The Effect of Gender and Cultural Factors on Student Language Acquisition

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Abstract

Performance has always been a tell-tale sign of success, be it in the world of academia or otherwise. To this effect, the growing disparity in academic performance among girls and boys, coupled with the higher incidence of poor self esteem in the former and the increasing high school drop out rates of the latter, have proven quite alarming to academicians and educators alike. Where an extensive corpus of literature seems to indicate that the reason lies in 'nature', that is, girls will tend to outperform their male counterparts in certain areas, due to certain natural capabilities and dispositions, while boys rank higher in other subjects for the same reasons, this explanation seems unsubstantial as a singular cause. Consequently, it is believed that other underlying factors of extensive influence, such as culture, schools, teachers, families and peer groups are stimuli that seem to partake in shaping gender-based performance results. Thus, the aim of this research is to shed light on the impact of culture along with the above mentioned factors that are thought to hinder performance differentially among girls and boys. Where a university student sample was surveyed, observed and interviewed, results seemed to indicate that indeed, the above mentioned factors did divergently alter performance and the respective attitudes among gender.
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It is said that life's richness is not in the realization of desires, possessions, nor the goals one sets out for oneself; rather, the epitome of human wealth lies in the journey that one undertakes to arrive at these goals, dreams and desires. I can truly say that this journey of mine has not only enriched my theoretical and experiential knowledge as such, but has also allowed me to unveil hidden reservoirs of strength that I never knew existed, especially when the roads to achieving my goal seemed trying, meandering and almost blocked. To the materialization of this thesis, I owe a great many thank-you's. First and foremost, a sincere thank you goes to Dr. Rima Bahous for opening a great many doors for me, and for making everything seem so simple and straightforward. I would also like to thank Dr. Layla Harmouch-whose motivational pick-me-uppers always found their way to my heart when I felt I could proceed no further. Similarly, I feel deep gratitude for Dr. Nola Bacha, who patiently and kindly answered my panicked queries related to SPSS, and who would trek all the way from L.A.U -Jbeil to see me amidst her hectic schedule. Last and certainly not least, I would like to thank Dr. Nabelah and Ramzi Haraty, for their unwavering faith in me.

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To Huda, the eternal heart that bleeds unconditional love and mercy

To Hala, a beautiful beacon in a world not untouched by night

To Nermine, a soul connection that knew-without words

And finally, to my father, my most exacting teacher
Chapter I

Introduction

“Education isn’t preparation for life; education is life itself.” (Dewey, 1950, pg. 21)

General Overview

An age old Chinese proverb compares children to soft clay: the slightest imprints leave their marks forever. Taking this adage into consideration, one wonders to what extent the environments into which children are born and integrated- be they family, culture, or school are adequate, the kind of imprints they leave behind on children, and whether or not they serve to foster or even hinder- growth and development. Subsequently, there has been mounting concern with respect to children and their respective underperformance at school. That is, with the increased rates of students dropping out or even poorly performing academically and most particularly so- in the domain of the languages, pedagogues and pundits in the field no longer attribute these flagrant failings as neglect on the part of the student. On the contrary, it is thought that the above-mentioned institutions and pedagogical pillars that are hypothetically there to mold and promote children’s potential are the very Achilles heels that are stunting the nations’ youths to develop and grow.

Ever since the 1990’s, gendered underachievement in some subjects versus others has shown to be a tell-tale sign that something in the pedagogical sector has gone amiss (Millard, 1998). The age-old myth that ‘girls are just not made for math’ and ‘boys are just plain stupid when it comes to writing’ (Welldon, 2005, pg. 45) just does not seem to support the controversial findings on achievement test scores. In fact,
researchers and pedagogues alike have come to note that while-to a certain extent-in some schools and institutions, girls’ progress in the sciences has come to improve, boys still lagged behind in the languages (Brown, 2007).

Despite myriad attempts to induce performance through remedial classes, extra tutorial sessions and even attaching financial rewards to academic achievement, satisfactory results and proficiency in language among boys-more than their female counterparts-remains to be alarmingly low. Coupled with high rates of boys dropping out of school, pedagogues have realized that something needs to be done to curb this problem, which otherwise, if left unattended to, may lead to higher rates of high school dropouts. In turn, this may unravel a snowball effect of blue collar workers due to lower education, increased lower socio-economic social stratification, and a very likely incidence of higher crime in the long run (Paechter, Preedy, Scott & Soler, 2001).

The proverbial fingers of incrimination point to diverse directions. For one part, culture is thought to play an integral role in affecting literacy and therefore language proficiency. To illustrate, educators generally agree that their Lebanese culture is not a reading culture, although Lebanon has the highest rate of literacy in the Middle East (World Bank Report, 1998). Thus, girls and boys alike don’t have a great deal of role models from whom they can emulate and acquire interest and motivation to learn. On a similar level, and still considering the cultural standpoint, Lebanon has been a country that has been exposed to colonialism, civil strife and political foreign intervention. Consequently, this has led to repercussions on the emotional level (Kazmi, 2004). Taking this point further, many students view the West as a threat,
and have come to disassociate with anything and everything that the West signifies, including languages (Spack, 2001). Thus, a student who bears antipathic sentiments towards the United States is very unlikely to internalize or acquire any part of the American culture, let alone English.

On another level, there exist physiological differences between girls and boys that disallow them to perform at the same level within the same time frame (Brown, 2007). That is, in considering girls’ and boys’ brains, the right side of girls’ brains responsible for linguistic competence and emotions, develop faster. In addition to this, girls are therefore more able to express themselves -as their emotional faculty of feeling is located in the right hemisphere (Chudler, 2005). On the other hand, in boys’ brains, the left side of the brain-responsible for math and spatial abilities develops faster in boys—thus enabling them to tackle subjects such as math and physics smoothly and quite deftly. As for boys’ emotional faculties of expression, unlike their female counterparts, these are located somewhere far away from their linguistic facilities in the brain. It should not be surprising then, that when ‘asked to express himself’ or to ‘discuss how he feels’, a boy will often be as curt as possible, as he can not easily find the words to describe his emotions.

Still another culprit would be the school, its curriculum and the media of information impartation: i.e. teachers. There have been growing concerns about the increased structuring of school systems which specialists and pundits in the field have come to view as ‘stifling and stunting in students’ development’ (Clark, & Millard, 1998). Moreover, many schools are now revising their curricula as they appear to be too overwhelming for the students, especially when students are required to ‘know’
so much in a very set and limited time span. There is also the question of teachers, as over 90% of language teachers are female (Cheng, & Dornyei, 2007). Similarly, where students of both genders tend to relate to their teachers and look up to them as role models, it should come as no surprise that boys often feel displaced and can not relate or look up to their teachers-as they are predominantly females (Zwerling, 2002). In truth, the concern of gendered academic performance is one of great concern to pundits and pedagogues alike, and to which solutions are needed-if the situation is to be improved.

The aim of this thesis then, is twofold: on a primary level, its first objective is to unveil the variable obstacles, masked as they are, by the omnipresent institutions that are slowly but surely drawing academic progress to a steady halt. Subsequently, the thesis also attempts to shed light on the possible alternatives that serve to remedy-if not downright enhance students’ language acquisition and proficiency in English as a Second Language. Basically, this corpus of research will revolve around two basic research questions:

- What are the factors that seemingly play a role in hindering student performance in terms of language acquisition and proficiency?
- What are some possible alternatives to jump start and enhance students’ academic performance in English as a Second Language?
Methodology

The research undertaken will involve first year university students at the Universal American College-in Intensive III classes. The reason for this is to ascertain the factors that have influenced language acquisition and proficiency throughout and up to the first year of university. (Refer to Appendix E to get an idea about students' educational backgrounds as per major i.e. literary, mathematical or scientific). A process of triangulation will be employed: that is, students will firstly be required to fill out a questionnaire, which will be collected and whose data will be analyzed. Consequently, this is to be followed by selective interviews and participant observations in class-as many as possible, whenever time and convenience allow for it. Naturally, having said the above mentioned, one would need to indicate that threats to validity would be definitive, as students' responses may very well be alterable-due to historical and mortality threats. The sample under study will be a convenience sample of 31 girls and 44 boys from three Intensive III classes. Based on the corpus of literature review considered, along with the statistical data obtained from the survey, data will be assimilated, analyzed and conclusions will be drawn with respect to hindrances on academic performance in the Lebanese situation.

The thesis will be divided into five chapters. The first chapter will naturally be that of the introduction, laying the basic framework of the research questions that are to be tackled, succeeded by the second chapter which will include the necessary corpus of theories and factors that have borne their repercussions on student academic performance. Subsequently comes the third chapter which is the case study at the Universal American College. Where Chapter Four will include statistical analysis and
findings, Chapter Five will encompass the hypothetical recommendations for remedying the problem of plummeting academic performance amongst girls and boys, hopefully, terminating the thesis to a closing by suggesting plausible alterable results in Lebanon's future academic horizons.

In retrospect, the Chinese had it quite right in indicating that children are impressionable; for there are a plethora of factors that more often than not mark the youth of tomorrow in ways that leave much to be desired, and quite often, forever. Where values from culture and families permeate into the mindset of children, families are equally guilty of erroneous indoctrination. This is very much so at the level of gender, which will be further explained as the study steadily unravels. Moreover, teachers are thought to be major players on the stage, along with peer pressure, each serving to mold the malleable attitudes of males and females at school. Hence, the coming chapters will unveil to what extent the above mentioned variables comprise flagrant and ubiquitous culprits that may be working to the detriment of girls' and boys' academic performance, rather than their benefit.
Chapter II
Theoretical Framework

“'The main hope of a nation lies in the proper education of its youth’
(Erasmus, 1995, pg. 300)

Factors of Underachievement

Underachievement or performing below par academically in terms of exam results and scores at school among girls and boys is a critical issue that has usurped the attention and concern of pedagogues and pundits in the field alike. Needless to say, a plethora of tell tale signs indicating flagrant disparities in 'gendered' academic performance were mostly noted in the languages, as boys seemed to dominate the scene in the high school drop out rates, remedial classes and overall scholastic scores (Brown, 2007). In fact, poor academic achievement in terms of language acquisition and proficiency has been attributed to a myriad number of reasons which will be discussed in ample detail as the chapter unfolds. For clarity purposes, defining both terms is considered necessary and rather basic. According to Webster (1994), language acquisition is simply defined as “something acquired or gained” (pg. 11), whereas proficiency is more holistically explained as “well advanced in the art, occupation or knowledge of something” (Webster, 1994, p. 931).

Basically, this means that where the former simply denotes a certain kind of gain—that can be very rudimentary at best, the latter is indicative of a particularistic mastery or fluidity in terms of conversation. Thus, for the remainder of the thesis, when referring to student performance in the light of the factors which are either detrimental or conducive to language learning, 'proficiency' will be used, indicative of mastery learning.
Physiological Factors

The first challenge to language proficiency at the school and collegial level is attributed to the physiological differences between girls and boys. It is not unknown that girls' and boys' brains develop differently and at dissimilar rates. Basically, this means that brains of members of either gender are at variance in their variable developmental stages (Pease & Pease 2006). To take matters further, with girls, the right side of the brain, which is responsible for phonological awareness, verbal and linguistic ability, develops from the onset of puberty until the late teens (eighteen/nineteen). On a similar level, girls are thought to be right lateralized; that is, according to magnetic resonance inclination scans (MRI), there seems to be more activity in the right hemisphere of the brain (Brown, 2007). Basically, what this means that girls develop a higher aptitude in vocabulary, grammar, punctuation and the arts at a greater speed than boys. As for their male counterparts, they are thought to be left lateralized; that is, there is more activity on the left side of the brain, which in turn is responsible for spatial, mathematical, and motor skills. Consequently, boys are much more at ease with problem solving skills in math and physics than their female counterparts, (Pease & Pease, 2006) and are equally more athletically inclined.

Equally noteworthy of mentioning is the fact that girls’ faculties of emotion are located in the same area as their language capacities. Having said this, a great deal of light is shed as to why girls can talk about their feelings quite explicitly, very much aware of how and what they are feeling, while their male counterparts are often unassuming—or simply, can not express themselves accurately enough, as their emotional faculties are
located elsewhere in the brain. (Thus, among one of the most confounding questions one can ask a male is ‘How do you feel?’)

Thus, where girls are more endowed with linguistic and verbal faculties, nature has equally been careful not to shortchange their male counterparts with mathematical/scientific aptitude. Having stated the afore-mentioned, a great deal of clarity and insight in terms of subject achievement or lack thereof is gained (Slattery, 2000). No longer are there keen questions revolving around why three fourths of special education students are boys, or why boys outnumber girls in remedial classes and summer camps. It also seems more fathomable as to why boys learn to read approximately twelve to fifteen months later than their female counterparts (Kuhl, 2005). In addition to this, the faculty of emotion is also located on the right side of the brain for girls. Consequently, they are more at ease in finding the words to express their feelings as opposed to boys, whose emotional faculties are located elsewhere in the brain. Thus, it should come as no surprise to find males unaware or unable to express themselves or how they feel (Ablard, 2000).

In addition to the developmental disparity in growth between girls and boys, there is also a hormonal side to the story. To elaborate further, testosterone, the main male hormone, is thought to be overly responsible for boys’ disciplinary issues, along with restlessness, fidgeting, rebelliousness, aggression and deviant behavior (Booth, Granger, Mazur, & Kivlighan, 2006). This hormone found at varying degrees in males and females, is low among members of both genders during the preschool and elementary school years, yet reaches an average tenfold production during among boys’ adolescent years, and three-fold among girls. Subsequently, correlative studies show that though
testosterone levels vary among males-be they teenagers or young adults-those with the higher levels of this hormone often displayed more aggressive, violent and even criminal tendencies (Booth et al., 2006) than their more ‘moderate’ counterparts.

On a similar level, further correlative studies have also revealed that males with higher levels of testosterone were more prone to depression, risky behavior, substance abuse-be it drugs or alcohol, and juvenile crime (Booth et al., 2006). Hence, a great deal is fathomed as to why boys at school often engage in undisciplined conduct, are often reprimanded for being too hyper, fidget in class or even get involved in rowdy, aggressive, rebellious or rude conduct particularly in these adolescent and highly volatile years; it’s very much to do with hormones (Campbell-Kibler, Podevsa, Roberts & Wong, 2002). Subsequently, it is understood why young males who get involved in sports activities often have a more ‘normalized’ behavior, are calmer, have higher overall scores and on the whole are less likely to get involved in juvenile crime or have disciplinary issues at school (Pease & Pease, 2006).

Finally, it should not go unnoticed that maturational levels amongst boys and girls are most definitely dissimilar (Clark & Millard, 1998). Where this was once thought to be a myth, it has now come to the attention of parents and pedagogues alike that due to these physiological and hormonal differences, girls and boys mature at varying levels and degrees (Salomone, 2005). To elaborate further, girls have finer motor skills in that they are able to sit still longer, have more concentrated attention spans and bear greater impulse control than their male counterparts (Clark & Millard, 1998). On an initial impulse, this bit of information may seem trivial or at best, insignificant; however, when considering an eight hour school day with only two twenty minute breaks at most, such a
bit of information ceases to be a detail when it comes to behavioral conduct and cognitive ability in terms of attention span and concentration (Booth et al., 2006).

Cultural Factors

Culture is another fundamental factor whose interplay with pedagogy causes it to set itself as a bulky hindrance in terms of language proficiency for both boys and girls. On a basic level, culture is defined as a person’s ‘mental software’, whereby all the norms, values, belief systems and even symbols are learned and internalized by any one individual (Hofstede, 2001). It can not be underscored enough that culture is learned, and not inherited, from one’s social environment and cultural niche. Consequently, if it so happens that this niche does not bear much tolerance to ‘foreign’ influence or even change, it would then be highly likely that any other culture, system of beliefs, norms and values are refused, or at best, resisted (Kazmi, 2004). Subsequently, individuals carry with them many variable ‘layers’ of this ‘mental software’ called culture. To elaborate further, culture can be broken down into national, regional, organizational and gender level culture (Hofstede, 2001). Each, in turn, will be further elaborated upon to illustrate how language proficiency may be hindered.

Culture at the National Level. The first categorization of culture is at the national level. What this means is that a set of belief systems by which one identifies at the nationalistic and patriotic level is to a high extent-tied to the geographic and historical events within a nation. In turn, these belief systems, along with the historic and geographic boundaries are also highly internalized within a person’s identity. Hence, a certain kind of fierceness as to where the individual comes from, the existing lifestyle, type of clothing and language(s) spoken are deeply imbued within the person’s identity.
(Kazmi, 2004). Consequently, any change or foreign intervention that would deeply disturb or threaten this sense of affiliation/national identity would only be met with resistance of this ‘imposing’ entity if not refusal altogether. And where languages are concerned, this can become rather critical, as a language is not simply a set of words, sounds and symbols that represent another spoken form of communication; on the contrary, to study a language is also to accept and internalize another country’s culture (Dornyei, Csizier & Nemate, 2006).

Having said this, it becomes polemical once the issue of colonialism is broached (Kazmi, 2004). According to Spack (2003), people who come from nations that were once colonies bear deep set resentment still towards the colonizing country and will resist accepting any aspect of that country, including languages. This can be seen through a myriad number of examples. Spack (2003) contends to argue for a similar point by citing her own personal experience when trying to teach Vietnamese to speak English. Because there had been deep rooted resentment due to wars between both sides, she found that it was most challenging to get the Vietnamese to acquire English. Similarly, in Lebanon, for example, and due to occupation and foreign interference by Western countries such as the United States, France and Italy, in certain areas there, the ‘West’ is viewed as a ‘great evil’, and should stringently be avoided (Kazmi, 2004). Furthermore, even when students realize they have to learn English or French as a requirement at certain schools, it is indubitable that though these languages may be spoken sparingly in the classroom, and not necessarily with the proper accents, they will not be spoken outside the classroom or among friends (Van Loan & Mikati, 1998).
Culture at the Regional Level. At the regional level, culture is permeated by ethnic or religious influences that mesh in with the original national culture. This is particularly the case in countries that are comprised of myriad ethnic and religious groups that are scattered throughout the nation’s boundaries (Cheng & Dornyei, 2007). At any rate, these religious and ethnic groups also have their own distinct value systems which permeate through this fabric called ‘culture’. Yet again, if it so happens that this ethnic or religious niche is averse to any other culture or social integration of any kind, the latter will too, be met with denial, refusal and resistance to say the least.

Many countries in the Middle East that have been under colonial influence and are predominantly Moslem are adequate examples. The reason this is a focal point is because in such areas, and particularly where fanatic factions exist, there is complete refusal of the Western faith, and anything associated with these faiths-including languages (Jule, 2005). One such example is Lebanon, which presents itself as a mosaic of different religions and ethnicities. Moreover, Lebanon is a country that has witnessed its fair share of colonialism, regional and civil wars as well. It should come as no surprise then, that such a country has been exposed to many countries and their respective cultures. For one thing, Lebanon is a francophone country, where Arabic, English and French are considered spoken languages. It should be noted, however, that some areas accommodate the speaking of French languages. These areas are often located in Lebanon’s northern region, and are heavily influenced by the French culture not only in education, but also in the lifestyle and clothing. On the other hand there are other areas where only English is spoken. This is found in bare scatterings throughout the major cities in the country, but mostly in its capital, Beirut. Still in some areas as well, such as
the Southern part of the country, neither English nor French is spoken, rather, Arabic. These areas are often influenced by other subcultures—such as a strong religious culture (Jule, 2005) which underscores the Arabic language, as religious teachings come in Arabic (Kazmi, 2004). Here, again, one notes the interference of religion in the acquiescence or refusal of certain cultural norms and symbols. It should be noted that even though individuals who reside in such areas may know how to speak English and/ French, they actually don’t, as it is considered a cultural taboo for the reasons mentioned above (Spack, 2003).

A final point worth mentioning along these lines basically revolves around the need for communicative exchange and survival. Moreover, in countries where two or three languages at best are spoken, it is not uncommon to find that the first language, or mother tongue, is where proficiency is at its peak, with less and less proficiency being the case for the second and third languages even (Dornyei et al., 2006). The reason for that is because a certain satiety for communicative exchange is attained upon the acquisition of the first language. Hence, there is no real ‘need’ to learn a new language—at least not with the same ardor as the mother tongue. On a similar level, it is not uncommon to find that individuals are motivated to learn a second or third language in order to better their career opportunities (Dornyei et al., 2006). Thus, in such a case, a practical use of the language, for extrinsic causes allows for a lesser level of proficiency than if the language were to be acquired for intrinsic purposes, such as wanting to acquire a language per se.
Organizational Level of Culture. Even at the organizational level, there exists a distinct culture (Hofstede, 2001). That is, for every organization, a distinct set of norms, values, and belief systems in the form of rules and regulations, procedures and processes are found. To this effect, schools, which in their very form are organizations, also maintain their own cultural flavor, which may or may not be detrimental to language proficiency. This is most particularly so, when a school is influenced by the regional culture in which it is situated (Epenshade & Fu, 2000). For example, a school in Montreal, Canada, is not unlikely to give courses in French and treat English as a language course. On a similar level, schools in the northern parts of francophone Lebanon also give the predominant number of courses in French, while treating English as a vestigial or subordinate language—at best. Moreover, schools that marginalize the French influence as a culture either have courses in English, treating French as a third language—or an elective course—often located in the city center, while still other schools’ media of instruction is in Arabic only. These schools are in areas that are under neither the French nor the English influence, and act-almost-as independent political islands within the mother country. Thus, the organization then influences the pedagogical methods of instruction (Epenshade & Fu, 2000), as the organization itself is within a region whose culture carries distinctive religious/ethnic characteristics.

Thus, the extent to which English is practiced or deemed an important language to acquire depends to a large extent on the organizational culture of the school (Van Loan & Mikati, 1998). It should come as no surprise then to find that remedial or intensive classes often contain students who are French educated and only studied English as a third language or took it as an elective, or whose formative education was in Arabic only.
Culture at the Gender Level. According to Hofstede (2001), culture at the gender level indicates certain normative behaviors that are based on the person’s gender. That is, within every society, there is a ‘male culture’ whereby men inhabit certain social roles, and carry their own language which more often than not is imbued with power symbols and behave in a certain way. Their female counterparts equally have certain expectations of them socially, are expected to behave in a subdued and subordinate manner and speak at a certain tone, in a specific mannerism. In fact, according to Tannen (1990), women and men learn the mechanics of an array of gendered concepts, expectations and duties, and in the light of those meanings, they learn to behave accordingly. For example, in certain traditional communities, women are expected to be more flexible than men, bear a tendency to be more affective in their words and behaviors, induce more solidarity rather than independence and individuality as men do and more often than not, speak more calmly and are expected to exercise patience in speech (Tannen, 1990).

On the other hand, men are expected to be adventurous, speak and behave on impulse, barely display shows of affection and assume responsibility for their families at an early age (Fischer & Good, 2001). Men are even encouraged to display dominance in speech. According to Tannen (1990), men exercise power play in speech, often in the form of interruptions, speaking loudly and not maintaining eye contact, since culturally speaking, the only time a male maintains eye contact is when he readies himself for a fight with another male (Fischer & Good, 2001). Similarly, through words, men will not only assert their position of dominance, but will also attempt to attract and maintain an audience, and will even try to assert themselves when another person is the center of the “conversational limelight” (Campbell-Kibler et al., 2002). It is equally noteworthy to
mention that males are socialized into being curt and as minimally expressive as possible. Moreover, in variable cultures across the globe, higher regard is given to men who are non-verbose as a sign of masculinity; it is also not untrue that talking and gossiping are generally attributed to women (Hofstede, 2001).

On a similar level, theorists have come to raise an integral point concerning gender and language. It is believed that language is predominantly man made—such that men control meanings (Tannen, 1990). To that effect, women are therefore forced to find words to express themselves and voice their opinions in a dialect or tongue that has been generally coined by men. Moreover, it is thought that while men are so involved in maintaining their power plays, language is therefore used to dominate, and women are dominated by the language through the vehicle of words (Campbell-Kibler, et al., 2002). Perhaps, it is thought, that where language and social power are concerned, one wonders if women feel the need to control a language in order to control and maintain social power (Tannen, 1990). Hence, in this ever-archaic power-based tug-of-war over which women have been struggling with men for ages on end, perhaps it is through language that women have finally managed to maintain some kind of social advantage—some competitive edge—over their male counterparts (Tannen, 1990). At any rate, culture at the gender level seems to pose as a gargantuan monolith, influencing families and media leaving its imprints embedded at their very core.

**Family Influence.** To a large extent, family exerts a major influence on the behaviorisms, identities and decision making of girls and boys. This is so, as the family maintains its own ritualistic and normative modes of behavior. Girls are socialized quite differently than their male counterparts (Litosseliti, 2006). While females are prodded to
indulge in house activities, cooking, doll playing, and reading—laying the fallacious cultural belief that reading is a female activity only, boys are made to believe reading is for sissies (Barwood, 2001). Moreover, while girls’ reading at school averaged fifteen percent only, boys averaged two percent only (Barwood, 2001). Moreover, males are often prodded to play outside, indulge in rough-and-tumble play, participate in sports and even exhibit aggressive behavior as a ritualistic exercise of ‘becoming real men’. Their female counterparts are looked down upon if they indulge in similar aggressive behavior, as it is socially unacceptable to display such ‘masculine’ mannerisms. In an article written by Baker-Sperry, (2006, pg. 9), such ‘double standards’ are blatantly questioned as she says “I often witnessed girls reprimanded for interrupting, but never saw a boy reprimanded for similar behavior”.

On a similar level, the toys to which girls are exposed to and play are often dolls which equally contribute to gender stereotyping. For example, Barbie® only recently had female engineers and architects as toy dolls; before, dolls were nurses, secretaries or even teachers. Furthermore, the toys girls play with do little more than reinforce the gender stereotype of women holding nurturing roles in society; while boys were always depicted as firemen, doctors, lawyers and engineers (Baker-Sperry, 2006). Equally stereotypical was the fact that certain sports were deemed only for males, such as soccer and basketball. With the passage of time alongside a series of revolutionary changes sparked by feminist movements, sports came to include members of both genders such as ballet, basketball, volleyball among others (Van der Gaer, Pustjens, Van Damme, & De Munter, 2006).
Subsequently, since a female’s role was eventually to get married, bare children and nurture her husband and family, careers to accommodate such roles were also subject to gender mainstreaming (Van der Gaer et al., 2006). This is to say that in some societies today, careers such as teaching, administrative posts, working a desk job at a bank or a company are appropriate for girls, while jobs such as engineers, architects, doctors and lawyers are generally male dominated. It should therefore make a lot of sense when one notes how most of the receptionists, secretaries, bank tellers, and nurses are women. Furthermore, it goes without saying that within the career domain, only recently did neutral terms in English replace their stereotypical alternatives. For example, ‘chairperson’, ‘flight attendant’ and ‘fire fighter’ replaced ‘chairman’, ‘steward/stewardess’ and ‘fireman/firewoman’ respectively (Van der Gaer, Pustjens, Van Damme, & De Munter, 2007).

Taking matters to a different level, family bears its influence on the degree of independence versus dependence in the manner by which girls and boys are brought up. In certain countries clearly dominated by tradition, children, as they grow up to be adults, are not treated as equals to their parents. On the contrary, girls and boys, but mostly girls, are taught not to question authority or ‘given’ ideologies—such as rules or religion. Having said that, critical thinking (Neihart, 2006), even individualized and independent opinions are therefore marginalized, if not banned altogether. Children or young adults are taught to rely on the family for everything, in return for ultimate loyalty. Thus, such families will often be the centerfold for decision making in terms of education, careers and even marriage. The offspring, in return for such ‘securities’ offered, will reciprocate with complete compliance to the family’s wishes and demands (Hofestede, 2001). In such
families, a child’s sense of self or identity is almost absent if nonexistent altogether (Neihert, 2006).

Subsequently, the styles of parenting are also thought to impact children and young adults negatively or positively (Neihart, 2006). This is most commonly so with authoritarian parents and families for whom it is second nature to control their children, restricting them and often stunting their development, as opposed to authoritative parents, who will often guide their offspring, but will gradually ‘loosen the reigns’, giving them more autonomy as children grow and mature. Moreover, other decisions parents make on behalf of their children can equally buoy the girls and boys up, or pull them down altogether (Van der Gaer et al., 2007). This is most particularly the case when parents decide how much of an education their daughters or sons get. Moreover, in certain families, parents may tolerate high school education to a certain limit, but will look down upon a college education thinking that it is futile and is not worth the financial sacrifice (Neihart, 2006). This is particularly so when there is a family business whereby the child’s future is ‘ensured’ and that the career is ‘there’.

On a similar level, as concerns female offspring, traditional belief systems, where girls will eventually get married and stay at home still exist today (Litosseliti, 2006). In fact, the major reason as to why parents prefer not to invest in giving their daughters an expensive college education is because they believe marriage is the ultimate ‘remedy’ to a girl’s security (Anderson & Hamilton, 2005). Thus, it is no wonder when one considers the ratio of girls to boys in colleges and universities in certain developing countries such as the Middle East, one finds that boys in colleges and universities outnumber girls by a ratio of four to one, respectively (Van Loan & Mikati, 1998). Simply put, families of
most traditional communities prefer to invest more in males than in females in terms of education for the basic reason that women will eventually be wives, and as such will cease to be the responsibility of the father or the brother—but the spouse instead (Anderson & Hamilton, 2005).

Finally, recent research has shown that household environments also contribute to the extent to which individuals become proficient in a language (Espenshade & Fu, 2000). That is, the more an immediate environment caters for opportunities allowing verbal and communicative expression reinforcing one’s knowledge of a language, along with enhancing fluency through practice, the greater the likelihood that an individual would attain proficiency within a set time. However, if one’s household does not have an inclination towards acquiring foreign languages, and instead blocks, stunts or treats language acquisition as something inconsequential, the chances of one becoming proficient with the target language become lower by far (Litosseliti, 2006).

Media. Equally disconcerting to note are the iconic stereotypes that are found in media outlets. It should be noted that it is not uncommon for girls or boys to relate to figures and characters in the stories they read or movies they watch. In considering bedtime stories or fairytales, the typical female figure is one that waits for her ‘Prince Charming’ to come on his white stead and rescue her (Brozo, 2005). To say the least, this teaches girls very little other than how to be passive, subdued and dependent rather than teach them the initiative of problem solving. It also puts a great deal of emphasis on the importance of marriage, and how girls would not be accepted in society—and would equally not be fulfilling their identities if they didn’t end up with husbands and children (Anderson & Hamilton, 2005). Where marriage and family is a part of the normal
developmental process of both men and women, it should come as no surprise, with such emphatic importance on it, that girls in some regions of the world, and particularly the Middle East, drop out of high school, or discontinue pursuing college degrees, get betrothed or engaged, at a very ripe age in their lives (Williams, 2006).

Then, there are the almost flagrant innuendos that females get from the media as regards their physical appearance. Basically, this indicates that girls are often bombarded with messages about beauty, fashion, their relationships with boys and their sex lives (Soto, 2006). What this leads to is a plethora of problems, from eating disorders, to dropping out of high school due to unwanted pregnancies, risking their lives through threatening abortions, low paying jobs which subsequently lead to high rates of crime and violence (Williams, 2006). One notes, not without deep rooted worry, that icons that have been set out to be role models, such as Britney Spears, do very little in terms of teaching women to rely on their strength and intellect rather than how much skin they show to get places in life (Williams, 2006).

Peer Groups. Peer groups are equally of considerable influence on young girls’ and boys’ behaviorisms, especially at school (Leeson, Ciarocchi, & Heaven, 2008). Moreover, a great deal of literature seems to suggest that student achievement and academic performance are very much influenced by the attitudes of the pupils’ peers, especially those of the same gender respectively (Van de Gaer et al., 2006). Subsequently, girls and boys who make up a certain ‘climate’ or ‘culture’ within their classes create an atmosphere that is either conducive to learning or totally detrimental. It has been generally noted that classes that were composed of students with positive attitudes about learning often had a positive impact on language learning among boys.
The antithesis holds true as well: classes that are composed of students with negative attitudes towards languages and learning have a detrimental impact on pupils’ scholastic performance—especially among boys (Leeson et al., 2008). What is most interesting to note is the general difference in attitudes amongst members of either gender, in general.

It has been noted that boys, in general, are not as enthused about school and learning as their female counterparts (Van de Gaer et al., 2006). That is, boys have shown to be more disengaged in learning, participate in class less, often don’t submit their assignments, are less organized in their responses, are more distracted in class and break school rules more often than girls. Moreover, further findings seem to suggest that boys are under more pressure to conform to their peers than girls are (Van de Gaer et al., 2006). This is to say that more importance is attached to how boys perceive themselves within their group. This is most particularly so during the adolescent years, where peer groups play a predominant influence on the shaping of identities among girls and boys a lot more than their parents, and the development of masculinities among male adolescents (Leeson et al., 2008).

An illustration that does not fare far from the above mentioned is the fact that boys consider other peers or colleagues who actually do their homework, participate in class and study for exams as ‘sissies’, ‘nerds’ or ‘girlies’ (Van de Gaer et al., 2006), suggesting that males actually believe that underperforming is a ‘manly’ thing with respect to their peers. Consequently, in order to live up to this machismo role set by boys themselves, an antisocial and anti-learning subculture develops, and to which young boys are very much vulnerable, causing their grades to plummet. This subculture basically stipulates that it is not ‘cool’ to participate in class, make high marks and appear enthused
or even knowledgeable in the content material at hand (Van de Gaer et al., 2006). This doesn’t mean that girls don’t also experience an antisocial subculture where ‘coolness’ of identity seems to clash with satisfactory academic performance (Leeson et al., 2008); however, boys tend to contend with even more elements that may affect their motivation and drive towards attaining high marks in language proficiency more so than their female counterparts.

Hence, it should come as no surprise that boys will often construct their masculinities at school (Van de Gaer et al., 2006). To elaborate further, males establish ‘peer networks’ whereby their masculinities and sexual identities develop at school. In fact, these peer networks provide some kind of institutional infrastructure on the social level, where males eventually develop not only their identities, but also a sense of self awareness and masculine reputations amongst each other (Fischer & Good, 2001). These groups or networks ultimately come to symbolize meaningful elements such friendship, power and influence (Mac an Ghaill, 1996). For example, if a boy should choose to either become a school ‘success’ or a ‘failure’ (Mac an Ghaill, 1996), there are two sets of social symbols acknowledged by the ‘group’ which also constitute an inherent understanding and shaping of masculine belief. For if the male chooses the former, even within peer groups, success at school materializes into social power through higher education, entry into reputable professions, and communicative prowess. Equally intriguing is how masculine codes of understanding and acknowledgement are attached to failure as well, almost prodding a proud acceptance or initiation into underperformance; that is, the more a male underperforms at school, the more ‘manly’ he appears before his peers (Van der Gaer et al., 2006). Thus, boys who opt to underperform due to an
antisocial, ‘anti-school’ subculture where it isn’t ‘cool’ to study believe that with failing
there exists a ‘trade-off’ for ‘finding’ their identities through athletic ability, being
sexually offensive or even being the class or even neighborhood bully whose eventual
record for physical aggression, violence, or drugs symbolize more medallions of
masculinity perceived through the eyes of their group networks (Mac an Ghaill, 1996).

For their female counterparts, the ‘story’ is much simpler. At school, girls, on
average, work harder, study more, submit their assignments more regularly, have more
organization in their notes and homework, show less distraction in class and tend to break
rules much less frequently than their male counterparts (Van de Gaer et al., 2006). In
terms of peer networks, girls seek less to find their identities as much as they are intent on
finding intimacy, solidarity and interpersonal relationships. One a similar level, where
boys consider reading a female activity, girls consider themselves as readers, on average
read more than their male counterparts for pleasure, and are even more likely to discuss
what they read, alongside with swapping books among their female peers (Barwood,
2001). It is crucial to note that where girls also seek solidarity, intimacy and ‘female
bonding’ with their same sexed peers, they are not as likely to derive their sense of self,
identity or confidence from such groups or be as influenced.

On the contrary, social or cultural icons are more likely to gain girls’ attention,
such as a famous singer, actress or celebrity who they can emulate (Barwood, 2001).
Perhaps this is due to the expected social roles girls ‘inherit’ from their cultural
background, as they are anticipated to be conforming and passive; subsequently, when
they are not, they are deemed rebellious, aggressive (Ablard, 2000) and unfeminine: a
trait that girls in general shy away from and ferociously avoid.
School. Where previous factors have influenced students’ achievement rather-compromisingly, the greatest culprit in gender underperformance is indeed the school itself. It should not go unnoticed that with the considerable amount of time invested at school—eight hours per day for approximately nine months, a considerable chunk of a child’s behavior, thoughts and belief systems are shaped and more so influenced (Baker-Sperry, 2006). Consequently, if schools, teachers and the respective systems are not carefully responsible in how they deal with impressionable and malleable persona of their students, a significant amount of damage can be done.

Gender Mainstreaming. First and foremost is the pressing issue of gender mainstreaming. Where physiological differences discussed previously have inspired pundits and pedagogues alike with epiphanies as to why there existed a lagging disparity between girls’ and boys’ performance scores in Math, Science and English language respectively, gender mainstreaming still takes place. Age-old myths that state “girls are just not made for math” and “boys are just plain stupid when it comes to languages” (Welldon, 2005, pg. 45), are exactly what they stipulate: myths. Today, research seems to be pointing a reprimanding finger at schools instead, indicating, that in fact, due to rigidity and poor attentiveness on the part of administrators and teachers alike, girls and boys are not ‘choosing’ to go into these domains per se. Rather, they are more or less ‘directed’ to do so (Barwood, 2001).

It seems as though schools are ‘predisposing’ students—if not ‘socializing’ them altogether, into accepting their limitations on their potential as though girls weren’t really made to tackle Physics or Math, and boys’ fortes don’t lie in English proficiency (Ablard, 2000). This is most evidently noted in teachers’ tendencies to discourage girls from
tackling mathematical or computational problems by not calling on them or even taking the time to dwell on mistakes done in class, for fear of curricular time constraints. Similarly, as concerns language classes and their male counterparts, boys’ reading failures and plummeting competencies in writing often go unnoticed because teachers will pay more attention to those who ‘know’ the answers, i.e. the high achievers (normally-girls), leaving boys’ poor performance often unattended to (Ablard, 2000). Thus, rather than have school systems promoting and enhancing students’ potential in a myriad number of subjects, by offering them remedial one-to-one sessions during or after school to strengthen their academic prowess, taking time to answer and guide them through their confused questions in class, and being patient with attempts to learn and make mistakes, it is a lot more convenient to have students major in subjects that are ‘safer’ for pupils and which they comfortable with, resulting in categorizations such as ‘scientifically oriented’ or ‘artistically predisposed’, instead of truly trying to develop students’ true potential (Brown, 2007).

Saturated Curricula. Subsequently, another factor which is conducive to underachievement is the curriculum itself (Clark & Millard, 1998). Moreover, the volume of the curricula with their myriad subjects adds more pressure to the already socially pressured adolescent-who is not only contending with physiological and identity changes along with peer pressure, but also has to deal with a compact curriculum saturated with information that s/he may not necessarily use in everyday life (Clark & Millard, 1998). To illustrate, a few of such curricula are G.C. S. E., the French Baccalaureate and the Lebanese Baccalaureate. What this leads to is demotivation on the part of the student, as subjects seem to be ‘imposed’ on them for which embarrassment and chagrin at
underperforming and not mastering courses at their most simplistic level occurs (Dornyei et al., 2006); consequently, this yields to weak interest in pursuing his/her respective degree, ultimately leading to a soaring drop-out rate from high schools in the short run, and increased poverty belts and crimes in the long run.

Curricular Content and Student Disinterest. Moreover, it seems that curricula are becoming client-oriented. This means that most of the content reading material caters for girls, while it should not be surprising to say that males are outnumbered by their female counterparts at school (Welldon, 2005). Hence, rather than teach young girls and boys subjects from which members of either gender can benefit from in their daily lives, such as self comportment during an interview or writing resumes, topics such as description and poetry are underscored, along with reading books for writers such as Virginia Woolfe, Louisa May Alcott, or even the Brontes. Moreover, these do very little other than reinforce disinterest and disattachment and a feeling of malaise that boys have, seeing how they can neither relate to nor show much interest learning materials. Yet again, all this forebodes to increased high school dropout rates, as school systems leave very little incentive to invite involvement and participation (Dornyei et al., 2006).

Thus, not only are the curricula saturated with subjects that do very little if anything to spark the interest of the pupil, nor do the school systems take the time to understand the problems and weaknesses of their students due to the race between curricular completion at term’s end and time, curricula also stipulate what topics can or can not be debated (Ernst, 1994). It is noteworthy to mention that even when discussions are allowed, the topics don’t spark the interest nor the creativity of the students. One will note, for example, that “Describe a scenic view” will instigate a far less response rate
among students than a topic such as "Should prostitution become legalized?"

Unfortunately, some institutions consider certain learning facets taboo, and do more harm than benefit to a student by repressing such topics that deal with everyday realities rather than offer children another window through which learning could take place (Ernst, 1994). Subsequently, yet another element caused by school systems that deters the motivation of students, especially boys- are teachers.

*Teachers.* A well known Mediterranean saying sets teachers on an almost equitable footing as prophets. Moreover, with so much colossal presence attached to the intermediary between knowledge and students, (Paechter et al., 2001) the instructor, it is quite alarming to note that even teachers have been found to partake in this conspiracy of hindering language learning among boys and girls. This occurs in a plethora of ways. One manner in which instructors impact students, especially boys, is found in their very gender; that is, schools have become ‘feminized’ (Brozo, 2005). An interesting statistic is that a hefty 90% of teachers at the elementary level are females. Moreover, around 75% of K-12 instructors are also females (Brozo, 2005). With such soaring figures that seem to reinforce the female presence at schools, this may elicit discomfort on the part of boys. One needs to stop for a moment and consider the fact that these young males are undergoing many psychological and physiological changes. Furthermore, they are likely to have many questions about their identities and masculinities (Campbell-Kibler et al., 2002). Having male teachers is crucial on two basic levels: the first is that young boys can identify with these males, and are more likely to relate to common experiences than they would with female teachers (Welldon, 2005). Subsequently, these students’ literacy would be enhanced if the males they looked up to and set as role models engaged in
reading, as the latter is often viewed as ‘something girls do’ (Williams, 2006). Thus, studies indicate that when it comes to reading, boys are either likely to opt for comic books, as they are non-threatening in that they are easy to read, and contain male heroes. Similarly, sports magazines are also another favorite among males, for the same reason. More often than not are star athletes the icons and role models for young adolescent males (Williams, 2006).

Moreover, “boys are in need of many more interactions with male role models who can “reinforce a connection between active literacy and masculine identity” (Brozo, 2005, pg. 20). According to certain studies, it was noted that in female ESL (English as a Second Language) classes, girls grouped their seats in the front while their male counterparts sat in the back. On the other hand, in classes with male ESL teachers the converse was true: where girls sat in the back, boys sat in the front. Consequently, studies suggest that the gender of the teacher also seems to play a key role in either motivating same gender students to perform in critically distinctive subjects, like languages or math. Hence, bearing in mind this need to emulate male role models, and where most schools have female teachers, this only serves to reinforce a feeling of ‘displacement’, unease or lack of belonging (Rosario, Mouraou, Nunez, Gonzalez-Pienda & Valle, 2006), be it in subjects where males are taught languages by females, or vice versa: girls are taught subjects like physics, for example, by males.

Another way where teachers spark discomfort amongst their students is behaviorally. To elaborate further, teachers tend to exhibit an unsound kind of bias in their teaching methodologies (Yepez, 2000). This is noted in the way girls were often not called upon during class discussions and were referred to by their first names (while
males in the same class by their last names); in addition, girls had less response time than boys to answer questions (Yepez, 2000). Similarly, studies have shown that female minority students more or less bare the brunt in that they are most often ignored, neglected, not given constructive criticism or feedback and are often interrupted (Baker-Sperry, 2006). Similarly, for every four boys and one girl who participates in the classroom, three boys are praised; and when instructors asked questions, two boys to every one girl was called upon. (Clark & Millard, 1998).

In addition, boys are often allowed more leeway for being disruptive than their female counterparts, where girls are quickly reprimanded for similar conduct (Baker-Sperry, 2006). This disparity in terms of behavior displays a bias—whether or not intentional, on the part of teachers towards students. Eventually, what this does is run the risk of what psychologists call ‘extinction’ on the part of students (Gage & Berliner, 1998). Basically, extinction is the disappearance of a conditioned behavioral response (in this case—it would be hand raising or participation). This happens because the students come to realize they are not being called upon, become demotivated, and stop participating in class. The end result naturally has repercussions on student performance, as they (girls and boys alike) feel they are no longer engaged in the subject material (Brozo, 2005).

Still another reason lies in the attitudes of teachers themselves. For over a decade at least, the existing corpus of literature has ubiquitously advocated the transition from teacher-centered to student-centered classrooms; and yet, where certain schools are involved, a great many classrooms are still orchestrated in such a manner that students pose as “passive recipients of social messaging” (Baker-Sperry, 2006, pg. 41). This
means that children/students have come to realize and indeed experience the fact that they often have very little say in terms of content selection or discussion, or even internalization of information (Praechter et al., 2001). Their role as students goes very little beyond taking in the information only to regurgitate it later, with critical thinking set at a stark minimum.

Unfortunately, where the ‘prophets of education’s’ main mission is to push and prod students to question and challenge information, what actually happens is the exact opposite: teachers and instructors alike are more than happy to simply impart information, without inviting—if not downright stifling—any queries or questions that may challenge their knowledge. In turn, teachers subsequently choose what topics are to be discussed and what are deemed ‘taboo’, along with what students are allowed to read or not read, thus imprisoning them in what can be considered a ‘cultural quarantine’ (Praechter et al., 2001). Consequently, teachers’ common complaint that students exercise very little critical thinking is not unfounded: ironically, the very ‘sin’ attributed to students originates from the very ‘seed’ planted, nurtured and reaped by their teachers.

Subsequently, it should be noted that an inherent power-relationship tends to manifest itself rather latently yet not without presence. In fact, according to Geert Hofestede, a reference in the field of intercultural organizational behavior (2001), there exist cultures that perceive social inequity as a given truth, and that absolute authority in terms of teachers and students ought to be founded on verbatim obedience of the latter towards the former. This is most flagrantly noted in Latin American, Eastern and Middle Eastern countries where teachers are viewed as ‘gurus’, whose authority must not be challenged nor questioned. In milieus such as this, girls and boys—especially, since unlike
their female counterparts, have not been ‘socialized’ to be submissive, will find dealing with such instructors polemical, if not threatening to their identities altogether. Consequently, males will either challenge these teachers, or become irresponsible and passive, refusing through their passivity, to internalize or acquire any knowledge imparted (Praechter et al., 2001). In considering the above-mentioned, either alternative is a lose-lose combination, yielding very little communicative exchange on the part of the teacher, and hardly any learning on the part of the student.

Equally disconcerting is the element of ‘power’ in the classroom. It should not go unnoticed that structure, rules and regulations are the very cornerstone on which schools, colleges and universities are built, and by which students are indeed bounded. Thus, where the teacher is the ‘enforcer’ of such rules (Praechter et al., 2001), students are not unaware that they are rewarded for following rules or answering correctly, and reprimanded for not conforming to ‘the law’ and answering incorrectly (Baker-Sperry, 2006). Subsequently, it should come as no surprise that such an authority symbol renders a student rather cautious on the behavioral level; and where recalcitrance and misbehavior are held in check, unfortunately, so are creativity and freedom of self expression. Moreover, where teachers ‘exercise their power’ by deciding students’ seating plans in another example of classroom power plays by the instructor (Preachter et al., 2001). There is also the notion of ‘space’; that is, allowing students the privacy of their own desks to put their belongings. Research indicates that the more ‘space’ a child is given with respect to a unique area to put their belongings, the more a classroom is viewed as a zone of comfort, rendering more comfort, and therefore more creativity and better performance in the long run (Preachter et al., 2001). Moreover, some teachers
would resort to humiliating students by having them clear their desks before their peers (Preachter, 2001, pg. 6):

Desks were one of the few spaces kids could claim as their own within the classroom although the claim was not absolute: one of the worst humiliations a teacher could inflict was to force a kid to empty his or her desk.

Finally, it is not uncommon for teachers to display bias in terms of their expectations between girls and boys. To elaborate further, rather than deal with males and females as separate entities, each with a distinct set of behaviorisms, mental constructs and normative beliefs, teachers end up comparing male and female behavior and expecting boys to conform if not emulate altogether, female behaviorisms. “Girl behavior becomes the gold standard. Boys are treated like defective girls” (Thompson, 2006, pg. 21). This is also quite noticeable in common complaints teachers have about boys ‘not sitting still’, ‘always fidgeting’ and ‘not concentrating enough’ (Preachter et al., 2001). What teachers don’t seem to realize is that at a certain age, boys’ hormone production levels reach a peak, causing them to be full of energy and restless. Thus, by constantly putting boys or highly energetic girls down, development is stunted, as well as vivacity and energized behavior, yielding to repressed thinking and acting, stunted development and heightened disinterest at school.

Thus, the theoretical framework as to the possible impediments that serve to undermine, hinder and stifle altogether student interest and motivation in language learning and proficiency has been laid. Subsequently, the coming chapter will consider the Universal American College as a case study. Methods using the triangulation of surveys, observations and interviews as tools for data collection will be employed,
Chapter III
Methodology

To ensure validity and reliability of data collection, it is crucial to consider triangulation; (Yin, 2003), that is, utilizing observations, interviews and questionnaires. It goes without saying that triangulation is a ‘rationale’ (Robson, 2002) that allows the researcher to consider variable sources of evidence to help in formulating conclusions valid for the study undertaken. Thus, triangulation “allows the investigator to consider variable ranges of historical, behavioral and attitudinal issues” (Yin, 2003, pg. 125). Hence, the instruments utilized were observations, interviews and questionnaires; each instrument was used in a distinct manner for equally distinct purposes which will be discussed further.

Observation

Nonparticipant observation is deemed necessary for data collection on a primary level. Basically, this kind of observation has the researcher ‘sit on the sidelines’ (Robson, 2002). The reasons for that are twofold. First of all, non participant observation allows the researcher to get a feel of the goings-on within the classroom without being directly involved nor having any kind of bias in collecting the data, or influencing them either. It is more “naturalistic, where the observer makes no effort to manipulate variables or control activity” (Yin, 2003, pg. 156). An integral point to bear in mind is that in tandem with interactive participation, it is more likely than not that certain biases or inclinations towards students in terms of appearance, intelligence or even degree of sociability may taint the validity of the data. Through the usage of observation checklists and anecdotal
records in a non-participative manner, impressions, events and goings-on within the classroom can be recorded with impartiality to an extensive degree (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The importance of the checklist is to facilitate recording anticipated or unanticipated events that occur in the classroom—as variables such as time and speed may impede the processes of timely and accurate transcription of events (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Similarly, anecdotal records were left for the observer to record later on, for any striking event, observation or impression conducive to the research at hand. Moreover, another reason nonparticipant observation was considered was to allow for the merging or the ‘blending in’ of the researcher to allow for an almost ‘normalized’ atmosphere (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993). This is crucial on the grounds that students-upon feeling they are assessed or evaluated through an interactive participant, may or may not behave in their usual manner. On the other hand, nonparticipative observation appeals to students more as they find it ‘non-threatening’ and the observer is soon ‘forgotten’ (Harkness, Van de Vijver & Johnson, 2003).

In synchronization with both the instructor and the coordinator of the Universal American College’s Intensive (U.A.C.) III classes which were chosen at random by the coordinator herself, the researcher would observe five class hours of three sections of Intensive III. Transcription of the events may occur in the classroom, as both the checklist and the anecdotal records were made for this. For the purposes of time and feasibility, the observer may write down small notes during the nonparticipant observation, only to come back to them after hours and write them in more detail.

Although there are advantages to nonparticipative observation, it is not without its vices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This is true in terms of potential biases that the observer
may harbor despite the fact the interaction is left at a minimum. Human perceptions and perspectives are individualized; thus, biases become an almost inescapable reality (Harkness et al., 2003). Similarly, one may consider that perhaps dealing with students on an interactive manner may allow for the disclosure of further information and data crucial for the research materialization and progression, which in the case of nonparticipative observation, would then be forgone (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993). Finally, the students were neither debriefed nor informed about the purposes of the observational visits; only their instructors were informed and were asked to respond vaguely that the visits were research oriented. Although this may raise ethical considerations (which will be discussed later on in this section), disclosing the aims of such visits were thought to jeopardize the validity and authenticity of the data collection, and were therefore kept confidential (See Appendix B).

Observations most certainly have their virtues, which make them very advantageous to employ. The most common vantage for observation is being able to get a realistic ‘feel’ as to how things are going in the setting under study. Interactions, communication, as well as anecdotal records that may note information that is valuable and particularistic to that specific setting aid the researcher a great deal in understanding the goings-on within a certain closed environment (the target groups) which may not be available to the researcher via any other means of data collection. In truth, it is the closest one gets to a ‘normalized’ setting, allowing the target group(s) the freedom to act in whatever way comes naturally to them. This is in the case of nonparticipant observation, where the observer just sits on the side and watches. However, in terms of participant observation, the researcher then interacts with his/her subjects. This too, carries an
important advantage; namely, by accessing more information, especially the kind that is often ‘latent’ and not always visible to the eye. That means that whilst there is interaction and both parties are at ease with one another, more information can be accessed, revealing more data that may be specific only to a certain group, and where other sources of information can not provide such first hand data.

It should be noted first that this would not be made possible without ‘breaking the ice first’, leading forth to a major disadvantage to observation. That is, if the participants don’t feel comfortable around the observer, the entire endeavor would be considered futile, to say the least. Participants may refuse to cooperate, as they may feel their right to privacy is being breached; similarly, they may simply refuse to be treated as ‘lab rats’ and be observed. The target group may even engage in behavior totally foreign to them, such as being completely passive in their environment, in the hopes of making the observer lose interest and choose another group. Another limitation to observation is that if it is nonparticipative, it may limit the amount of information exchange between the observer and the participant. That means, if the observer were to interact more with the target people under study, perhaps more information would be unveiled. On the other hand, it is feared that with the observer’s participation, a feeling of familiarity may develop and recorded results may then be ‘tainted’ or ‘skewed’; that is, results would be recorded according to the researcher’s favor, and not necessarily in the form that coincides with reality. For this reason, although observation bears many advantages, it is not without its disadvantages as well.
Interviews

Working in tandem with nonparticipative observation were the semi-structured interviews. In truth, the role of the interview is thought to be the most challenging in terms of data collection (Harkness et al., 2003). This is because the interviewer needs to adopt a neutral disposition such that there is “balanced rapport” and that the interview is “casual and friendly” yet “directive and impersonal” (Harkness et al., 2003, pg. 81). The purposes of having a semi-structured interview was to ensure, as much as possible, that the necessary data was obtained through preset questions that the researcher considered integral for the study at hand (See Appendix C).

Similarly, it was semi structured and not structured since allowing for potential questions that may arise during the conversation were equally important in order to arrive at personal or experiential data that may serve to unveil further information in the study undertaken. On an equal level, it was important to have a one-on-one verbal exchange, as this allows for the disclosure of more candid responses, humanistic-in terms of divulging real feelings and values, which can neither be obtained from the questionnaire nor the observation. The downside of interviews, however, are that they are time consuming in terms of transcribing the information (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993). Similarly, they are equally delicate in setting up the questions and analyzing and synthesizing the data collected. Since interviews are more complex in terms of data analysis and synthesis and require more time than the other instruments of data collection, three students were chosen at random from the multiple sections of the U.A.C’s Intensive III sections.

The questions for the semi structured interview were set in English, as it is the general medium of verbal exchange, in language as simplistic and as simple as possible,
given the fact that the interviewees are Intensive III students. Similarly, the questions, carefully worded, were six, allowing leeway for any sub-queries that may surface during the interview. The respondents’ answers were taped and later transcribed after the interview was over. Naturally, the interviewees were interviewed in normalized settings, be it in the playground or the university cafeteria. If however, the environment got too noisy and interfered in the discerning of respondents’ answers, the interview was discontinued and resumed in U.A.C.’s study hall.

‘Empathetic interviewing’ (Yin, 2003) was in no way an option, as neutrality and objectivity dominated the scenes. To allow the ‘removal of barriers’ and more disclosure of information in terms of personal feelings and experiences as a “quid pro quo of good faith” (Denzin & Lincold, 2005, pg. 369), the interviewer should bear relaxed countenance, that is, smile, allowing for more curiosity and minimal subjectivity. This is due to the fact that respondents may realize they are being judged or evaluated on the basis of their perceptions. This in turn may very well affect the validity of the respondents’ answers.

In terms of ethical considerations, the interviewees were briefed on a ‘need to know’ basis, whereby they were told that the interviewers were collecting personal feedback about attending classes prior to Intensive III courses. Candidates were chosen at random from multiple sections of Intensive III courses. Students who happened to be the researcher’s pupils at some point were avoided and replaced by others. This was due to the fact that the researcher (who was also the interviewer) foresaw potential bias in the respondents’ answers-having been former students. Since it was feared that respondents’
answers would be shaped by the interviewer’s presence, they were removed as potential candidates.

In considering the virtues of interviews, one notes that they are many. For starters, interviews allow the researcher information that may not be accessible from other sources. Similarly, the quality of information exchange is bound to be of more quality, as face to face contact draws on more familiarity, and so the quality of information would be of a higher caliber than say, if the information was obtained through questionnaires or distant observation. Interviews allow the researcher to get ‘up close and personal’; by making the interviewee feel important by default, more information is likely to be disclosed.

However, it is important to note that there is a downside to this. Interviews are highly time consuming, as they occur on a one-to-one basis, which in itself takes time. Similarly, transcription of the details of the interview itself takes a great deal of time and precision if it is to be considered accurate and authentic. Similarly, the questions the interviewer asks can not simply be superficial or haphazard, nor can they be intimidating or drawing on the interviewee’s discomfort, as that would be unethical. Indeed, the questions asked must be precise, and of purpose. The interviewer must also not be impartial and unbiased with his/her questions and not lead the candidate into a trap of molding the interview to what s/he desires to hear or record. Thus, although the interview is a prime ‘favorite’ of researchers, it is not entirely without its vices.
Questionnaires

The most extensive step in terms of number and work was the questionnaire (See Appendix D). Questionnaires were considered for the simple reason that a large corpus of data can be collected in relatively minimal time, as questionnaires and surveys alike are not time consuming to say the least (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993). However, unlike the ‘up close and personal’ collection of data obtained from discrete observation, or the ‘one on one’ disclosure of invaluable information that is acquired from interviews, questionnaires collect data rather impersonally. That is, although data is collected in large quantities, it is not necessarily representative of the respondent’s thinking patterns or even coincide with his/her behavioral/belief systems.

At any rate, 75 questionnaires were dispatched and returned (having targeted three sections of Intensive III, 25 students each), and were accurately filled out. Convenient random samples of Intensive III students were chosen to fill out the questionnaire. Naturally, consent by the coordinator and the instructors at U.A.C. were obtained beforehand, who—upon administering the questionnaires in the absence of the researcher, were told that the surveys were ‘research based for U. A.C.’ administrators. The questionnaires comprised of twenty five normative statements, along with a Likert type scale ranging from Strongly Agree→ Strongly Disagree. There was a final question (the 26th question, which was subjective in nature and was not answered in any of the questionnaires), and was therefore removed altogether. Similarly, the questionnaires were in simple English to allow for Intensive III students to understand them, and very well contained “cross cultural anchoring” in the implicit values held by some normative statements (Harkness, et al., 2003).
Once distributed, the students were given approximately fifteen minutes to complete the questionnaires and return them to the instructor administering them, who in turn, returned them to the researcher. Thus, there were no reported absences (since absences in Intensive III are heavily penalized), and no questionnaires were unreturned. Later on, data entry of the questionnaires into an SPSS software was done (Statistical Package for Social Sciences, 11) and statistical results were obtained (See Chapter IV).

It is crucial to note that questionnaires are indeed any researcher’s ‘gold mine’, as they are laden with many virtues. For starters, questionnaires allow a great deal of information to be disclosed in a relatively short period of time, as they can target a group as small as 25 people at one go. Similarly, what helps in questionnaires is the anonymity of the respondent; thus, in no way would s/he feel discomfort in revealing information as their identities continue to be unknown throughout the research process. Also, questionnaires are not only speedy in terms of data disclosure with respect to time, but they are relatively cheap, in comparison to other methods of data collection—which besides being limited in the amount of information disclosure, can be quite costly and time consuming.

However, questionnaires are not without their vices, for they may not always disclose accurate information. Basically, what this means is that surveys and questionnaires alike, because of their length, may hamper the respondent’s desire and motivation to continue. Thus, respondents may not fill out the entire survey, may answer haphazardly and inconsistently, in the hopes of finishing and returning the survey, or may simply not even return the questionnaire. In any of the above mentioned cases, this would lead to the cancellation of the survey, as it would not be considered valid. It is crucial to
note that questionnaires and surveys alike can not be forced on the respondent; this would be considered unethical by all means. The researcher is fortunate to have the respondent fill out the survey consistently, or s/he will have wasted time, as the questionnaire is returned unfilled, incomplete, or inconsistent. Yet another caveat to questionnaires is the authenticity of the information. That is, the respondent may or may not agree with the items s/he marks, and will respond accordingly. However, there is an element of truthfulness in question; that is, the respondent may not necessarily answer according to how s/he actually behaves in reality; rather, the responses may be according to the candidate’s belief of ‘how things should be’. Thus, although the virtues of questionnaires are myriad, these too, are not without their setbacks as well.

**Ethical Considerations**

For the most part, very little information was disclosed about the nature of the study at hand. This was due to a very simple reason that upon divulging respective aims of the study, respondents’ answers would be altered (Robson, 2000). Having said the afore mentioned, it is equally worth noting that candidates were informed on a ‘need-to-know-basis’ whereby they were told very little information. In retrospect, although it was not the most ethical of measures, since when people are interviewed or surveyed, they do have a right to know the reasons for such questions. However, in considering the fact that none of the students really inquired does not really breach respondents’ rights, as many of them did not pursue the matter any further when told it was for research purposes, as they didn’t really care. On a similar level, information was at all times anonymous and confidential since potential disclosure may taint results at any point (Robson, 2000). Similarly, none of the respondents were the researcher’s own, as involving former or
current students may pressure them and therefore ‘taint’ the validity and reliability of the data collected. Finally, none of the respondents were under any obligation to participate, in order to remove any element of coercion or pressure that would have had negative ethical considerations (Robson, 2000). Thus, having come to the end of this chapter, the subsequent chapter will include the statistical analyses and results followed by the respective recommendations and subsequently, the conclusions.
Chapter IV
Triangulation Analysis: Statistics, Observation and Interviews

Statistical Findings

In considering the statistical analysis of the study undertaken, it is necessary to keep in mind the hypotheses: the null hypothesis being that culture and its variable factors bear no effect on language acquisition amongst girls and boys; subsequently, there is its antithesis, being that culture, along with the other factors mentioned, impact learning languages among girls and boys. Testing for the null hypothesis is most relevant when considering the variable tests undertaken such as the chi square, Tukey and coefficients of correlation. But before delving into the above mentioned, it is noteworthy to revert to the frequency variables that the tabulated results have provided (See Appendix A).

Frequencies were provided for each survey question. It should be noted that where consistent patterns in response rates materialized, in other instances, there was a great deal of irregularity. This could be due to a number of variables that will be discussed further on throughout the chapter. At any rate, tabulated frequencies have shown that the mean response (μ) for students’ views that teachers’ strategies were inefficient was 3.21, and where boys’ responses exceeded their female counterparts by approximately five points, a considerable number of members of either gender-around thirty four- thought instructors’ teaching methods were uninteresting, leaving around thirteen students (males and females) undecided. Thus, one can conclude that even though fifteen male respondents out of the entire sample thought teachers’ methods were
interesting, an overall alarming number of students-from either gender seemed to think that instructors’ methods in teaching English were uninteresting-regardless of performance or proficiency level.

For the next similar item, more males than females thought that their English teachers were young and easy to approach-lending to a total number of about 36 students. In addition, eight students were undecided, five boys to three girls. Similarly, more males than females looked forward to English class-while an almost equal amount of boys and girls responded ‘Undecided’. Interestingly enough, for this item, of the students who disagreed, there were more boys than girls who voiced this. In addition to this, there was an almost unanimous response rate of ‘strongly disagree/disagree’ among members of both genders concerning item 12 which entails “I feel comfortable if I am writing and my teacher is standing next to me”, indicating that there seems to be a great deal of power distance among students and teachers, such that the closer an instructor is physically to a student while the latter is reading or writing, the more discomfort the pupil feels.

Proceeding further, around 46 students of either gender seemed to find that English as a language was easy-where boys (24) exceeded girls (22) by two points. Interestingly enough, twice as many boys as girls seemed to disagree with the statement that English was an easy language to acquire, as was the case with the number of ‘undecided’ boys to girls.

There was an almost unanimous agreement from members of either gender that schools had way too many subjects included in their curricula, naturally with boys in the lead, as approximately 30 boys in comparison to 25 girls’ responses varied between ‘Strongly Disagree/Disagree’ to the statement “I think our curriculum at school needed
more subjects of study”. Yet again, the number of undecided boys to girls was double, while twice as many boys as girls strongly agreed that schools needed to add further subjects in their curricula (around nine boys and four girls). The subsequent question gave unambiguous results in terms of concurrence, as around 57 students of either gender strongly disagreed/disagreed with the statement that “studying for English was equally important as other subjects”. Having said this, it is noteworthy to mention that twice the number of boys to girls disagreed with this statement (36 in comparison to 18), while seven boys were undecided. Girls who agreed to this statement were approximately three times more in number than the males who agreed to this statement. Thus, it is clear from this survey item that the predominant numbers of students do not consider English high ranking in precedence with respect to other courses at school.

Moreover, the next item sheds further light on the appeal of English with respect to more scientific courses-such as science courses, as around 45 students found English books to have less appeal than the science books, (of which 32 were males and 13 were females); and while 22 other students found English books appealing, thirteen were females while nine were males. Once gain, females tend to outnumber males in their appeal towards English. The next question seems strangely controversial, as there seemed to be only a slight variation between students who agreed/disagreed with the statement “At school, our English teachers seemed to give us a lot of homework”. While 29 students seemed to agree with the above mentioned statement, 36 disagreed. Of the 31 who agreed that too many assignments were being given, 19 were males while 12 were females. Thus, more males than females thought that more homework than was necessary was being given. On the contrary, of the 37 students who thought more homework was
needed, 21 were females while 16 were males. Hence, more females than males thought that more homework was needed to supplement English language learning.

The subsequent item seemed to display controversial results. The item stated “I often studied for English classes at school”, and although there were more respondents falling under the ‘Strongly disagree/disagree’ category, of these were more females than males. Similarly, for those who agreed with the statement of studying English regularly, more males agreed than their female counterparts. Perhaps this could be attributed to girls’ physiological disposition to be more at ease with languages, as the previous literature review had mentioned.

As concerns class/peer participation, there seemed to be more propensity amongst males to participate in class and encourage class participation among their peers, more so than their female counterparts. Similarly, in item 16, “I don’t make fun of my classmates who raise their hands and participate in English classes” seemed to instigate more ‘agreement’ from the males than females. Conversely, in item 18, “I feel very comfortable speaking English with my friends outside school”, more boys disagreed than girls. Furthermore, the statement of item 14, “I read books in English in my spare time” rendered strong disagreement more so among the boys than the girls. Naturally, this seems to indicate that when outside the classroom, males-more so than the females, prefer to spend their time immersing themselves in matters that fall outside the scope of English language learning.

Approaching items that deal with families and home environments, item 17, “I feel very comfortable speaking English at home” resulted in a rather strange response rate. While a predominant majority of males seemed to disagree-a lot more than the
females, and where both members were equal in their ‘strong disagreement’, a considerable amount of boys—more than the girls, seemed to agree (and by a very little margin). It should be noted that an immodest amount of students from either gender seemed undecided. This seems to indicate that males are more likely to feel uncomfortable at practicing foreign languages at homes than those who do. Perhaps this serves to show more avoidance in terms of language acquisition among males. Similarly, items 19-23 seem to show the existence of an inverse relationship between the propensity amongst boys and girls to learn English vis a vis family expectations; that is, the more students concentrate on studying English, the more likely they would disappoint their families.

Broken down in a more particularistic manner, item 19 which states “My parents would be more proud of me if I became a teacher than a doctor, or an engineer or even worked in a company or a bank” rendered strong disagreement, more from males than females—and almost no agreement from the males with very little consensus for the females. This item was among the very few where males who were undecided were by far less than the females. On a similar note, an equally flagrant response rate of disagreements was shown—more among males than females in the subsequent item, where “My parents would be proud of me if I did well in English than in Math”; results of the following item also rendered such high disagreement in response rates among males, more so than females. It seems that where families are involved, there seems to be more pressure on boys than on girls to maintain high performance in the sciences and maths than in the languages and arts. Perhaps this could be due to culture permeating into the family sphere, as was suggested in the literature review.
Similarly, item 22 which is not unlike the previous mentioned items, lent a strong
disagreement-yet again more with males than females, concerning the belief ‘that it is
more important to pass English than math’. There was very little agreement amongst the
males and females, along with no ‘strongly agree’ among the males and only three among
the females. The item before the last, item 23 stated “I believe it is more important to
pass English than Science” resulted in more boys disagreeing/strongly disagreeing than
girls, and a high rate of “undecided” more among the boys than the girls. Perhaps the
reasons for this could be attributed to schools as well. This is due to the fact that some
schools, which classify students in terms of ‘Life Sciences’, ‘Maths’ or ‘Humanities’ alter
the subjects given at school according to whatever major the student has. Thus, students
may be in the same grade, and yet have completely different schedules, based on what
they would like to major in at school. For the most part, it is known that students who are
classified under the Sciences and Maths get more scientific courses and less English
courses than their colleagues who choose to major under the Humanities and Arts. In
turn, a student who is a ‘Life Sciences’ student and who is only taking three or four hours
of language/week in comparison to fifteen hours/week of Sciences cares more about
passing the latter than the former.

Subsequently, it is noteworthy to mention that it seems strange to have such a
large response rate of “undecided”, more among boys than girls in almost all of the
questions. In addition to this, there seemed to be items whose response rates ran quite
contradictorily to other items, when they were made to test the same paradigms. For
example, item 13’s response rate although varied, indicated a flagrant disagreement-
predominantly among the males, concerning the statement “I learn English at school
because I enjoy it as a subject” seems to lend an indication that the study of English is more or less an obligation and less of a joy—at least for males. This statement runs contradictory to a previous one, item 8, which states “I often look forward to English classes”, where the majority of males answered in agreement. This statement further contradicts item 24 which indicates that “I learn English because it interests me as a language and not because I’d like to get a well paying job” whose response rates ranked very high among the males, more than their female counterparts.

Perhaps this was because students didn’t ‘know’ how they felt, and so preferred to answer ‘undecided’, or maybe they had gotten tired and restless from the survey and found it easier to choose a more ‘neutral’ answer than a more pronounced, or definitive one. Also, it could have been that as students were sitting close to one another, through comparing their answers to their peers, thought that some answers were more ‘correct’ than others, and so chose them instead. In all cases, the statistical aspect of the research allows inferences and conclusions to be made in a thorough, generalized manner, safeguarding against erroneous misplaced theories, which is not what this study is dealing with.

On a further note, the statistical analysis of the research continues with the analysis of variance (ANOVA). Out of the five factors, teachers, school, families, culture and peers, the factors of ‘school’ and ‘family’ seem to influence language acquisition the most.
Table 4.1: Analysis of Variance: Factors Affecting Language Acquisition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval for Mean</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Bound</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>2.9680</td>
<td>.62475</td>
<td>.07214</td>
<td>2.8243</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>4.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>3.5200</td>
<td>.66495</td>
<td>.07678</td>
<td>3.3670</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>2.5167</td>
<td>.81925</td>
<td>.09460</td>
<td>2.3282</td>
<td>2.7052</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>3.1044</td>
<td>.58109</td>
<td>.06710</td>
<td>2.9707</td>
<td>3.2381</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>3.4667</td>
<td>.99180</td>
<td>.11452</td>
<td>3.2385</td>
<td>3.6949</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>3.1152</td>
<td>.83234</td>
<td>.04298</td>
<td>3.0306</td>
<td>3.1997</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Influence of Factors on Language Acquisition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>50.056</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.514</td>
<td>22.149</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>209.049</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>.565</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>259.105</td>
<td>374</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the last column "Sig.", it is noted that the p-value is far less than 0.01; thus, the factors’ means are different from each other and bear different influences at a 99% F-Distribution test.

Furthermore, following the Tukey HSD test, it seems that ‘teacher’ and ‘culture’ factors influence language acquisition a lot more than ‘family’ and ‘school’.
Table 4.3: Tukey HSD Test for Factor Influence of Language Acquisition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Subset for alpha = .05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>2.5167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>2.9680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>3.1044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here, the means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed. There is no significant difference between the “Peer” mean value and itself which justifies the “Sig.” value of 1.000. Similarly, there is no significant difference between the “Teacher” & “Culture” mean values as 0.800 is > 0.05. Hence, “Teacher” & “Culture” factors influence the acquisition process similarly far more than the “Family” & “School” factors which are less influential.

Although a test for correlation was performed to consider the impact of culture on the other independent variables of teacher, school, family and peer groups, the correlation values were low, showing a weak relationship between the influence of national culture on the remaining four variables.

Table 4.4: Correlations: Culture and Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Teacher Correlation</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.307(**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.307(**)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Table 4.5: Correlations: Culture and School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Culture</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.384(**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.6: Correlations: Culture and Peer groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Culture</th>
<th>Peer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.268(*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.7: Correlations: Culture and Family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Culture</th>
<th>Family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.248(*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

All correlations were significant at the 0.05 level meaning that if we were to repeat this experiment a 100 times, it is likely that at least 95 of the 100 times will give the same
result as above. Furthermore, independent sample t-tests were performed in order to check whether there exists a significant difference between males and females as to how they acquire English at school. To do this, average means were considered and compared.

Table 4.8: Average means/gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3.2434</td>
<td>.41120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratings</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>3.0013</td>
<td>.45978</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.9: Independent Samples Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equal variance assumed</th>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Ratings</td>
<td>.349</td>
<td>.556</td>
<td>2.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variance not assumed</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>.2420</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be deduced from the above table that there is no significant difference between males and females as to how each acquire English. The reason for that is likely due to the
fact that the methodologies used by the instructor to impart information are the same for both gender. Thus, neither males nor females are singled out during instruction.

Going even further, chi square contingency tests to ascertain whether there exists a difference between males and females as to how they acquire English under the variable factors of ‘school’, ‘culture’, ‘peer’ and ‘teacher’ revealed that the influence of language acquisition affected males and females in a similar manner, while ‘family’ showed a significant impact. That is, where the approximate significance was $0.047 < 0.05$, this means that ‘family’ does indeed impact language acquisition methods differently among boys and girls.

Table 4.10: Contingency Coefficient: Teacher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Approximate Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contingency Coefficient</td>
<td>0.390</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>0.415</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.11: Contingency Coefficient: School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Approximate Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contingency Coefficient</td>
<td>0.370</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>0.534</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.12: Contingency Coefficient: Peers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Approximate Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contingency Coefficient</td>
<td>0.438</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>0.217</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.13: Contingency Coefficient: Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Approximate Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contingency Coefficient</td>
<td>0.483</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>0.088</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.14: Contingency Coefficient: Family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Approximate Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contingency Coefficient</td>
<td>0.511</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>0.047</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observational Findings

For the most part, nonparticipant observation was conducted and shed light on a series of behaviorisms on the part of the students and the teachers. To start with, five hours of nonparticipant observation took place. Noteworthy of mentioning that in the classes visited, males outnumbered the females by as much as three or four times. The boys were seated throughout the classroom, and often congregated or sat close to one another, while the girls sat far apart from each other. One would think that in a classroom full of eight boys and two girls, the latter would choose to sit near one another; however, the converse was true. Where the girls often sat in upright positions, took notes and looked straight at the teacher when not engaged in the act of writing, boys seemed to show more restless body language, that is through stretching, fidgeting, shaking their legs, playing with a utensil such as a pen, pencil or even a cellphone or with any other object at hand (in one instance, a male student was constantly putting his cap on and taking it off). Some boys would often get up to open a window, door or even volunteer to turn on the air conditioner. Furthermore, males tended to exhibit more laid back postures, where they slouched in their seats. It was not uncommon to find boys whispering to one
another making remarks, whether personal or academic. Girls on the other hand, remained for the most part, quiet, with their legs crossed and their hands on their laps or on their notebooks. When girls did engage in conversations, it was often because they couldn't follow the answers the teacher was calling out, and were therefore asking for the answers for the questions that they missed.

On a similar level, boys came in as much as fifteen and twenty minutes late, and were admitted into the classroom, while the girls showed more punctuality and orderliness. Most students came with their books, with the exception of one male in one of the observation hours, who sat next to a colleague and shared with him. In one of the classes, a quiz was returned to the students. Interestingly enough, the girls would go through the entire quiz, and even count and recount the number of points, ask for further explanation from the teacher or correct the mistakes on their quiz. Males on the other hand, were more thorough in reexamining their quizzes, as some simply glanced at the grade, slipped the quizzes back in their notebooks and continued reading. One male only, in a class of eight, was thorough in reviewing his quiz.

In addition to this, boys tended to participate more, even if they called out the wrong answer. Males exhibited more confidence in calling out answers than their female counterparts. In fact, the latter seemed to be more hesitant in answering, and often raised their hand when they wanted an answer to a question, or further explanation, or to even to have an answer repeated. Similarly, while males spoke in audible voices, girls' response tones seemed more timid, and were lower pitched. Moreover, while the teacher was explaining the lesson, a few boys could be seen reading the explanations of the book on their own, while the girls sat listening to the teacher.
Males seemed more extroverted in behavior, calling out answers without raising their hands, while the opposite was held true for the girls. Girls raised their hands first before they spoke. Furthermore, boys seemed not only to be more interactive with the instructor, but also physically interactive—as they would joke, fidget, turn around and even get up and change seats. None of the girls showed any sign of interest at the idea of having a nonparticipant observer in the class with them, yet most of the boys managed to glance at-or comment on, at least once, the nonparticipant observer. While the girls in the observed classes seemed to behave in a more disciplined manner, two boys in one of the observed classes were verbally reprimanded twice about their chatter and were warned about having their seats changed.

Although males seemed to have difficulty working in tandem with disciplinary regulations as in coming in on time or incessant chatter, they were by far more participative than their female counterparts. Perhaps it was due to the fact that their instructor called more on boys than on girls. Eventually, in one class, when the instructor did call on a female, while answering a question, a male colleague finished off the remaining answer. It seemed that instructors had a greater tendency to call on boys a lot more than girls, even if the latter had the correct answers. Perhaps it was because males showed more readiness to interact, as opposed to girls who seemed more self conscious, hesitant and less confident. Perhaps if the instructor had continued to call on the girls a bit more, the females would become more interactive and more comfortable in expressing themselves verbally in class.
Interview findings

Dispatching surveys, collecting them and interpreting them allows for numerical data that may be difficult to obtain otherwise. Nonparticipant observation gives information about the behavioral/attitudinal beliefs and values of the students, while interviews disclose a great deal of information on the personal level, without the interviewee really knowing why these questions are being asked. Hence a plethora of data is uncovered more often than not pertaining to the student’s anecdotal and personal experiences. The subsequent findings are derived from one Remedial English student (female) and two interviews with Intensive III students (males).

The findings obtained from the former interview generally uncovered the inability of students to converse in topics that were of interest to them, as most of the topics students found interesting-or could relate to also happened to be taboo, or were banned by the administration in fear of causing problems between the parents and the school administration. Similarly, there were comments that teachers bombarded students with way too many assignments, putting the latter in a state of malaise and stress, as students felt they needed more time to complete the projects that were assigned the day before. In addition, students often felt disgruntled at the fact that teachers left very little for the realm of the imagination, and followed the books verbatim. There seemed to have been very little space for improvisation or creativity, which is something the students seemed to have longed for. Not only this, but a female respondent indicated that she was not expected to behave in an extroverted manner as it was looked down upon socially.

On a similar note, it was noted that the impact of the teacher at school and the family play a major role in molding the propensity of students to excel or perform poorly
in English courses. In one of the interviews, the student was greatly impacted by the instructor-and most positively so-that he had continued to perform diligently in her classes, and classes that continued afterwards. This was clear in his attendance, his note-taking and his performance with other teachers. The student was not only enthused by the easy-to-approach attitude of the instructor, but also by her ability to engage them in interesting topics in writing and conversation-as these were the topics he looked forward to the most. Moreover, it was clear that the home environment plays a critical role in the formation of appropriate language foundations. According to this student, his sister, who not only was his role model to whom he could turn to in times of trouble, but was also his mentor in English language-and with whom he could practice English with and have conversations in English at home, influenced him and prodded him to excel and perform well in English language courses. It was noted that hindrances such as excessive homework assignments and not enough language lessons in which to practice language learning were believed not only to dampen students’ motivation in language learning, but also affected their performance direly as well.

Equally disconcerting is to note the detrimental negative impact of school systems, both teachers and curricula on students. Among the variable findings throughout this research, it was noted that schools have a detrimental impact on students on two levels. The first level is when a student feels that the teacher is picking on him, and reaches out to the support networks of the administration only to find that there is no support there. Thus, what happens is that students either drop out of language classes, fail them or simply stop attending and participating. Another aspect of negative impacts that teachers have on students is when teachers don’t try to catch the attention of their
students. Thus, they neglect disinterested students, rather than work on enamoring them with the subject; in turn, students respond with further negligence. The quote from one of the interviewees clearly explains this: “My teacher used to come to class and didn’t use to explain anything for us...so we talked to each other and passed time”. On more than one occasion have students mentioned that they rarely used to take class time seriously, and would sit and chatter instead. When asked how they would pass, students often answered by saying that there was a cumulative pass/fail grade; that is, if they failed in one subject, they could always compensate by doing better in another one, as the pass/fail grade relied on a cumulative average. Hence, what parents and administrators alike don’t seem to realize is the impact a teacher could have on affecting the student’s performance not only during the term of study, but in the future as well. As was revealed in the interviews, students seemed greatly impacted by how they were treated and how their instructors interacted with them.

Consequently, the second way in which school systems negatively impact students is through the curricula. This is so as students are categorized as ‘Life Sciences’, ‘Maths’ or ‘Humanities’. In turn, depending on what division a student has decided s/he is interested in, courses would thus be allotted and their schedules consequently altered. So for example, science or math students take more courses of science or math, at the expense of language courses—which would reach a maximum of three or four hours per week. Having said this, not balancing out schedules, where certain students are prepped for certain subjects at the expense of others—usually language courses—is a pure recipe for poor proficiency in the latter. Equally noteworthy of mention is the fact that students have also been noted to complain about their curricula as being overloaded. Many
students feel stressed by the fact that they have way too many subjects to prepare for, while at the same time, the school puts pressure on them to perform well in the scientific and mathematical subjects. The higher the passing rate of students in the scientific and mathematical domains, the more it is considered reputable. Thus, even schools seem to bear a culture that underscores the maths and sciences, leaving languages to linger in the shadows.

In retrospect, it seems that the variable vehicles of data collection can indeed allow certain conclusions to be made. For starters, the statistical findings have revealed that the major culprits for students' modest performance in English language with respect to ANOVA tests are schools and families. These findings are solidly supported by variegated interview responses which have voiced students' vexation at not being able to have interesting discussions nor being able to relate to the content material at hand, not being motivated to participate in class, as lectures were mostly teacher centered, and even not feeling comfortable with an ultra-saturated curriculum, or teachers with whom students could not establish rapport. Some students even expressed their dismay at having teachers pick on them unfairly. Moreover, many interviewees indicated that the school they attended left much to be desired in terms of motivating them to pay attention in class, prioritizing English as an important language to learn, or simply doing their homework regularly and on time.

In addition, the influence of family was apparent as statistical findings indicated that families helped shape students' preference to their respective chosen majors, and according to gender-as girls more often than not were categorized under the Arts and boys had the lion’s share of Sciences. Not only that, but having someone at home help
students out with their assignments, such as a sibling who would prod and motivate his/her sister/brother also indicated more comfort and security in terms of internalizing a foreign language.

Furthermore, according to the statistical findings, variables such as culture subtly surfaced during interviews as well, as female respondents felt they would have been more motivated had they been allowed more freedom of expression, both verbal and behavioral. One female respondent even went as far as to indicate that she would socially be looked down upon if she chose to be talkative and ask more questions. Thus, as surreptitious as culture appears, it still manages to permeate into students’ latent behaviorisms in the classroom. In addition to this, observational findings for the most part indicated a delicate impact of peer groups on performance (class participation), which subsequently varied among members of either gender. That is, where boys would sit near their male friends, girls were more dispersed; thus, boys seemed more in need of a ‘comfort zone’ during the lectures than their female counterparts. Similarly, in line with the theories covering male/female physiology and their respective behavior, boys did indeed participate more even though many of their responses were incorrect, were restless and fidgeted a lot compared to their female colleagues, and got called on as much as three or four times more than the girls. On the contrary, girls seemed more contained in their posture and behavior, more patient, and certainly quieter than their male counterparts.

Thus, having revealed the myriad impacts of culture, family, peers, schools and teachers on students, this chapter shall pave the way for the subsequent one, which aims to shed light on possible solutions that would potentially aid in surpassing the previously
mentioned impediments that have long served to hinder language proficiency. Thus, the fifth and final chapter of this research will attempt to consider strategies and possible solutions that could aid students in becoming more proficient in the English language.
Chapter V
Recommendations and Conclusions

“Schools could do more than perhaps any other single institution in society to help young people, and the adults they become, to live healthier, longer and more satisfying lives”
(Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development)

In retrospect, thus far, the thesis undertaken has tackled a certain problem; namely, the issue of underperformance among girls and boys, and has sought to delve into the underlying factors, some more covert than others, that seemed to pose as almost tangible ‘monkey wrenches’ in young girls’ and boys’ language acquisition process. Afterwards, triangulation-covering statistical analyses, observation and semi-structured interviews were undertaken, only to reveal that to a large extent, the afore-mentioned factors did indeed come into play. Thus, the final chapter of this research is dedicated to considering alternative methods that could potentially aid in enhancing English language learning and proficiency, along with working on minimizing or impairing other factors that have contributed little else besides hindering the English educational process. The recommendations considered will generally fall under the following categories: familial influences along with cultural tactics, teacher tactics and curricular strategies, and finally peer tactics.

Parental Tactics

In retrospect, the findings have illustrated a rather strong relationship between motivation to acquire English language among males and females and the family. In fact, not only does the family have an influential factor on English language proficiency, but it also seems to be support the idea that girls and boys are influenced quite adversely, and
more so differently when it comes to family expectations and values. In being realistic, one can not assume that any change in family cultures and values is viable or even feasible for that matter. What can be solicited, however, is further awareness of the parents’ influence on their offspring’s performance concerning the importance of languages. Stated more specifically, the higher the expectations of parents concerning their child’s content performance, the more girls or boys for that matter would be motivated to acquire or learn (Neihart, 2006), in order to appear competent and reliable in front of their parents and merit their approval (Kohn, 2000). At least, in that sense, young girls and boys find they have a certain clear and understood goal to work towards, and would thus be motivated to attain it in return for familial acceptance.

Noteworthy of mention is the fact that research has unveiled parents’ roles in partaking in gender mainstreaming. Taken one step further, where parental expectations of both males and females were thought to be clear, parents of females monitored their offspring’s progress at school far less than their male counterparts (Cavanagh, Dellar, & Mollon, 2001). Basically, what this does is reinforce behavior differentials in terms of girls’ and boys’ performance. Naturally, this may present itself direly, as both girls and boys realize that what is expected of them is different—that is-slightly more or less of what is expected of their siblings; this results in less motivation in terms of performance, slacking off or poor development of self esteem (Dornyei et al., 2007). Thus, once parents indicate clearly and loudly that expectations of members of either gender are the same, and ‘cut neither party any slack’, chances are that responsibility towards goal attainment is likely to rise (Cavanagh et al., 2001). Furthermore, with parents encouraging both genders to read more at home as opposed to one more than the other,
the likelihood of more enhanced performance in terms of language acquisition is likely (Barwood, 2001). This is because siblings of either gender would then be working with a subtle kind of competitiveness, or at least be more motivated to work a bit harder. In addition to this, parents need to be aware of gender-stereotypic roles that they may fall into. Put more simplistically, when asked about what mommy and daddy do around the house in one of the researches conducted, a young boy’s answer was “daddy reads the paper while mommy shouts” (Anderson & Hamilton, 2005, pg. 152). Girls are likely to emulate their mothers’ behaviors and boys their fathers’. And where reading as an activity is considered ‘something girls do’ (Coles, 2002) parents, without realizing, end up partaking in gender mainstreaming and forming certain stereotypes. Thus, another strategy to short change such stereotypical conclusions made is either to equally prod siblings of either gender to undertake more reading activities at home, or even to have both parents (mothers and fathers) engage in reading activities with their children (Barwood, 2001).

Finally, schools, teachers and administrations should hold monthly or bimonthly meetings with parents in order to enhance their awareness and realization of the importance of language proficiency among their children—both males and females. Not only this, but it is also crucial that teacher/parent workshops be made occasionally to render a greater understanding (Crombie, Pyke, Siverthorn, Jones & Piccinin, 2003). Perhaps in doing so, parents would realize the importance of language; subsequently, they can be made to realize the financial benefits of following up their children at school, rather than pay the astronomical fees of intensive programs. In addition to this, once parents realize that successful job placements are the promised fruit of language
proficiency along with saving time and money (Crombie et al., 2003), they are likely to be more motivated with their children rather than let matters slip through their fingers. For this reason, teacher/parent meetings or workshop are definitely vital as informing parents recurrently about the rendered benefits and advantages of having their children become more proficient in English, such as finding a prestigious or well paying job, would further propel the mother or father in prodding their children to work more (Burke, 2000).

Cultural tactics

The item in the survey that unveiled to what extent Lebanese culture esteems language teaching posts as opposed to other administrative posts in terms of prestige and importance was one which stated: “My parents would be more proud of me if I became a teacher than a doctor, or an engineer, or even worked in a company or a bank”, to which there was almost unanimous disagreement. Thus, one can infer that although teaching posts abound, Lebanese culture favors more prestigious job posts socially and professionally, and under which, according to such a culture, teaching does not fall. Thus, these are flagrant tell-tale signs that portray to what extent culture dictates certain uncircumscribed normative beliefs. To further illustrate this point, culture harbors certain expectations of girls and boys (Williams, 2006). To elaborate, girls are shelled by certain images or cultural messages that they should “be interested, if not obsessed, with their physical appearance, fashion, and relationships with boys” (Williams, 2006, pg. 306). What this yields to is a great deal of passivity, self esteem issues, and picturing girls as prospective wives-to-be, waiting for their ‘knight in shining armor’ (Brozo, 2005) or even mothers. Even when girls do read, research has revealed that they often read and write
about “the traditional marriage plot, which depends on a male hero” (Williams, 2006, pg. 306). The implicit values that are indoctrinated therefore ‘stipulate’ that males are the dominant problem solvers, while girls are “comforters, subsumed into the male story” (Williams, 2006, pg. 303).

It should come as no surprise that although girls are naturally endowed to outperform their male counterparts in the language faculties, culture acts as a gargantuan hindrance in not only distorting their self image, but also in maiming their inner aspirations and dreams. Hence, having said this, some light is shed on girls’ timidity in the classroom along with their hesitation to participate even though they may know the right answer, as opposed to boys who-while their response rates are incorrect, continue to participate and discuss ideas with their instructors (Paechter et al., 2001).

This can be short changed by exposing girls, both at schools and at homes, to female role models who are ‘go getters’ and have aspirations and dreams that go beyond marrying and child rearing. In turn, through exposing girls to such role models through movies, stories, cartoons, and even friends or guest speakers in the classroom, will more likely empower girls, allowing them to ‘remodel the making of their self esteem’ (Crombie et al., 2003). It is critical to note that while the family or the organization to which the girl is affiliated to bears such stereotypical ‘plans’ for the girl, very little if any, can be done to overcome such a hindrance, save for the development of sound foundations of self esteem through empowerment.
Teacher Tactics

It has not gone unnoticed the dominant influence that teachers play in molding the child’s personality (Paecther et al., 2001). In the interviews conducted, respondents’ answers were similar: the impact teachers had on them were for the most part decisive in their shaping their affinities or aversions towards English language acquisition. Educators and teachers alike are aware of the power that they exude in the classroom. Having said this, power can be used constructively or destructively. If the latter is the case, then this use of power “ruptures the relationship” (Kohn, 2000) between the teacher and the student. Having said this, there are many foibles that teachers should try to avoid, if even cancel out altogether, in the manner with which they interact with girls and boys alike.

Research seems to indicate that female English language teachers interact with males wherever they may seat themselves in the classroom, as opposed to only the girls who sat nearby the teacher (Yepez, 2000). It has been further noted that in classrooms where the instructor is female, the girls sat closer together at the front and the boys at the back, as opposed to classes with male instructors, where the opposite was true; boys sat together at the front of the class while girls were at the back (Yepez, 2000). What is necessary at this point is to equally disperse attention, comments, praise, encouragement and questions alike towards members of either gender, without exhibiting any bias. Even if girls tended to interact less at first, with a surge of more confidence in being approached more frequently, it is not unlikely that their self-esteem will be enhanced, and thus become more participative (Katz & Sokal, 2008). Another method would be to reverse the seating arrangement between boys and girls—depending on the gender of the instructor. That is, if the instructor is female, and the general tendency of the males is to
sit in the back while the females in front, the teacher could playfully ask that seating arrangements be switched 'just for the day' two or three times a week. What this serves to do is to enhance the level of rapport and therefore comfort in student/teacher interaction. Eventually, enhanced comfort renders further security, which very likely induces more motivation and therefore improves performance in language learning (Katz & Sokal, 2008).

Equally, exposing boys to more role models or more male teachers would also enhance interaction amongst boys and their instructors. In the aim of augmenting proficiency, male teachers or guest speakers who are immersed in variable successful jobs or activities are quite likely to positively influence male students, if not prod them altogether, into performing more. Research seems to strongly support this as studies conducted have shown affective factors among boys coming into play with their performance (Crombie et al., 2003). Hence, once again, the more male students feel an affinity towards their instructors or towards the class, the more likely they would be motivated to perform better.

Still, another theory seems to indicate that teachers should act as cultural brokers (Neihart, 2006). According to Neihart (2006), teachers should act as cultural brokers, that is, people who understand gender, racial and ethnic cultures and can mediate between their members by building bridges and establishing 'comfort zones' to establish rapport and enhance interaction and learning abilities. For example, it has been noted that male teachers who act as cultural brokers refer to their male students as 'son', or 'dear boy', (Weaver-Hightower, 2003), or even 'pretty miss' or 'lady' for the girls; these titles have been noted to let boys' and girls' guards down. Similarly, they often praise and encourage
male and female students, call on them equally enough, and give them remedial help when necessary. Instructors who act as cultural brokers generally work to create comfort zones amongst their students, allowing them to interact and be more synchronized with their identities and selves, such that girls needn't feel as threatened in the presence of male teachers, nor males with female instructors.

Noteworthy of mention is the element of having continuous teacher training and workshops. Instructors need to feel that they are within a learning continuum, and are accountable for their teaching styles and methodologies (Kluth and Strout, 2003). Variable training techniques considered could be as versatile as coteaching between special education and general education instructors, where each teacher trains, mentors and coaches the other in the acquisition of variable teaching skills; furthermore, there is also collaborative teaching, where instructors of special needs work together with general education instructors to create an all inclusive classroom to accommodate students of variegated backgrounds, cultures and ethnicities (Kluth & Straut, 2003). Similarly, there are teacher-preparation programs, whereby teachers amongst each other can collaborate and design together curricular adaptations to their teaching programs. Such programs involve coplanning, designing and modifying already existing curricula in order to better cater to the needs of class diversity in terms of abilities and needs, along with coteaching (Kluth & Straut, 2003).

To promote a culture of teaching excellence and expertise, mandatory teacher training and workshops need to be considered in schools and universities alike. The reason is generally twofold: the first being a given, that teachers need to learn new techniques; for as times change, certain methods and strategies become obsolete, and
creative alternatives should replace the less efficient ones. Secondly, teachers once trained, mentored and even monitored (as it is necessary to guide teacher behavior) become more accountable and responsible in the performance towards their students and towards themselves (Friend, 2000).

Schools and Curricular Tactics

It is noteworthy to mention the gargantuan influence that schools have on the shaping of children, both girls and boys, and which has been revealed throughout this study. To take matters further, working with reemploying tactics at school to promote a better learning environment revolves around two considerations, curricular and content adaptations (Papalewis, 2004). A complaint that has not been uncommon among students was the fact that the Lebanese curriculum contained way too many subjects, and very little English courses. Having way too many courses to tackle, the closer girls and boys got towards their senior years, the more likely they were on the road to academic burnout, and thus the more less interested in mastering English as a second language they became. In addition to this, having had minimal English classes, or even swapping Science courses instead of English, gave students the feeling that language courses per se were subordinate and unimportant at best; thus, students didn’t really take such language courses seriously.

A step well worth considering would be one whereby schools could minimize the number of cores subjects required by the student (Neal & Kelly, 2002). Perhaps as students start approaching their freshman years at school, they could be given the option of a course release: that is, choosing electives, or even some courses over others in order to allow for a more malleable, workable academic program. Certain schools, especially
ones with G.C.S.E programs implement this. Generally, the benefits of this are twofold: on the primary level, students feel more ‘responsible’ towards their future in that they are actually being given a choice in deciding what to study and what not to. Thus, a student is not only likely to behave more accountability towards his/her life decisions, but will also exhibit more interest towards the subjects chosen. Similarly, having the option of a course release, or choosing one elective and dropping another provides students with ‘academic ventilation’; that is, students are given a ‘breather’, and thus are prevented from being burnt out. This plan of action is equally efficient as it allocates students’ efforts in line with their interests (Neal & Kelly, 2002). It should be mentioned though, that introducing such changes nationally at the curricular level is indeed challenging, as bureaucratic school systems in Lebanon, which are quite averse to modifications, require a great deal of red tape before any likely outcome could be made. However, where vision is still optimistic, it is well worth noting that some private schools have opted for such curricular adaptations within their scholastic systems, and whose students’ performances have improved.

Another adaptation to the school program would be balancing/increasing the number of English language classes that a student would be required to take, regardless of the major; that is, there should be a minimum number of class hours in English per week, say at least five, that any student should take, whether majoring in Arts or Engineering. Similarly, students need to feel that their performance in English is important; thus, increasing the amount of academic pressure/stress here would be beneficial in order to better propel students’ performance towards language learning (Crombie et al., 2003). Implementing these two steps would not only expose students to
more class hours of English teaching which—with proper instruction, would have an enhanced impact on their performance levels, but would also ‘psyche’ students into feeling more motivated to work harder to pass English courses. With that, it is hoped that more language learning and higher proficiency would be attained.

Of equal importance are the steps and measures taken within the classroom to promote a livelier learning atmosphere. In fact, there are a myriad number of strategies that help in realizing this. One method would be to involve more drama in the classroom (Williams, 2006). Allowing for channels where young boys would be allowed to vent out their vibrant, excessive energy has not proven unfruitful. On the contrary, reverting to drama, sketches, and even role playing has not only added more liveliness and enthusiasm to the classroom, but has been noted to create a much augmented sense of motivation and responsibility towards mastery and proficiency in English language learning (Williams, 2006). Girls would be equal benefactors of this strategy as well, as more outlets to express themselves would render them more assertive and would surely increase their sense of self-worth and cater to their esteem needs. Another strategy would be to introduce more technology into the domain of language learning. Research undertaken has revealed that among boys, the use of technology has rendered more positive attitudes towards learning (Sokal & Katz, 2008).

Having said this, incorporating technology with language learning, such as assigning young boys more projects using internet research, computers, LCD and Overhead projectors, would not only prod learners to sharpen their reading skills, but would also have them enthused about the projects undertaken. On a similar level, throwing girls into the world of computers and technology would oblige them to become
more computer savvy, a skill that girls at this day and age, could not afford to do without (Sokal & Katz, 2008).

A further element that should be underscored is that of male/female identification. Basically, at the familial, cultural and even academic level, girls and boys are bombarded with stereotypical messages constantly. Furthermore, it goes without saying that a considerable corpus of literature is either written to accommodate female readers, or is written by females. What this does is short change boys, causing them to feel ‘disattached’ to what it is they are meant to read, and therefore—not only disinterested, but in the long run, direly impacts their performance at school and enthusiasm for the subject matter at hand (Barwood, 2001). A potential remedy for this would be to allow males to engage in topics and reading materials that are of interest to them, such as comic books, subjects on technology (such as cars, computers, airplanes), or even literary pieces involving action, adventure or even sports magazines that help males to reidentify with this ‘macho’ image that is a crucial social construct for them. Once young males are allowed or given this option, with the belief that it would be taken seriously by the instructor and peers, the resulting outcome would probably yield to more enthused young males. In turn, higher performance or motivation at least, is likely.

On a similar level, exposing girls to more outgoing, dynamic and ‘go-getter’ icons and role models would help them to assert their characters more, and perhaps change or alter their passive natures, as research undertaken has revealed that “gender stereotypic portrayals in literature can influence behavior among girls and boys” (Anderson & Hamilton, 2005, pg. 145).
Thus, as young girls or boys for that matter are introduced to characters with whom they can identify, a young learner would then be exposed to a plethora of new ideas, feelings, and even belief systems leading to personal growth and development, and perhaps allowing them to find solutions to experiences or problems they may be facing in their lives today (Nichart, 2006). It may even be ‘cathartic’ as students manage to ‘step out of their shoes’ and consider their situations as observers, considering their lives more critically.

Still, another strategy that could augment English learning is applying what is called (PBL) projects or problem based learning projects. These are projects that are based upon real life problems, and where serious and realistic problem solving strategies need to be considered. PBL is not unlike case studies or even simulations in content. Engagement of students with assignments of such nature has been noted to be high, as males and females alike are removed from their frame of reference and are allowed to research and find solutions for real life cases (Chan, 2004). Theory and memorization are uncalled for; on the contrary, a practical hands-on experience, along with critical and analytical skills all serve to heighten the intellectual capacities of students, spark their interests and enthusiasm, enhance their language and research skills, and propel them to take their assignments seriously and responsibly.

Having broached the issue of homework and assignments, it is crucial not to needlessly bombard students with way too many assignments on a daily basis, as this has proven to be a sure recipe for burnout and underperformance (Rosario et al., 2006). Assignments should be decided upon in advance, where students have time to think about, read ahead, and research if necessary, whatever topic is being considered.
Following such a strategy would allow students to regulate their working schedules ahead of time, set their own learning pace and would thus, help in establishing more structure. Eventually, what this renders is overall positive results not only in students’ self-concepts, but also in their academic performance as well (Rosario et al., 2006).

In addition to the above mentioned, there is also the notion of having certain same gender classes, even in a coed school. Research seems to indicate that in single sex classes, the student is allowed to concentrate solely on the subject matter at hand, without needing to worry about gender related issues or peer pressure. This plan of action could be most effective in subjects where the disparity between girls’ and boys’ performance is high. Trouble shooting problematic subjects such as Math and English for both boys and girls allows for more accessible remedial help for members of either gender where necessary, along with less threat of competition and underperformance as well. Thus, with a more ‘secure’ and ‘less threatening’ atmosphere, certain studies have found that performance is indeed improved (Cavanagh et al., 2001).

Furthermore, establishing all boys’ groups or sorority sectors for girls can also be used as a strategy to enhance learning in the classroom. Various examples could be an “All Boys Reading/Debate Club” where boys alone, without the pending threat of females, can choose, work together on and discuss books, topics and articles related to their own ‘gender culture’ and where ‘exclusive membership’ is granted to them alone (Kluth & Straut, 2003). What this yields to is more engagement in literary, along with academic activities, without the need to feel competition or even pressured to perform. Naturally, such clubs ought to be headed by popular male role models or instructors, in order to capture the interest and zeal of the club members. Such schemes already exist,
such as the ‘Prefect Scheme’ in British educational systems or even ‘Executive Schemes’, where mediocre/underperforming boys are assigned particular tasks to ameliorate their sense of responsibility, importance and self esteem. Consequently, with such gradual responsibilities undertaken and their affective personalities progressively improving, what this does is render positive results on performance (Neihart, 2006) in the long run. Thus, same gender mentoring and emulating role models greatly enhances students’ self image, engages them in activities that allow them to allocate their energies–both mental and physical, efficiently and beneficially, and eventually leads to development on the mental and affective levels.

Peer Tactics

Although the influence of peer pressure has shown to have the weakest impact on individual student behavior, it is nonetheless palpable and real. It is a given; furthermore, classes where successful learning occurs are those which cultivate a cooperative learning environment, where support is ubiquitous and respect is unanimous (Cavanagh et al., 2001). Thus, teachers and administrators alike need to work together to cultivate such classroom environments in school, collectively based rather than individually, as studies have shown that recalcitrant and disruptive behavior are virtually nonexistent in milieu where the going effort amongst students is to work together and establish rapport. The general trend for students is to want to ‘fit in’. Hence, by having mentors and key leaders who, along with the teachers, work on motivating and cooperating with their peers, allows for a more secure and enriching classroom environment; one where students needn’t feel the pressure to outperform or underperform. On the contrary, such learning
environments concentrate on learning as a process, cultivating students' interests through group work (Cavanagh et al., 2001).

**Limitations of the Study**

It should be noted though, that any study undertaken would come to have its constraints and limitations. In fact, the limitations of this study were variable. For starters, in designing the questionnaires, and dispatching them to the students to complete, a number of resulting answers showed inconsistencies (refer to Chapter Four). Perhaps this was due to the fact that students-with their limited English, needed more time to complete the form; and although the questions were in simple English, it was noted that students were looking at their neighbors to see what answers were 'right'. Thus, it should come as no surprise that some answers may not necessarily be reflective of students' value systems concerning the enclosed items, as some students simply felt restless and wanted to be done with the survey, answering some questions at random.

Another limitation was the fact that more interviews were needed, and it was more difficult to get appointments from students to keep the interviews. Perhaps many felt distrustful or afraid, and indicated their discomfort at being interviewed. Thus, the lack of feasibility in approaching students as was initially desired to get a more thorough 'feel' of their attitudes towards the English classroom at school somehow limited the scope of information disclosed. The same goes for observations. As the researcher also works, it was not very feasible to approach other Intensive instructors, as there was a time clash; similarly, the number of Intensive III sections in the Spring semester were far less than those in the Fall semester.
However, despite the above mentioned limitations, the results given did seem to touch upon the problem of gender and English language proficiency, at least as concerns the undertaken study at hand. In fact, the problem of underperformance among girls and boys in Lebanon is one whose concern is heightened in the minds of parents and educators alike; and their causes are myriad. The good news is that there are a plethora of strategies that render impressive results and curtail the hindrances that impair student development and performance. Key elements to keep in mind are constant growth and life long learning and commitment towards enhancing skills that help to bridge the academic gap between girls and boys, along with more mentoring, patience, a readiness to change, and even monitoring. Although this may be slightly tricky at the beginning, an expenditure of serious efforts to meet diversified needs render positive results on the academic, affective and professional scales.
References


Van der Gaer, E., Pustjens, H., Van Damme, J., & De Munter, A. (December 2006). The


Appendices
Appendix A
Frequencies
The current document presents an analysis of the behavior of English language students with regards to various pedagogic methodologies intended to support the acquisition process of the language.

Design of Experiment

A questionnaire has been developed for this purpose showing the preliminary profile of students:

1-Gender
2-Age
3-University enrollment status

& their attitude regarding 24 methods/techniques to learn English each having been rated over a 5-points Likert scale expressing the extent of favorability towards it

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
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Where:

1 = Strongly Agree = SA
2 = Agree = A
3 = Undecided = U
4 = Disagree = D
5 = Strongly Disagree = SD
Favorability towards English language acquisition/teaching methods/techniques

The 24 rated methods/techniques were even reduced to 5 factors:

- Teacher
- School
- Peer
- Culture
- Family

The mean value displayed next to each chart reflects the tendency of agreement with regards to the header statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value Interval</th>
<th>Tendency of Agreement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – 1.49</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 – 2.49</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 – 3.49</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 – 4.49</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.5 – 5</td>
<td>SD</td>
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Below, the same frequencies of favorability towards English language acquisition/teaching methods/techniques ratings, are broken by gender.
1- At school, I felt that the English instructor's method in teaching was interesting?

2- I find that English language courses at school are easy.
3- I think our curriculum at school needed more subjects of study.

4- With all the subjects at school that we had to prepare for, studying for English was as equally important as the other subjects.
5- I find that English books were more appealing/interesting than Science books.

6- At school, our English teachers gave us a lot of homework.
7- My English teachers were often young, understanding and easy to approach.

8- I often looked forward to English classes.
9- I often studied for English classes at school.

10- I prefer to participate in English classes to encourage class discussions with my friends.
11- If I know French or Arabic, I feel a strong need to learn English.

12- I feel comfortable if I am writing and my teacher is standing next to me.
13- I learn English at school because I enjoy it as a subject.

![Histogram for question 13]

- **Mean**: 3.20
- **Std. Dev.**: 1.1855
- **N**: 75

14- I read books in English in my spare time.

![Histogram for question 14]

- **Mean**: 3.6267
- **Std. Dev.**: 1.30253
- **N**: 76
15- I don't think people who speak English with their friends outside school or class are fake.

Mean = 2.6267
Std. Dev. = 1.27738
N = 75
16. I don't make fun of my classmates who raise their hands and participate in English classes.

17. I feel very comfortable speaking English at home.
18- I feel very comfortable speaking English with my friends outside school.

19- My parents would be more proud of me if I became a teacher than a doctor, or an engineer or even worked in a company or a bank.
20- My parents would be more proud of me if I did well in English than in Math.

21- My parents would be more proud of me if I did well in English than in Science.
22- I believe it is more important to pass English than Math.

23- I believe it is more important to pass English than Science.
24- I learn English because it interests me as a language and not because I'd like to get a well paying job.
Bar Chart

1- At school, I felt that the English instructor's method in teaching was interesting?
Bar Chart

2- I find that English language courses at school are easy.
3- I think our curriculum at school needed more subjects of study.
4- With all the subjects at school that we had to prepare for, studying for English was as equally important as the other subjects.
5- I find that English books were more appealing/interesting than Science books.
Bar Chart

- Strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, strongly disagree
- Male (blue), female (green)

6- At school, our English teachers gave us a lot of homework.
7- My English teachers were often young, understanding and easy to approach.
Bar Chart

8. I often looked forward to English classes.
9- I often studied for English classes at school.
Bar Chart

10- I prefer to participate in English classes to encourage class discussions with my friends.
Bar Chart

11- If I know French or Arabic, I feel a strong need to learn English.
12- I feel comfortable if I am writing and my teacher is standing next to me.
Bar Chart

13- I learn English at school because I enjoy it as a subject.

Bar Chart

- Male
- Female
Bar Chart

15- I don't think people who speak English with their friends outside school or class are fake.
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**Bar Chart**

17- I feel very comfortable speaking English at home.
18- I feel very comfortable speaking English with my friends outside school.
19- My parents would be more proud of me if I became a teacher than a doctor, or an engineer or even worked in a company or a bank.
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21- My parents would be more proud of me if I did well in English than in Science.
Bar Chart

22- I believe it is more important to pass English than Math.
Bar Chart

23- I believe it is more important to pass English than Science.
24- I learn English because it interests me as a language and not because I'd like to get a well paying job.
Appendix B
Observations
Observation Checklist

✓ Students pay attention to the teacher and participate actively.
✓ Students don’t loiter, talk with their friends or doodle on their notebooks.
✓ Students don’t appear to be daydreaming or playing with their phones.
✓ Students’ body languages indicate interest in the content material.
✓ Students exhibit organized, responsible behavior indicating respect and reverence to the class time and the instructor.
✓ Students appear genuinely interested in the material through their questions, remarks, requests for further explanation and through the give-and-take process with their instructor.
✓ Students display respect for class time by coming in and leaving according to class meeting sessions.
✓ Students appear to be prepared for the class meeting times and assignments, and come with the necessary materials.
✓ Students exhibit cordial attitudes towards their teacher and classmates as opposed to being aloof and disinterested.
✓ Students exhibit readiness to cooperate and be involved in class discussions and activities.
Observation/anecdotal records (5 hours of random intensive classes)

-The class was quiet. Students kept pouring in till about twenty minutes afterwards. (A classroom of nine students-two girls and seven boys).

-The girls were seated and in place from the beginning of class. One lady sat in front while the other had chosen to sit in the middle row. The girls sat far away from each other. The boys on the other hand, sat towards the back, mostly grouped together. The boys kept pouring in till twenty minutes after class had started.

-A quiz was handed back to the students. The girls flipped through the quiz questions and asked for clarification. Two boys folded the quiz after looking at the grades and slipped them into the notebook. -One male student went through the quiz thoroughly and even asked the teacher for further clarification. -There were four students who had come in late. None asked for their quizzes. The teacher called their names as they were leaving class to hand back their exams.

-In general, the female students sat quietly, either raising their hands to ask questions while the boys would talk amongst themselves. The instructor had to ask two male students to quiet down twice.

-As for participation, girls remained quiet throughout the class period, not participating when a question was asked. As for the males, there was generally more participation from the males. One male continued to call out answers (not through raising his hands though) although the answers were incorrect.

-The girls seemed oblivious to the nonparticipant observer, while the males looked towards (me) and whispered among themselves-asking.

-Both girls had their books. Most boys had their books with the exception of one male student who sat next to his friend, sharing.

-One boy was restless, constantly getting up to stretch or to change his seat.

-Instructor changed a male student’s seat as he continued to talk with his friends during class.

-Boys participated more throughout the lesson. Girls were still and quiet. Though males participated more, they seemed to fidget or be more restless. One male kept shaking his foot, while another would remove his cap and then put it back on.

-One (veiled) female student was one step ahead of the class in terms of the teacher’s explanation.

-Boys seemed to be more interactive, while girls seemed quiet, timid and shy.
-One male student was reading the lesson on his own while the teacher was explaining the very lesson.
-When girls asked questions, they did so in Arabic. When prodded by the instructor, she seemed to hesitate and solicited help from her instructor by pausing, while the instructor threw in a word and the girl would continue. A male participated in helping to translate and complete the girl’s question.
-Boys exhibited restlessness. While females seemed to continue to listen to the instructor, or take notes, males seemed to look around, or look out the window, or even yawn.
-Though less participation came from the girls, they did seem to participate when they felt they had a correct answer to share.
-Three boys were noted to have been reading material from the book while the teacher was explaining the lesson.
-One male was taking notes, one boy was yawning, another was stretching.
-Body language: males’ body language was more relaxed, slacked off, seemed less interested-while girls seemed to sit with a forward slant.
-While males had their hands to the sides, or were stretching, girls had their legs crossed and their hands on their laps or on their notebooks.
-Boys commented on the heat. Girls said nothing.
-One male got up to turn on the AC (which was out of order).
-Students followed through with their teacher as she was reading through the text.
-Teacher said nothing as students (males) came in fifteen and twenty minutes late.
-More joking around between boys and teacher or amongst boys themselves.
-More fidgeting around from boys; boys seemed more interactive with teacher-and seemed more present physically. Girls shifted occasionally to reposition their legs or hands.
-One boy talked about his girlfriend, while another played with his hair. During the explanation (after an hour’s time) one boy was doodling in his notebook. Girls listened and wrote nothing an hour later down the explanation of the lesson.
-One male student had his hand on his cheek, slouched back and was yawning repetitively. Instructor said nothing.
-More male participation. Two boys offered to read. One boy corrected another who was reading. Girls said nothing.
- Though boys made more grammar errors, they continued to participate. When girls spoke, they often asked to have the answer repeated so that they could jot them down on their notebooks.
- Teacher called on the boys-and not the girls.
- One female student asked permission to go to the ladies room.
- Boys were quick to pack their belongings when class time was up.
- Boys’ answers seemed more high pitched and marked with potential enthusiasm that they may call out a correct answer, while girls answering seemed more timid and hesitant. Their voices were lower.
- When the instructor called on a girl, a male student finished her answer.
- Although the teacher mentioned that the two girls in class were smart, they didn’t participate as much as the boys.
- One male student asked to borrow a pen from his colleague who was sitting next to him in order to write down the answer.
Appendix C
Interviews
Interview Questions:

1) What did you like most about English class?
2) What did you like least?

(May ask: how did you feel about English class?)

3) If you could go back in time, would you change anything about your English teacher in school?
4) If you could go back in time, would you change anything about your English class in school?

5) What do you think contributed to your attitudes about English?

6) What was the greatest challenge you faced in your English classes at school?
Interview No. 1:

(Girl)

Q) What did you use to like about English class?

G) Umm, we used to have a lot of group work (smiles) and we used to have ah, we used to have projects-like topics about Shakespeare and uh stuff (pauses) it was different like you had a lot of choices, you know?

Q) What did you like least?

G) pauses and looks to the ceiling: umm, least...(more pause)..laughs..everything! (laughs) no! we had to stick to one answer in discussions. Or at least, the answers in the book..em..I hated that. I felt like-uh like I couldn’t say what I wanted to say, you know what I mean? Laughs. I like to share my ideas..

Q) how is that?

G) pauses and holds a steady gaze: it’s like whenever a topic got interesting, like civil marriage or God, the teacher always stopped us. She would not let us continue.

Q) Why do you think she did that?

G) shrugs her shoulders: I don’t know. May be she isn’t allowed to speak about such things in the school you know?..(frowns) or may be she is afraid such topics would create problems?

Q) What kind of problems?

G) Shrugs-I don’t know. Problems with parents maybe.

Q) If you could go back in time, would you change anything about your English teacher in your school?

G) ummm...yeah, my teacher! Laughs..no! I wish she could be more patient, you know?...she gave us homework every day, and we like had to like give it in the next day so it was hard to keep up. But I wouldn’t change her...(laughs) just the patience..

Q) If you could go back in time, would you change anything about your English class at school?

G) Ummm...pauses...would I change anything in school...looks at the ceiling... I think we never took any real topics-like social problems or religions..they didn’t really give us much space to think...so ...umm.eh, I think it would be nice to talk more..like..umm..the school I went to was a British Pakistani school..so umm...we had topics that you couldn’t say your opinion about...you know? They seemed strict about topics like um..we couldn’t have topics about homosexuality or mixed marriages.
Q) What do you think contributed to your attitudes about English?

G) my attitudes? Pauses...umm..i like to say my opinion and most of the time I feel I can’t...

Q) Why?

G) laughs...it’s not good for a girl to talk too much...if a girl talks too much her personality-it lowers her appearance in front of others..plus my teacher seemed to be too strict with the book, always followed it..pauses..frowns...narrow minded..i think..pauses...it really was depressing..i don’t like it when I can’t say what I want to say, you know? Like I hate to be told what to say..

Q) Thank you for your time. I enjoyed this conversation/interview.

G) Thank you . Me too.
Interview No. 2:

(Male)

Q) What did you use to like about English class?

M) Firstly, I took eh English like eh a second language and emm my main language is French I like eh my English teacher she was very lively.

Q) But what in specific did you really like about English?

M) English eh was very important for me..Grammar especially. When I had to learn English, I learned very hard. The most thing I liked it's writing and conversation

Q) What did you like least?

M) Nothing.

Q) Nothing at all?

M) Yes because every person has his own personality.

Q) I am not sure I understand. I mean, wasn't there something that bothered you about English classes in general?

M) Yes. (laughs). They used to give eh us too many exams and homeworks.

Q) If you could go back in time, would you change anything about your English teacher in your school?

M) Nothing. For me, she was the way a teacher should be-eh always smiling, giving us interesting discussions, easy to talk to and approach..eh (smiles) she understood all students and what (yi-za3ilon) (displeases them) and we didn't have problems during the year.

Q) 'She'? Who's 'she'?


Q) Tab what about the other English teachers you had at school?

M) (looks to the ceiling)..In general they were all like this...at least the ones I took English. You see, it's not enough to wait for the teacher to do something..eh, like for me par example, I am French educated..My sister, she eeh helped me very much at home. She did her Masters at A.U.B and she helped me so much to become better in English...

Q) How did she do that? What did she do?
M) Well eh, we used to practice speaking together in English, having conversations, (pauses)...if I eh had any questions she would help me with them...she explained much for me...
Q) Like what-what did your sister use to explain?

M) Well, eh for me, grammar-if I eh had any uh questions during my revision, I—I could always ask my sister...but especially in conversation, she helped me a lot..

Q) If you could go back in time, would you change anything about your English class at school?

M) I said before, English was very important for me. My eh first language is French. I uh think we should have more hours of English...you know, we only took three or four hours a week, or twice a week double sessions...

Q) Three or four hours the entire week? Did you feel that was enough?

M) No, not at all...this is the problem eh you see... (pauses), me I worked very hard on myself...it's not enough to take a few hours in school...you must to go home and work on yourself also...I worked long and hard on myself to learn English...it's not enough to rely on the lesson...you have to work alone if you want to learn anything..

Q) What do you think contributed to your attitudes about English?

M) I like the language and my sister helped me very much. Eh we are three children in the house...my sister helped me very much to like the language and learn it...French was the main language at home and uh like my brother and I eh are uh French educated...she eh she helped me in the house...we eh we discussed together in English and when I had any troubles, she made me like English..

Q) Did you face any challenges in English?

M) No, nothing.

Q) Thank you very much for your time.

M) You are welcome.
Interview No. 3:

(Male)

Q) What did you use to like about English class?
M) Nothing (laughs)

Q) (smile) No, really, there must be something you liked about the class?
M) shrugs his shoulders...shakes his head and smiles..nothing.

Q) Why?
M) My teacher used to come to class and didn't explain for us anything...(smiles) so we talked to each other during the class...eh we passed time (smiles and shrugs)

Q) So what did you do during exam time or quizzes?
M) Well- uh ana kint wa’t il imtehan...

Q) (smile) in English? Can you?
M) (smiles)- eh during the exam, I did it, I wrote it...most of the times I didn't do so well...

Q) If you could go back in time, would you change anything about your English teacher in your school?
M) Everything..eh I felt the teacher...you know...kenit hatta min ehtaty...

Q) You mean she picked on you?
M) Yes.. (leans forward)..she picked on me..

Q) But why?
M) Well, my brother from eh before me...he made a uh problem with a teacher and the administration, eh so when the new teacher came, I felt he eh hated me min awal yawm.. from the first day...

Q) How did you feel that? I mean what did the teacher do?
M) eh, (waves his hand in a sweeping movement) ken yish hatni min essaf

Q) (smiles) In English
M) He used to send me out of the class for nothing...

Q) He? It was a male teacher?

M) Yes. I didn’t like him..

Q) Tayeb what about your other teachers? Weren’t there other teachers, or other sections?

M) No it’s not like that...(mish hayk kelna). We had him for two years at least in our school. He was the teacher for the life..

Q) I’m sorry-I don’t understand. “life”?

M) Yes. You have life, science x...

Q) Oh, so you were split up into sections, and each section had it’s own teacher...?

M) eh, shee hayk -yes.

Q) If you could go back in time, would you change anything about your English class at school?

M) shrugs..no time...we had too many subjects at school..

Q) How many hours of English did you have per week?

M) eh, around three maybe...

Q) Three hours per week? Shouldn’t you have more?

M) Yes but how...we were life science...so we take most important like math, physics biology...

Q) Ah, so if you went into more scientific subjects, you took more sciences and maths, yes?

M) eyh..yes..

Q) What do you think you’d like to change most about your English teacher(s) in school?

M) taree it et ta a3mol ma3 it tlamiz...the way the teachers interact with students...they should give more explanation...more interaction, you know..eh give and take with the students...listen to students, hear their ideas..

Q) What do you think contributed to your attitudes about English?

M) What I mentioned from before...if you feel you have a problem at school with the teacher or the administration, everything becomes...hayk..saeel...you’re not happy..
Q) What did you find most challenging in English classes?

M) ya’ni..writing essays..I have the ideas but I don’t know how to put them together...ma ba’rif..

Q) Thank you very much for your time.

M) eyh.. (smiles)
Appendix D
Questionnaire
Student Questionnaire
The Effect of Gender and Cultural Factors on Student Language Acquisition

Dear Intensive III Student,

I would appreciate if you fill the following questionnaire for purposes of completing research. All information will be kept anonymous. In case you are not interested in participating, kindly return the form unanswered. Thank you in advance.

A) Personal Information:

- Gender: Male / Female
- Age: _________
- Is this your first semester at L.A.U.? Yes / No

B) Please circle the answer that best describes how you feel: SA → Strongly Agree; A → Agree; U → Undecided; D → Disagree; SD → Strongly Disagree

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) At school, I felt that the English instructor’s method in teaching was interesting</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) I find that English language courses at school are easy.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) I think our curriculum at school needed more subjects of study.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) With all the subjects at school that we had to prepare for, studying for English was as equally important as the other subjects.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
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<tr>
<td>5) I find that English books were more appealing/interesting than Science books.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) At school, our English teachers gave us a lot of homework.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) My English teachers were</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Codes</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I often looked forward to English classes.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I often studied for English classes at school.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I prefer to participate in English classes to encourage class discussions with my friends.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>If I know French or Arabic, I feel a strong need to learn English.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>I feel comfortable if I am writing and my teacher is standing next to me.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I learn English at school because I enjoy it as a subject.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I read books in English in my spare time.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I don't think people who speak English with their friends outside school or class are fake.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>I don't make fun of my classmates who raise their hands and participate in English classes.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>I feel very comfortable speaking English at home.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>I feel very comfortable speaking English with my friends outside school.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>My parents would be more proud of me if I became a teacher than a doctor, or an engineer or even worked in a company or a bank.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>My parents would be more proud of me if I did well in English than in Math.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>My parents would be more proud of me if I did well in English than in Science.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I believe it is worse to fail English than Math.</td>
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<td>22)</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
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<td>23)</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
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<td>24)</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I learn English because it interests me as a language and not because I'd like to get a well paying job.</th>
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<tr>
<td>25)</td>
<td>Would you like to add anything else?</td>
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Appendix E
Frequency Table of Student Enrollment by Major and Gender
Frequencies of Enrolled Students by Major and Gender

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Business (Arts)</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Business (Arts)</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Freshman Arts</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Freshman Arts</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Computer Engineering</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Biology</td>
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<td>F</td>
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<td>M</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Communication Arts</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Economics</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>Graphic Design</td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Graphic Design</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Hospitality Management</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Interior Design</td>
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