. We
need to communicate with others, to know how they think, to have
relationships with them. That’s what I think. A lot of people don’t
want to do this, but we must. I would like to speak to someone in
another language, not only English, but I can’t do this.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

No, that’s enough.

Ok. Well, thank you very much indeed.

You are welcome.


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