Lexical Differences between Spoken and Written English among Year 12 Students in Saudi Arabia

A thesis by

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CLT	community language teaching
CC	communicative competence
EFL	English as a foreign language
ESL	English as a second language
ELT	English language teaching
SLA	second language acquisition
L1	first language
L2	second/foreign language
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
NS	native speaker of English
HAs	high achievers
MAs	medium achievers
LAs	low achievers
MoE	ministry of education
N	number of participants
SD	standard deviation

Author declaration

I certify that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text.

Ahlam Rashid Algofaili

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Abstract

It is widely acknowledged that the effective learning of English should provide learners with the skills required to interact successfully with English speakers. Failure to gain interactional competence can result in misunderstandings between non-native and native speakers of English and in the fear of being evaluated negatively (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003; Glaser, 2014; Taguchi, 2011; Thomas, 1983; Yates, 2010).

While the debate on the effectiveness of English teaching in Saudi Arabia's secondary classrooms is ongoing, little attention has been given to the acquisition of distinct registers in oral and written tasks. Register, broadly speaking, refers to the concept that our language varies according to the purposes or functions we are trying to achieve and to the situation in which we find ourselves; while some choices of vocabulary and grammar appear appropriate to specific contexts and functions, others may not.

The main question being investigated in this study is whether, and to what extent, school learners of English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia are aware of the varieties of language registers and able to put their awareness into practice. Surprisingly, this question has been under-explored in the Arabic-speaking world in spite of the popularity of English courses in the Middle East.

This research began with the assumption that many Saudi students would speak and write in a similar fashion—typically using a formal register, due perhaps to a lack of explicit training in recognising the differences between registers.

In order to test the assumption, a mixed methods study was conducted to compare the lexical differences between spoken and written narratives completed by a group of female high school EFL learners in Saudi Arabia. The study also investigated the potential role of classroom instruction and the textbook in teaching differences between language registers. Five different methods were used to triangulate the data: picture-story retelling tasks, both spoken and written; a students' background questionnaire; classroom observation; a teacher interview; and finally, the evaluation of the textbook.

Analysis of the data revealed that ***the original assumption was incorrect***. While the overall results indicated that the student participants did not differentiate much between spoken and written registers, as expected, it was also found that *the learners relied heavily on an informal English register for both speaking and writing*. This was contrary to expectations, but, nevertheless an interesting and important result in terms of how English is currently taught and learned in a modern Saudi Arabia. The originality of the findings lies in the discovery that young Saudi learners draw on external resources to gain interactional competence. They acquire a considerable amount of colloquial English through their participation in diverse social contexts, mostly mediated through the Internet and movies, which they then transfer into their writing. Furthermore, the examination of the textbook and the teacher's approach clearly indicated that Saudi EFL students were not being explicitly taught the differences between spoken and written English.

As a result, the contribution of this research to EFL pedagogy in Saudi Arabia is significant as it needs to respond to the challenges of modern ways of communicating. The conclusion outlines some practical suggestions to assist English as a second language teachers to plan and deliver effective English lessons, providing opportunities for learners to recognise differences between English speech and written texts with regards to vocabulary usage. Moreover, this research will be of interest to other educational stakeholders, policy makers and textbook authors in many similar EFL contexts to Saudi Arabia. It contributes to drawing their attention to the socio-linguistic content of language teaching besides the purely linguistic focus of current EFL teaching practices.

Lexical Differences between Spoken and Written English among Year 12 Students in Saudi Arabia

Chapter 1

Introduction

The research reported in this thesis seeks to investigate the ability of learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) to distinguish between spoken and written registers in regard to vocabulary, and how this ability is developed in the classroom. Being aware of the varieties of language registers and able to use them appropriately in accordance with the context is part of a speaker's communicative competence that is crucial for learners to develop. If learners do not develop this ability, they risk being evaluated negatively. Similarly, if English programs in schools and institutions do not aim to develop this competence, they will keep producing learners who are not very effective in using English for real-life purposes.

This chapter provides a general review of the research undertaken as part of this project. Firstly, the research background in the field of language registers (speech and writing) is presented. Secondly, the rationale of the study is explained. Thirdly, the aims of the study are presented, along with the research approach. Subsequently, the status of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Saudi Arabia is discussed to identify the need of teaching/learning English for communication purposes. Finally, the significance of this research is outlined, and the structure of the thesis is described.

1.1 Study background

While acquiring one's mother tongue (L1) is a normal part of every child's development, learning a second/foreign language (L2) is considered an achievement. That is, not all learners succeed in mastering a foreign language or achieving native-like fluency. Mackey (1965, as cited in Cook, 2016, p. 108) states: 'The learning of the first language follows the same pattern for every one'; 'the learning of the second language can take on a variety of patterns'. This is because many factors, including individual psychology, linguistic aptitude, and social surroundings have a strong influence on second language acquisition (Cook, 2016). This study investigates whether Saudi learners who speak English as a L2 succeed in distinguishing between spoken and written English in terms of vocabulary. Linguists commonly characterise oral communication, across all languages, as having simple structure, high context dependency, and frequent use of the most common words, while written language is described as more formal, abstract, complex and elaborate (Biber, 1991). Both modes of expression are fully capable of expressing what is intended, but with slight differences in material and texture, like a painter choosing watercolours or oil paints to capture the same landscape. As Halliday (1989, p. 9) has stated, ‘the two are both language; and the language is more important than either’.

Thus, the ways in which language is used varies according to its intended purpose or function, and this fact is fundamental to communication. Halliday (1985, p. 17) argues that function is ‘a fundamental property of language itself’, one of the few core principles that is needed to define how language works, and different functions are more appropriately fulfilled through either written or spoken communication.

A person would never sit down to tell a story to a friend using the language register of a novel, for example, nor would they write a job application using language commonly heard in the coffee shop. According to Crystal (1995, p. 178), when people are in close proximity, they ‘do not write to each other when [they] have the opportunity to speak, apart from such exceptional cases as secretive children in class and spouses who are not talking’.

There may be many instances where something could equally well be spoken or written, yet our written and oral outputs are usually very different, even when our intended meaning is the same. The salient differences between speech and writing, according to Cornbleet and Carter (2001), regard vocabulary, grammar and style. The topic of this research concerns the differences in vocabulary usage, in particular, the ability of learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) to distinguish between spoken and written English vocabulary.

However, it must be noted that in view of internet writing now, the written and oral modes are not clearly separated, and certain forms of communication do not necessarily make a clear distinction between the two. That is, it is not necessarily odd or inappropriate to mix both. Yet, in the context of the present study, i.e., classroom learning, only the opposite ends of the continuum which clearly distinguish between writing and speech are being considered, e.g., writing a formal composition vs. interacting orally with a peer.

The research examined specifically how EFL learners' speech differs from their writing in regard to the coverage of most frequently used vocabulary, lexical diversity, sophistication and formality. Each of these four elements is defined below.

1.1.1 The coverage of most frequently used words

Despite the fact that English contains a vast array of lexical possibilities, some words are utilised far more frequently than others. For example, those termed *general service vocabulary* words (West, 1953), such as *and* or *the* occur often regardless of their context or the purpose of their usage. On the other hand, we have words like 'erstwhile' and 'ailurophile', which appear rarely, if ever, in the corpus of everyday language.

Among the various lists of most common words in English, the most frequently used and cited is that of West's 1953 General Service List (GSL). West's (1953) primary aim was to produce a vocabulary list that would be of 'general service' to English learners. The GSL is a list of approximately two thousand words. A written corpus of five million words was used to calculate the frequency of word occurrence.

Despite being published in the early 1950s, being based entirely on written language, and containing some errors, the GSL continues to be the most cited word frequency list available to date (Milton, 2009). Moreover, all the available measures of word coverage, including the ones used in the current study, [e.g., *Lexical Frequency Profile (LFP)* (Laufer & Nation, 1995); *RANGE* (Heatley, Nation, & Coxhead, 1994); *Web Vocabprofile* (Cobb, 2009); *P_Lex* (Meara & Bell, 2001)] also compare texts to West's GSL.

As a consensus, among native English speakers, the most frequent 2,000 words cover almost 80% of normal written language (Carroll, Davies, Richman, & Davies, 1971, as cited in Nation, 2001, p. 15; Francis & Kucera, 1982; Milton, 2009; Nation, 2001), and nearly 99% (Schonell, Middleton, & Shaw, 1956) or 95% (Adolphs & Schmitt, 2003) of normal speech. The current study investigates how often Saudi EFL learners utilise these words in written and spoken language. That is, word/lexical coverage in the current study refers to the percentage of the most frequent 2,000 words in English, described in the General Service List (West, 1953), appearing in a written or oral text.

1.1.2 Lexical sophistication

A person who says, ‘the feline reposed on the antique Persian rug’, will appear to be much more eloquent and possessing of a more sophisticated lexicon than one who merely says ‘the cat sat on the mat’, even though the two are essentially equivalent in meaning (Milton, 2009, p. 131). Calculating the occurrence of infrequently used, or ‘rare’ words in a given text, as a percentage of the total, can give us a useful measure of word sophistication (Laufer & Nation, 1995).

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that the distinction between frequent and infrequent words is rather arbitrary and no one can draw a cut-off between them (Nation, 2001, p. 19). Consequently, in most cases lexical sophistication is measured by categorising any word that falls within the 2,000 most frequent words of the GSL as frequent, and those that do not as infrequent. That is, lexical sophistication can be defined as the proportion of vocabulary items in a text that are not among the most frequent 2,000 words (Laufer & Nation, 1995; Milton, 2009).

1.1.3 Lexical formality

It is widely understood that the many different contexts, purposes, audiences, and modalities of language will result in a variation of style and register (Bell, 1984). And it has been argued that the concept of formality is an important element of variation between registers or styles (Heylighen & Dewaele, 1999).

Formality is divided by Heylighen and Dewaele (1999) into ‘surface’ and ‘deep’ formality. When form is being considered for the sake of form, or merely for convention’s sake, this is understood as surface formality. On the other hand, when form is considered for the purpose of gaining a definite comprehension of the expression, this is understood as deep formality.

Heylighen and Dewaele (1999, p. 5) argue that ‘deep’ formality is ‘the avoidance of ambiguity by minimising the context-dependence and fuzziness of expressions’. Words are called context-dependent or ‘deictic’ (Levelt, 1989, p. 58) if their denotational meaning varies depending on place or/and time, although their semantic meaning is fixed. English pronouns, for example, are deictic because their meaning depends on context. These can be differentiated into four sub-types as follows:

- deixis of person (my, we, her)
- deixis of time (yesterday, later, now)

- deixis of place (those, there, upstairs)
- deixis of discourse (yes, therefore, however).

For instance, the following statement ‘She’ll come here soon’ is highly context-dependent and can be rephrased more formally as ‘Jane Smith will come to the United States on April 20, 2019’. Thus, the context dependence of expression is avoided by incorporating the contextual information which would disambiguate the statement.

However, according to Heylighen and Dewaele (1999), there are some instances that simply contain an inherent and unavoidable level of ambiguity which cannot be resolved by incorporating information about the context, such as when the pertinent details are just unavailable. For example, the most accurate description of temperature, in the absence of a thermometer, may be merely ‘it is hot’. Even if we add modifiers such as ‘very’ or ‘like the sun’, the interpretation remains largely subjective and affective without an exact numerical temperature point. The word ‘hot’, therefore, has an inherently ‘vague or fuzzy’ meaning (Heylighen & Dewaele, 1999, p. 7).

Thus, if the meaning of deep formality is disambiguation, then formal styles must avoid vague or ‘fuzzy’ words, as well as those dependent on context. Consequently, the basic advantage of formality is that a person can avoid misinterpretation on the part of an audience that is not inhabiting the same situational context that they are. This is essentially what enables the functionality of writing, as any message on any subject can be broadcast to and understood by anyone with the skills to read it, and the more unambiguous it is, the more likely it is to be understood further afield from the context of the original sender. This explains why writing is usually more formal than conversational speech (Biber, 1991; Nation, 2001). In the present investigation, an empirical formality measure developed by Heylighen and Dewaele (1999), the F-score, is used to determine the formality level of written and oral texts produced by language learners.

1.1.4 Lexical diversity (or lexical richness)

The purpose of language is communication. That is, vocabulary is almost never something that we learn just for the sake of learning. Thus, a basic goal for any vocabulary teaching program should be to enable learners to use new vocabulary communicatively (Linnarud, 1986) in such a way that matches their context and purpose. For instance, words used for writing an essay should be different from those for casual conversations.

Lexical diversity, also known as ‘lexical richness’, is the range of different words in an oral or written text (Milton, 2009, p. 129). It has long been used as an effective indicator of language proficiency (e.g., Malvern & Richards, 1997; Zareva, Schwanenflugel, & Nikolova, 2005), as well as a strong predictor of writing quality (e.g., Laufer & Nation, 1995) and oral performance quality (e.g., Jarvis, 2002; Malvern & Richards, 2002; O'Loughlin, 1995). However, it has been generally assumed that speech inherently uses a lower number of different words than writing because of the frequent repetition of common and formulaic vocabulary (Carter, 1998; Milton, 2009).

This research presents an empirical analysis of samples of speech and writing produced by EFL learners that seeks to explore whether and to what degree English learners differentiate between spoken and written registers in regard to lexical diversity.

1.2 Rationale for the study

In 2009, I moved to the United Kingdom from Saudi Arabia to work on a master’s degree. In time, I realised, through my conversations with native speakers, that the words and phrases I had learned from my English textbooks at school were not suitable for spoken communication. The speech of English native speakers was much less formal and more simplified than mine and, as a result, I was coming across as very formal. This personal experience encouraged me to investigate in an objective way whether my experience demonstrates a general truth among Saudi learners of English.

1.2.1 Personal rationale

My five-year experience of studying abroad, as well as three-year experience teaching English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia, has led to the same anecdotal observation as my personal experience in the UK. I noted that many Saudi students did not distinguish between formal and informal registers when speaking English as a L2. Consequently, I became more interested in finding out how widespread this phenomenon is and in searching for its possible causes.

While there may be many causes, I selected two with which I was particularly familiar—teaching materials and teaching practices. I speculated, from experience, that the type of English instruction received by Saudi students in schools is not effective in developing sensitivity to different language registers. That is, students are unlikely to be taught explicitly to observe the lexical differences between spoken and written English, or at least to be exposed to spoken English during a lesson.

Therefore, students may never have the opportunity to notice which words are more common in speech than others. Unsurprisingly, they are therefore likely to treat all words the same, and consequently speak and write in quite similar ways. That is, students would use the formal English they learned at school in both their speech and writing, giving their speech an overly formal tone.

Furthermore, it should be recognised that the reason for focussing the research on the Saudi Arabian context is that I am a product of the Saudi education system and I am very keen to contribute to enhancing English language teaching in my home country.

1.2.2 Theoretical rationale

Most researchers in applied linguistics have been concerned with either spoken or written lexical qualities, but not with comparing the two when produced by the same participants. The literature review indicated that only one relatively recent study produced by Yu (2010) has compared the lexical qualities of speech and writing produced by the same person.

Different learners of English participated in Yu's study and his sole focus was on the lexical diversity in oral and written English. Compared to Yu (2010), the current study investigates more aspects of the lexical differences between written and spoken registers such as: the coverage of most frequently used words, lexical sophistication and formality. The current study, however, focusses on a single EFL context, an English class in a female-only public high school in Saudi Arabia.

Additionally, the earlier literature reveals a large number of studies examining textbooks in different contexts around the world. The researchers largely used surveys to elicit the perspectives of English teachers, supervisors and students on the textbooks (e.g., Alamri, 2008; Dahmardeh, 2013; Thein, 2006), and standardised evaluation checklists. Most of the surveys used a Likert scale to measure the responses to closed-ended questions and, consequently, produced a superficial examination of many of the items in the textbooks, such as the textbook's aims, organisation, illustrations, exercises and activities.

There are few qualitative studies that provide a detailed description and examination of a certain aspect of the textbook, as has been done in the current study. These qualitative studies on English language teaching textbooks mainly focussed on either the cultural content included in textbooks

(Ahmed & Narcy-Combes, 2011; Lesikin, 2001; Ndura, 2004) or the pragmatic content (Gilmore, 2004; Kakiuchi, 2005; Usó-Juan, 2008). The current research, however, includes an in-depth examination of textbook material in relation to one particular area—different registers—which, upon investigation, appears to have never been examined in previous studies. Additionally, the present study is different from previous studies on Saudi EFL textbooks in the sense that the target textbook *Traveller6* has been deeply examined for the first time.

1.3 Purpose of the study

As indicated, my personal experience, and that of other Saudi students struggling with different language registers, led to the choice of this thesis topic. Thus, the main assumption in this research was that many Saudi students do not differentiate between formal and informal registers when speaking English as a foreign language (i.e., they speak and write in a quite similar, often formal, way) and one explanation may be due to the lack of explicit training in recognising differences between registers.

Without analysing the English vocabulary produced by Saudi students in writing and in speech, as well as investigating the type of instruction received by Saudi students in schools, the accuracy of this assumption would remain uncertain. Accordingly, a case study was conducted to compare the lexical differences between spoken and written narratives produced by a group of high school EFL learners in Saudi Arabia. Two language production tasks were implemented (see section 1.4.2) in order to conduct this aspect of the study. It is important to state clearly that this study examines differences in register use in narrative description tasks. The implications for register use in other tasks and genres are outside of the scope of this thesis.

The potential role of student instruction in teaching differences between language registers was also investigated. Classroom observation, a teacher interview and textbook evaluation were conducted (see section 1.4.2).

1.4 Research approach

The research took the form of a case study involving multiple sources of data, different methods of data collection and methods of analysis. Employing both qualitative and quantitative approaches, the current study adopted a *mixed methods approach* (Creswell, 2013). The research was divided into two periods of investigation:

Phase 1: Investigation of the learners' ability to use lexical differences between spoken and written English productively

Phase 2: The role of classroom instruction and materials in developing students' awareness of different registers

1.4.1 Participants

A female high school English teacher along with her Year 12 level all female class were the target participants in the present project. Further data were collected from five native speakers of English to provide a basis for comparison between the Saudi participants' output and the language naturally provided by English native speakers, in order to aid in the interpretation of results. The native speakers were the same gender and age as the Saudi participants; they were all female, aged 18. The participant recruitment process is discussed in Chapter 3.

1.4.2 Methods

Five different methods were used to gather the data:

- picture-story retelling tasks
- students' background questionnaire
- classroom observation
- teacher's interview
- textbook evaluation.

In the Methodology chapter (Chapter 3), all the methods relating to each phase are explained in detail.

1.5 Context of the study: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)

Saudi Arabia is one of the largest countries in the Middle East with a total area of approximately 2,150,000 km^2 and a total population of 32,552,336 (General Authority for Statistics, 2018). The official language in Saudi Arabia is Arabic.

1.5.1 Education in Saudi Arabia

Mandela (2003, p.1) noted that 'education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world', and governments across the globe should invest in the education of their citizens to help their countries compete in the global economy. In Saudi Arabia, education has been a top priority.

Over the last two decades, the budget for education in Saudi Arabia has been equal to a quarter of the national budget (Abahussain, 2016). Under the universal slogan 'Education for all', public education is open to every resident and citizen in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with the government providing free transportation, tuition and textbooks. The government also supports public university students with monthly stipends to encourage them to pursue higher education (Alamri, 2011; Rugh, 2002).

In addition, the Saudi Arabian government provides scholarships for its citizens to study overseas. In the last ten years, students from Saudi Arabia have represented the fourth most numerous group of international students in universities across the United States. Saudi Arabians are by a wide margin the first source of students originating from Middle Eastern countries studying in the US (Open Doors, 2017).

Despite these efforts made by the government for education, the outcomes of the Saudi education system are not always positive. For instance, the growing number of Saudi students studying abroad has prompted numerous studies which have evaluated Saudi students' readiness for their overseas experiences in terms of English communication skills (e.g., Alharbi, 2015; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015) and investigated the language and cultural difficulties these students frequently encounter while overseas (e.g., Al-wossabi, 2016; Ben Duhaish, 2015).

The studies have been critical of Saudi students' English communication skills (e.g., Al-Seghayer, 2015; Al-wossabi, 2016; Alanazi & Widin, 2018; Alharbi, 2015; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; Bani Younes & Albalawi, 2016; Elyas & Al Grigri, 2014; Fareh, 2010; Rababah, 2003). The results of the studies indicate that Saudi EFL learners can demonstrate a high level of linguistic competence on grammar-based exams, but many of them cannot speak English fluently and accurately (see section 2.8 for details).

Subsequently, the effectiveness of English programs taught in schools and institutions in Saudi Arabia has been the subject of investigation by various researchers (Al-Seghayer, 2015; Al-wossabi, 2016; Alanazi & Widin, 2018; Alharbi, 2015; Batawi, 2006; Ben Duhaish, 2015). These researchers argue that EFL teaching in Saudi Arabia centres on developing linguistic competency, while only giving marginal consideration to the development of communicative and sociolinguistic competence. A detailed review of EFL instruction in Saudi Arabia is provided in Chapter 2, aiming to show the constraints of Saudi EFL classes for developing students' communication skills.

1.5.2 ELT in the Saudi Arabian context

An ever-increasing dominance of English has spread throughout the areas of technology, business, commerce, research, politics, education, communication and tourism, and it has achieved the status of the sole international language or the *lingua franca* (Crystal, 2012; McKay, 2003). As reported in Al-Jarf (2008), approximately 85% of international organisations rely on English as their primary operational language, 90% of the total internet is English, and 'one out of four people around the world can communicate in English'. Furthermore, the number of people across the world who are attempting to learn English is nearly a billion (Al-Jarf, 2008, p. 197). The overwhelming dominance of the English language has initiated an unprecedented trend of teaching and learning it in almost all countries. In non-English speaking nations, English is taught as a foreign language and Saudi Arabia is included in this regard.

Moreover, the discovery of oil fields in Saudi Arabia in the twentieth century attracted many international companies which started an era of English teaching and learning in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Nather, 2014). In 1927, the Kingdom established its first official primary and secondary schools. At the same time, English was integrated into secondary education, but without any particular curriculum. Almost 30 years later, with the introduction of the intermediate level in 1953, a specific English curriculum was imported for the intermediate as well as secondary level (Al-Subahi, 2001). The resulting curriculum was heavily borrowed from Egypt, and as such, it was found to be unsuitable for Saudi Arabian customs and requirements.

Only five years later, in 1958, the government held a conference on education that would spark a series of significant reforms in the organisation of education in the country, including the allocation of 11 regional offices to oversee the provision of education throughout the different regions of the country. In 1970, the framework of education as we know it today began to form. Education policymakers soon realised the significance of English as a global language of communication and introduced it as a mandatory subject in all public schools in 1972 (Al-Subahi, 2001). Since then, English language education has become a priority in the educational agenda, and currently English is the sole foreign language offered in Saudi schools. Public schools in Saudi Arabia have EFL teachers from different Arabic backgrounds; some are Palestinians, Jordanians, Egyptians and Saudis, while some private schools employ English teachers from Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States (Al-Omrani, 2008).

English language was formerly a compulsory school subject from the seventh grade. In 2012, however, English began to be taught from the fourth grade. To define the seventh and fourth grades in Saudi public schools, it is necessary to briefly review the current structure of the education system in Saudi Arabia. The current educational progression begins with elementary school which covers first through sixth grade. In the intermediate school, students complete grades seven through nine. During secondary school (high school), students go through grades 10, 11 and 12. During secondary schooling, a student's educational progress is measured by their grade point average (GPA), which largely determines where they enrol for their tertiary education. High GPAs allow graduates to access more prestigious schools and academic programs like medicine or engineering (Batawi, 2006). Thus, it is not surprising to find students focussing more on grades than actual learning in Saudi schools.

Al-Blauwi (2016) has explained that EFL learners in the Saudi Arabian context are judged based on their grades in written exams, rather than their overall proficiency of English, and this reality demotivates them from learning English for communication purposes (see section 2.8.3). However, the new projects and practices (discussed in the next section), such as the Neom project, that have recently been adopted in Saudi Arabia will most likely increase the use of English in the Saudi community, and consequently raise the necessity for teaching/learning English for communication purposes.

1.5.3 The modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

In the Saudi Arabian context, as is the case in many EFL contexts in which English is rarely spoken in the community (as opposed to English as a Second Language ESL), students have limited opportunities to be exposed to or use English in real-life situations. This limited English speaking environment outside the classroom has generally been considered to be a significant reason for the lack of communicative competence among Saudi students (e.g., Al Seghayer, 2013; Ben Duhaish, 2015).

Moreover, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has long been known for its traditional societal and religious culture (Alrahaili, 2018, Nather, 2014). While more than a million Saudis to date have studied abroad, millions of others are immersed in this conservative culture (Kinninmont, 2018). According to some studies, conservative families hold negative attitudes towards speaking EFL, believing that English or any foreign language conflicts with their Islamic values (Al Darwish, 2018; Alharbi, 2015; Asiri, 2017; Khan, 2011a; Osailan, 2009; Shah, Hussain, & Nasseef, 2013). However, this may change in the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The Saudi Arabian government, with the new leaders of the royal family, has recently put in place Vision 2030, a policy that aims to set forth a number of social, cultural, economic and political improvements (National Transformation Program, 2016). More specifically, Saudi Arabia has embarked on a wide-ranging program of social reforms that aims to open the society and engage the Saudi Arabian people in the international community.

For instance, in 2017, the Kingdom announced, as part of Vision 2030, the creation of Neom, a new semi-autonomous region with separate laws 'on par with international standards' that is designated as a one-of-its-kind industrial and scientific zone, as well as a world-class destination for international tourism. The project will cost around $500 billon and promises to deliver a style of living unavailable in today's Saudi Arabia (Shahine, Carey, & Nereim, 2017). It has been claimed that the creation of Neom enhances the position of Saudi Arabia on the world tourist map (Arab News, 2018).

Moreover, Saudi Arabia's recent decision to end its 35-year ban on cinemas is another part of a wider change across society. The first public film screening was that of an English film on 18 April 2018, shown for five days in a 620-seat cinema in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia (Petroff, 2018). The government hopes that by 2030, Saudi Arabia will have more than 300 movie theatres with over 2,000 screens (Paul, 2017).

Attracting tourists and promoting foreign films are symbolic moves signalling changes to the institutionalised conservative attitudes towards foreign cultures/languages in the country. Moreover, these projects are leading to an increase in the exposure to and use of English in the country. To adapt and take advantage of such moves, Saudi people need to have an effective command of English.

Furthermore, the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman, recently made the promise to steer the Kingdom toward 'what we were before—a country of moderate Islam that is open to all religions and to the world' (Sanchez, 2017, p. 1). Again, to open to the world or to develop an understanding between the world and Saudi Arabia, it is increasingly important for Saudi people to learn the global language English for communication purposes rather than for the sake of passing exams, which has often been the case until now. As suggested by Picard (2018, p. 161), a high level of English competence is valued for Saudi citizens because of the importance of English for achieving the Saudi Arabian government's goals, as envisaged in Vision 2030, such as encouraging trade, enhancing political relations, and creating economy growth with foreign countries.

1.6 Significance of the study

The importance of learning English is rapidly increasing due to the globalisation of commerce, which has been led by English speaking peoples. The effective learning of English should equip learners with the knowledge and skills required to interact successfully with other speakers. In the field of linguistic and communication research known as *pragmatics*, an important part of a speaker's communicative, or pragmatic competence, is their ability to distinguish between language registers. It is well known that native English speakers rarely speak in the same way as they write, yet the question remains as to whether, or to what extent learners of English as a foreign language are aware of this difference and put it into practice.

Surprisingly, the review of the literature indicated that no study of which the researcher is aware has ever attempted to answer this question in the Arab world context, in spite of the popularity of English courses in the Middle East. The importance of a research project such as this one comes from the need to know whether or not English learners develop this part of their L2 pragmatic competence because failure to do so may result in a total breakdown of communication between learners and English speakers or at least partly for fear of being evaluated negatively (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003; Glaser, 2014; Taguchi, 2011; Thomas, 1983; Yates, 2010) (see section 2.3.2).

More specifically, studying the field of pragmatics within the context of Saudi Arabia is of great importance because of the fast-growing Saudi interest of investing in students pursuing their higher education abroad. As a result of the King Abdullah Foreign Scholarship Program which launched in 2005, thousands of Saudis are given the opportunity to study in English speaking countries and to interact with English native speakers for the first time in their lives (e.g., Al-Seghayer, 2015; Alanazi & Widin, 2018; Alharbi, 2015; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; Bani Younes & Albalawi, 2016; Batawi, 2006; Fareh, 2010). Therefore, research on Saudi students' communicative and pragmatic competence is required to evaluate to what degree they are prepared, or not prepared, to cope with the linguistic and cultural demands of studying abroad or using English appropriately with native language speakers. The current study is the first of its kind to evaluate Saudi students' ability to discriminate between spoken and written registers, as one, particularly important, aspect of pragmatic competence.

Moreover, the research reported here has been designed to assist English as a second language teachers plan and deliver effective English lessons that provide opportunities for learners to recognise differences between speech and written texts with regards to vocabulary. Undoubtedly, when EFL learners are trained to notice the differences between language registers, this should ultimately advance their communicative and pragmatic competence, and more specifically to write and converse appropriately with the expected level of formality according to context.

Additionally, by studying the current EFL teaching methodology employed in a Saudi secondary school, this research concludes with a discussion of EFL curriculum development based on the shortcomings of today's curriculum. In other words, the research aims to identify the instructional factors that might negatively affect students' awareness of different registers and suggests some techniques and guidelines to be followed within the education system in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the results of this research will be of interest to the decision makers and textbook authors in the Saudi education system, and in many similar EFL contexts, who are interested in improving English teaching and learning in schools. Finally, this study lays the foundation for future studies in the area of language registers in Saudi Arabia.

1.7 Organisation of the thesis

Eight chapters make up this thesis. **Chapter 1** introduces the thesis by outlining the central problem of the study, as well as its aims, research approach, and significance. **Chapter 2** reviews the relevant literature that is needed to identify a research gap and help answer the research questions. **Chapter 3** presents the research questions and methodology including descriptions of the data collection methods and research procedures, details of the participants and a discussion of ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 describes the findings of phase 1 of the current research whereas **Chapter 5** presents the findings of phase 2. **Chapter 6** interprets the findings of the speaking and writing tasks completed by Saudi EFL learners and compares the results with prior research. **Chapter 7** identifies the factors that affect the participants' performance in the written and oral tasks and highlights the pedagogical implications of this research. Lastly, **Chapter 8** presents the conclusion that summarises the findings with respect to the research questions, focuses on the contribution and the limitations of the study, and proposes directions for future research.

1.8 Chapter summary

In this chapter, the research background and concepts, a justification for the research and research approach have been presented along with an overview of the English language education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The significance of the study was then outlined, and the thesis structure presented.

Whilst this chapter has provided an introduction to the study, the next chapter reviews the literature in the area of language registers and communicative competence, including relevant studies on the role of classroom instruction in developing students' communication skills.

Chapter 2

Literature review

This study was designed to determine the extent to which Saudi students differentiate between written and spoken registers when using English as a foreign language. Furthermore, if students are failing to appreciate the difference in written and spoken registers, is this outcome due to the kind of the instruction they have received and, if so, what strategies could be implemented to raise student awareness of language registers?

To offer an overview of the literature pertaining to *language registers*, the chapter begins by discussing the term. Being able to differentiate between language registers is part of *communicative competence* (CC) or sociocultural competence, in particular (Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, & Thurrell, 1995; Hymes, 1972). Therefore, the definition of communicative competence, its components and how CC is developed are discussed (with a focus on the sociocultural competence component). Subsequently, the chapter identifies the importance of L2 sociocultural competence (i.e., pragmatics) and how it is acquired.

Before addressing the possible approaches to teaching L2 pragmatics, the chapter compares and contrasts a number of historical approaches that vary in their orientation from a focus on language forms to one on communication skills. Next, the question of which teaching approach would be the most effective in teaching pragmatics is addressed, followed by a section devoted to teaching one aspect of pragmatics as 'a variety of language registers'. Lastly, a review on EFL instruction in Saudi Arabia is provided, aiming to show the constraints of Saudi EFL classes for developing students' communication skills. The chapter concludes with a rationale justifying the necessity for carrying out this study in light of the literature.

2.1 Language and register

There is always variation in language. Variations can be observed at the surface level depending on the context of the situation, including whether the language is being written or spoken, the topic being discussed, and the people who are being addressed. Thus, distinctions can be made between religious discussion, poetry and casual conversations. A paper written and researched by a university professor or a judge's sentencing following a trial cannot be compared to a message sent to a close friend or a casual conversation taking place between family members.

Furthermore, Halliday (1989) states that there are two levels of language variation: *social* and *functional*. Social variation refers to the differences between language dialects, which are affected by region and/or social class. Individuals speak a particular kind of language depending on geographical region, class, ethnicity, gender and even age. Social variation, however, is not a key point of interest for this research, which focuses on functional variation, more commonly known as *stylistic variation* or *register* (Halliday, 1989).

Register refers to the idea that our use of the grammar and vocabulary of a language changes within different settings and environments to achieve a particular purpose, for example, a formal letter versus an informal or casual speech. According to Halliday (1989), the notion of register helps us understand the relationship between language and context by focussing on three elements: field, tenor and mode.

- **Field** refers to the topic or subject matter of the text, whether it is written or oral. For instance, items such as 'software', 'USB key', 'pen drive', 'data storage', and 'flash drive' are probably exclusive to fields that focus on computing.
- While the field implies what a text is about, **tenor** focuses on the change in language that occurs when relationship dynamics are in action. For instance, the relative status of participants, the rules of politeness in use and the degree of formality are likely to affect the language used in particular situations. If we imagine that person A requires person B to close a window, we find that A can address B in many ways as illustrated below:
  - Could you please shut the window?
  - The window!

  These two utterances convey the same message but in completely different ways. The first example seems very polite and indicates a formal relationship between person A and person B while the second example implies a lack of formal relationship between A and B, as well as an ascendance of A over B.

- Whilst taking field and tenor into account, Halliday (1989) also claims that language is sensitive to the means or **modes** of communication. Modes within communication may require immediate contact or postponed contact between individuals. This distinction seems very obvious between spoken and written language.

To sum up, field, tenor and mode are the three values that make up the linguistic features of any text. However, the element of field is beyond the scope of this research, and the term 'different registers' in the current research refers to a combination of tenor (formal vs. informal) and mode (spoken vs. written). In other words, this research investigated the ability of EFL learners to distinguish between spoken/informal and written/formal registers in regard to vocabulary.

The following section shows that being able to differentiate between language registers is part of communicative competence.

2.2 Communicative competence

This section explains the progression and advancement of the term 'communicative competence' beginning with its initial foundations (Hymes, 1967, 1972) through its further development by Canale and Swain (1980), Canale (1983), and Celce-Murcia et al. (1995).

Communicative competence (CC) as a definition was developed by Hymes (1967), whilst countering the theories of the famous formal linguist Chomsky (1965), who argued that social factors must not be included in the domain of linguistics. According to Hymes (1972), linguistic competence (such as the rules of grammar, vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation), and sociolinguistic competence (appropriate application of language in a given situation) are both ultimately required in order to interpret the acquisition and the use of a language.

Hymes (1972) claimed that the structure and acquisition of a language are not free of context and other social factors, whilst Chomsky had focussed more narrowly on linguistic competence. Their work laid the foundation for *Communicative Language Teaching* (CLT). CLT assumes that communicative competence is the central aim of second or foreign language teaching and, in turn, central to classroom practice. This view is in contrast to previous practices that advocated that grammatical competence should be given the ultimate importance.

Canale and Swain (1980) developed the first communicative competence model designed to encompass both teaching and assessment components. The model was extended by including strategic competence, in addition to the sociolinguistic and linguistic competence first proposed by Hymes (1972). Canale and Swain used ‘grammatical competence’ in place of ‘linguistic competence’, however, with the same intended meaning. Ultimately, communicative competence was defined as containing three essential elements:

- *grammatical competence*
  an understanding of the lexicon, phonetics and grammar of a language
- *sociolinguistic competence*
  appropriate use of language in social contexts
- *strategic competence*
  being able to effectively use verbal and nonverbal communication in order to increase communication efficiency and give the language speaker the ability to compensate for problems in communication.

Canale (1983) later altered the above model to add *discourse competence*, which refers to the ability to work creatively with the structures of a language to produce cohesive and coherent texts. Another dimension, *actional competence* (being able to convey and understand communicative intention by performing and interpreting language functions, such as complimenting, suggesting, or reporting), was later proposed by Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) to be integrated into communicative competence. The changes made by Celce-Murcia et al. included a change in the terminology. Sociolinguistic competence was re-labelled as *sociocultural* competence and grammatical competence was changed to *linguistic* competence.

A final list of the components of communicative competence is as follows:

- linguistic/grammatical competence
- sociocultural/sociolinguistic competence
- strategic competence
- discourse competence
- actional competence.

As can be seen from the historical development of the CC model, the focus of communicative competence research has become less linguistic and more social. Linguistic competence is currently the only element in the model that deals with language *per se*. The various other components of the model demonstrate competence in regard to social abilities, pragmatics and communication. These changes ensure that language education is centred on the student and their social abilities. However, some foreign language classes are still aimed at developing grammatical competence above all else (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011).

Given that the present study investigates learners' ability to distinguish between language registers, among all the components of communicative competence described above, the predominant focus in this research was on sociocultural competence, which concerns the use of language in social contexts.

2.3 Sociocultural competence

Sociocultural competence is defined as the learner's appropriate use of language in social settings (Canale & Swain, 1980), which ultimately means pragmatic knowledge. Shively (2010, p. 106) defines pragmatics as 'the knowledge and skills needed to use and interpret the meanings, assumptions, and actions expressed by language in its socio-cultural context'.

2.3.1 Sociocultural competence definition

The knowledge and skills of pragmatics include the appreciation of style, register, formality, degree of politeness and so on. Celce-Murcia et al. (1995, pp. 23-24) identify three main elements of sociocultural competence:

- factors of social context: the participants' age, gender, social distance, status
- stylistic appropriateness: the knowledge of genres, registers and politeness strategies required in a particular situation
- cultural factors: prior understanding of the language, awareness of dialect differences and acknowledgment of various cultural differences.

These factors are complex and interrelated. However, it can be clearly seen that sensitivity to language registers, which is the focus of this research, is considered as the second variable of sociocultural/pragmatic competence.

2.3.2 Importance of L2 pragmatic/sociocultural competence

It has been wisely said that our inability to understand other people comes not from a basic misunderstanding of how they structure their sentences or pronounce their words, but rather from a misperception of their intent (Miller, 1974, as cited in Thomas, 1983, p. 91).

Failure to convey or comprehend the intended meaning of utterances is very often associated with a lack of pragmatic competence in the user of the language (Glaser, 2014). Indeed, the difficulties associated with the lack of L2 sociocultural and pragmatic language skills are frequently cited in the existing literature (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003; Glaser, 2014; Thomas, 1983; Yates, 2010).

According to Glaser (2014), pragmatic difficulties tend to arise when students attempt to apply their newly learned L2 knowledge to real life communicative situations. Glaser (2014) points out that it is vitally important to understand and produce language appropriate to the context. Failing to do so may result, at best, in learners missing key information or being misunderstood by others. Even worse, the lack of pragmatic and sociocultural skills and knowledge can result in a total breakdown of communication, frustration on all sides, and the perpetuation of stereotypes of second language users as people who are inept or insensitive (Thomas, 1983).

Taguchi (2011) has argued that context-inappropriate statements can cause far greater breakdown in communication than linguistic errors during conversation. In other words, the consequences of pragmatic misunderstandings and mistakes, unlike errors of grammar or pronunciation, are often interpreted by the native speaker at the social or personal level, rather than as an innocent mix-up in the process of learning a new language (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003, p. 38).

In the same sense, Yates (2010) reports that pragmatic mistakes can lead to not only diminished understanding but also the perception that the speaker is rude, pushy, unfriendly, or uncaring. Therefore, L2 pragmatic competence has been recognised by SLA researchers and scholars as a vital component of a learner’s communicative competence and L2 proficiency (Bachman, 1990; Bachman & Palmer, 2010; Canale, 1983; Liao, 2014).

Some examples of L2 pragmatic mistakes have been highlighted in Eslami-Rasekh’s (2005) study which sheds light on expressions that are semantically equivalent in English but may not be pragmatically interchangeable. For instance, though it would be acceptable for a teacher to tell her students, ‘Perhaps you could read through this for Friday’, it might be more appropriate and certainly more polite to say to one’s supervisor, ‘Could you possibly read through this by Friday?’

Eslami-Rasekh (2005) points out that the phrase ‘perhaps you could’ is often interpreted by native English speakers as a demand rather than a request. Moreover, he points out that EFL learners are often overwhelmed by the English language’s extensive and intricate system of degrees of obligation (must, ought, should, have to) and typically settle on a single one which they then use in any context. For instance, Russian speakers in Eslami-Rasekh’s study preferred the ‘to be’ construction (you are *to be* here by eight), which is not a fortunate selection, since the ‘to be’ form is typically only used by people with significant authority over others, such as a military commander directing their underlings or parents giving directions to their children.

A further and common, example of L2 pragmatic mistakes is described by Vu (2017). Vu (2017) reports that inappropriate utterances in social interactions usually occur as a result of cross-cultural misunderstandings and may cause serious communication breakdowns. Vu, a lecturer at a university in Vietnam, once felt disrespected and even annoyed when one of her students called her by her first name. This student had learned from one of her American teachers that she could use first names when addressing her teachers because American teachers preferred it that way. However, in Vietnamese culture, students are not expected to address teachers by their first names. This phenomenon is known as pragmatic failure which ‘occurs when learners transfer first language (L1) pragmatic rules into second language (L2) domains’ (Grossi, 2009, p. 53). In the present study, however, the term pragmatic failure is used for all types of pragmatic mistakes or difficulties.

The above-mentioned examples show the complexity of language and carry a message about the importance of using language appropriately in accordance with the context. A useful question to ask at this point, therefore, is whether or not pragmatics should be explicitly taught to second language learners.

2.3.3 How L2 pragmatics develops

Perhaps one could argue that pragmatic knowledge will naturally develop as the grammatical and lexical knowledge of the language are acquired, without being taught specifically and directly. However, several pragmatics studies in adult learners of a foreign and second language have contributed significant evidence to the argument that grammatical development of language learners does not necessarily lead to an equal development of pragmatic competence (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Gee, 2001; Kasper, 2001). In fact, 'even advanced language learners often show a marked imbalance … of their communicative competence, with pragmatic competence lagging behind grammatical knowledge' (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998, p. 234). See also (Ellis, 1991; Kasper, 1992, 2000; Nakane, 2003; Ross, 2005; Rossiter & Kondoh, 2001).

Similarly, Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989, p. 10) argue that politeness, values and intentions may be mis-conveyed or misconstrued even by advanced learners. Consequently, it could be that a learner knows the grammar and vocabulary of the target language, but still makes inappropriate linguistic choices at the moment of speaking. That is, linguistic and pragmatic competences of language learners do not always develop in parallel.

It should be recognised that the question at hand is not whether grammar or pragmatics develop first, but how these emergent skills enhance each other, synergistically supporting each other in the development of a second language as a whole (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013; Kasper, 2001). The ability to use language in a contextually appropriate way requires sufficient development of grammatical and lexical knowledge, as well as pragmatic knowledge.

For example, when choosing whether to use *shut up* or *be quiet*, the learner must have these two expressions in their repertoire, otherwise an expression such as 'shut up' would be used in all contexts since the speaker does not know any alternative in the target language. Conversely, speakers with a full repertoire, such as native speakers, can do quite poorly in social interactions due to a lack of adequate knowledge and awareness of pragmatic conventions (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998; Wolfson, 1983).

Therefore, as linguistic competence already receives much attention in language teaching programs, there is a need for pragmatic instruction the way there is in grammar (Bardovi-Harlig, 1996, 2001; 1999; Kasper & Rose, 1999, 2001; Kasper & Schmidt, 1996). Indeed, the debate over grammar-based instruction and communicative instruction has largely dominated the history of language teaching research in the last four decades. The next section compares a number of historical approaches that vary in their orientation from focus on language structure to focus on communication skills.

2.4 Teaching approaches in SLA

Although a large number of teaching approaches have come and gone through the ages, some of them are notable for their usage and historical importance (Hinkel, 2002).

Grammar Translation approach. Perhaps the oldest among the approaches to teaching second languages, and typical of the late 1800s, is the *Grammar Translation approach*, which focussed solely on the memorisation of words, phrases and rules, translating them literally and directly into the L1, to the neglect of live communication skills. A classroom following this approach would typically consist of an introductory list of vocabulary to be memorised, followed by a lecture on the rules of grammar and a selection of sentences to translate. It would be unlikely to find any oral or auditory activities in this approach, and pronunciation is given very little importance.

The Audio-lingual method. With the beginning of a new century, the 1900s brought about new insights in a variety of fields, from behavioural psychology to descriptive linguistics, which changed the scientific understanding of second language acquisition. In response, the *Audio-lingual method* appeared, based on behaviourism; all behaviour (languages included) is acquired by repetition and negative or positive reinforcement. Therefore, in Audio-lingualism, drills and pattern practice are typical (learners practise, mimic and memorise language forms), and no explicit grammatical instruction is given. So, like the grammar translation method, structural principles are still the primary focus of second language instruction. However, unlike the Grammar Translation method, Audio-lingualism stresses that learners should be taught a language through pattern drills, without using the learners' mother tongue.

Natural Approach. Another methodology, the *Natural Approach* (Krashen & Terrell, 1983), rose to prominence with the idea that a second/foreign language is acquired in the same natural way as the native language was acquired. That is, students need to attend to large amounts of comprehensible target language input to acquire the language. Vocabulary should be taught through real-life objects or natural contexts, and grammar should be taught inductively. The target language should be used as the medium of instruction in the classroom, which is characterised by a centrality of spoken language.

Communicative Language Teaching. With the advent of breakthroughs in cognitive science in the 1960s, theories of second language acquisition, led by Noam Chomsky, attempted to make use of the brain’s ‘universal grammar’, or innate inclination to make and use language, in language instruction. The resulting cognitive approaches focussed heavily on syntax, indicating a shift back to direct and explicit teaching.

The 1970s, however, brought communicative instruction in line with the development of an approach named *Communicative Language Teaching* (CLT). This approach focussed on fostering meaningful communication and genuine learning opportunities, making real communication both the means and the main aim of teaching. The second language was thought of as ‘a tool for communicating rather than as an object to be analysed’ (Ellis, 2008, p. 1). According to CLT, any kind of instructional activity can be considered beneficial if it enables learners to acquire useful communication skills in authentic situations.

CLT also implies that students learn the target language through the interaction with one another and the instructor, or by the study of authentic texts. Applied to language class, CLT is often characterised by work that requires cooperation and negotiation between students, such as small groups and pairs working on complex tasks, rather than teaching discrete grammar points or a set of vocabulary items.

All the teaching and learning approaches, focussing predominantly on either communication or language structure, represent two extremes that might equally impede certain aspects of language acquisition. Loewen (2015) argues that while the drawbacks of focussing solely on structure are frequently reported (Green & Hecht, 1992; Long, 1991; Winitz, 1996), the strictly communicative teaching has also proven to be notably inadequate (Norris & Ortega, 2000; Scott, 1990; Skehan, 1996). According to Ellis (2001), communicative instruction helps learners to develop high levels of language fluency but is insufficient to insure parallel levels of accuracy as well. Similarly, Lyster (1998) and Swain (1998) pointed out that advanced grammatical competence was not achievable from purely communicative instruction. Their suggestion, therefore, was that learners and instructors give some attention to language form as well. It is argued in this research, therefore, that within the context of meaningful communication, attention must still be given to linguistic elements in EFL classes within a Focus on Form (FoF) approach as advocated by Long (1991), Ellis (2001) and Bourke (2008). The role of attention and awareness in SLA is explained below, followed by the historical development of the Focus on Form approach.

2.4.1 The role of attention and awareness in SLA

The idea of focussed attention has gained much interest from SLA researchers. Many theories concerning second language instruction and development have brought into focus the role of attention in language learning (Al-Hejin, 2004).

Firstly, it is worth mentioning that awareness and attention are sometimes used interchangeably in the literature (Schmidt, 1995). Whilst inherently connected, their operating functions do have significant differences. The definitions by Schmidt (1995) offer clear distinctions between these terms and are predominantly used in SLA research.

Schmidt (1995) defined *attention* as the *acknowledgement of a stimulus* whereas *awareness* is seen as a learner's *experience or knowledge of a stimulus*. According to Schmidt, awareness has two different levels: *noticing* and *understanding*, which he was careful to distinguish. He defined *understanding* as the 'recognition of a general principle, rule or pattern' (Schmidt, 1995, p. 29). That is, a deep level of awareness is achieved through understanding, unlike *noticing*, which is merely awareness of 'elements of the surface structure of utterances in the input' rather than of foundational and fundamental rules (Schmidt, 1995, p. 5).

Two of the most prominent hypotheses speculating on the roles of awareness and attention in language learning are the *independent component model of attention* in SLA (Tomlin & Villa, 1994) and the *noticing hypothesis* (Schmidt, 1995, 2001). Schmidt's conceptualisation of attention differs from Tomlin and Villa's model in that Schmidt, based on his interpretation of the same studies, argued that awareness and attention are interdependent and required for all learning, whereas Tomlin and Villa (1994) stipulated that awareness is a separate function and that the aspects of their model operate independently.

The question surrounding the necessity of awareness and attention for learning to take place among second language learners remains deeply problematic and largely unanswered by research despite numerous studies over a century. However, this question is beyond the scope of this research. The main question should not be whether learning takes place without attention, but whether learning can be increased with more applied attention. Indeed, there is no evidence against the claim that learners learn more when they do pay attention to language forms and learn much less when they do not pay attention (Logan, Taylor, & Etherton, 1996).

As reported by McGinnis (2007), research data available in the field of cognitive psychology (Cohen, Dunbar, & McClelland, 1990; Curran & Keele, 1993; Nissen & Bullemer, 1987) as well as SLA (Alanen, 1995; Jourdenais, Ota, Stauffer, Boyson, & Doughty, 1995; Leow, 1997, 2000, 2001; Rosa & O'Neill, 1999; Schmidt & Frota, 1986; VanPatten, 1990) propose facilitating and supporting roles for awareness in learning and SLA. In the same vein, McGinnis's (2007) review argues that increased attention leads to increased learning overall. This is to say that attention and awareness are important in the language learning process, as the more attention learners pay to the target language input, the more success they will have learning a language.

However, in second language acquisition research, there is a theoretical debate about how best to make use of the process of attention. Some researchers claim that conscious attention to discrete-forms of the L2 (known as **Focus on Forms** (FoFs) approach) is sufficient to enhance learning (Boers & Lindstromberg, 2009; Jones & Haywood, 2004; Wilkins, 1976, as cited in Long & Robinson, 1998; Wood, 2009). Other researchers argue that attention must be given to the linguistic elements of the L2 within the context of meaningful communication (**Focus on Form** (FoF) approach) (Bourke, 2008; Ellis, 1991; Lindstromberg & Eyckmans, 2014; Long, 1991; Peters, 2014), making this approach similar to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), rather than an innovation.

However, CLT merely refers to meaningful exposure to language input, or what is called **Focus on Meaning** (FoM) instruction, in which learning takes place through language use, with minimal time and attention directed specifically to the discrete elements that characterise the language, such as grammar (Ellis, 2008). The next section addresses the Focus on Form approach specifically, which combines the characteristics of Focus on Forms and Focus on Meaning approaches.

2.4.2 Focus on Form

The Focus on Form method was first introduced by Long (1991) and subsequently Long and Robinson (1998), who argue that Focus on Forms and Focus on Meaning are both important approaches to language instruction and should be used complementarily rather than exclusively. Thus, Focus on Form is an approach to language education in which teachers should give due attention to language form in a communication-based learning environment.

Research-based evidence for the benefits of Focus on Form instruction is frequently cited in the literature (Fotos & Nassaji, 2013; Goldenberg, 2008; Saeidi, Zaferanieh, & Shatery, 2012). Saeidi et al. (2012) conducted a study of 70 ESL learners receiving different vocabulary instruction: Focus on Form instruction (dictoglos tasks), Communicative teaching (discussion and reading tasks) and Focus on Forms instruction (vocabulary lists). The findings show that students in the Focus on Form cohort did significantly better on post-test scores than their peers in Communicative and Focus on Forms.

In the same sense, a synthesis of the results from a large review of studies on various form-focussed techniques showed that students learn best in language classes that combine interactive approaches with form-focussed instruction (Goldenberg, 2008). Moreover, Fotos and Nassaji (2013) reviewed research conducted on the views and classroom practices of instructors (Borg & Burns, 2008; Farrell & Lim, 2005) as well as learners (Ikpia, 2002; Manley & Calk, 1997; Paraskevas, 1993), and found that teachers as well as students prefer occasional shifts of attention to linguistic elements in the context of a communicative classroom.

Focus on Form instruction is usually instructor-led, yet it can be initiated by students through clarification requests and questions (Fotos & Nassaji, 2013). Teachers have many ways to help students attend to form. For instance, Focus on Form instruction could equally be occasional and incidental or planned and structured. Ellis (2001) clearly defines Focus on Form as:

> *Any planned or incidental instructional activity that is intended to induce language learners to pay attention to linguistic form. (pp. 1-2)*

Moreover, teachers may purposely present tasks regarding forms to encourage learners to notice these forms through ‘implicit instruction’, or indeed give explicit instruction of the forms accompanied by meaningful practice opportunities. Focus on Form could also come in the form of explicitly correcting a student’s language, as well as recasts, requests for clarification, and other kinds of feedback.

Indeed, the idea of Focus on Form was first mentioned in the context of teaching grammar (VanPatten & Oikkenon, 1996; Williams & Evans, 1998), yet was found to also be applicable to teaching vocabulary (Doughty & Williams, 1998). Doughty and Williams (1998) note that:

> *It is likely that focus on form can enhance lexical acquisition, and there is mounting evidence that, in the acquisition of lexical items, as with that of grammatical structures, some interaction is helpful. (p. 212)*

Besides teaching vocabulary, Ellis (2001) mentioned that Focus on Form instruction is necessary to achieve advanced writing and speaking proficiency. Moreover, Selinker and Gass (2008) argue that complex aspects of language cannot be acquired by the mere exposure to meaningful input. They suggest that deliberately shifting attention to linguistic features is necessary.

Focus on Form instruction is also necessary to improve the learners' ability to produce the conventional expressions of the target language appropriately (i.e., pragmatic competence) (Rafieyan, Sharafi-Nejad, & Eng, 2014). Schmidt (2001) notes that to develop pragmatic competence, learners' attention must be drawn to both pragmatic and linguistic aspects of target language expressions. Consequently, scholars are advised to use some sort of awareness-raising pragmatic instruction, adopting either explicit or implicit form-focussed techniques, in order to develop pragmatic competence in language learners (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003; Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Rafieyan, 2016).

Most recently, Vu (2017) has stated that pragmatic instruction should consist of three main elements:

- consciousness-raising
- metapragmatic explanation
- communicative practice.

That is, during classroom instruction, teachers should direct students' attention to pragmatic features of language form, as well as possible pragmatic failures that may occur in real life situations (consciousness-raising). Instruction should also help learners understand how different contexts call for different forms and why and when specific linguistic practices occur (metapragmatic explanation). Finally, the classroom must be a safe place for interaction, where students feel confident enough to try new patterns and forms, make mistakes, and receive constructive and supportive feedback from other learners and their teacher (communicative practice).

To analyse the conditions under which pragmatic teaching is specifically beneficial, several studies have focussed on comparing explicit and implicit Focus on Form approaches.

2.5 Teaching English pragmatics

Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor (2003) described the classroom as an ideal place in which to help learners broaden their knowledge of the culture, people, and living language being studied. However, it should be recognised that a number of SLA researchers (such as Canale & Swain, 1980; Nunan, 1992) do not support teaching pragmatics and argue that living amongst members of the chosen L2 is the only way to understand the appropriate usage of language in different situations. Canale and Swain (1980) argue that any non-linguistic competence is obtained in real life settings as opposed to the artificial setting of the classroom.

Nunan (1992) also argues that:

> *Only by studying language in its social and cultural contexts, will we come to appreciate the apparent paradox of language acquisition: that it is at once a deeply personal and yet highly social process. (p. 23)*

From the point of view of the present study, Nunan's stance shows to be correct. Real-life experience among native speakers is highly effective for language learning in general, and particularly apt for the study of pragmatics. However, it will be argued here that learners' immersion in the language is significantly enhanced if the learner has had language instruction to prepare them for such an experience. They need adequate teaching of the basics in both the linguistic and pragmatic elements of the chosen L2, and such knowledge can be achieved in class.

To support this argument, after reviewing the pragmatics research of the past three decades, Taguchi (2011) found that previous research clearly demonstrates that it is not only feasible to teach language learners pragmatic skills (Kasper, 1997, 2001; Kondo, 2008; Rose, 2005; Soler, 2002), but also beneficial to do so (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Ishihara & Cohen, 2014; Shokouhi & Rezaei, 2015), and in many cases proves more effective than mere target language exposure in fostering pragmatic skills (Bouton, 1994a, 1994b; Félix-Brasdefer, 2006; Halenko & Jones, 2011; Jeon & Kaya, 2006).

2.5.1 Explicit vs. implicit dichotomy and deductive vs. inductive dichotomy

The central differentiating feature that separates explicit and implicit instructional design in language teaching comes down to the question of whether the instructor explains the rules and the usage shaping the language or not (Norris & Ortega, 2000). Regarding interlanguage pragmatics, the question is one of whether meta-pragmatic explanations are incorporated into instructional design, which is thought to enable learners to perceive the target language more easily (Rose, 2005).

Explicit vs. implicit instructional design. Meta-pragmatic discussion or explanation draws the learners' attention to socially important details: why people choose this expression; which would be the more appropriate for a particular situation? The students and teacher may find it useful to analyse and discuss certain linguistic features explicitly in order to appreciate their usual context and usage. On the other hand, the teacher may want the students to develop the same pragmatic knowledge implicitly, by giving them experiences which they can then reflect on and from which they can infer the social nuances and implications for themselves.

In other words, if meta-pragmatic information is provided, instructional design is focussed on explicit instruction usually comprised of meta-pragmatic explanations and explicit correction of form and meaning mistakes. Conversely, if meta-pragmatic information is *not* directly provided, instructional design is focussed on implicit teaching involving recast techniques and pragma-linguistic input enhancement.

Inductive vs. deductive teaching approaches. Teaching the rules and usage of the L2 language involves choices in the design of the instruction in terms of where and how to fit the information about the language into the lesson. For example, would it be better to confront the learners with language materials from the start, then summarise the rules of what they have been given later? Or would it be preferable to provide an overview of the rules at the beginning, following with activities and exercises that provide reinforcement?

Such considerations create another philosophical division in language teaching design—in fact, in the field of pedagogy generally—between deductive and inductive teaching approaches (Shaffer, 1989). Applied to this study, an example of deductive instruction is to tell students that when native speakers of English ring a hotel in order to book a room, they tend to use less formal and sophisticated words over the phone. Conversely, when native speakers decide to make a reservation by writing to the hotel, their written request sounds more formal.

When the deductive approach is used to impart these norms to students, they are then reinforced through practice activities and exercises. The teaching model is highly rule driven and teacher-centred; however, it does offer the benefits of being quick to the point and time efficient (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Inductive approaches, on the other hand, proceed from ‘real language use’, that is, students are expected to observe characteristic patterns of language usage from real-life interactions (Shaffer, 1989), and find meaning in them. Students experience certain aspects of language that the instructor wants them to learn about, without providing any explicit rules. Then, language use and language discovery activities are encouraged.

For instance, learners might be provided with examples of genuine conversations between native speakers by means of film or audio recordings, or even by reading conversations transcribed onto paper. Then, students are encouraged to try out their conversational skills by producing similar interactions/language functions amongst themselves. Inductive teaching is very student-centred and time-consuming (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). It is a highly experiential method, founded on the philosophy of learning through guided discovery.

According to Decoo (1996), inductive instruction is often associated with language acquisition generally, as the intention of this approach, to a certain extent, is to follow the natural acquisition of a first language that every person experiences as a child. Deductive instruction, on the other hand, is frequently compared to language learning. It is direct instruction in the rules of language, and learners acquire language through a conscious process during which they are made aware of the rules of the language. Although some scholars and researchers do refer to the deductive/inductive dichotomy in their teaching recommendations, it is mentioned far less frequently than the implicit/explicit dichotomy, particularly in terms of empirical studies (Eslami & Eslami-Rasekh, 2008).

As this brief overview of terminology illustrates, the distinction between inductive and deductive methods primarily concerns the starting point or the sequencing of the instruction, while the explicit/implicit dichotomy focusses on whether or not to provide rules. These two dichotomies are thus different in focus, though a connection clearly exists between them in that a deductive lesson must essentially be explicit, as it requires that rules be explained. Moreover, an implicit lesson, because it largely excludes rule provision, is naturally inductive.

Because of the value to the learner of both methods of instruction, the addition of a methodology that integrates these dichotomies, perhaps one that begins inductively with the raw presentation of material and follows with an explicit explanation of the underlying rules, has been developed, referred to as the *explicit-inductive approach* (DeKeyser, 2003). The relationship between the explicit-implicit approach and the deductive-inductive approach is shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Convergence of the explicit/implicit and inductive/deductive dichotomies (DeKeyser, 2003, p. 314).

Rules provided? / Starting point?	Explicit (rules)	Implicit (no rules)
Deductive (rules first)	Explicit-deductive	--------
Inductive (language first)	Explicit-inductive	Implicit-inductive

As shown in Table 2.1, the cell containing the combination of deductive and implicit has been left blank as these concepts are essentially incompatible: a deductive design begins with the provision of rules which, by definition, are non-existent in the implicit approach. Consequently, the implicit approach can be used only inductively whereas the explicit approach could be applied to the classroom deductively or inductively.

2.5.2 Effectiveness of explicit and implicit instruction

> *Explicit teaching is often more efficient than attention to input for identifying the pragmalinguistic forms of the target language. (Schmidt, 1993, p. 20)*

In line with Schmidt's quote, most empirical research lately has indicated that explicit methods are generally more effective in developing pragmatic skills than implicit methods (Cohen, 2008; Kasper, 2001; Kasper & Roever, 2005; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Koike & Pearson, 2005; Nguyen, Pham, & Pham, 2012; Rose, 2005; Salemi, Rabiee, & Ketabi, 2012; Shively, 2011; Soler, 2002). This is to be expected if we consider how children learn their L1 communicative competence. Adults in most cultures typically take an active role in correcting and instructing children in how to behave and speak politely to others according to their particular cultural norms, while the inherently acquired aspects of language like semantics, syntax and grammar can be trusted to develop by a certain age without direct intervention (Kasper & Schmidt, 1996; Schmidt, 1993; Snow, Perlmann, Gleason, & Hooshyar, 1990).

While there is abundant literature exploring the effectiveness of explicit and implicit pragmatics teaching methods, empirical research contrasting deductive and inductive approaches is largely non-existent in pragmatics studies (Takimoto, 2008). The results of Rose and Ng's (2001) research on deductive and inductive approaches' effectiveness in teaching compliments and compliment responses indicates that both inductive and deductive teaching methods increased pragmalinguistic proficiency (the linguistic resources available for performing pragmatic functions). However, Qi and Lai (2017) found that the inductive approach was significantly more effective at helping learners master the speech act of request, compared to the deductive method.

In the same sense, Glaser (2014) argues that when situated within a framework of explicit instruction, inductive methods are more productive in the teaching of pragmatic skills than deductive instruction. Ishihara (2010) concedes that his results are 'inconclusive at this point' (p. 117), nonetheless he states that inductive methods are 'generally believed to promote higher-order thinking and may be more effective than a deductive approach' (p. 116). This is to say that classes that make space for both the inductive process of discovery as well as the explicit provision of rules are likely to be more productive than ones based on simple deductive instruction. However, further studies are necessary to support this result, given the lack of pragmatic studies concerned with deductive and inductive designs.

Other SLA studies investigating deductive vs. inductive approaches in teaching grammar have also shown that learners taught inductively perform better than their peers who were taught deductively when both methods contained explicit rule explanation. That is, explicit/inductive methods seem to be more effective than explicit/deductive methods in teaching grammar (Haight, Herron, & Cole, 2007; Shaffer, 1989; Vogel & Engelhard Jr, 2011). However, when the inductively taught class was not given explicit rule provision (i.e., the implicit-inductive design was used), they learned less than the explicit/deductive class, according to research by Robinson (1996), Rosa and O'Neill (1999), and Erlam (2003).

The lesson to be drawn from this discussion is that the implicit/explicit distinction appears to be most salient in SLA, with the explicit provision of rules being more beneficial than not. Furthermore, within the explicit framework, the inductive method of allowing students to initially experience the rules in contextualised usage appears to be more effective than beginning deductively with the teaching of rules.

One reason for the superiority of inductive instruction could be the element of 'guided discovery' (Tomlinson, 1994), a practice instrumental to inductive methodology, which refers to activities that allow students to intuitively develop an understanding of the language through exploration and self-made analysis. The teacher is there to guide and assist, but not to force or dominate. Participation by the student in the exploration of 'regularities and relationships' is described as a decisive element in the process of learning (Bruner, 1961, p. 24). Additionally, Hammerly (1975, p. 18) points out that 'learning by discovery is better retained'.

As the discussion above attests, the explicit/inductive approach seems to be the most beneficial approach for language learners (in terms of linguistic and pragmatic development alike). Yet, the question arises as to whether it is the most efficient as well in terms of implementation. To choose what instructional design works best in a context, the teacher should bear in mind the potential effectiveness of the design, as well as its efficiency. All studies that have dealt with inductive teaching admit concern for the additional time needed for preparing and implementing inductive instruction (Glaser, 2014).

Creating discovery-based activities requires significant time and effort on the part of the instructor, particularly when it comes to collecting and curating authentic materials (Glaser, 2014). Moreover, unlike deductive approaches, teacher-centred designs in which the timing and sequencing of the activities are controlled by the instructor, inductive discovery activities are essentially open-ended, and may lead to unexpected discoveries and spark learner interest or questions that lead 'off topic' for some time. Many instructors find it very difficult in such circumstances to guide the discovery process in the intended direction without either becoming overbearing or going over their class time (Ben Duhaish, 2015). According to Ben Duhaish (2015), it may take students 45 minutes to get through an activity that was planned for 15, forcing the teacher to abandon the other topics or activities they had planned for the day. Learners might need a longer time of input exposure, language use and discovery activities before they acquire the target language features through discovery (Takimoto, 2008).

In summary, a number of theorists and researchers have attempted to answer the question of which teaching approach is the most successful for the teaching of pragmatics. Complicating the issue is that individual learners exhibit personal learning styles. Although these individual differences and learning styles are, beyond the scope of this research, teachers developing their instructional design should also take these differences into account.

Several techniques and activities that can be used in class to develop students' pragmatic skills have been provided by research and empirical studies, as presented in the next subsection.

2.5.3 Techniques and activities to develop pragmatic competence

Several techniques and activities have proven useful in raising learners' pragmatic awareness. For one, materials that contain pragmatic failure or problematic communications can be usefully presented for analysis and discussion (Rose, 1999). Additionally, instructors could train students to be good observers and explorers, encouraging them to find other instances of communication mishaps from film and television in the target language, or from their own experience. Following that, learners may arrive at their own tentative theories for the peculiar pragmatic behaviours they observe and be in a better position to discuss and understand them (Batawi, 2006).

In addition, Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) note that pragmatic awareness may not be sufficient to produce appropriate performance; i.e., learners may be aware of the pragmatic conventions of the target language but nonetheless cannot perform them appropriately. Therefore, in-class productive activities, such as situational questions and role-plays are recommended for instructors to introduce learners to L2 pragmatic experiences (Lihui & Jianbin, 2010).

Bardovi-Harlig (2013) also suggest that translation activities in which students create literal translations of passages from their first language into English are useful because this activity illustrates how different the literal and pragmatic meaning of an expression can be across languages; and how, sometimes, to correctly translate a pragmatic meaning, you have to change the literal meaning drastically. Translation activities might involve students discussing and reflecting on different cultural pragmatic norms and arriving at some generalised conclusions.

This particular technique may be more appropriate than role play to use with groups whose cultural behaviour and values clash with the target language culture (e.g., in dealing with inter personal relationships that seem incompatible with one's own values and beliefs, as when Australian females are learning Japanese female pragmatic behaviour which is incompatible with their views). Bardovi-Harlig (2013) also suggests that more activities should be used in L2 classes to promote learners' pragmatic knowledge and encourage practice, such as identifying speech acts, watching and evaluating video interactions (judgment tasks), judgment tasks with corrections, ranking the formality of various expressions (card sorting), as well as group discussion of pragmatics.

Most importantly, pragmatics researchers (such as Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998; Kasper, 1982; Thomas, 1983; Wolfson, 1983) emphasise the need for teachers and textbook authors to be fully aware of L2 pragmatic conventions before they introduce it to students, a competence which may require specific training. That is, students should be presented to instructed language input that is not only linguistically accurate but also pragmatically correct. Otherwise, students may run into problematic situations because of teaching-induced errors rather than lack of awareness or practice in L2 pragmatics.

The next section discusses studies specifically looking at teaching one aspect of pragmatics, which is a variety of language registers.

2.6 Teaching differences in registers

Much language use aims at interaction, which means that people use language for the creation, preservation and development of social relationships (Brown, Gillian, & Yule, 1983). Yet, this aim will not be achieved if language users cannot choose the language appropriate to their immediate social situation. In other words, inappropriate language, even non-deliberate, leads to a breakdown of social relationships (British Council, 2017). Therefore, register theory was proposed by Halliday (1989), discussed in section 2.1, to help language speakers understand and produce appropriate written or spoken texts by addressing three variables of the context:

- *field*, the subject or topic of the communication
- *tenor*, the relationship between speaker and listener or writer and reader
- *mode*, the medium or channel of communication such as writing or speaking.

Each variable necessitates the usage of particular resources within the lexico-grammar (Halliday, 1989).

Unlike early scholars of language registers (e.g., Biber & Finegan, 1988; Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999; Halliday, 1989), however, who divided mode into spoken and written modes, recent studies, such as Zwiers (2013) and Gillett (2011), have acknowledged that mode, as an element of register, is more complex than merely a dichotomy of speech and writing. Zwiers (2013) and Gillett (2011) argue that academic spoken language has many of the key features of writing, while many common, informal usages of writing, such as advertising, more closely resemble speech. Additionally, this overlap has increased after the arrival of texting and emailing. Writing an informal email usually involves a similar degree of informality to that of speech (Gibbons, 1998), for example. Therefore, in terms of the mode continuum, Gibbons (1998) suggests that it is more useful to consider texts as ‘more written-like’ or ‘more spoken-like’.

As a result of this blending of communicative modes, teaching different registers has been given more attention in recent years. Christie (2005) shows that learners’ difficulties in producing features of academic language result from their incomplete understanding of mode, tenor and field, the three variables of register. Thus, many researchers have argued for the benefits of modeling these three variables and providing opportunities to practise them within the classroom (Aguirre-Muñoz, Parks, Benner, Amabisca, & Boscardin, 2006; Firkins, Forey, & Sengupta, 2007; Swales, 2004).

Moreover, the lack of an absolute boundary between spoken and written registers, discussed earlier, increases the amount of awareness needed by students, and consequently puts more emphasis on the importance of teaching different registers (British Council, 2017). Keller (2018) suggests that apart from developing students' language proficiency, teachers also need to enhance students' awareness of the register features of spoken and written English.

To achieve this, previous researchers have emphasised that students should be exposed to authentic spoken English in the classroom, and that standard English, occurring predominantly in written language, is an inappropriate model to use for teaching the spoken language (Biber, Conrad, Reppen, Byrd, & Helt, 2002; Gavela, 2015; Hilliard, 2014; McCarthy & Carter, 2006; Rühlemann, 2008).

McCarthy and Carter (2006) argue that since standard English is the language used for textbooks, exams and classroom instruction, many non-conforming structures of everyday spoken language are considered as 'deviant'.

Analyses of spoken corpora, however, show the dominant use of these non-conforming structures by native speakers and present this as indisputable evidence that the rules of everyday speech are vastly different from those of standard English, as explained in Rühlemann (2008). Cullen and Kuo (2007) and McCarthy and Carter (1995, 2006) distinguished between written and spoken language when they reported that in speaking, people usually include grammatical features, such as non-standard use of tenses and syntax, ellipsis, as well as vague language to create and carry on live interactions spontaneously.

English language instruction, however, usually neglects structures that have important discourse functions, yet deviate from standard English (Rühlemann, 2008, p. 678). A more appropriate model to teach the grammar of speech, as (Rühlemann, 2008) suggests, would be what he terms *spoken grammar*. Critiques of spoken grammar, such as Mumford (2008), claim that failing to teach students the unique grammatical features of spoken language can limit their ability to speak English appropriately and fluently.

Grammar usage is beyond the interest of the current research, which focusses on vocabulary. In terms of vocabulary, Rühlemann (2008) points out that teachers should draw students' attention to vocabulary/expressions that are very frequent in conversations and strictly avoided in serious writing. For instance, *conversational contractions*, as defined by Rühlemann (2008), should be taught in class. These contractions include particular aphetic forms like:

- gotta (got to)
- wanna (want to)
- gonna (going to)
- innit (isn't it)
- cos (because)
- yeah (yes)
- dunno (don't know).

In addition to these types of contractions, verbal and negative contractions have been shown to be used in conversational speech with significantly greater frequency than in any other register (Biber et al., 1999, p. 1129).

Unfortunately, these distinctive characteristics of spoken language do not appear to be considered in Saudi EFL classes. A large number of studies (Al-Seghayer, 2014; Al-wossabi, 2016; Allehyani, Burnapp, & Wilson, 2017; Alshumaimeri & Alzyadi, 2015) have shown that English instruction in Saudi public schools does not provide the learners with authentic, real life language. Ben Duhaish (2015) points out that textbooks and classroom instruction in Saudi Arabia predominantly depend on formal, or written, standards of English, while giving very little thought to the casual or informal:

> *We are learning [in Saudi Arabia] a very different language than the language that is spoken here [in the United States]. That is why we find difficulty in communicating with them [American students] because we are talking a Standard English while they are using a non-standard. (Interview, January 9,2013 cited in Ben Duhaish, 2015, p. 67)*

These observations indicate that EFL learners in Saudi Arabia need to maximise their exposure to spoken English, and teachers should be encouraged to incorporate authentic activities in different registers into their classes.

However, teaching different language registers is still difficult and complicated, particularly because register is very specific not only to culture but also to the context within the culture. That is, instructors cannot teach and demonstrate every possible subtlety of usage and context. Therefore, some scholars argue that mere exposure to authentic language can help learners become aware of the diversity of contextual possibilities, and therefore produce language accordingly (Gibbons, 1998; Gilmore, 2007; Rühlemann, 2008). Yet, it should be pointed out that explicit teaching of appropriate language usage can be more effective for developing L2 sociopragmatic skills than implicit instruction and mere exposure (Kasper, 2001), as discussed in section 2.5.2 above.

The assumption that exposing learners to authentic input in the target language facilitates the acquisition of different registers also implies that the use of L1 in the language class is likely to hinder this ability. In fact, interactions between teacher and learners in the target language have been observed to assist learners significantly in acquiring different language registers (Gibbons, 1998).

Gibbons (1998) examined how English interactions between 10-year-old learners and their instructor in ESL classes affected their development of English language, with the focus on the formal academic register of English. In this study, the children began by interacting with each other in small group learning experiences and then participated in a reporting session led by the teacher.

The results demonstrate that the interactions between teacher and learners (particularly teacher recasts) gave learners the data to extend their interlanguage into more context-reduced registers and helped them acquire the type of English related to the science topic that they were studying. To exemplify how this occurs, Gibbons (1998) reported the word *repel* as an example. The instructor introduced *repel* for the learners in a communicative way to help them produce a more scientific register, when they had already conveyed this meaning in everyday English, for instance: *it pushes it away; they're fighting; it slips off; it feels like a strong wind!* The following conversation took place between a student in a teacher-guided reporting session and the instructor.

> *Hannah: The magnet on the top is sort of floating in the air.*
>
> *Teacher: So that the two magnets are repelling each other. (Gibbons, 1998, p. 111)*

Here the instructor acts like a partner in a conversation by expanding on what the student has expressed and by including a new science-specific lexis (repelling). Later, according to Gibbons (1998), the written compositions produced by learners provide evidence of uptake. In the writing texts, Hannah, as well as many of the students, included wording which was part of the instructor's recasting. Moreover, Gibbons (1998) notes that the classroom interaction influenced the interactants as well as the students who listened to the interactions. Based on these observations, classroom interaction is very likely to help the learner produce an improved, more appropriate version according to context.

In sum, although a number of researchers and scholars recommend teaching specific features and characteristics of spoken and written language to English learners, there is no agreement on the best approach for teaching them, or the extent to which teachers have to teach the characteristics of different language registers.

Communication skills of Saudi EFL learners, and the role of classroom instruction in developing these skills are described in the following sections.

2.7 Communicative competence of Saudi EFL learners

The emphasis on evaluating Saudi students' communication skills is recent, as can be seen by the studies mentioned throughout this section. After the launch of the King Abdullah Foreign Scholarship Program in 2005 in Saudi Arabia, which resulted in a growing number of Saudi students studying abroad, numerous researchers have become interested in the evaluation of Saudi students' readiness to experience education and life overseas in terms of the quality of their communication skills (e.g., Alharbi, 2015; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; Ben Duhaish, 2015; Nather, 2014).

Consequently, their skills have been widely examined and criticised (e.g., Al-Seghayer, 2015; Al-wossabi, 2016; Alanazi & Widin, 2018; Alharbi, 2015; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; Bani Younes & Albalawi, 2016; Batawi, 2006; Ben Duhaish, 2015; Elyas & Al Grigri, 2014; Fareh, 2010; Rababah, 2003), with extensive criticism directed toward their proficiency in using spoken English (Al-wossabi, 2016; Aljumah, 2011; Elyas & Al Grigri, 2014; Rababah, 2003). Al-Shumaimeri (2003) explains that teachers often complain that Saudi students are leaving their secondary schooling after six years study of English without even basic conversation skills.

Based on his long experience as an EFL teacher in a number of Arab countries, Rababah (2003) reports that a great number of English graduates throughout the Arab World, including Saudi learners, are unable to express themselves fluently and comfortably using EFL. Whether in academic or in everyday contexts, they worry about being misunderstood. Al-Hazmi (2017) found that Saudi EFL learners who have completed at least seven years of English instruction can demonstrate a high level of linguistic competence on a discrete-point grammar exam, but many of them cannot speak English fluently and accurately.

Another problematic dimension of communication skills among Saudi EFL learners is pragmatics. Research in the area of pragmatics shows that pragmatic transfer and pragmatic failure are very common among Saudi speakers of English (Al-wossabi, 2016; Althigafi, 2017; Ben Duhaish, 2015; Salameh, 2001). Al-wossabi (2016), based on anecdotal evidence, argues that a large number of Saudi university students who are nominated for summer intensive English programs at American universities lack the ability to communicate purposefully and meaningfully in the target language. Al-wossabi (2016) adds that most of these students, when returning, revealed that they had encountered many challenging communicative and academic situations where they lacked proper linguistic resources and knowledge of the sociolinguistic rules required to maintain conversations and avoid breakdowns in communication.

Similarly, Ben Duhaish's (2015) study focussed on how five Saudi students studying for a master's degree in the United States came to understand the evolution of their pragmatic English abilities through their experiences as students in English speaking countries. Presented in the style of a narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), the Ben Duhaish study examined the five participants' past experiences and educational backgrounds in Saudi educational contexts prior to embarking on their graduate degrees in the United States. Additionally, the study investigated their present lives in the United States and how their journeys shaped their future visions of teaching and learning English in Saudi Arabia.

A number of data collection sources was used in Ben Duhaish's study, including individual interviews, multiple self-recorded reflections, a focus group and an electronic blog. The participants' successful classroom experiences in Saudi Arabia (all participants were graduate students pursuing their master's degrees in American universities) convinced them that they would be successful in communication.

As soon as the participants arrived in the United States, however, they immediately began to stumble over their words and lose confidence in their communication skills. Al-wossabi (2016) and Ben Duhaish (2015) concluded that Saudi students often discover a vast difference between the English they have been taught in school and the English they encounter in real life. This concurs with the rationale for the current study, that research is needed into the English language education of Saudi students because they appear to lack sufficient understanding of the varieties of language registers when speaking EFL or how to use those registers to achieve their communication goals.

Indeed, pragmatic issues have been identified among both proficient and less proficient EFL learners in Saudi Arabia (Althigafi, 2017), confirming the observation by Gee and Gee (2007) that proficiency in grammar does not necessarily correlate with the development of pragmatic ability. Althigafi (2017), through a discourse completion task (DCT), examined compliment responses produced by three groups of participants: 10 adult native speakers of English, 10 Saudi EFL learners at an advanced proficiency level and studying in American universities and 10 Saudi EFL learners at a lower level of proficiency and studying in the Institute of Public Administration (IPA) in Saudi Arabia.

The study investigated the extent to which Saudi EFL learners could produce native-like compliment responses and whether language proficiency levels affect the production of native-like compliment responses. According to the results of the study, Saudi learners failed to produce native-like responses in most of the tasks. Furthermore, the level of language proficiency did not significantly affect the production of native-like compliment responses. In other words, both groups of Saudi students failed pragmatically.

To improve the communication skills of Saudi students, the underlying causes of any deficiencies must be identified. Only by analysing the reasons for the failure of the Saudi language students can strategies be developed to address the weaknesses in their communication skills.

2.8 Constraints on developing communicative competence in Saudi Arabia

After reviewing a large number of studies concerning EFL in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), the researcher believes that Saudis' deficiency of communication skills is likely to be attributed to three main constraints—attitudes, pedagogies and curricula (see Figure 2.1). Each of these constraints is considered below, with emphasis on its manifestations, consequences and causes in Saudi Arabia.

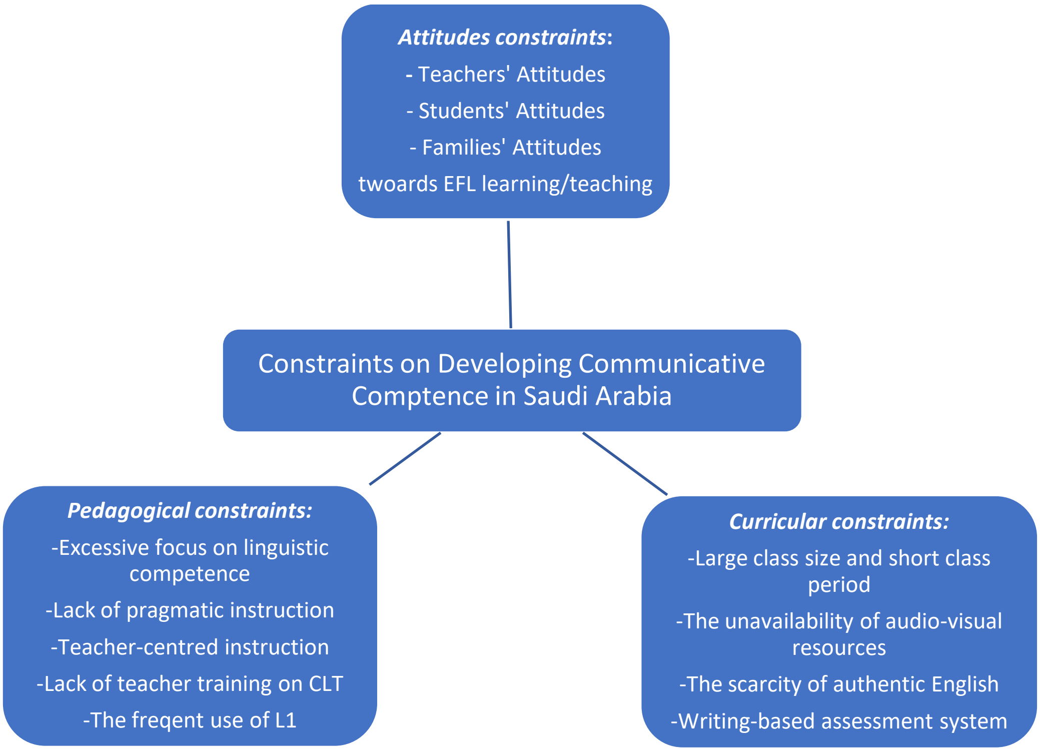

Figure2.1 The most significant constraints on developing communicative competence in Saudi Arabia

2.8.1 Attitude constraints

Families, teachers and students' attitudes towards foreign language learning are significant contributory factors in the language teaching and learning process (Khan, 2011a). In Saudi society, at one extreme there are open-minded families who encourage their children to learn about different cultures and languages, while at the other, very conservative families (especially those who are uneducated) hold negative attitudes towards learning EFL, believing that English or any foreign language conflicts with their Islamic values (Al Darwish, 2018; Alharbi, 2015; Asiri, 2017; Khan, 2011b; Osailan, 2009; Shah et al., 2013).

Mahboob and Elyas (2014) and Picard (2007) explain that many Muslim people have concerns about the influence of learning English on young Muslims because they are exposed to thoughts associated with 'Western colonisation' (refer to Picard, 2007, pp. 19-21, for a discussion on this point). Along the same lines, Alharbi (2015) argues that some Saudi society members incorrectly assume that widespread studying of English as a second language leads to a loss of the Arabic language, as well as Saudi cultures and customs.

Osailan (2009) has explained these misconceptions by pointing out that Saudi Arabian people are familiar with the example of Dubai, a city in the United Arab Emirates, in which Emirati identity is hardly seen and the Arabic language is barely used because Emirati people tend to use English more than Arabic, even though the latter is their native language. Lack of support among Saudi Arabian families and elements of Saudi society demotivates students attempting to learn English (Al Darwish, 2018).

Furthermore, because English does not provide any immediate benefit to everyday life in the real world since English is not spoken in the Saudi community, the language is misperceived as merely one among many school subjects learned for the purpose of exercising the mind, not as a second language that is learned to achieve language proficiency (Batawi, 2006). In other words, most students spend only the minimum effort towards learning the language, and only with the aim of becoming competent enough to pass the exam. Thus, rote learning, rather than meaningful learning, is common in Saudi EFL classes where students memorise whole passages, rules of grammar out of context, and assorted vocabulary to prepare for tests (Alrabai, 2018). Al Seghayer (2013) compares learning English in Saudi Arabia to learning swimming in a bathtub:

> *They have no real purpose for or opportunity to use English outside of the classroom. It is as if teachers have been teaching students to swim by placing them in a bathtub and giving to them lots of rules, but little water. (p.18)*

Moreover, in the view of many Saudi students, learning English is beyond their abilities (Al-Sobhi & Preece, 2018; Al-Zahrani, 2008; Asif, 2017). Students are afraid of attempting English language learning, thinking that it is simply too difficult. To many, it is just another unpleasant hurdle, and perhaps the most unpleasant, in their journey through the school system (Al-Zahrani, 2008). Research has shown that many secondary school students in Saudi Arabia would prefer not to study English if they had the choice due to their fears and the difficulties of learning a foreign language, as reported in (Al-Zahrani, 2008). Furthermore, parental and institutional pressure often mean that Saudi students study English in spite of a lack of intrinsic motivation, joy or interest, caring only about school grades (Fareh, 2010; Khan, 2011a; Shah et al., 2013).

Traditional teaching methods in Saudi schools limit classroom interaction. Saudi teaching methods are teacher-centred, and students receive lectures rather passively, and can be quite negative about

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) with its demands for student participation rather than rote memorisation (Al Darwish, 2018; Kabooha & Elyas, 2015). According to Al Darwish (2018), students describe teachers who implement CLT as 'lazy' and underperforming. Teachers, as well, hold the misconception that the teacher is the fount of knowledge. They, too, prefer dictation over activities that foster co-construction of knowledge.

In such circumstances, whenever an advocate of CLT tries to implement it, it is likely to fail (Al Asmari, 2015). Al Asmari (2015) stresses that teachers in Saudi Arabia should themselves be more aware of the principles and practices of CLT in order to maximise the oral interaction in the classroom, while focussing on integrating the four language skills with grammar and vocabulary. That is, communicative language instruction can begin with receptive skills (listening and reading), constructing a foundation on which to gradually build productive skills, such as writing and speaking.

2.8.2 Pedagogical constraints

In this section, pedagogical constraints, including excessive focus on linguistic competence, lack of pragmatic instruction, teacher-centred instruction, lack of teacher training on CLT and the frequent use of L1 are discussed in order.

Excessive focus on linguistic competence. Previous studies (such as Ahmad & Saha, 2014; Alkubaidi, 2014; Alrabai, 2014; Fareh, 2010; Rajab, 2013) investigated a number of EFL teaching practices in the KSA which actually prevent students from building satisfactory communicative competence. Historically, the emphasis in Saudi schools has been primarily on learning the morphology, phonology and syntax of English (Alharbi, 2015). Al-Mohanna (2011) found that students in Saudi EFL classes are engaged in extensive, monotonous drills of vocabulary and grammatical rules.

Al-Seghayer (2014) notes that EFL teaching in Saudi Arabia centres on developing linguistic competency, while only giving marginal consideration to the development of communicative and sociolinguistic competence. Al-Seghayer (2014) details how students are bereft of opportunities to discover how to use English in real situations in which they may one day find themselves, how the techniques that empower them to understand written and spoken forms of English are neglected, and how important social aspects of the language that govern to whom to say what and when are left out entirely. Nor are they supplied with useful strategies that can help them in the inevitable case of a breakdown in communication.

Moreover, as Almutairi (2007) and Rajab (2013) point out, the focus of English teaching in the KSA is on receptive skills and knowledge, such as reading comprehension and grammar, rather than productive skills, such as speaking and writing. Despite the fact that many teachers claim to focus on their students' speaking and critical thinking, they do not in reality pursue these goals, as described in Fareh (2010).

According to Batawi (2006), linguistics competence is what helps students pass exams in Saudi Arabia, and ultimately graduate to commence their undergraduate studies, so teachers do not risk students' success by altering grammar-based instruction. Moreover, Fageeh (2011) claims that most instructional materials in Saudi schools focus on teaching grammatical forms while neglecting the communicative aspects of English language. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the teachers of English in Saudi schools, who commonly use teaching approaches based on these materials, primarily emphasise grammar illustrations and vocabulary drills. As a result, Saudi EFL classes produce students who are better able to complete grammar-based tests than interact effectively with English speakers (Al-Hazmi, 2017; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015).

Ben Duhaish (2015) argues that English teachers in Saudi Arabian schools should appreciate that teaching grammar is not an end in itself, but is taught to assist learners become successful communicators. That is, teachers should use grammar-awareness-raising tasks to instil consciousness of the rules that will benefit students immensely when they communicate. Moreover, learning to read, write and speak in English cannot be considered merely just another school project. The students' future, academically, interpersonally, and in business is very likely to be affected by their English proficiency since the language is used so universally.

Lack of pragmatic instruction. All pragmatic studies related to Saudi Arabia discovered during this research reported a lack of, or disregard for, pragmatic content in the curriculum (Aribi, 2012; Batawi, 2006; Ben Duhaish, 2015; Fareh, 2010; Hamouda, 2014). These studies stress that Saudi EFL teachers and syllabus designers need to integrate cultural and pragmatic content into their EFL teaching programs if their aim were truly to foster student ability to speak appropriately and engage in successful communication.

Besides the lack of pragmatic content, Fareh (2010) found that the simplifications made by English teachers could also hamper the growth of Saudi students' pragmatic competence. According to Gibbons (2010), simplified input occurs when a teacher consciously simplifies or modifies the language of the classroom instruction by avoiding the grammatical and lexical complexity that the teacher believes to be beyond the present comprehension of students.

While simplified input may render language more comprehensible, it could also impact the successful acquisition of a second language negatively as learners cannot access language items or features that are unknown to them (White, 1987). For example, when an instructor teaches students to use only one particular form of request, the learners will predictably use that form in every context they encounter regardless of the social status of their conversational partner, the degree of formality or level of directness required by the situation.

Similarly, Lihui and Jianbin (2010) have stated that the 'so-called' standard linguistic patterns which are introduced in EFL classes commonly mislead English language learners. These patterns, such as 'How are you? Fine, thank you.' are not always followed in real life conversations. Accordingly, Lihui and Jianbin advise English instructors to avoid rigidity in their pragmatics instruction. Rather, instructors should holistically expose students to the varieties of linguistic patterns in different contexts. Ben Duhaish (2015) reports that when he first arrived in the United States, he was surprised to find people using greetings such as 'What's going on? and 'What's up?' which caused him a great deal of confusion until he discovered their meaning as informal alternatives of 'How are you?'. This is because he had never been introduced to these alternatives in Saudi EFL classrooms.

Consequently, the main recommendation of the researchers, after observing Saudi students' limited pragmatic knowledge, is to teach pragmatic forms and preferences explicitly in Saudi EFL classes (Aribi, 2012; Batawi, 2006; Ben Duhaish, 2015; Fareh, 2010; Hamouda, 2014). Aribi (2012) points out that instructors can help learners understand appropriate, polite, alternative communication by introducing the preferred and non-preferred forms of idiosyncratic English language formations. As demonstrated in Hamouda (2014) experimental study, explicit instruction of English refusals, for example, can provide a clear advantage for learners. The Saudi participants in Hamouda's study outperformed the control group significantly, who received no explicit instruction in performing English refusals. This supports Kasper (1992) argument that explicit instruction may be required to help EFL learners develop pragmatic competence.

Teacher-centred instruction. Another teaching practice in Saudi education that may hinder learners' communicative competence is the instructors' reliance on teacher-centred approaches, such as Grammar Translation and Audio-lingualism (Al-Hazmi, 2017; Al-Humaidi, 2007; Al Darwish, 2018; Alqahtani, 2018; Elyas & Picard, 2010).

Saudi academic culture is vastly different from Western culture. Saudis are raised to be self-effacing in school. Therefore, speaking aloud in the classroom, whether to the teacher or to another student is discouraged by the school culture at large, rendering classroom speech opportunities—in another language no less—immensely intimidating. Moreover, Saudi social norms emphasise politeness and respect from students towards teachers. For example, it would be unusual to see a student volunteer to say something in class unasked, or address their teacher by anything other than 'teacher' (as an honorary title) followed by the teacher's name, while expressing further respect by standing up when greeting and speaking to their teacher (Nather, 2014).

Additionally, in the Saudi context, students see in their teacher a model to be followed to achieve a high level of L2 proficiency (Althigafi, 2017). Therefore, EFL teaching in Saudi Arabia adheres to the teacher-centred approach, through which students dutifully absorb no more or less than whatever knowledge the teacher dispenses to them. In other words, there is little or no opportunity to interact in the classroom, except for the occasion when the teacher may quiz students with a question or instruct them to complete an activity or exercise (Al-Johani, 2009; Alkubaidi, 2014; Alrabai, 2014).

Furthermore, as Al-Seghayer (2014) notes, the textbooks currently used to teach English in Saudi schools emphasise the transfer of knowledge over the fostering of skills. This situation encourages the traditional teacher-centred approach, and teachers appear to be more concerned with presenting information than creating opportunities for practice and individual growth. Instead, learners passively receive, memorise and reproduce (Alrabai, 2014). They memorise not only vocabulary, but grammar rules and whole paragraphs and passages of composition without necessarily understanding the meaning or the formation of what they have memorised (Alkubaidi, 2014; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; Elyas, 2008; Rajab, 2013). Thus, students are judged on their ability to memorise vocabulary and structures rather than their ability to make meaningful use of the language (Elyas & Picard, 2010).

By simply memorising the entire textbook, or large sections of it, Saudi students are able to pass with high marks in English without really learning to use the language (Alkubaidi, 2014; Nather, 2014). They finish the course unable, however, to use their vocabulary or knowledge of linguistic forms to communicate in English (Batawi, 2006; Rababah, 2003; Ur Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). Therefore, researchers (Al-Nasser, 2015; Al-wossabi, 2016; Alharbi, 2015; Ben Duhaish, 2015; Fareh, 2010; Ur Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013) emphasise that teachers of English in Saudi Arabia should give up the model of dictation and lecturing to focus on improving students' ability with the four basic skills of reading, speaking, listening and writing.

Lack of teacher training in CLT. Previous researchers of Saudi Arabian education (such as Al-Humaidi, 2007; Al-Mohanna, 2010; Al-Hazmi, 2003; Al Darwish, 2018; Fareh, 2010) have concluded that the lack of familiarity with CLT constrains teachers in applying communicative teaching. Al-Seghayer (2014) has remarked on the fact that public schools in Saudi Arabia only require holding a bachelor's degree in English to teach the language.

Throughout their four-year program, English language student teachers in Saudi Arabia take several different courses within the English department in addition to English language and literature classes to prepare them for teaching. These may include linguistics, teaching methodology, and additional courses focussed on education. These courses are expected to prepare prospective teachers to teach English at all levels in public schools, including elementary, intermediate, and secondary.

Upon completion, graduates receive a Bachelor of Arts in English. Because of the condensed nature of the courses, the teaching methodology courses only represent about 10% of the courses available to take at most college and university English departments (Al-Seghayer, 2011). Accordingly, Fareh (2010) and Khan (2011a) argue that many students who graduate are underqualified to teach EFL. Furthermore, teacher development programs conducted by local departments of education are severely limited in scale, and consequently some English teachers, despite having spent decades on the job, have undergone little to no career development (Al-Seghayer, 2014). In addition, English teachers have very limited options for career advancement other than rare promotions to supervisor position (Al-Seghayer, 2014). Furthermore, teachers who seek out professional development on their own find a scarcity of teacher training resources and limited encouragement or incentives from their school administration. Unsurprisingly, given the factors described previously, many EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia lack familiarity with modern methodologies and theories in language teaching and testing (Javid, Farooq, & Gulzar, 2012; Khan, 2011b).

Nather (2014) asserts that Saudi English teachers need focussed and systemic training, with the teachers' attitudes towards learning and teaching being the first and primary focus of the training. According to Nather (2014), teacher training needs to first bring teachers to understand and articulate their beliefs and attitudes about teaching and learning, secondly to uncover any contradictions inherent in their beliefs, and finally, to help teachers realise what areas of their belief structure need further development. Critically, Saudi teachers who believe that teaching is merely imparting knowledge to help students pass one exam after another should be brought to appreciate that language use is the primary goal of teaching English, not, test preparation, and the way they teach must be appropriately altered to match this philosophical change. Moreover, Al-Seghayer (2014) appointed using a universal set of standards during the hiring process to assess a teacher's qualifications.

However, it must be acknowledged that Saudi teachers cannot effectively implement change in teaching practice without solid administrative support that actively initiates systemic reform (Batawi, 2006). Saudi education is highly controlled by the Ministry of Education. English teachers at every grade level are required to teach the same syllabus, which is designed by the Ministry of Education, with guidelines they must follow and deadlines they must meet.

Accordingly, English teachers in Saudi Arabia have little autonomy in teaching objectives, approaches, materials and assessment systems (Shah et al., 2013). Teachers are usually unable to design engaging curricula that address students' real learning needs, interests, capabilities, and knowledge. Nevertheless, teachers should ideally be aware of their responsibility to educate their students, for whom the teacher-centred approach is just as ingrained, to the real purpose of learning EFL and their role as active participants in the classroom (Decker, 2004; Li, 1998).

The frequent use of L1. The issue of including or excluding the students' first language in foreign language classes has been the subject of debate for a long time. There are essentially two basic approaches on the use of L1 in language classrooms. Some researchers propose that the only medium of instruction should be the target language (e.g., Atkinson, 1987; Krashen & Terrell, 1983). When Krashen and Terrell (1983) published their Natural Approach which aims to foster a natural form of language acquisition, they proposed that students have to attend to 'large amounts' of comprehensible input in the target language.

That is, L1 should not be used in the class. Moreover, according to Krashen and Terrell (1983), students should acquire the target language through visual interference and meaningful communicative activities (inductive learning) rather than the use of native language. According to this group or the supporters of a monolingual approach, the effectiveness of learning the target language will increase with the banishing of the mother tongue. However, researchers who advocate the bilingual approach argue that the first language is a very beneficial instructional tool in EFL classes (Cook, 2016; Schweers Jr, 1999; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003).

To review the issue specific to Saudi Arabia, previous studies show that the Arabic language (L1) is widely used in teaching English (Al-Nofaie, 2010; Alhawsawi, 2013; Alkhatnai, 2011; Almutairi, 2007; Alshammari, 2011; Fareh, 2010; Khresheh, 2012; Machaal, 2012), and both students and teachers have positive attitudes towards its use (Al-Nofaie, 2010; Alanazi, 2018). As indicated in Alshammari (2011), 69% of Saudi English teachers carry out instruction in Arabic, while 60% claim using Arabic is essential for maximising limited time efficiently (i.e., Arabic is necessary for students to learn the content efficiently, without wasting time trying to understand the 'message' in English).

In other words, 60% of teachers believe that the content is more important than practising the target language. Besides the teachers' beliefs, lack of confidence in their own English-speaking skills has also been identified as a main reason for using Arabic in the classroom (Al-Humaidi, 2007; Al-Mohanna, 2011; Al-Hazmi, 2003; Fareh, 2010). Additionally, it has been shown that the use of the

Arabic language in Saudi EFL classes is almost unavoidable because of the lack of English-speaking skills among teachers as well as students (Al-Hazmi, 2017; Al-Nofaie, 2010; Batawi, 2006). However, Alhawsawi (2013) and Rababah (2003) argue that instructors' choice to rely on Arabic while teaching English is likely to make their job easier. Similarly, students also demonstrate a generally positive attitude towards instruction in Arabic because vocabulary and grammar are more accessible for them (Al-Nofaie, 2010).

Due to this favouring of Arabic as a language of instruction, EFL learners in Saudi Arabia have very limited opportunities to hear and practise the new language in their lessons and this consequently hinders development in their communicative competence (Alfahadi, 2016; Alharbi, 2015; Batawi, 2006; Nather, 2014). Therefore, Al-wossabi (2016) and Alharbi (2015) recommend that the Ministry of Education consider converting a number of Saudi public schools into bilingual schools. Teaching several subjects such as Physics and Maths in English would be a good method for maximising English usage, increasing fluency and communication ability. Al-wossabi (2016) and Alharbi (2015) add that developing bilingual schools would enable Saudi students to achieve English fluency while honouring local culture and heritage.

On the other hand, according to some researchers, judicious use of Arabic in Saudi English classes appears to facilitate the teaching and learning process (Alrabai, 2016; Shuchi & Islam, 2016). Al Shammari (2018) and Alrabai (2016) note, however, that, teachers must carefully tread the line between constructive and unproductive use. According to Al Shammari (2018) and Alrabai (2016), Arabic is useful for defining some difficult or abstract vocabulary items or ideas. Such observations concur with several studies in EFL contexts (Assalahi, 2013; Dujmović, 2007; Hidayati, 2012; Sharma, 2006) which report that most students assigned the highest importance of the use of their L1 to clarifying some abstract vocabulary or explaining difficult grammatical points, particularly when L2 proficiency is low.

These different findings are consistent with views expressed by SLA researchers. Shaikh (1993) and Richards and Rodgers (2014) argue that those students who acquire the second language while depending on the mother tongue may find difficulties in L2 speaking because they are accustomed to translating ideas slowly from L1 to L2 as they go. Nevertheless, other researchers (such as Burden, 2000; Harbord, 1992; Polio, 1994) emphasised that only an *excessive* dependency on the mother tongue may lead learners to lose the ability or confidence to communicate in L2. They advise that language teachers stand somewhere in the middle between the monolingual and bilingual approaches, using mostly the L2, but also using L1 when needed. In other words, striking a balance between the first and second language should be the goal of the EFL teacher who wants to both maximise English language use and ensure student comprehension.

2.8.3 Curricular constraints

In this section, the large class size and short class period, unavailability of audio-visual resources, scarcity of authentic English and writing-based assessment system in the Saudi Arabian learning environment are discussed.

Large class size and short class period. It has been argued that communication difficulties among Saudi students could be partly attributed to large class sizes (Al-Nasser, 2015; Al Darwish, 2018; Fareh, 2010) and the amount of time allocated for teaching English (Al-Nasser, 2015; Al-Seghayer, 2014; Shah et al., 2013). Students in the intermediate and secondary grades receive four class periods of English per week, each lasting 40-45 minutes. Yet, in elementary school, the students are taught English just twice a week for 60 minutes. Al-Nasser (2015) believes that in this way learners are unlikely to develop communication skills or improve their language learning as a whole. Students simply do not have the same opportunities to practise and reinforce their learning (Shah et al., 2013).

According to Fareh (2010), many teachers report that the large number of students in Saudi schools increases the difficulty of engaging students in group discussions and other oral activities. Similarly, Al Darwish (2018) argues that the large classroom size in Saudi Arabian public schools does not suit Communicative Language Teaching CLT, especially if the classroom environment suffers with discipline issues.

Supporting this claim, Gahin and Myhill (2001, p. 9) state that ‘large class size …[acts] against group work activities’. Nather (2014), based on his 10-year experience as an EFL teacher in Saudi Arabia, reported that:

> *I found myself constantly speaking loudly to gain the students' attention. With the lack of space in classrooms, I could not move around to instruct students and talk to them individually. (p.3)*

Al-Seghayer (2014) specifically criticised the amount of time allocated for teaching English at Saudi high schools. He argued that, at the high school level, English instructors should conduct a lesson daily in order to complete the prescribed textbook, as is expected of them, in one semester, but even in these circumstances, completion is unlikely to happen. Some of the lesson activities and materials will have to be left out of the 45-minute period. Thus, English instruction in Saudi schools is described as a race to get the textbook finished in time for exams at the end of the year (Batawi, 2006).

Moreover, time constraints in Saudi EFL classes can result in ineffective experiences for both learners and teachers alike. Teachers struggle merely to cover all the units in the textbook while individualised instruction is abandoned. Learners, as a result, are provided insufficient opportunity to reflect on and practice the newly taught material (Al-Seghayer, 2014). Consequently, previous researchers (e.g., Al Darwish, 2018; Alhawsawi, 2013; Almutairi, 2007; Alshammari, 2011) have recommended that Saudi students be provided more opportunities for participation in class. One effective way of achieving this is by increasing the time allotted for learning English and/or reducing the class size in Saudi schools.

The unavailability of audio-visual resources. Another factor that negatively affects the learning and teaching process in Saudi English classes is the lack of audio-visual materials and equipment. A visitor to Saudi schools is immediately aware of the lack of audio and visual aids or a computer lab with all the necessary equipment (see Fareh, 2010). Even resources provided by the few schools who do have them, such as flash cards, visuals or auditory aids, are often outdated and/or damaged (Al-Seghayer, 2014).

The lack of access to appropriate teaching resources results in numerous negative consequences. Most English teachers in the KSA do not use teaching aids in class and rely extensively on the blackboard and textbook for their lessons. For instance, teachers usually choose to deliver a listening exercise by reading it out loud themselves (Al-Seghayer, 2014). This indicates that Saudi EFL learners lack sufficient exposure to authentic listening materials and their interest in learning the language is not simulated (Batawi, 2006). Consequently, their motivation to learn the language suffers (Liton, 2012).

Al-Nasser (2015) argues that this is insufficient, and that Saudi students need to hear and see how English is produced in real life situations. That is, students need to hear, observe and imitate the language through stories, film, discussion and live drama. Students cannot effectively acquire language proficiency by studying a textbook and talking about, rather than in, the language. Al-Nasser (2015) concludes that Saudi schools should provide audio-visual resources to help students learn English more effectively and enjoyably.

The scarcity of authentic English. There are very limited opportunities in Saudi Arabia for students to speak or hear English in the community, and empirical studies have shown that Saudi students experience a lack of authentic English input in the language classroom itself (Al Darwish, 2018; Alhawsawi, 2013; Almutairi, 2007; Alshammari, 2011).

According to Gilmore (2007), authentic materials refer to examples of real language produced by native speakers for native speakers; that are not created for language teaching purposes, such as magazine and newspaper articles, brochures, leaflets and menus. Authentic materials of this sort offer learners significant exposure to the target language and the way it is used in an actual context, presenting learners more opportunities to improve communicative abilities (Mishan, 2005; Rilling & Dantas-Whitney, 2009). Nuttall (1996) notes that authentic texts demonstrate the vibrancy and real-life nature of the language (i.e., authentic texts are proof that the target language is produced by real people for real-life purposes), which can be highly motivating for learners.

On the other hand, lack of authenticity means that students may receive impoverished or insufficient exposure to the second language. LoCastro (2013, p. 246) states that the teaching materials may 'misrepresent the target language culture and its social rules of speaking. All too often they are not based on naturally occurring language'. Similarly, Tomlinson (2008, p. 3) argues that the communicative aspects, as well as the cultural and social conventions of the target language, are usually missed in text-book materials.

Tomlinson (2008) adds that this is because most of the texts and activities included in such materials have been written specifically to teach certain language structures and vocabulary. In the same sense, Kasper (2000) emphasises that learners' unawareness of L2 pragmatic conventions may be partly due to the instructional focus on linguistic accuracy. Inauthentic classroom materials may cause learners to deviate from the target language's pragmatic norms, as indicated by Ishihara and Cohen (2014). Therefore, in order to produce successful communicators in a L2, Hedge (2000) emphasises authentic language use inside the classroom:

> *If the goal is to equip students to deal ultimately with the authentic language of the real world, they should be given opportunities to cope with this in the classroom. (Hedge, 2000, p. 67)*

That is, the teacher's choice of classroom activities must be:

> *According to how well [the activities] engage students in meaningful and authentic language use rather than in the merely mechanical practice of language patterns. (Li, 1998, p. 679)*

These recommendations indicate serious issues related to EFL teaching in Saudi classrooms, with extensive criticism directed toward the disregard of authentic language samples in school textbooks in Saudi Arabia. Prior research shows that EFL textbooks in Saudi schools provide language teaching explicitly via using artificial samples and texts that make learners concentrate mainly on the given language feature in unnatural contexts (Ben Duhaish, 2015).

Al Azri and Al-Rashdi (2014) mention that most textbooks in the Arab world do not provide the learners with real life language because they are designed for teaching rather than learning. Furthermore, Allehyani et al. (2017) found that most of Saudi high school textbooks focus on accuracy rather than fluency, and the prime teaching content of textbooks does not fulfil the learners' needs for communication skills. Similarly, Fageeh (2011, p. 67) claims that the materials used for teaching English in Saudi schools focus on grammar and vocabulary with little attention to cultural or pragmatic content. As a result, Saudi EFL learners frequently find that the language they encounter in real life is different from what they learned in school (Al-wossabi, 2016; Ben Duhaish, 2015; Fageeh, 2011).

Given that school textbooks are the main source of learning material in Saudi EFL classes, it should be ensured that they provide the basic practices of authentic language in EFL classes to serve communicative purposes (Al-Seghayer, 2014; Al-wossabi, 2016; Allehyani et al., 2017; Alshumaimeri & Alzyadi, 2015). In addition, Saudi teachers should find a balance between the existing textbooks and authentic materials that teachers are able to source themselves (Alshumaimeri & Alzyadi, 2015). Many authentic materials, such as newspapers and magazines, and also media, such as movies, television, documentaries, and commercials, can productively supplement the textbook and help enhance the pragmatic awareness of learners (Gebhard, 2006; Grossi, 2009).

However, although some English teachers in Saudi Arabia are aware of the fact that school textbooks do not always reflect real-life language, they still rely almost exclusively on textbooks for language instruction (Al-Seghayer, 2014; Nather, 2014). This is because Saudi instructors find it difficult to develop authentic materials themselves due to a lack of knowledge or training, time restrictions, or external pressure that restricts their ability to develop teaching materials (Al Darwish, 2018; Allehyani et al., 2017; Althigafi, 2017; Batawi, 2006).

Additionally, some teachers in Saudi Arabia perceive that developing teaching materials diverts their energy and time from the main task of teaching (Al-Seghayer, 2014). Furthermore, Al-Saadat and Al-Braik (2004) argue that the strong centralisation of authority in the Ministry of Education discourages teachers from finding or creating authentic materials and limits opportunities for trainees to learn materials development techniques. The effect of the centralisation of educational protocol and control is that teachers come to believe that materials development is above their ability and outside of their responsibility (Al-Seghayer, 2014).

As the discussion above attests, Saudi school curriculum is mainly textbook-driven, and consequently previous researchers put much emphasis on the evaluation and improvement of textbooks in Saudi Arabia (Alamri, 2008; Allehyani et al., 2017; Batawi, 2006; Fareh, 2010). However, although textbooks at Saudi schools have undergone a number of changes (Allehyani et al., 2017), those so far published, even the latest, the Traveller series, do not include or at least recommend the use of authentic materials (Nather, 2014).

Writing-based assessment system. The nature of the examination/assessment system in Saudi education is widely considered to be a significant reason for the lack of communicative competence among Saudi students (Al-Blauwi, 2016; Al-Nasser, 2015; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; Batawi, 2006; Nather, 2014). The assessment system for all topics in Saudi public schools, including English language, is writing-based. In the English language module, a student who achieves 50 out of 100 marks can pass the module.

The mid-term and the final exams are based on a basic format created and distributed by the General Directorate of Curricula, in the Department of English Language at the Saudi Ministry of Education. This directorate details all of the items to be assessed by the examination, as well as how marks should be distributed.

Alrashidi and Phan (2015) argue that having a set template on which students can be trained relatively quickly enables students to succeed more easily in exams without having to study as much of the textbook. Another concern is that such exams, which are usually given a maximum of three times per term are ineffective at closely monitoring student language development over the course of a year, as explained by Coombe and Barlow (2004). Furthermore, Huerta-Macias (2002) and Coombe and Barlow (2004) point out that paper and pen tests are not authentic because they do not gauge the multi-skills, strategies and knowledge that determine student success in the language.

Most importantly, the lack of speaking and listening assessment in Saudi EFL classes has been identified as a major reason for the lack of oral and aural skills among Saudi learners (Al-Blauwi, 2016; Batawi, 2006; Nather, 2014). According to Nather (2014), EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia find that they must use a large segment of their classroom time preparing for these grammar-based exams. Thus, most teachers predominately teach grammar, while neglecting other very important language skills, such as listening and speaking.

Although some Saudi EFL teachers believe that grammar-based examination does not necessarily reflect their students’ actual knowledge or skill level, they cannot use their own initiative to adapt assessment tools due to administrative constraints (Batawi, 2006). Similarly, Al-Blauwi (2016) reports that Saudi learners are much more concerned with learning grammar, even though they realise the importance of learning English for communicative purposes. This could be because students in the Saudi Arabian context are judged based on their grades in the written exams, rather than their actual proficiency in English, and this reality discourages them from learning English for communication purposes.

Therefore, administrators, as well as teachers, in Saudi Arabia need to understand that English is a living language and must therefore be treated differently from other subjects in Saudi schools; and that language education needs to reflect the communicative nature of the language (Al-Nasser, 2015; Batawi, 2006). The evidence indicates that it is imperative that a new dimension of assessment be sought in Saudi EFL classes in order to give assessment tasks a more natural, communicative orientation that reflects students' actual proficiency levels as revealed through a variety of spoken, as well as written, language skills (Al-Nasser, 2015; Batawi, 2006; Nather, 2014). This is consistent with Coombe and Barlow (2004) views that educators should use assessment tools that are student-centred, and which focus on communication ability rather than memorisation. Furthermore, in order to reduce the level of anxiety associated with the exams, Batawi (2006) suggests the use of portfolio assessment in Saudi EFL classes.

Portfolio assessment is understood to be a 'record of work over time and in a variety of modes to show the depth, breadth, and development of the student's abilities' (Shaaban, 2001, p. 7). Law and Eckes (1995) point out that portfolio assessment is particularly important for English language learners because it is inclusive of learners' knowledge and skills, and it demonstrates growth. However, the current study indicates that Nather (2014) is correct when he argues that portfolio assessment is difficult to implement in Saudi Arabia because the educational system officially prioritises the use of grammar-based tests and does not recognise portfolios as a valid means of assessment.

This suggests that language researchers, as well as teachers, should promote the idea of portfolio assessment. Moreover, given that portfolios have a number of disadvantages (e.g., they cannot be easily or meaningfully translated into numerical scores that can be readily compared), portfolio systems should not replace paper and pen tests but can 'coexist and complement' them (Neiman, 1999, p. 5).

In sum, in Saudi EFL classes as described in this section, it is obvious that priority is given to teaching the written register of the English language. Thus, a major communicative drawback is a by-product of this system of education. The first step towards developing communicative competence among Saudi students, as suggested by the majority of previous studies, would be to reform the examination system in Saudi Arabia (Al-Seghayer, 2011; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; Batawi, 2006; Nather, 2014). Since grammar-based exams are prioritised by the Saudi education system, developing communication skills is unlikely be a primary goal of English teaching or learning. Al-Seghayer (2011) described the situation most vividly, writing:

> *The examination system is achievement-oriented rather than proficiency. Due to such practice, Saudi EFL teachers remain the facilitators of examinations of English rather than the linguistic or communicative proficiency. (p.20)*

These practices have caused EFL students in Saudi Arabia 'to adopt a passive approach to learning' (Al-Seghayer, 2015, p. 93)

2.9 Chapter summary

The literature review presented in this chapter offered insights into the area of language and language learning investigated in this study. The review gives a historical overview of the importance of developing communicative and pragmatic competence among English learners. Pragmatics is concerned with those features of a language that allow learners to interpret the word of other speakers, and to produce language which is accurate and appropriate to the cultural and social circumstances where the communication takes place. That is, producing the right language register in a given context is part of pragmatic competence.

The chapter consequently focussed on some approaches and techniques to teaching English pragmatics in general and teaching differences between language registers in particular. The chapter then provided a detailed review of EFL in Saudi Arabia, discussing the role of instruction in developing Saudi EFL learners' communicative competence.

This survey of the literature indicates that the foundational knowledge of English instruction obtained in Saudi EFL classes does not prepare students effectively for real life communication and its enduring challenges. Moreover, although many studies in the literature discuss the issue of different registers in different EFL countries, no research appears to have been done into determining whether Saudi students are able to differentiate between language registers when producing English language.

Furthermore, the question remains unanswered whether English instruction in Saudi Arabia can teach this aspect of language. That is, students' and teachers' practices in regard to different language registers remain unclear. It is this question which this study aimed to address. In the next chapter, the research methodology is explained.

Chapter 3

Methodology and methods

This chapter explains the methodology and methods used during this research. The main aim of this project was to investigate whether Saudi Arabian female high-school learners distinguish between different registers of English (writing and speech) in regard to the English vocabulary they choose to use. The research took the form of a case-study involving multiple sources of data and different methods of analysis, as described in this chapter.

The chapter is organised as follows: Firstly, the main questions that guide the present research are presented. Then, the epistemological approach and logic of the research methodology and method are discussed. Next, participants and ethical considerations are identified, and data collection techniques discussed in detail. Subsequently, tools for data processing and approaches for data analysis are described. Finally, a conclusion highlighting the key elements of the research methodology and methods is provided.

3.1 Research questions

As described in Chapter 1 (section 1.2.1), based on my observation, many Saudi students do not distinguish between spoken and written registers when using English as a L2. However, as indicated by the literature review, there is no research related to Saudi EFL learner recognition and use of register in English. This study is the first of its kind in the context of Saudi Arabian education to investigate EFL learners' understanding of the lexical qualities of spoken and written English. The following research questions guided this study:

R1: *To what extent do Saudi EFL students discriminate between spoken and written registers?*

- ***R1.1*** *How does Saudi EFL students' speech differ from their writing in regard to word coverage, sophistication, formality and diversity?*
- ***R1.2*** *Do Saudi EFL students use vocabulary in their speech and writing in the same way/proportion as native speakers?*

From my perspective as a teacher, it was hypothesised that the type of instruction received by students in schools plays a pivotal role in developing sensitivity to different language registers. This leads to the second main question of this research as follows:

R2: *How do elements of the teaching and learning context/environment, including textbook and teaching approach, contribute to learners' ability to use different registers?*

R2.1 *What teaching approach is used in the classroom in relation to these differences?*

R.2.1.1 *Does the teacher provide a variety of input samples for learners to be able to observe these differences? For example, do they use informal spoken registers in English, as well as more formal registers?*

R.2.1.2 *Does the teacher draw learners' attention explicitly to differences in registers?*

R2.2 *What teaching approach does the textbook use in relation to these differences?*

R.2.2.1 *Does the textbook provide a variety of input samples for learners to be able to observe these differences?*

R.2.2.2 *Does the textbook follow an explicit or implicit approach to teaching differences in registers?*

3.2 Research methodology: Mixed methods

The terms methodology and method cannot be used interchangeably. Methods are the techniques and tools used to gather or analyse data. On the other hand, research methodology is the theoretical framework(s) and the approaches that guide the research design. The methodology provides justification with regard to the choice of a specific approach to collecting and analysing data instead of another (Bell, 2014). The methodology does not specify which methods a researcher must adopt. However, the nature of the methodology will influence the appropriate processes for data collection and analysis. The present research has elements of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies which is known as *mixed methods* research.

Quantitative research

Quantitative research aims to measure defined variables, such as views, opinions and behaviours in a given context by using highly structured methods like online questionnaires, online polls, on-street or telephone interviews and systematic observations. Quantitative research generates numerical data that is usually analysed through computer software and tabulated. Quantitative studies make use of measurable data to establish facts to generalise findings from a sample to the entire population.

Qualitative research

Conversely, qualitative research is non-numerical. Data from qualitative research come from personal interactions between the researcher and the subject as the researcher seeks to gain understanding and insight into the meaning making of the research participant. Qualitative research provides an in-depth understanding of underlying factors that affect the target population or phenomenon.

Qualitative research uses flexible techniques, such as individual interviews, observation and focus groups that allow unlimited expression from participants in order to elicit as much detailed information and as comprehensive a view as possible.

Table 3.1 summarises the differences between qualitative and quantitative studies drawn from a number of sources (Bryman, 2015; Creswell, 2013; McKay, 2006).

Table 3.1 Differences between qualitative and quantitative research

	Quantitative	Qualitative
Purpose	to generalise, to predict, to establish truth and to show a causal relationship	to understand a phenomenon or individuals
The research questions	fixed, formulated prior to data collection	dynamic and on-going questions
Participants	large number	small number, even one individual
Data collection methods	structured	unstructured or semi-structured
Length of study	short-term	long-term
Data display	numerical figures, percentage and/or table	narratives
Language	technical	descriptive
Data analysis	statistical analysis	interpretative analysis

Mixed methods research

As seen in Table 3.1, quantitative and qualitative approaches differ in a number of ways. However, the two approaches do not display the extreme characteristics shown in the table above but rather form a continuum (Dörnyei, 2007). Quantitative studies are not infrequently followed by qualitative studies which help to investigate the quantitative findings further. Similarly, qualitative research usually produces hypotheses and ideas for later quantitative studies.

Employing both qualitative and quantitative approaches, the current study adopted a *mixed methods approach* (Creswell, 2013). The mixed methods research is characterised by the fact that both qualitative and quantitative data are collected, analysed and integrated in either a single or multiphase research (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The use of the mixed methods approach can be justified because it provides the advantages of the quantitative and qualitative research methods, and voids their disadvantages (Neuman, 2013).

As stated by Neuman (2013), the research questions can be addressed from more than one angle, thereby generating more comprehensive findings by integrating positivist and interpretivist philosophies and approaches. In this instance, the quantitative approach was required to calculate the extent to which Saudi EFL students discriminate between spoken and written registers. Moreover, since the statistical data resulting from the quantitative research alone does not always offer a complete explanation or an accurate interpretation of the target phenomenon (see section 3.4.2), an interpretive naturalistic approach was also necessary.

This is to say that the methodological triangulation technique, which is defined by O'Donoghue and Punch (2003) as the application of more than one method to investigate a given phenomenon, has been adopted in this research in order to increase the validity and credibility of the results. For this purpose, a variety of qualitative and quantitative research methods was used here to collect the data: interviews, class observation, textbooks evaluation, questionnaires and language production tasks.

3.3 Research design

As defined by Polit, Beck, and Hungler (1997, p. 191), a research design is 'the researcher's overall plan for answering the research question or testing the research hypothesis'. The present research took the form of a case-study involving multiple sources of data and different methods of analysis.

Definition of case study

Case studies have been widely used in the field of second language acquisition. According to Tarone and Liu (1995), a case study not only investigates the decontextualised and isolated issue of what is taught and learned, but in addition highlights how specific interactional contexts and settings affect the way that languages are taught and learned. Case studies allow researchers to uncover aspects of language teaching that are not available through different methodologies. They help us to find such information because they deeply explore the complexity and uniqueness of a single case from multiple perspectives and through a concrete, context-dependent experience which is extremely difficult to materialise in other types of research. Therefore, every time a case study is conducted, new facets of language teaching are likely to be generated. Sometimes, however, a case study brings up more questions than it answers. Yet, this is a fundamental role of research that allows setting problems while solving others (Wolcott, 1990b).

A case study can be defined as:

> *An intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit. Case studies are particularistic, descriptive and heuristic and rely heavily on inductive reasoning in handling multiple data sources. (Merriam, 1988, p. 16)*

A 'whole system' approach, therefore, appears to be the central component of case studies. This means that case studies of interactions in language classrooms provide good opportunities to investigate the performance of learners, not just in regard to the actual activities they do in class, but also their feelings and thoughts regarding their in-class behaviours (Richert, 1991). It is impossible to deal with the totality of any issue, but a great deal of the complexity and diversity of experience usually emerges in case studies (Stake, 1988).

According to Merriam (1988), there are many obvious advantages to conducting case studies in the field of languages research. The case study is useful for 'studying educational innovations, for evaluating programs, and for informing policy' (Merriam, 1988, p. 31). Merriam also proposes that conducting a case study during implementation of a language program helps to reveal the processes or dynamics at work, capture settings and situations and highlight patterns. Furthermore, she adds that case studies may provide description, evaluation or interpretation, but they are very likely to provide a mixture of these.

Adelman, Jenkins, and Kemmis (1976, pp. 148-150) also report that several distinct strengths are associated with selecting case study as a research method in educational projects. These advantages are summarised as follows:

- the data collected through case studies is strongly anchored in reality
- a good deal of attention is paid to the complexity and subtlety of the case
- insights may enlighten instructors, institutions and decision-makers
- the data is usually displayed in a form that makes it easy to read.

An easily perceived feature of the case study method, then, is that a case study describes more than what participants think and do by identifying the circumstances surrounding the participants in a specific time and place. This feature makes case studies understandable and easily read, yet rarely arranged in a tabular, systematic or condensed form. A table or diagram can never be used to summarise a case study's findings, because the integrity of the data and the contextuality of the participants' accounts are favourably maintained within the cases. This, however, does not mean that we are not able to reach conclusions, or the results cannot generate general insights (Nunan, 1992; Starman, 2013).

In most discussions of case study methodology, the issue of generalisability or external validity usually arises. This generalisability is not only a question of quantity. In qualitative studies, generalisability concerns whether what the researcher finds of explanations, patterns and theories, generated from the data, makes sense in other situations. Scholars and researchers seem to agree that the main aim of case studies is understanding the complexities and idiosyncrasies of one given case, yet the implications and insights drawn might be applicable to other, similar contexts (Stake, 1988; Wolcott, 1990a).

For instance, Wolcott (1990a) argues that case studies are most likely to be specific, while their implications can be wide. Adelman et al. (1976) also state that it is legitimate to generalise about the case, as well as from it. Nevertheless, Miles and Huberman (1984) argue that multiple case studies are more likely to deliver more interpretation and greater generalisability than a single case study can provide, an argument also adopted by Merriam (1988). What is important about a case study is that it provides ‘thick’ descriptions of the context so that readers can make their own judgements as to whether their own contexts are sufficiently similar, and therefore results could apply to them too. Stake (2006, p. 90) puts this aptly when he says, ‘Because the reader knows the situations to which the assertions might apply, the responsibility of making generalisations should be more the reader’s than the writer’s’.

3.3.1 Ethical considerations

Trust and good rapport between the researcher and participants are fundamental. These are maintained through professionalism. Participants’ perspectives and values are respected and recognised as worthy and unique.

Confidentiality, anonymity, as well as the types of questions asked, were carefully considered in this project. All the handwritten compositions and voice files continue to be stored on a password-protected computer to which only the researcher has access. When reporting on the data collected throughout the project, all information was de-identified and participant anonymity guaranteed, as required by Flinders University as part of the research approval process before starting data collection. Each participant was fully aware that taking part in this research was voluntary. They had the right to refuse to participate and they had the right to withdraw at any time without any effect or consequences on their job or study.

Although a signed consent form was received from each participant, there was an issue that challenged the researcher to rethink about the overall ethics dimension of the current project and to protect the rights of the Saudi students. Because the Saudi participants were asked by their school principal or English teacher to take part in the study, the concern was that the Saudi students, or some of them, were likely to feel coerced to participate or at least that they might believe there would be negative consequences for them if they refused or ended their participation at some point.

Yet, the only available option for recruiting subjects was through the school itself. This way of recruitment is considered normal, or at least, not unethical in Saudi educational institutions. The researcher was, however, very careful to protect the participants’ interests and prioritise their welfare. Students were regularly assured that there were many other students in other schools who were willing to take part in the study, and that there was no need for students to feel obligated to participate.

3.3.2 Setting and participants

A female high school English teacher along with her Year 12 level all female students were the main target participants of the present project. All students were native Arabic speakers attending the First Secondary School in Ar Rass city, located at Al Qassim province, central Saudi Arabia. There were approximately 280 students enrolled at different levels in the target school. A single context was selected for study because of the complexity of the investigation, which was a language project consisting of two phases with five different methods of data collection. Conducting these different phases in different contexts would most likely have produced an overwhelming amount of data.

Saudi Arabia was chosen as the target context for the present study because the researcher herself is a Saudi national who wishes to contribute to improving English language teaching in her home country. All participants were students in Saudi Arabia because they were easy to recruit for the study, in line with the ‘convenience sampling’ principle advocated by Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, and Ormston (2013, p. 115). Given that the researcher used to be an EFL teacher in Saudi Arabia, she had easy access to these participants based on her existing professional network. However, it must be noted that the participants and the researcher did not know each other before this study. The lack of any personal relationship between the researcher and the study participants helped to avoid researcher bias during research design and analysis.

The participating teacher was a Saudi national, born in Saudi Arabia from a Saudi family, who spoke Arabic as a native language. She acquired her English language at school, when she was a student, and from different English language institutes in Saudi Arabia as well. She has a bachelor’s degree in English literature from Al-Qassim University. The teacher has been in a number of English-speaking countries for leisure, but never for English learning or teaching training. She has been teaching English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia for 12 years and was the only English teacher of the target Year 12 class.

There were 36 EFL learners in the target class. All of the learners were Arabic native speakers, most of whom were Saudi citizens, and a few who were from other Arabic backgrounds. The class was all female, and the participants were aged 18, studying their final year of high school (Year 12). Students in Saudi high schools have an English lesson four times a week and each lesson lasts 40-45 minutes.

The reason for choosing Year 12 students to participate in this project was that they had been studying English in school for seven years, which is likely to be long enough for learners to be aware of some differences between English registers. Moreover, Year 12 is the last level of compulsory education in the Saudi education system, and the English curriculum of this year is designed to prepare students for further study or work abroad.

This is indeed one of the main aims set by the Saudi Ministry of Education in 1970 for teaching English in the secondary stage of schooling, to provide the secondary school student with a window on the world (Alshumaimeri, 2001). One of the signs of language proficiency is the ability to differentiate between registers when producing the language:

> *Knowing what the various registers are, how to differentiate between them and when to use which one increases your chances of being accepted by groups and speakers in a variety of contexts. (Eaton, 2012, p. 1)*

It is, therefore, important to determine whether Saudi students are aware of register and can exhibit skill in moving between registers in English after they have studied English as a foreign language in school.

Regarding the procedures followed for the recruitment of Saudi participants, first, an ethics approval was obtained from Flinders University to conduct this study, as shown in Appendix 1. Then, all Saudi students received a brief explanation of the research project through their teacher and the aims of the study were provided (see Appendix 2). The researcher then paid a visit to the school to introduce herself (the introduction letter is available in Appendix 3). She met with the potential participants to explain the study in detail and to answer any question students might have.

The students were assured that participation was voluntary and that students could refuse to take part in the study, also that they were free to withdraw at any time without effect or consequences. The researcher also informed the students that a summary of the project outcomes would be provided for participants if they wanted to see them. Of the 36 students invited to take part in the current project, 24 volunteered to participate.

Signed consent forms were received from these students (Appendix 4), as well as from their teacher (Appendix 5). Similarly, the target school gave permission to conduct the study on its campus and amongst its staff. Participants' anonymity, privacy and confidentiality were guaranteed, and the volunteers were also provided with the contact information of the researcher.

Five native English speakers studying at Flinders University were also recruited to participate in this study. To reach native speaker participants, a recruitment flyer, which included the researcher's email, was posted on boards around the Flinders Campus (Appendix 6). After being contacted by email, the researcher met with the participants to inform them about the nature of the study and invite them to sign the consent form if they were willing to participate. The five native speakers were the same gender and age as the Saudi participants; they were all female, aged 18. Although the study focussed on Saudi students, these participants were able to provide a basis for comparisons between groups of EFL learners and native speakers, which aided in the interpretation of results.

The design, as well as the implementation of data collection instruments used in this study, are described and discussed in the following sections.

3.3.3 Methods

Five different methods were used to gather project data:

- picture-story retelling tasks
- students' background questionnaire
- classroom observation
- teacher interview
- textbook evaluation.

Picture-story retelling tasks

A narrative description task was chosen to examine the participants' ability to distinguish between different registers (speech and writing) in regard to vocabulary. The task was divided into two main stages; every student was asked to complete two language production sessions: speaking and writing.

A picture story with text under each picture, as shown in Appendix 7, was shown to the students and they were asked to read it as many times as they wished. After reading the story, their task was to re-tell it, under no pressure of time, in writing, as well as in speech, over one week. They were also asked to highlight any difficult words in the original text, so that the researcher could clarify them. The most common words highlighted by the students were ‘quaint’ and ‘protagonist’.

Three days after the reading session, the pictures were given to the students without the accompanying text (Appendix 8). And they were asked to look at each picture and compose a story from as much as they could recall from their reading. If they could not remember the original details of the story, they were encouraged to use their imagination to create events appropriate to the pictures.

Three days after the writing session, the same pictures were used for the speech task. Participants were requested to view the same picture narrative and tell the story aloud. Participants’ speech was recorded and then transcribed manually by the researcher (see the criteria for transcription in section 3.4.1).

The interval of three days was enforced in order to limit the influence of their written narrative on the participants’ oral output. There was some concern that performing the two tasks consecutively could encourage the participants to produce the same vocabulary in both tasks, even if they possessed a broad vocabulary. An interval of more than three days (e.g., a week) would have been preferred, but because of time constraints the researcher could not leave more than three days between the two tasks.

Clear instructions were given to the EFL learners before the speaking task, that they should re-tell the story in an informal register, as if they were talking to a close friend of their age. In relation to the writing task, on the other hand, the learners were instructed to write in a more formal style. This was to ensure that the students were able to produce texts that corresponded to different levels of formality. Otherwise, the risk was that they would use a formal register even in speech because they were talking to an adult stranger (the researcher).

The group of five native English speakers, also female and 18 years of age, were given the same tasks. Given that the tasks were designed for this study and not tested for validity previously, it was important to include native speakers in the study to ensure that the observed differences were related to the construct under examination (i.e., students' awareness of differences in register) and not to features of the task.

If the Saudi participants failed to differentiate between speech and writing registers, it could be because of the task design, not because they were unaware of the differences between language registers. However, if the native speakers did differentiate, then this would be evidence that the task design was not an issue. In addition, collecting data from English native speakers was also necessary to provide a basis for comparison between the Saudi participants' output and that naturally provided by English native speakers.

Students' background questionnaire

Survey research is a widespread method of collecting information about a population of interest (Fowler & Floyd, 2013; Nardi, 2015; Porter, 2004; Rossi, Wright, & Anderson, 2013). Surveys allow researchers to gather a wide range of data (e.g., beliefs, attitudes, behaviour) and to ask numerous questions about an area of concern, providing extensive flexibility in data analysis.

Furthermore, surveys are very cost effective as they collect information from a huge number of respondents for a relatively low cost. They are also very easy and flexible to administer and can be distributed to respondents by a variety of means, such as e-mail, fax or through the Internet. Indeed, there are many different types of surveys and several ways to administer each type. A very common type of survey research is the use of questionnaires. A questionnaire is an objective means of gathering information from participants consisting of a predefined series of written questions or statements to which participants are asked to respond (Denscombe, 2014).

During data collection in Saudi Arabia, and particularly when the speech task had been completed, it was observed that some student participants displayed considerable English-speaking competence. This was unexpected, given the students' limited exposure to English in the classroom, in which students and their teacher were observed to speak Arabic most of the time. Therefore, it was necessary to investigate whether these students had access to other sources of English language outside the class, which may have contributed to the improvement of students' speaking skills.

Due to the fact that teenagers are likely to practise some activities in a secret way, particularly if the desired activity is not permitted by their parents, it was important to choose a data collection method that could be administered anonymously to encourage respondents to be honest in their answers. For instance, some Saudi families do not allow their teenagers to chat online with strangers or watch movies in English, yet teenagers still practise these activities secretly. Compared to other methods of data gathering, questionnaires are the only method that provides complete anonymity.

Responses to other collection methods are not inherently anonymous, at least not to the researcher. Of course, the researcher can assure confidentiality to respondents, but some respondents might be sceptical. Moreover, unlike other research methods, using a questionnaire is useful for collecting data from all respondents simultaneously, even if they are remote or hard-to-reach, as was the case in the current study since the researcher was in Australia while the respondents were in Saudi Arabia. All participants agreed to complete the questionnaire at the same time in class and all the completed forms were sent to the researcher on the same day.

Given the advantages of using a questionnaire for research, a brief one was designed to collect data about the language activities that students might practise outside of class. This was then administered to the same Saudi participants who had taken part in the language production tasks.

Saudi participants were contacted through their teacher and invited to complete the questionnaire in class or at home in their own time. They were informed that participation was voluntary, and that the confidentiality guidelines would be applied as per the initial information sheet.

All 24 students to whom it was distributed, completed the questionnaire and no questions were left unanswered. Although the questionnaire was relatively short and relied mainly on close-ended questions, the results assisted in understanding how some participants were able to speak English well, despite the absence of spoken English in class and why some students had a higher competence in spoken English than their classmates.

Close-ended questions were included rather than open-ended ones for two reasons. Firstly, close-ended items are easier to answer and analyse. Counting the frequency of each response in a close-ended questions survey is simpler than dealing with the undefined answers of open-ended questions. Closed questions yield responses that are usually easy to tabulate or score and the findings are readily analysed. In contrast, responses to open-ended questions need to be categorised into a smaller list of items that can be counted by the researcher for statistical analysis.

Moreover, close-ended questions take less time and effort to answer than open-ended questions (Patten, 2016) since respondents to close-ended questions are provided with a list of fixed responses from which to select an answer, whereas open-ended questions must be answered in the participant's own words.

Secondly, because quantitative data in regard to students' out-of-class language activities were being sought (i.e., the aim of the questionnaire was to investigate how often the participants were exposed to English outside the classroom), simple multi-choice questions were sufficient to obtain the data. Fowler and Floyd (2013) argue that survey research that aims to produce quantitative data should rely almost entirely on closed questions rather than open-ended items. For a close-ended questions survey to be effective, however, the list of predetermined answers must include all possible responses and the meaning of the answer options must not overlap.

The survey questions were written especially for the purpose of this study. There were 14 questions, 12 using a six-point Likert scale and two short answer questions (Appendix 9). The choice of an even number of options in the frequency scales was to eliminate the indecisive middle alternative.

The first open-ended question was to ask students whether they had ever lived in another Saudi city, or in another country, and if they had, where, and for how long? The 12 close-ended questions were a checklist on English language usage out of class. The questions contained a range of different activities by which students could be exposed to the English language outside the classroom. Likert scales were indicated in front of each question as follows:

- Every day or almost every day
- Once or twice a week
- Once or twice a month
- A few times a year
- Every few years
- Never

The last question on the survey was an open-ended one and was designed to capture any option that had not been anticipated by the researcher.

Finally, as with all data collection methods, survey research also comes with a few drawbacks. Unclear data can result from survey answer options because respondents may comprehend some response options differently. For instance, the predetermined response ‘every few years’ is open to a number of interpretations and could represent different frequencies to different people. ‘No’ or ‘Yes’ responses could too cause a problem. Respondents might select ‘No’ if the answer ‘one time’ is unavailable. In addition, respondents might choose some answers randomly or might return the survey unfinished because of boredom or any other reason, all of which lower the validity and reliability of the results.

Although survey research was seen to have a number of shortcomings, it was still the most effective option for collecting the type of data needed in the context of the study (i.e., students’ background and out-of-class language activities) for the reasons mentioned earlier in this section. Although the survey did not allow for rich and deep information to be collected, the use of close-ended questions to gather personal data and measure the frequency of the participants’ exposure to English outside the classroom was appropriate and effective.

Class observation

Observation in the classroom is a way in which to identify classroom practices through direct observation of a target class (Wragg, 2013). Its application can be formal or informal. Observation of a class during study is a widely used method in studies of language teaching and learning, yet it did not actually begin among language-oriented researchers. It originated in the 1950s to help teacher trainers develop effective teaching and was first conducted to give student teachers feedback about their performance in class during their teaching practice. After receiving feedback, trainers realised that they needed to improve their teaching strategies to deliver more effective teaching. Establishing effective language teaching has proved to be a very complex task, however, and turned into a research problem that has interested researchers and trainers of pre-service teachers alike. Researchers follow the same method used to evaluate trainers’ classes (i.e., classroom observation) in order to study what happens in language classrooms and then incorporate their findings into effective teaching (Allwright, Allwright, & Bailey, 1991).

Therefore, one of the first and valid purposes of observation studies is to describe the classroom activities and the content being taught in class in order to find out any instructional issue. More than three decades ago, Good (1988) stated:

> *One role of observational research is to describe what takes place in classrooms in order to delineate the complex practical issues that confront practitioners. (p. 337)*

This was the fundamental purpose of using classroom observation in the current study. The performance of the participating Year 12 class and their teacher was observed for approximately one month in order to determine the effectiveness of the teaching approach adopted by the teacher on the students' learning of different registers.

Because of the difficulty in observing and recording all the details of the practices and behaviours that happen in a class, classroom observation must be focussed. Observers have to decide in advance what behaviours to concentrate on in the classroom, particularly areas of interest related to the research question.

It is important to note, however, that 'there are many interesting aspects of classroom processes that no observer can actually capture in any very reliable or measurable way', even if the observers focus their attention on a particular aspect (Allwright et al., 1991, p. 4). To investigate anxiety in the classroom, for instance, direct observation may not produce reliable results, as some people who do really feel very anxious in class may manage to disguise their emotion in a very convincing way.

Therefore, other methods of eliciting the data, rather than direct observation, are needed to investigate emotional responses, such as anxiety in the classroom. The focus of classroom observation in this project, however, was mainly linguistic. The goal was, firstly, to see what technique the instructor was using to draw students' awareness to different registers and how often this happened. Secondly, it was important to notice whether the students differentiated between speech and written registers in terms of vocabulary usage when they participated in class.

The class observation was completed in the preliminary stages of the research and before the teacher was interviewed. In this the researcher was guided by the approach of Sapsford and Jupp (1996, p. 58). They argue that class observation should be a starting point to explore all the real-life practices and issues related to the phenomenon being observed, which can then be investigated more fully using different techniques and methods. For example, class observations pushed the researcher to further explore a variety of issues, such as the role of L1 in English classes, and to discuss this issue with the teacher during the interview.

While the whole interview was recorded using a digital voice recorder, school rules did not allow either video or audio recordings in the classroom. Consequently, class observations were recorded by hand and in detail during periods of observation. As soon as the class finished, a reflective report on that class was written.

The use of the classroom observation technique in the current research, as well as in studies of language teaching and learning, provides a number of advantages. One of these advantages is to allow researchers to investigate the educational process naturally while it is taking place in a learning environment. Moreover, live lesson observations help researchers gather precise and detailed evidence faster than other data collection tools. The detailed data produced by this technique can also lead to better understanding of classroom practices and then for more effective ways to improve teaching (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2013).

Although observational techniques have many obvious strengths, they also come with drawbacks. The main limitation of class observation is the obtrusiveness of the method. Teacher or student behaviours are likely to change because of the presence of an observer (observer effect) (Martinez, Taut, & Schaaf, 2016). Some teachers and students become nervous, insecure or uncomfortable when being observed and consequently their performance is likely to suffer. On the other hand, as class observation is usually scheduled in advance, teachers and students can prepare very well for the lesson and put in more effort than usual. Consequently, the results of the observation may not represent the teacher's and students' normal behaviour. Observer effects might lead to distorted data and then invalid conclusions because they do not allow the observer to see what normally happens in the classroom (Medley, Coker, & Soar, 1984).

Another concern about observation research is the potentially high degree of observer bias. Observations can be very subjective as the observer is likely to impose their own subconscious opinions or beliefs about teaching on the data collected, which could invalidate the results. Moreover, observations can only tell about actions, but not about attitudes or opinions. Therefore, observation alone can lead to inaccurate analysis.

Because of the limitations of class observation, multiple tools of data collection were used to increase the validity of this research and to understand the target issue in a more comprehensive way.

Teacher interview

Interviews are widely used in the field of educational research. Lewis and Ritchie (2003) refer the interview as a controlled verbal exchange. According to Bryman (2006), there are three basic types of research interview:

- *unstructured:* The unstructured interview is similar to an observation. The questions are most likely not prepared, and even if they are prepared, they will be open-ended questions that can be asked in any order. Some questions can be added, deleted or changed while the interview is taking place.
- *structured:* The use of prepared, sequential close-ended questions in the structured interview is very similar to a questionnaire.
- *semi-structured:* The semi-structured interview is in between unstructured and structured interviews in design. The semi-structured interview asks a set of sequentially prepared questions, yet it is still flexible because of the scope for follow-up questions. The interviewer can deviate from the main topic and investigate more or different issues based on the received answers (Bryman, 2006).

Clough and Nutbrown (2012) point out that the communication skills of the interviewer determine the effectiveness of an interview. A skilled interviewer is able to ask clear questions, listen with full attention and encourage interviewees to speak broadly. They can ‘pause, probe or prompt appropriately’ (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003, p. 141).

The interview conducted as part of this research was semi-structured and based on four open-ended questions for the interviewee as part of a prepared interview protocol. The aim of the interview was to use discussion, conversation and questioning of the teacher participant to obtain a deep understanding of the target theme. Conducting an interview was important because through an interview, research participants' experiences, perceptions, motivations and opinions can be ascertained at a depth that is not accessible with other data collection methods, such as field observation or questionnaire (Berg, Lune, & Lune, 2004; Gomm, 2008; Heigham & Croker, 2009).

Although questionnaires that are answered by numerous people could offer more information than do interviews, interviews still 'hold out the possibility of understanding the lived world from the perspective of the participants involved' (Heigham & Croker, 2009, p. 187). This is to say that questionnaires produce broader but more superficial information while interviews offer narrower but deeper information. Gomm (2008) points to a number of strengths in relation to using interviews in qualitative research:

- They yield rich data when open-ended questions are asked.
- The verbal language, as well as the body language, used by interviewees provide essential insight into their attitudes and perceptions.
- Relational and contextual features are important for understanding participants' beliefs and experiences.
- There are a variety of techniques to be used for analysing the interview data.

The Year 12 English teacher was invited to attend a one-on-one interview with the researcher who aimed to gain insight into the teacher's beliefs, attitudes and teaching methods on raising students' awareness of different registers. The interview was conducted in school after completing classroom observations and lasted about one hour. It was recorded using a digital voice recorder and saved as an audio file to be transcribed and summarised later. The teacher's name was never mentioned in order to preserve anonymity and her comments were never linked directly to her. The key interview questions were guided by the textbook evaluation criteria as follows:

- How do you teach vocabulary?
- How do you teach about differences in registers?
- What resources do you use in teaching differences in registers?
- How do you assess your students' knowledge of spoken and written registers?

These questions were the core questions asked during the interview. Denscombe (2014, p. 176) encourages the interviewer to use open-ended questions to allow people to ‘use their own words and develop their own thought’. The interview questions in the present research were open-ended and very general to let the teacher speak freely about her teaching practices and thoughts. Unscripted follow up questions were also used when needed. The interviewee was allowed to stray from the subject at certain points, and the researcher did not strictly adhere to the set order of questions. This was to keep the conversation flowing naturally and smoothly between the teacher and the researcher.

Due to its parallels with a normal conversation, unstructured and semi-structured interviews usually allow for much deviation from the interviewer’s topic, which leads to very complex data and difficult analysis (Zacharias, 2011). However, interviews produce rich and deep data, making the results worth the extra analytical effort. Results from the interview used in the current project allowed the researcher to gain a deeper insight than would have been available otherwise. Bryman (2015) also argues in favour of the complex data produced by unstructured and semi-structured interviews because this data helps the researcher to discover crucial information that did not seem relevant before the interview, or which may be unexpectedly revealed.

In addition to the sheer amount of data generated by unstructured and semi-structured interviews, another limitation frequently arises—the interviewer effect (Denscombe, 2014). The interviewer effect is a function of the fact that different people perceive the interviewer differently and responses to the interviewer can be quite idiosyncratic:

> *In particular, the sex, the age, and the ethnic origins of the interviewer have a bearing on the amount of information people are willing to divulge and their honesty about what they reveal. (Denscombe, 2014, p. 184)*

In the current study, the face threats were minimised by the fact that the interviewer and the interviewee were both women.

Bryman (2015) also mentions an interesting issue that should be considered when conducting an interview. It is the tendency of some interviewees to answer questions inaccurately to be viewed favourably by others (social desirability bias) and to avoid having negative evaluations. In this instance, the teacher interviewee was unlikely to be subject to social desirability bias because she was aware that the researcher had observed and recorded her performance in class for almost a month and would therefore be able to triangulate the interview data to corroborate the answers.

Textbook evaluation

Sheldon (1988, p. 237) argues that 'textbooks represent the visible heart of any ELT program', and therefore textbook improvement should be a priority for educationalists and curriculum designers. Moreover, according to Kim and Hall (2002), textbooks play an important role in teaching English, especially in contexts where English is taught as a foreign language, because they serve as the primary form of linguistic input.

In the Saudi Arabian context, school textbooks are considered to be the basic pillar of the teaching-learning process (Al-Seghayer, 2014; Alamri, 2008; Allehyani et al., 2017; Batawi, 2006; Fareh, 2010; Nather, 2014). Consequently, an entire generation of children will be affected by the decision of which textbook to use throughout the entire school system.

Because of the importance of the text, one of the ways to improve English language education in Saudi Arabia is to ensure the quality of the textbooks used in the English teaching programs. This can only be done when the users systematically assess and evaluate textbooks based on established criteria. The findings of these kinds of assessments should be shared with the authors of the textbook materials, as well as curriculum designers, in order to design the most effective textbooks. The evaluation of teaching materials:

> *[I]nvolves measuring the value or (potential value) of a set of learning materials [textbooks] by making judgments about the effect of the materials [textbook] on the people using them. (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2004, p. 13)*

As summarised by McGrath (2002, p. 25), many researchers have suggested two approaches or 'levels' for textbook evaluation: an impressionistic evaluation and an in-depth evaluation. The impressionistic method means that:

> *We take the literal meaning of the method by quickly looking through the textbook cover to cover, to try and get an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the book. (Cunningsworth, 1995, p. 1)*

This method allows the evaluator to form a quick impression of the textbook's design and structure, such as how the textbook is sequenced or how attractive the cover is. In contrast, an in-depth evaluation provides a detailed examination of specific areas in the textbook, such as investigating the balance of language skills in one or two chapters or whether the textbook's activities meet learners' levels and needs (Cunningsworth, 1995).

The present study involved an in-depth evaluation in which two units of the EFL textbook *Traveller6* were examined to check how well it performed with regard to different registers. *Traveller6* is organised into eight units, and the analysis is based on a sample of two units—Unit 2 and Unit 6—which were chosen randomly to represent the textbook.

Because of the similarity in structure of all the units in the text, two units were considered to be a good sample. Unit 2 was from the first half of the book, while Unit 6 was from the second half. The Saudi Ministry of Education provides all public and private schools a ready-made English curriculum which takes into account the beliefs, traditions, values and customs of the Saudi community. *Traveller6*, written by Mitchell and Malkogianni and published by mm publications, is the one and only compulsory English textbook adopted in the target class, and was designed especially for the Saudi market.

The text has been in use for teaching students at Year 12 in Saudi public schools since 2013-2014. It was examined for the purpose of this study in order to establish the potential contribution of teaching resources to learners' awareness of differences in register. The examination included all the textbook's components: the Student's Book, the Workbook, the Teacher's Manual and CDs. Although the CDs were not available for the EFL teachers in Ar Rass city, they were provided for the study by EFL teachers in the capital city of Saudi Arabia, Riyadh, who normally have access to the CDs.

According to Cunningsworth (1995) and Ellis (1997), material evaluation is of three different kinds, depending on when the evaluation takes place. Textbooks can be evaluated *whilst-in-use, pre-use* and *post-use,* and each stage has its own features and importance.

The pre-use or predictive evaluation, which can help to measure the potential future value of a textbook, is probably the most common type of evaluation (Cunningsworth, 1995; Ellis, 1997). The second type of evaluation is the whilst-in-use evaluation, in which the suitability of the material is examined while using it or by observing it being used. Lastly, there is the post-use evaluation that is carried out to measure the actual utility and relevance of the textbook, that has been in-use in any educational institution, for the target learners. The textbook evaluation in the present project was post-use. That is, an attempt was made to assess how well *Traveller6*, which has been in use in Saudi public schools since 2013, performed in regard to different registers.

Cunningsworth (1995) points out that one crucial reason for textbook examination, is:

> *To identify particular strengths and weaknesses in course books already in use, so that optimum use can be made of their strong points, whilst their weaker areas can be strengthened through adoption or by substituting materials from other books. (p. 14)*

For this reason, an evaluation checklist was developed specially to evaluate *Traveller6* and highlight the supporting or missing information regarding lexical differences between language registers. The textbook was examined in light of the following questions to determine whether it contained explicit instruction on lexical differences between language registers:

- Is there any explicit focus on vocabulary?
- If there is, what is the proportion in relation to e.g., grammar, pronunciation, etc?
- Is vocabulary presented inductively or deductively?
- Is vocabulary presented in context or as a list of discrete items?
- What techniques are used to draw learners' attention to vocabulary?
- Is a variety of registers presented through texts?
- Are differences between different registers taught explicitly?
- If they are, are they taught inductively or deductively?
- Is students' understanding of differences in register formally assessed?
- If yes, how? Does the textbook suggest testing these skills in reception (i.e., listening; reading) or production (i.e., speaking, writing) or both?

Whereas in many studies involving the effectiveness of textbooks, students and teachers have been surveyed, this technique was not adopted for this study. It was hypothesised that Saudi students and teachers were most likely unaware of different registers and would be of little assistance in generating the data that would establish the potential contribution of this teaching resource to learners' awareness of differences in register. Assessing aspects of the text would be time consuming and an unnecessary imposition on both the student and teacher participants. Although their opinion of the text and how well they thought it addressed their needs would be interesting, in this instance the users could not provide a deep description of the target material or product.

In terms of precisely what aspects of *Traveller6* were assessed, it should be noted that grammar sections were excluded from the evaluation. The focus was how vocabulary was presented throughout the textbook and how different language registers were taught. Examining a small set of items (such as vocabulary) in a specific material allowed the strengths and weaknesses of the material to be identified in greater depth.

3.4 Data collection and analysis

Data were collected in a variety of ways as listed in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Summary of instruments and procedures for data collection

Data source	The target participants/ material/context	Data type	Date of administration
Manual transcription of 24 speaking sessions	Saudi students	Quantitative & qualitative	January 2016
Manual transcription of 5 speaking sessions	English native speakers	Quantitative	October 2016
24 written texts	Saudi students	Quantitative & qualitative	January 2016
5 written texts	English native speakers	Quantitative	October 2016
24 completed questionnaires	Saudi students	Quantitative	June 2016
An evaluation for the second unit and the sixth unit of 'Traveller6' textbook.	Year 12 English textbook adopted in Saudi schools	Qualitative	August 2016
Handwritten notes for the classroom observation sessions.	English classes of Year12 level in a Saudi public school	Qualitative	January-February 2016
A transcribed teacher interview	The Year 12 English teacher	Qualitative	March 2016

3.4.1 Identifying vocabulary in student oral and written texts

In order to analyse the vocabulary in the students' oral and written texts, the linguistic unit to count vocabulary should be identified. The units of counting were particularly important aspects of the analysis since the ways in which words were counted in the text provided a guide to the students' proficiency. In applied linguistic research, two linguistic units are commonly used to count vocabulary: the lemma and the family (Nation, 2001).

Lemmas vs. word families. A lemma is a headword and the inflected forms of the word. A pure lemma contains words that all remain the same part of speech (e.g., attend, attends, attended, attending). On the other hand, the word family refers to the base form of the word and all of its derivations and inflections (e.g., attend, attends, attended, attending, attendance, unattended, attendant, attendee) (Harrington, 2018).

In terms of the current research, the lemma was the most ideal unit to count words because lemmas are base words with all their lexical variations, while word families consist of base words and all of their inflected and derived forms made from affixes. Using word families to analyse vocabulary can mask crucial productive knowledge and cause overestimated results (Vermeer, 2004). The use of word families presumes that students are able to produce all the derivations and inflections of a given word, while this is not necessarily the case.

Although counting the lemmas was undoubtedly the best option for the present project, the word family was used to count vocabulary since all the computer programs used in the data analysis (e.g., *Web VocabProfile*, *P_Lex, D_tools*) were designed based on word families. Furthermore, the majority of the linguistic researchers in the existing literature adopted the word family as a standard unit in their analyses (e.g., Harrington, 2018; Milton, 2009; Nation, 2001). Therefore, to compare the results of the current study with previous studies in order to determine whether Saudi learners could repeat the figures and outcomes of earlier research, the same common unit of the word family had to be used to obtain effectively comparable results.

Transcribing the data. Given the lack of reliability of speech recognition software for the transcription of non-native speaker speech, the participants' output was manually transcribed. To meet the requirement of *D_tools* and *P_Lex* programs (described in section 3.4.2), the written and transcribed compositions were all converted to plain text files. The criteria for editing and transcribing the material produced by learners or by native speaker participants have been set as follows:

- Proper names were not included.
- Mispronounced words or misspelled words, that the researcher was sure they were meant to be written or said, were corrected. For instance, some participants used the letters b, f instead of p, v, and this is clearly resulted from the learners' first language interference (/P/ and /V/ voiceless consonants do not exist in the Arabic language).
- Incomprehensible or unrecognisable words students used in their speech or writing were deleted.
- Filler phrases or words such as 'right,' 'well,' 'you know', and other common expressions were included in the analysis, despite their exclusion in some native language studies (e.g., Singh, 2001). Fraser (1990) and Singh (2001) argue that the use of what may be considered meaningless terms and filler expressions can be an essential indicator of learners' lexical diversity as well as their confidence in using the target language. They are also marks of casualness in speech.
- Contractions such as 'don't' were divided into their separate components, in this case 'do not', because the computer programs used here did not recognise contractions.
- Repeated vocabulary that was produced as a form of speech pausing or hesitation was counted only once. For instance, in order to say 'their house', some students said 'their their …. their house'. 'Their' was calculated once not thrice, because counting it more than one time would overestimate its coverage. This is to say that repeated vocabulary might indicate high coverage only because words were repeated frequently in order to plan for the next word, but not because of its high level of frequency in English.

It is important to note that the use of contractions and repeated words could make a significant difference between spoken and written production, yet these forms were not included in the quantitative analysis because of the reasons mentioned above. Indeed, repeating the previous word while thinking of the next utterance could be a marker of speech fluency. Repeated words have long been seen as a remedy for speech disruptions (Clark & Wasow, 1998) and as a sign of planning (Clark, 1996).

If fluent speakers need time to plan for the next word, they usually try to avoid being silent by using repetition. Similarly, contraction is a distinct sign of informality which is seen more often in spoken rather than written English (Biber et al., 1999). Therefore, a qualitative analysis was necessary to complement the quantitative analysis, in order to investigate whether Saudi students do exhibit native speakers' tendency to use contractions and repetition when speaking English.

Another aim of the qualitative analysis at this stage of the project was to study the discourse markers that the learners used in language production. The computer programs used for the quantitative analysis treated these items as normal words, so they did not differentiate between texts containing many discourse markers and texts containing none. Given that discourse markers frequently occur in speech produced by English native speakers (Crozet, 2003; Allwood, 1998, as cited in Asik & Cephe, 2013; Fung & Carter, 2007), a study about the use of these 'linking words or phrases' by English learners was needed to understand learners' awareness of differences between writing and speech. Asik and Cephe (2013) state that discourse markers are important for English learners because they help learners gain 'nativeness' in the target language and this feeling of nativeness is most likely to make learners feel comfortable and confident when producing a second language and communicating successfully.

Moreover, the use of discourse markers provides advantages in increasing the naturalness of the produced language, as well as its coherence (Crystal, 1988; Halliday & Hasan, 2014). Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik (1985) argue that discourse markers are the best devices for creating an intimate and ongoing relationship between interlocutors in every day speech. Louwerse and Mitchell (2003) emphasise the fact that discourse markers are seen in native speakers' speech more often than in their writing, and this is a significant feature of orality.

The quantitative analytic tools as well as the qualitative ones are described in detail in the following section.

3.4.2 Analysing the data

The process of analysis means 'a search for patterns in the data—recurrent behaviours, objects or a body of knowledge' (Neuman, 2013). The analysis is also theory building, supposed to provide answers to the research questions. Given that this project was a mixed methods research, the analysis used for the qualitative data was mainly inductive content analysis during which the researcher studied the data to develop themes and identify patterns. This is to say that themes, categories, and patterns of analysis 'emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis' (Patton, 1990, p. 390). However, as quantitative data was also collected, different computer programs were used to analyse data and calculate a variety of lexical statistics.

Writing and speaking tasks

Quantitative analysis. Once the participants had completed their writing and speaking tasks, the recorded speech of student participants was transcribed into electronic format and saved as text. All the handwritten compositions produced by participants were processed in *Notepad* and saved electronically as texts. After the language produced was turned into a digital text, the text was analysed by using computer programs and a statistical summary of the data was produced.

As described in section 1.1, linguists commonly characterise oral communication, across all languages, as having simple structure, high context dependency, and frequent use of the most common words, while written language is described as more formal, abstract, complex and elaborate (Biber, 1991). Accordingly, to compare the participants' speaking with their writing and to index register differences, four factors were investigated:

A *The coverage of most frequently used words*: The coverage of most frequently used words refers to the percentage of the most frequent 2,000 words in English, as described in The General Service List (West, 1953), in a speech or written text produced by participants.

B *Lexical sophistication*: Lexical sophistication means the proportion of vocabulary in a text that are not among the most frequent 2,000 words used in English (Laufer & Nation, 1995).

C *Formality*: Formality is defined as minimisation of ambiguity by avoiding context-dependent and 'fuzzy' expressions (Heylighen & Dewaele, 1999, p. 5).

D *Lexical diversity (or lexical richness)*: The range of different vocabulary in a text is known as lexical diversity or 'lexical richness' (Milton, 2009, p. 129).

To compare the words used by the participants in speech and in writing, different computer programs were used to calculate a variety of lexical statistics:

1 *Web VocabProfile* (Cobb, 2009) (Appendix 10). This program is used to measure the proportion of the most frequent 2,000 words produced by participants in writing and in speech (word coverage). It is an online adaption of Heatley, Nation, and Coxhead's (1994) *Range*. *Web VocabProfile* is a computer program that analyses the words of a text based on frequency levels. It uses the General Service Word List (West, 1953) as a baseline for frequent words with any word outside the list being infrequent. This program divides the vocabulary of the text into four separate records in accordance with the following word lists:

- the first most frequent thousand words of English (West, 1953)
- the second most frequent 1,000 words (West, 1953)
- the Academic Word List (Coxhead, 2000)
- the remainder, which includes words that are not found on the other lists.

2 *P_Lex* (Meara & Bell, 2001) (Appendix 11). The purpose of this program is to assess the lexical sophistication in a language sample. Unlike the multi-records yielded by *Web VocabProfile*, *P_Lex* produces only one measure called *lambda*. Lambda is calculated by dividing a written text into 10-word chunks and determining the number of infrequent vocabulary in each 10-word chunk. Infrequent words are considered as those not included in the most common 2,000-word list. Between .5 and 4.5 are the typical lambda values obtained.

Lower and greater values can be seen but occur very rarely. A high value of lambda is an indication of a high use of sophisticated words, while a low value of lambda indicates that a text largely contains more common words.

3 *D_Tools* (Meara & Miralpeix, 2004) (Appendix 12). This program is used to assess the variation of words produced by English speakers. Malvern and Richards (1997) proposed a measure of lexical diversity known as the D-value that can be calculated by *D_Tools*. The D-values produced by the program lie between 0 and 90. The D-value reflects the number of different vocabulary items that occurred in a given text. The D-value is greater if there is a wider variety of vocabulary included in the text, and vice versa.

In regard to the assessment of a text's level of formality, which is one of the factors considered in the present research, no computer program could be found that could determine the formality of the text in terms of vocabulary. The only available tool to calculate the degree of formality of spoken or written text was the F-score devised by Heylighen and Dewaele (1999). The F-score quantifies *deep formality* rather than *surface formality* by calculating an average degree of deixis for the most general word categories (Deep formality and surface formality are discussed earlier in section 1.1.3).

According to Heylighen and Dewaele (1999, p. 5), deep formality is 'the avoidance of ambiguity by minimising the context-dependence and fuzziness of expressions'. This is to say that the F-score determines the level of formality language speakers used in a speech or written text to make sure that their expressions were not misinterpreted.

A *Xerox* online tool was used to assign parts of speech first, then a formula was created in *Excel* to calculate the F-score automatically by adding up the frequencies of the context-independent words (nouns, prepositions, articles and adjectives), subtracting the frequencies of the context-dependent words (verbs, adverbs, interjections and pronouns) and normalising to 100. This resulted in the following formula:

$$F = (\text{noun frequency} + \text{preposition freq.} + \text{adjective freq.} + \text{article freq.} - \text{verb freq.} - \text{pronoun freq.} - \text{interjection freq.} - \text{adverb freq.} + 100)/2$$

(Heylighen & Dewaele, 1999)

In practice, F-scores range from 0 to 100% but do not reach these limits. As formality increases, there is an inevitable increase in the F-score.

Web VocabProfile, P_Lex, D_Tools and F-score were run on each individual speech and written text produced by the study participants in order to compare the participant's speaking with her writing. For instance, was the formality score of Participant A's writing higher or lower than the formality score of her speech? This comparison took the form of Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 Sample comparison between the scores of each participant

Student	F-score in writing	F-score in speech
Nourah	59.5	53
Hanouf	55	60.5
Ebtesam	59	61

Based on the learners' performance in the speech task, they were divided into three groups:

- *high achievers* (HA) who on average obtained the highest scores in the lexical coverage measure (*Web VocabProfile)* in the speech task (a total of four learners)
- *low achievers* (LA) who scored the lowest mean figures in the same measure (a total of four learners)
- *medium achievers* (MA) who had average scores ranging between those of HA and LA (a total of 16 learners).

Lexical coverage measurement of learners' oral texts was used to put learners into three fluency levels because the most salient difference observed among learners when recording the speech task was that some students spoke fluently in idiomatic/colloquial English composed mostly of high-frequency vocabulary, while others did not.

For example, some learners produced a large number of discourse markers while narrating the story, such as 'well', 'you know' and 'I mean' as well as contractions like 'dunno' and 'wanna', which make their speech sound very fluent. The more fluent the learner was, the more formulaic expressions they used and then the greater lexical coverage of the most frequent words they scored.

Data analysis generated a summary of all EFL learners' results in each measure in this study (i.e., *Web VocabProfile, P_Lex, D_Tools* and F-score) to show the minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation (SD) figures. Table 3.4 is an example summary of learners' scores on one measure.[1]

1 1 While only example tables are included in the Methodology chapter, it must be mentioned that the complete tables are provided in the Results chapter (Chapter 4).

Table 3.4 Example summary of learners' scores on one measure

	Number of participants (N)	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Writing	24	46%	59.5%	53.06%	4.64
Speech	24	44%	61.5%	52.72%	5.75

Moreover, three tables for each measure were designed in order to compare the results on the speaking and writing tasks for the three groups of learners (high, medium and low achievers).

Finally, given the observed differences between the performance of high achievers and that of low achievers in the current study [who showed most divergence in their fluency], the results of these two groups of learners were analysed in comparison with the native speakers' output. Table 3.5 is an example of this comparison.

Table 3.5 Example summary of native speakers', high achievers' and low achievers' scores on one measure

Participants	Writing	Speech	The difference between writing and speech
Native speakers (N=5)	77.22	62.41	14.81
High achievers (N=4)	65.56	56.19	9.37
Low achievers (N=4)	39.64	35.43	4.21

Besides the variety of lexical statistics calculated in the EFL learners' data, a brief qualitative analysis was also conducted to complement the quantitative analysis as shown in the following section.

Qualitative analysis. A number of important language items that are used in distinctly different ways when speaking compared to writing, such as contractions, abbreviations and discourse markers, were excluded from the quantitative analysis. Moreover, the quantitative tool 'F-score' which was used to calculate the degree of formality of the participants' language appeared to work well in the current study. Yet this measure was not perfect, being too coarse and reducing the formality of a text to mere frequencies of the conventional grammatical categories of words (see section 4.1.3 for details). Consequently, a qualitative analysis was necessary to complement the quantitative study in order to effectively study the level of formality of the language. The following items were considered:

1 *Pausing strategies.* One of the most frequently used strategies to overcome linguistic difficulties, such as finding the right vocabulary, or to gain time for preparation when speaking a second language, is pauses (Lindblad, 2011). According to Cenoz (1998), pauses have many functions such as: to allow speakers to breathe, plan their speech, retrieve the correct information and to mark demarcations in the speech.

Language speakers are different in the way they pause. Some just introduce a silence interval, whereas others would rather pause using fillers. The types of speech pauses (filled or empty) followed by the learner participants were analysed.

There are different views on the definition of filled and empty pauses. However, in this context, a filled pause was the repetition of the previous word, or the use of fillers such as 'so, yeah'. On the other hand, an empty pause was a silent interval of more than two seconds (a total absence of speech) or a meaningless sound such as 'um, uhh' whether or not accompanied by a silent interval.

Following the Jefferson-style transcription (Jefferson, 2004), a silent interval/pause is shown in transcription as a number inside brackets where the number indicates the length of the pause. For example, a four-second pause is marked as (4.0).

2 *Discourse markers.* Before analysing the data, it was necessary to clarify which words or phrases qualified as discourse markers. The definitions of discourse markers proposed by Swan (2005) and Fung and Carter (2007) were used for the analysis. Swan (2005) describes discourse markers as expressions which either show the speakers' attitude to what they are saying or words or phrases that connect the current utterance and the previous one. According to Fung and Carter (2007), discourse markers are used to fulfil several functions, such as hesitation devices, opening and closing of topics or signifying ongoing thinking processes. *Anyway, you know, right* and *well* are all examples of discourse markers.

However, some instances of discourse markers were treated carefully during analysis, such as 'well'. Some students used 'well' as an adverb, rather than as a discourse marker, as in: 'everything was going well till they got two tickets in the mail'. 'Well' in this extract cannot be described as a discourse marker as it does not meet any discourse marker function.

Identifying which function of a word was being used in a sentence would not have been possible using a computer program, as recognising the way a word is being used requires human judgment. This points to the significance of qualitative analysis in order to compensate for the limitations of the quantitative tools.

3 *Contractions.* Contractions, which are also called short forms, are commonly used in informal contexts. There are two types of contractions in English: *verb contractions*, formed by combining a pronoun or noun with a verb (e.g., I'd, they've, we're), and *negative contractions*, which commonly combine a verb and not (e.g., didn't, aren't, haven't) (Babanoğlu, 2017).

Speakers use contractions because they are shorter and easier to articulate than their equivalent full forms and still convey the speaker's meaning. This study investigates the usage of both types of contraction in Saudi students' speech and writing in English. These forms were excluded from the quantitative data, but identified during qualitative speech and writing analysis.

4 *Abbreviations.* According to Minkova and Stockwell (2009), an abbreviation is a shortened form of a phrase or word that usually consists of the initial letters of words. In contrast to contractions, abbreviations can be seen in formal as well as informal situations. However, in formal contexts, speakers usually use abbreviations that are known to the majority of audience, or they explain the abbreviation the first time they mention it.

Abbreviations are mainly divided into two subsets: *initialisms* and *acronyms* (Minkova & Stockwell, 2009). The key difference between initialisms and acronyms is the way of pronouncing them. An acronym is an abbreviation consisting of the first letter of each word in the name of something, such as UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) or TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages).

Initialisms, on the other hand, cannot be pronounced as a word, but are spoken as separate letters, like DVD (Digital Video Disk) or PC (Personal Computer). Finally, there are some shortened forms of words, like 'cause' for 'because', which are neither acronyms nor initialisms, rather just abbreviations. All the previously mentioned types of abbreviations are included in the present study.

5 *Colloquialism.* Interestingly, there is no well-established definition for colloquial language, but it generally means the everyday language which is very commonly used in informal situations. Therefore, in this part of analysis, as a first step, colloquial words in the students' language were identified according to the researcher's perception of colloquialism and intuition. Then two English dictionaries (*English Oxford Living Dictionaries* and *The Free Dictionary*) were used to double check the informality of the assigned word (*English Oxford Living Dictionaries*, n.d.; *The Free Dictionary*, n.d.).

6 *The quantity of language.* This category was used to investigate the number of words produced by learners at different levels. High level learners (high achievers in this context) were expected to produce more vocabulary than low level learners (low achievers).

In the qualitative analysis, all transcripts and written texts of two groups of Saudi students who showed most divergence in their fluency (i.e., the highest and lowest achievers in the quantitative study) were examined against all six factors mentioned above in order to discover the differences between the high and low achieving students, as well as the difference between the same students' speech and writing from a qualitative perspective.

Finally, possible correlations between the results of the quantitative and the qualitative analysis of the language production tasks were explored. For example, it was important to determine whether the highest achievers, those who had the greatest coverage of the most frequent words in the quantitative study, were the same students who scored the highest amount of discourse markers and contractions in speech.

Questionnaires

Given that the students used a paper questionnaire in this study, the answers were manually transferred from the survey into a spreadsheet. Every possible answer was assigned a number or 'code' as shown in the following table:

Table 3.6 Coding system

Scale items	Codes
every day	1
once or twice a week	2
once or twice a month	3
a few times a year	4
every few years	5
never	6

Then, a column heading was used for each question, and each student's answers were put in one row. The researcher looked through every student's questionnaire in turn, adding in the codes. Table 3.7 is an example of what this might look like.

Table 3.7 Example coding spreadsheet

	Q1	Q2	Q3
Student A	2	2	3
Student B	1	1	2
Student C	2	3	1

We can see, for instance, that student A does the activities in questions 1 and 2 once or twice a week, and she does the activity in question 3 only once or twice a month. As all students answered every question, there was no need to construct code to describe missing data or to deal with respondents who selected more than one category. Once the data from all the questionnaires were entered into a spreadsheet, frequencies were calculated for each questionnaire item. The following table provides an example.

Table 3.8 Sample of the students' responses in percentages

Question	1= Every day	2= Once or twice a day	3= Once or twice a month	4= A few times a year
1	0	25%	8%	41.6%
2	0	45.8%	12.5%	4%
3	0	16.6%	16.6%	12.5%

Once all the data were analysed and tabulated, the researcher explored correlations in the data. A correlation coefficient was calculated using *Excel* to explore a number of statistically significant correlations between the activities mentioned in the survey (see section 4.4 for details). These correlations assisted the researcher to interpret the findings more comprehensively.

To present and discuss the results of the questionnaire, all questionnaire answers were divided into four main categories which represented the main language skills—listening, writing, reading and speaking. The rationale for using the latter four categories was to investigate the popularity of each language skill outside the classroom and how this popularity might contribute to the students' performance in the writing and speaking tasks. This is to say that possible correlations between the results of the writing and speaking tasks and the results of the questionnaire were explored.

Classroom observation and teacher's interview

The main aim of the interview and classroom observation was to investigate the teacher and student participants' awareness and performance in relation to different language registers. After an hour's interview with the teacher, along with 12 hours of direct observation, a multi-layered description of the target EFL class was developed. The results of the observations and teacher's interview are included in greater detail in Chapter 5.

The multi-layered description included the teacher's strategies for teaching vocabulary, her method of assessment and providing feedback, her perceptions and teaching approach surrounding the differences between language registers, and issues surrounding the role of textbooks and any other supplementary materials in the teaching process. The description also included students' in-class practices related to speaking and writing in English. The results of both classroom observations and the teacher's interview were grouped together since they complemented each other. The same points observed in class were repeated by the teacher in the interview with further details and justification.

To analyse these two sets of data, content analysis was used during which the researcher worked through all data to become familiar with its details and to identify major themes emerging from it (Neuendorf, 2016; Stemler, 2015). Identifying and categorising all the field notes/answers required a period of going backwards and forwards between the research questions, the data and the themes.

The informal notes from the classroom observation and the transcribed teacher’s interview were combined in order to identify the basic elements of the instructional styles, classroom dynamics and lesson contents recorded.

The observation data was then analysed separately by assigning the activity in class to a variety of categories:

- English vocabulary in class
- four language skills in class (writing, speaking, reading and listening)
- the use of different registers.

The interview data was also analysed to identify common themes in the answers to the interview questions. The categories were:

- teaching vocabulary
- teaching differences in register
- student assessment.

In this way, thick data were recorded to be combined and arranged for the overall analysis and interpretation of the data.

Finally, the results of the classroom observation and teacher’s interview analysis were combined, allowing conclusions to be drawn about the significance of presenting and practising lexical differences between English registers in the classroom (to be discussed in Chapter 7).

Textbook evaluation

Given that the main aim of the current study was to explore students’ awareness of lexical differences between registers, all the elements of the teaching and learning context, including the textbook, needed to be examined because they were most likely to contribute to this awareness. Moreover, for many English learners in Saudi Arabia, the textbook is the main source for acquiring English vocabulary (Alsaif & Milton, 2012); consequently, it was important to analyse the main English input presented to Saudi students in order to understand the research issue.

Textbook analysis enables researchers to study particular aspects of the book, identify its strengths and weaknesses, and provide recommendations to improve the outcomes from the learning/teaching material. Of the limited number of studies that have attempted to analyse textbooks in depth in different EFL contexts (e.g., Ahmed & Narcy-Combes, 2011; Lesikin, 2001; Ndura, 2004), at the time of conducting this study, none had examined the area of lexical differences between registers.

Therefore, this original evaluation of Traveller6 challenged the researcher to create appropriate testing and analysis methods in an area where there has been no previous work. This study addresses a need to examine in greater depth how vocabulary is presented throughout the textbook, whether a variety of registers is presented in the texts and whether the textbook contains explicit instruction on lexical differences between language registers. For the reasons cited above, an evaluation checklist had to be created and the researcher had to rely on her personal judgment to answer 10 open-ended questions. Then, specific textbook components to be examined were selected.

Once the textbook components were selected and the questions for evaluating the text were identified (mentioned in section 3.3.3), the analysis of the target content began with the examination of specific exercises, lessons, and activities in the student or teacher material in which differences between English registers were addressed. Two units of the three books of *Traveller6*; Student's Book, Workbook and Teacher's Manual were included in the analysis.

Using content analysis, the three texts that were used together as *Traveller6* were compared in terms of each question, with answers combined under headings representing common themes. The common themes were as follows: presenting vocabulary in the course book, teaching different registers through texts and finally textbook's approach of assessment.

3.5 Chapter summary

This chapter identified the research questions this research sought to address, the research methodology and the research method. The research was a case study involving an EFL class and their teacher. Qualitative and quantitative data were generated from multiple sources and a variety of tools was used for data analysis.

Case studies are particularly suited to studying a given phenomenon or issue in the language classroom because they allow a deep exploration of the complexity and uniqueness of the process of language teaching and learning from multiple perspectives. Moreover, to increase the validity and credibility of the findings, triangulation of the data was ensured (O'Donoghue & Punch, 2003) by the number of ways the data were collected from three related sources: teacher, text and students. This allowed the researcher to capture thick data that enhanced understanding of the research issue, namely ‘differences between spoken and written registers’.

The participants and the learning context of this study were also described in this chapter, along with an explanation of the recruitment procedures. Next, the five different methods used to gather data during the current research—interviews, class observation, textbook evaluation, questionnaires and language production tasks—as well as the rationale for selecting each method, were presented and discussed. The design of data collection instruments, materials and tasks to be used in this study was indicated, and the implementation of these tasks was briefly described.

Finally, the researcher shed light on the specific approaches and procedures employed for data analysis. The case study outlined in this chapter assists the investigation of Saudi students’ awareness of lexical differences between English registers (writing and speech).

Having identified the main questions and the methodology, methods and analytical approach adopted for this project, the next chapter describes the results in detail.

Chapter 4

Results of Phase 1: Learners’ ability to use lexical differences between spoken and written English productively

The first phase of this research was to examine the ability of learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) to distinguish between spoken and written English in regard to vocabulary. In order to achieve this aim, two language production tasks were carried out at the beginning of the study with 24 Saudi EFL learners and five native speakers of English, all females. Data from the production tasks were analysed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Moreover, to assist in interpreting the results of the language production tasks, a students’ background questionnaire was completed by EFL learners. This chapter presents the results of language production tasks followed by the results of the questionnaire.

The results of Phase 1 are presented in the current chapter in four sections:

- Language production tasks completed by Saudi students (quantitative analysis)
- Language production tasks completed by native speakers (quantitative analysis)
- Language production tasks (qualitative analysis)
- Questionnaire results

The second phase of this research was to investigate the potential role of classroom instruction and materials in teaching differences between spoken and written registers. The results of the analysis of the data from classroom observation, the teacher’s interview and textbook evaluation are presented in the following chapter.

4.1 Language production tasks completed by Saudi students (quantitative analysis)

This section presents the results of two language production tasks (writing and speaking) completed by 24 female EFL learners who were studying their final year in a Saudi high school. Learners were divided into three groups: High achievers (HA), or the most fluent participants, low achievers (LA), or the least fluent participants, and medium achievers (MA), based on the criteria elaborated in Chapter 3. There were four different sets of results to be considered:

- Descriptive statistics of lexical coverage
- Descriptive statistics of lexical sophistication
- Descriptive statistics of lexical formality
- Descriptive statistics of lexical diversity

4.1.1 Descriptive statistics of lexical coverage among Saudi students

The first aim of this study was to explore the degree to which Saudi learners used the most frequent 2,000 words when speaking and writing English as a foreign language. Word coverage was measured using *Web VocabProfile* (Cobb, 2009), and a summary of this measurement is presented in Table 4.1. The minimum and maximum scores shown in the table are the minimum and maximum observed among the 24 Saudi learners of English and the mean is the mean for this group of learners.

Table 4.1 Coverage of most frequent 2,000 words used by Saudi students

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Writing	24	91.85%	97.43%	94.62%	1.39
Speaking	24	93.22%	98.77%	95.90%	1.46

The lowest score of word coverage in Table 4.1. is 91.85%, which means that in both the writing and speech tasks all students used 91% or more of the 2,000 words designated as the most common in English. This suggests that EFL learners depend heavily on these common words to produce both spoken and written English language. Moreover, the most frequent 2,000 words are used more extensively in speech than in writing, although with only a modest 1.28% increase in coverage. It should also be noted that the standard deviation in Table 4.1 is low. This is indicative of a very limited variation amongst Saudi EFL learners in lexical coverage.

Tables 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 record the coverage figures for each individual in the three groups of learners (high, medium and low achievers).

Table 4.2 Summary of lexical coverage for the high achieving participants

Student	Coverage in writing	Coverage in speech
Huda	97.22%	98.77%
Abeer	97.43%	98.70%
Amal	96.70%	98.62%
Mona	96.82%	98.52%
Mean	97.04%	98.65%
Standard deviation	.33	.01

Table 4.3 Summary of lexical coverage for the medium achieving participants

Student	Coverage in writing	Coverage in speech
Samia	95.21%	95.93%
Bothainah	95.13%	95.93%
Jamilah	93.88%	95.92%
Maha	94.34%	95.91%
Fatimah	95%	95.91%
Aisha	93.97%	95.88%
Ameerah	95.11%	95.87%
khozamah	93.92%	95.83%
Yarah	94.21%	95.82%
Reema	94.91%	95.81%
Lama	94.22%	95.77%
Aseel	93.55%	95.69%
Maram	94.90%	95.61%
Malak	95%	95.52%
Manal	91.85%	94.89%
Lina	94.06%	94.82%
Mean	94.32%	95.69%
Standard deviation	.84	.34

Table 4.4 Summary of lexical coverage for the low achieving participants

Student	Coverage in writing	Coverage in speech
Nourah	93.85%	94.80%
Hanouf	93.12%	93.97%
Ebtesam	92.83%	93.82%
Mada	92.92%	93.22%
Mean	93.18%	93.95%
Standard deviation	.45	.64

The above tables demonstrate that the participants made heavy use of the 2,000 most common English words in both their spoken and written language, and that the pattern of usage was a function of the learner's level of fluency. The most fluent students (high achievers), as shown in Table 4.2, used more of the 2,000 most frequently used English words than the less fluent participants (medium and low achievers). The written and spoken language of high achievers included over 97% of the most frequently used words on average, with that number decreasing to less than 94% among the low achievers (least fluent). This is to say, the high achievers used at least 3% more of the commonly used English words than did the low achievers.

On the other hand, it can be seen from the tables that every participant used more of the 2,000 most frequently used words in her speech than in her writing. This difference was quite low. However, it was consistent throughout all learners' scores, and, although learners' speech always featured more of the 2,000 words than their writing, the extent of the difference between speech and writing still varied among the three groups of learners.

The average difference between the writing scores and speech scores was 1.6% for the high achievers and 1.3% for the medium achievers. For the low achievers, the difference was only 0.7%. The results indicate that as English fluency increases, so does the learners' ability to differentiate between speaking and writing, in relation to the use of the most frequent words in English. Another significant finding was the low standard deviation recorded for each group. This is indicative of a very small level of variation between participants at the same level of fluency, demonstrating that the data pattern is probably of reliable English interlanguage data quality.

4.1.2 Descriptive statistics of lexical sophistication among Saudi students

Building upon the analysis of lexical coverage, the data were also analysed by measuring lexical sophistication. Whereas the measure of lexical coverage was based on the use of the 2,000 common words, the sophistication measure was based on the use of the words that are not among the most frequent 2,000 words used in English.

In order to quantify and compare lexical sophistication between spoken and written English produced by Saudi EFL learners, the measure 'lambda' was used, based on Meara and Bell's (2001) *P_Lex* program. As described in Chapter 3, a low lambda value indicates a higher number of commonly used words in a text, while a high value indicates greater usage of words from outside the common 2,000, that is, more 'sophisticated' word choices. Table 4.5 summarises writing and speaking lambda scores of the EFL participants in this study, regardless of fluency level.

Table 4.5 Lambda values of 24 Saudi EFL learners

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Writing	24	0.49	1.78	1.13	0.45
Speech	24	0.28	1.42	.86	0.41

The lambda values in this table demonstrate that the Saudi participants tended to use low frequency 'sophisticated' words in their written communication more often than in their spoken communication (with 1.13 and .86 mean lambda values respectively). However, the degree of average difference between spoken (.86) and written (1.13) sophistication levels was fairly small (.27). Furthermore, since the *P_Lex* manual states that 'in practice, lambda values range from about .5 to about 4.5. Higher and lower values are possible, but do not occur frequently in real life', the minimum lambda scores of the learners in this study were even below the manual's expected low point for both spoken (0.49) and written (0.28) English.

The maximum lambda scores for writing (1.78) and speech (1.42) did not reach even half of the predicted maximum lambda score according to the manual (4.5), indicating reliance among the participants on high frequency words with a minimal usage of low frequency words. It is also worth noting that the range between minimum and maximum lambda scores was very small, as indicated by the small standard deviations (.45 for writing, .41 in speech), meaning that there was very little variation in the lexical sophistication exhibited by the participants. Table 4.6, Table 4.7 and Table 4.8 show the lambda values for the three groups of learners participating in the present study.

Table 4.6 Summary of lambda values for the high achieving participants

Student	Writing	Speech
Huda	.52	.28
Abeer	.49	.31
Amal	.53	.34
Mona	.61	.36
Mean	.53	.32
Standard deviation	.18	.14

Table 4.7 Summary of lambda values for the medium achieving participants

Student	Writing	Speech
9	.88	.73
10	.95	.82
11	1.27	.84
12	1.23	.85
13	.99	.86
14	1.18	.89
15	1.10	.90
16	1.32	.93
17	1.19	.94
18	1.25	.95
19	1.23	.97
20	1.19	.97
21	1.34	.98
22	1.31	.99
23	1.33	.99
24	1.26	1.02
Mean	1.18	1.01
Standard deviation	.42	.38

Table 4.8 Summary of lambda values for the low achieving participants

Student	Writing	Speech
Nourah	1.35	1.07
Hanouf	1.42	1.16
Ebtesam	1.55	1.29
Mada	1.78	1.49
Mean	1.52	1.25
Standard deviation	.26	.20

The three tables above demonstrate that lambda values increased from high achievers to low achievers, reinforcing the pattern of word coverage presented in the previous section. With increasing fluency in English, contrary to expectations, production of infrequent words decreases, and the usage of frequent words increases, for both spoken and written language. The high achieving participants based their linguistic output on high frequency words, resulting in lambda scores averaging .53 in writing and .32 in speech. The low achieving participants, on the other hand, received higher overall lambda scores (1.52 in writing and 1.25 in speech) due to their higher production of infrequent words. This is an interesting finding which will be discussed later in Chapter 6. Moreover, when comparing the individuals, it became apparent that each individual student scored lower lambda in speech than in writing, lending further support to the principle of spoken English being less sophisticated than written English.

4.1.3 Descriptive statistics of lexical formality among Saudi students

The third aim of the present study was to compare the lexical formality of spoken and written discourse produced by English learners. To do so, the formality measure (F-score) created by Heylighen and Dewaele (1999) was used. It is important to restate that the F-score quantifies *deep formality* rather than *surface formality* by calculating an average degree of deixis for the most general word categories. As explained in Chapter 1, 'deep' formality, according to Heylighen and Dewaele (1999, p. 5), is 'the avoidance of ambiguity by minimising the context-dependence and fuzziness of expressions'. In other words, the F-score is an empirical measure of how frequently the writer or speaker uses different classes of words in an effort to avoid ambiguity. Nouns and adjectives, for example, appear more commonly in formal language usage, while adverbs and verbs are more common in informal language, which is recognised by its direct, implicit style (Heylighen & Dewaele, 1999). A summary of the study participants' results on the F-score is provided in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9 Summary of participants' F-scores

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Writing	24	46%	59.5%	53.06%	4.46
Speech	24	44%	61.5%	52.72%	5.75

According to Heylighen and Dewaele (1999), F-scores range from 0% to 100%. The results in Table 4.9 show that Saudi students produce slightly more formal language in both writing and speech. The mean scores of both are more than 50% with no score under 44%. Furthermore, the average F-scores in both categories are very close, with 53.06% for writing and 52.72% for speech, suggesting that the formality level of participants' speech and writing is nearly identical.

However, the minimum and maximum F-scores for speech and writing differ quite noticeably between individuals. This is further illustrated by the high standard deviations (SD) compared to the

SDs of the previous factors (SDs in lexical coverage and sophistication measures). This indicates a high variability among students' output in relation to formality. Tables 4.10, 4.11 and 4.12 record the F-scores for the three groups of learners participating in the present study.

Table 4.10 Summary of high achieving participants' F-scores

Student	F-score in writing	F-score in speech
Huda	46%	44%
Abeer	47.5%	49%
Amal	49.5%	47.5%
Mona	49%	50.5%
Mean	48%	47.75%
Standard deviation	1.58	2.78

Table 4.11 Summary of medium achieving participants' F-scores

Student	F-score in writing	F-score in speech
9	55%	54%
10	48%	44%
11	46%	51%
12	57%	52%
13	56%	49.5%
14	56.5%	47%
15	56.5%	53%
16	59%	53.5%
17	48%	56%
18	51.5%	56%
19	54%	59%
20	50%	44.5%
21	54.5%	61%
22	48.5%	45%
23	55%	61.5%
24	59.5%	60%
Mean	54%	52.93%
Standard deviation	4.21	5.04

Table 4.12 Summary of low achieving participants' F-scores

Student	F-score in writing	F-score in speech
Nourah	59.5%	53%
Hanouf	55%	60.5%
Ebtesam	59%	61%
Mada	53%	53%
Mean	56.37%	56.87%
Standard deviation	4.51	7.94

As indicated in the above tables, not all participants produced similar F-scores in their speech and writing, as would be predicted by the mean F-scores from Table 4.9. For each individual, there is a clear variation in formality between speech and writing. Some learners produced writing that was more formal than speech, while others produced speech more formal than their writing, despite having the same content focus for both. Such inconsistency was found even between learners at the same fluency level.

For instance, two students at the high-fluency level used more formal language in their speech than in their writing, whereas the other two students at the same level followed the opposite pattern (see Table 4.10). Moreover, some learners showed a substantial difference in the degree of formality between their speech and their writing, reaching a 9.5% difference (see student no.14 in Table 4.11). In contrast, other learners only showed a very small difference between their written and their oral output, scoring a mere 0.5% difference (see student no.24 in Table 4.11).

One learner's scores for her written and spoken language did not differ at all (see Mada, Table 4.12, who scored 53% in both tasks). Essentially, the findings of the formality measure (F-score) proved puzzling, and it was not possible to discern a consistent pattern in the data in terms of the degree to which learners knew and used the lexical differences between writing and speech in terms of formality or whether speech or writing is simply more formal in English interlanguage produced by Saudi students.

On the basis of the findings presented in this section, however, it can be concluded that formality was inversely related to language fluency; that is, in both writing and speaking, the mean formality scores of language production decreased as the fluency of the participant increased (see Tables 4.10. 4.11

and 4.12). This result will be further interpreted in the Discussion chapter (Chapter 6). The average formality scores of both written and spoken discourses produced by the least fluent students (low achievers) reach nearly 57%, whereas the most fluent students (high achievers) produced the lowest scores of formality, with an average of around 48% for both tasks. In other words, the more fluent English learners in the current study produced almost 9% less formal language than did the least fluent group.

The outcomes of the F-score must be treated carefully, however. While calculating F-scores in the current research, it was found that analysing texts based on word category frequencies (as devised by Heylighen & Dewaele, 1999) revealed vocabulary behaving contrary to its common tendency. To clarify this, when the coarse-grained procedure (F= adding up the frequencies of the context-independent words—nouns, prepositions, articles and adjectives—then subtracting the frequencies of the deictic words—verbs, pronouns, interjections and adverbs—before normalising to 100) is followed, the word ‘thing’ must be placed in the formal category since it is a noun. However, the word ‘thing’ seems to be more common in informal contexts and fits better in the deictic category because the meaning of this word really depends on the context in which it is used. Nevertheless, although the F-score may not be perfect in calculating language formality, it is still the only quantitative tool available to carry out this task at this time.

4.1.4 Descriptive statistics of lexical diversity among Saudi students

A further aim of this study was to examine the degree to which the speech and writing produced by participants were related in terms of lexical diversity. To quantify lexical diversity, the value ‘D’ from *D_Tools* by Meara and Miralpeix (2004) was used. Table 4.13 presents the lexical diversity of the 24 participants’ speech and writing in the form of D-values.

Table 4.13 Summary of D-values for the 24 Saudi students

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Writing	24	39.02	66.71	52.36	8.48
Speech	24	34.16	57.52	43.80	7.09

Of all the factors investigated in the present study, the factor of lexical diversity produced the greatest degree of variation between the speech and writing of the participants. The previous results of lexical coverage, sophistication and formality measures showed no more than a 1.28-point difference on average between writing and speech. In contrast, as Table 4.13 demonstrates, average D-values differed by almost 9 points between speech (43.80) and writing (52.36). This divergence in the D-values implies that participants used a wider range of vocabulary in their written statements than they did in speaking, despite the fact that the same events were narrated in both.

A paired sample t-test was performed in which the 24 D-values of speech (M=43.80, SD=7.09) were compared against the 24 D-values of writing (M=52.36, SD=8.48); t (45)=3.80, p=0.0042. The test results supported the findings recorded in Table 4.13. The t-Stat value was greater than the t-Critical two-tail value (t-Stat=3.80 > t-Critical=2.01), which means that the null hypothesis can be rejected in this case. The observed difference between the sample means (52.36 - 43.80) is convincing enough to say that the difference between learners' writing and speech is statistically significant. Although a wide range of values was evident from the standard deviations among the learners, the D-values were nonetheless uniformly higher in writing than in speech amongst all participants, as shown in Tables 4.14, 4.15 and 4.16. The tables present the D-values derived from the *D_tools* program for each of the three groups of learners.

Table 4.14 Summary of D-values for the high achieving participants

Student	D-value in writing	D-value in speech
Huda	66.71	57.52
Abeer	66.12	55.71
Amal	64.91	56.12
Mona	64.52	55.42
Mean	65.56	56.19
Standard deviation	1.01	.92

Table 4.15 Summary of D-values for the medium achieving participants

Student	D-value in writing	D-value in speech
9	59.90	50.31
10	59	51.11
11	57.92	46.97
12	56.81	45.71
13	55.10	44.10
14	54.60	43.12
15	54.11	43.98
16	53.82	44.01
17	52.76	42.09
18	50.99	43.83
19	48.17	38.21
20	48.09	39.15
21	46.92	38.34
22	46.46	38.62
23	47.73	40.41
24	48.18	38.76
Mean	52.53	42.79
Standard deviation	4.54	4.08

Table 4.16 Summary of D-values for the low achieving participants

Student	**D-value in writing**	**D-value in speech**
Nourah	40.41	36.61
Hanouf	40.05	35.93
Ebtesam	39.11	35.03
Mada	39.02	34.16
Mean	39.64	35.43
Standard deviation	.68	1.06

The three tables above support the data presented in Table 4.13; just as revealed by the average D-values, all learners were observed to use a wider vocabulary in writing than they did in speech. The most fluent learners, in particular, recorded higher mean D-values in their writing than in their speech, with around 9.5 points difference, while the least fluent students only recorded a 4-point difference between their written and spoken English.

Besides the noticeable differences between the D-values in writing and in speech mentioned earlier, there was also a large difference between learners at different levels of fluency. The most fluent students recorded greater D-values than the least fluent ones. In writing, the mean D-values of the high achieving group (65.56) was greater than the mean of the medium achieving group (52.53), with around a 13-point difference, and higher than the low achieving group's (39.64) with 26 points.

The same pattern was repeated with the mean D-values in speech. The most fluent students scored on average 56.19, which is around 13.5 points higher than the mean of the second group at 42.79, and 21 points higher than the third group at 35.43. These elevated D-values are reflective of the tendency for higher fluency learners, in writing or speaking, to make more varied word choices than a learner at a lower fluency level. This is to say that the D-value appears to correlate noticeably well with language fluency level. A paired t-test showed that the observed difference in D-values between high and low fluency students is statistically significant.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the average D-value increased in relation to the level of fluency, both in writing, as well as in speech, with an increase of roughly 13 points per fluency level, except the increase in the speech mean D-values of low achievers and medium achievers. Overall D-values for high achieving learners were 13.4 points greater than medium achievers' average scores in both writing and speech. Similarly, medium achievers scored on average 13.07 points higher than low achievers in writing, but only 7.3 points higher in speech. Nonetheless, it should be noted that this pattern might not be representative of all participants because of differences between individuals within a level, as can be seen in the standard deviations in Tables 4.14, 4.15 and 4.16.

The quantitative analysis continued to compare native speakers and learners' results on the four measures used in this study (i.e., *Web VocabProfile*, *P_Lex*, *F-score* and *D_Tools*) as shown in the next section.

4.2 Language production tasks completed by native speakers (quantitative analysis)

Given the observed differences between high and low achievers in relation to lexical coverage, sophistication, formality and diversity (as shown in the previous sections), the results of these two groups of learners were analysed and compared with the native speakers' output. It must be remembered that due to time constraints, the researcher was only able to recruit five English native speakers. Therefore, native speakers in the current study were used only as a benchmark to study the behaviour of two groups of learners who showed the most divergence in language fluency; high and low achievers, and also to confirm the validity of the task. For this purpose, the number of native speakers (five students) was comparable with the number of learners in each group (four students).

4.2.1 Descriptive statistics of lexical coverage

The quantitative analysis revealed that native speakers showed greater differentiation between speech and writing than both high and low achievers in terms of lexical coverage. Table 4.17 compares the mean coverage of the 2,000 words used by the three groups of participants in written and spoken language.

Table 4.17 Mean coverage of the 2,000 words for native speakers, high achievers and low achievers

Participants	Coverage in writing	Coverage in speech	The difference between speech and writing
Native speakers NSs (N=5)	85.12%	94.54%	9.42%
High achievers HAs (N=4)	97.04%	98.65%	1.61%
Low achievers LAs (N=4)	93.18%	93.95%	0.77%
The difference between NSs and HAs	11.92%	4.11%	-
The difference between NSs and LAs	8.06%	.59%	-

Table 4.17 shows that the native speakers' speech contained more of the 2,000 most common words than their writing, matching the general pattern of the EFL learners' outputs. However, the differences between their speech and writing were smaller among the EFL students than for the native speakers. While the frequencies of words varied slightly between the learners' speech and writing (1.61% difference for HAs and 0.77% for LAs), word frequency noticeably varied between native speakers' oral and written outputs with a 9.42% difference. The similarity between the EFL learners' speech and writing in terms of lexical coverage suggests that both high and low achievers failed to differentiate between spoken and written registers, or at least they did not vary their vocabulary as much as they should according to the native speakers' norms.

Moreover, according to the coverage figures shown in the table above, the high achievers used more frequent words in both speech and writing than the native speakers. In speech, the high achievers used 4.11% more frequently used English words than the native speakers, whereas in writing they used nearly 12% more of the most common English words than the native speaker group. Thus, the difference between native speakers and high achievers was greater in writing than in speech, with non-native speakers using considerably more high frequency English words than native speakers.

As it was the case for high achievers, the low achievers tended to make extensive use of commonly used English words to communicate orally as well as in writing. However, the low achievers used fewer of the common English words overall than the high achievers. According to the measures used, the fact that the low achievers did not use as many common words brought their scores for usage closer to native speakers' figures in speech (only .59% difference). In writing, however, the difference between low achievers and native speakers was clearer (8.06% difference). The low achieving students did not differentiate between speech and writing when selecting their vocabulary, whereas the native speakers did.

That is, the native speakers used fewer of the most frequently used English words than the high and low achievers did in both language tasks. This suggests that Saudi EFL learners overuse the most common English words when producing the language, particularly in writing. Learners based both their speech and writing on the most frequently used words, even though written English was expected to include more variety and fewer frequently used words.

4.2.2 Descriptive statistics of lexical sophistication

An overview of the lambda values derived from the *P_Lex* program for spoken and written tasks performed by native speakers is given in Table 4.18 along with the high achievers' and low achievers' values (all values are considered averages).

Table 4.18 Summary of lambda values for native speakers, high achievers and low achievers

Participants	Writing	Speech	The difference between speech and writing
Native speakers NSs (N=5)	3.11	2.15	0.96
High achievers HAs (N=4)	0.53	0.32	0.21
Low achievers LAs (N=4)	1.52	1.25	0.27
The difference between NSs and HAs	2.58	1.83	-
The difference between NSs and LAs	1.59	0.9	-

Table 4.18 suggests that both native speakers and Saudi participants made greater use of infrequent words in their written communication than in their spoken communication. However, the difference between native speakers' writing and speech outputs reached .96 on average (around one point) while the difference in the learners' case was merely .21 for high achievers and .27 for low achievers (around a quarter). This means that the native speakers' word selection indicated a differentiation between writing and speech three times greater than the word selection of the learners.

Furthermore, native speaker participants produced substantially more sophisticated words than EFL learners and thus scored the highest lambda values in both tasks. As shown in table 4.18 above, the average difference between native speakers and HAs on the *P_Lex* measure in both writing and speech was 2.58 and 1.83 respectively. That is, the difference in lexical sophistication between the two groups was greater in writing than in speech. Similarly, native speakers exceeded low achievers in the use of infrequent words and consequently the former scored higher lambda scores in both writing and speech over the latter. However, the mean difference between native speakers and the low achiever group was less than the difference between native speakers and high achievers. On average, the written text of a low achiever scored 1.59 less lambda value than that of a native speaker. In speech, on the other hand, the mean difference in lambda values between native speakers and low achievers was only .9.

Table 4.18 shows a decrease in the mean difference between native speakers and learners from high achievers to low achievers, confirming the earlier pattern of lexical coverage. Low achievers produced more infrequent words than did high achievers and thus obtained lambda values closer to those of native speakers than the high achievers. In other words, high achievers gained the lowest lambda scores in both spoken and written tasks, which suggests that they produced the lowest number of infrequent words among all participants. This is a very interesting finding which will be discussed later in Chapter 6.

It must be noted that although native speaker participants recorded the highest lambda values in both speaking and writing tasks among all participants, they still obtained relatively low lambda scores (3.11 in writing and 2.15 in speech) when compared to the predicted maximum lambda score (4.5) stated in the *P_Lex* manual. This suggests that the native speakers' lexical sophistication in the writing task was relatively low, possibly due to the nature of the task (to be discussed in the Discussion chapter).

4.2.3 Descriptive statistics of lexical formality

Contrary to the measures of lexical coverage and sophistication that are concerned with word frequency, the formality measure (F-score) quantifies language formality by using deixis only (percentage difference between deictic and non-deictic parts-of-speech, regardless of word frequency level). In order to check the variation in the degree of formality evident in learners' (high and low achievers') as opposed to native speakers' language, Table 4.19 records the mean F-scores for both.

Table 4.19 Summary of average F-scores for native speakers, high achievers and low achievers

Participants	Writing	Speech	The difference between writing and speech
Native speakers NSs (N=5)	45.2%	42%	3.2%
High achievers HAs (N=4)	48%	47.75%	0.25%
Low achievers LAs (N=4)	56.37%	56.87%	0.5%
The difference between NSs and HAs	2.8%	5.75%	-
The difference between NSs and LAs	11.17%	14.87%	-

The results for the native speakers confirm the inverse relationship, shown earlier in section 4.1.3, between the level of language fluency and language formality (F-scores). Native speakers produced the least formal language and thus obtained the lowest average F-scores in both writing (45.2%) and speech (42%) among all participants of whatever fluency.

As seen in Table 4.19, high achieving learners scored on average 2.8% higher in writing and 5.75% higher in speech than the native speakers. As the F-scores show, high achievers produced more non-deictic words than deictic ones, which made their language appear more formal than that of the native speakers.

The results of the F-score might appear contrary to the earlier pattern of lexical coverage. While high achievers were recorded as using more highly frequent words to write and speak in English than native speakers, high achievers also scored more highly on the formality measure than native speakers. This is because, as previously mentioned, the F-score calculates language formality by using deixis only, without consideration for word frequency level.

The F-scores of native speakers were also lower than the F-scores of the low achievers' in both written and spoken discourses. Low achieving students recorded an average F-score of 56.37% in writing, which is 11.17 points greater than the native speakers' F-score of 45.2%. In speech, on the other hand, the low achiever group scored 14.87 points more than native speakers on the lexical formality measure (F-score). Given that the F-score was greater for the low achievers than for native speakers, the results indicate that low achievers used more context-independent language (i.e., fewer deictics) than native speakers.

Additionally, the difference in the use of deictics between the native speakers and the low achievers was greater than the difference in their use between native speakers and high achievers. High achievers produced more deictic expressions than low achievers and obtained lower F-scores accordingly. Therefore, the formality level of high achievers' language appeared closer to native speakers', compared to low achievers.

Moreover, contrary to the very small difference between English learners' writing and speech (0.25% for HAs and 0.5% for LAs) on the formality measure (F-score), native speakers' results showed that the average F-score was higher in their writing than in their speech by about three points. This general pattern of greater formality in writing than in speech was repeated individually by all native speaker participants, as shown in Table 4.20, contrary to the inconsistent pattern of the F-scores shown earlier in the learners' results.

Table 4.20 Summary of the F-scores for the five native speaker participants

Participants	Writing	Speech
Louise	46%	43%
Krystal	47%	44%
Helen	44%	41%
Ann	47%	42%
Emily	42%	40%
The mean	45.2%	42%
Standard deviation	.96	.70

4.2.4 Descriptive statistics of lexical diversity

The mean differences between the results of high achievers, low achievers and native speakers on the lexical diversity measure (*D_tools*) are given in Table 4.21. Table 4.21 compares the mean values of the lexical diversity (D-values) in written tasks and speech between the native speakers and two groups of learners (HAs and LAs).

Table 4.21 Summary of mean D-values for the native speakers, high achievers and low achievers

Participants	Writing	Speech	The difference between writing and speech
Native speakers NSs (N=5)	77.22	62.41	14.81
High achievers HAs (N=4)	65.56	56.19	9.37
Low achievers LAs (N=4)	39.64	35.43	4.21
The difference between NSs and HAs	11.66	6.22	-
The difference between NSs and LAs	37.58	26.98	-

Lexical diversity has been shown in Table 4.21 to be noticeably higher in writing than in speaking when produced by native speakers, repeating the same general pattern of lexical diversity in the learners' language. However, the mean difference between native speakers' outputs (writing and speech) reaches 14.81 which is around 5.50 points higher than the average difference between high achievers' outputs (9.37), and 10.6 points higher than the average difference between low achievers' outputs (4.21).

In other words, within-group differences between D-values for speech and writing show that native speakers differentiated more than the EFL learners. This means that, although lexical diversity was the factor, among all the factors investigated in the current study, that illustrated the most obvious distinction between spoken and written language produced by Saudi students, the difference was still not as much as that produced by native speakers.

In addition, the results showed that native speakers deployed a greater variety of words than both groups of learners and thus scored the highest D-values in spoken and written discourses. When comparing between the mean D-values of high achievers' outputs and that of native speakers, I found that the mean difference between the two groups was 11.66 in writing and 6.22 in speech. Similarly, the differences on D-values for both writing and speech were considerable between native speakers and low achievers. The writing D-values for the low achieving students was 39.64, as opposed to 77.22 for the native speakers, with a difference between groups of 37.58 points. In the case of speech, the average difference between low achievers and native speakers was almost 27 points.

In summary, the native speaker group, used for benchmarking the task, produced the most diverse written and oral texts and therefore scored the highest D-values among the study participants. High achievers wrote and spoke using a more diverse vocabulary than low achievers and thus obtained higher D-values in both writing and speech, moving closer to the D-values of the native speakers compared to the low achievers. The results indicate that as foreign language speakers improve in language fluency, their word choices in language production become more varied as well.

After presenting the results of the quantitative analysis for the written and spoken discourses produced by participants, the next section describes the results of the qualitative analysis related to the same data.

4.3 Language production tasks (qualitative analysis)

As discussed in the Methodology chapter (Chapter 3), qualitative measures were necessary to compensate for the limitations of the quantitative tools used in the current study. This section presents the results of the qualitative analysis of the language production tasks completed by the two groups of Saudi student participants who had shown the greatest divergence in their levels of fluency—the high achievers and the low achievers. The results described in this section show the differences between the high and low achieving students, as well as the differences between the same students' speech and writing from a qualitative perspective. The analysis focussed on the following items:

- pausing strategies
- discourse markers
- contractions
- abbreviations
- colloquialism
- the quantity of language.

4.3.1 Pausing strategies in high and low achievers' speech

The types of speech pauses (filled or empty) adopted by the learner participants were analysed. The results are presented in this section. As stated in Chapter 3, there are different views on the definition of filled and empty pauses. However, in this study, a **filled pause** was identified as *the repetition of the previous word*, or *the use of fillers,* such as 'so, yeah'. On the other hand, an **empty pause** was a *silent interval of more than two seconds* (a total absence of speech) or a non-lexical sound such as 'um, uhh' whether or not accompanied by a silent interval.

At a preliminary inspection of the data, it was possible to distinguish roughly between the high achievers' speech and the low achievers' with respect to speech pauses. Overall, all of the high achieving students (HAs) tended to apply the same pausing strategies, providing a small amount of extra thinking time by either repeating words or using fillers such as 'so yeah'.

In contrast, a different overall picture emerges from the low achievers' (LAs) data. When LAs needed time to plan for the next word, they either stayed silent or produced non-lexical sounds/expressions of hesitation such as ‘um’ or ‘uhh’, which sometimes were preceded and/or followed by a silent interval. The two extracts below illustrate the typical difference in the pausing strategies used by HA and LA students, both of whom were narrating the same story. It must be noted that the names of the students are pseudonyms assigned during data collection and analysis to preserve student anonymity.

> *Extract 1. High achiever*
> ***So yeah*** *they went to the show, to the musical show, and they'd much fun there and when they came back home* ***they...they*** *found every item that had value was gone. (Huda)*

> *Extract 2. Low achiever*
> *They were went to the show and (**5.0**) they're happy. When they didn't see their* ***umm um*** *things they know someone take them. (Norah)*

As shown above, the HA student uses the filler ‘so yeah’ and repeats the word ‘they’ in order to indicate that she needs time to plan the continuation of her narration while also attempting to avoid a silence which might be viewed by some people as a sign of lack of fluency (Lindblad, 2011). The LA student, however, used an empty sound ‘um’ as well as a five-second silent interval in order to achieve pausing.

Another example showing the different pauses produced by two learners at different levels of fluency (HA and LA) is indicated in Extracts 3 and 4:

> *Extract 3. High achiever*
> *A young couple got married and after that* ***of course they...they*** *went on a honeymoon. (Abeer)*

> *Extract 4. Low achiever*
> *Marry and Jason get married and they were so happy and then* ***(4.0)*** *and they go to honeymoon in a small city. (Hanouf)*

Although these different pausing markers in the speech do not provide any lexical meaning, the results show that the choice of a particular strategy to apply pausing was most likely related to the learner's fluency in the target language. Fluent speakers (high achievers) prefer filled pauses while speaking, whereas less fluent speakers (low achievers) just use silent pauses.

Finally, it is important to note that the repetition of words was not just observed in the HA group. The LA group did use repetition frequently in their speech. However, while the repetition used by HA students always indicated that they were planning for the next utterance, the repetition by the LA students was always used to correct grammar, a technique known as 'self-repair' (Smith, 2008).

LA students seemed very concerned about accuracy and kept correcting themselves by repeating what they had just said, suggesting that they were less concerned with fluency than correctness. The quotes below are an example:

Extract 5. Low achiever
***They** go...**they** went...to honeymoon and **the place was**...**the place is** very nice. (Mada)*

Extract 6. Low achiever
***Mary and Jason find**...**Mary and Jason found**...two tickets in mail. (Ebtesam)*

4.3.2 Discourse markers in speech and writing

Discourse markers were the most salient feature of the high achievers' speech and distinguished their speech from the speech of the other participants in the study. The spoken discourse of the HAs was rich in a variety of discourse markers that fulfilled different functions.

High achievers. Some discourse markers were used for indicating the speaker's stance, as was the case with 'actually' in the extract below:

Extract 7.
*It was hard to get these tickets **actually**. (Amal)*

'Ok so' in the following quote serves another function, that of marking a transition:

Extract 8.
***Ok so**, this is a young couple they recently got married. (Huda)*

Mona produced, 'Anyway', as shown in Extract 9, to indicate a shift in the topic (from wondering about the giver of the tickets to attending the show):

Extract 9.
They were worried, and they spent the entire day wondering who sent them the tickets.
***Anyway**, they...they... just decided to go to the show and have fun. (Mona)*

The discourse marker ‘Yes, and’ in Abeer’s speech (Extract 10) connects the current sentence and the previous one:

> *Extract 10.*
> *They began unpacking the presents they had received from friends and...and they discussed the...and they talked about...where they put them...**Yes, and** luckily, they tended to agree on everything. (Abeer)*

‘I think’ was used by HAs for reformulation of previous utterances whereas ‘Kind of’ was used as a hedge to sound uncertain and less direct as was the case in Extract 11:

> *Extract 11.*
> *They went to a small village, **I think** or...or **kind of** a tropical resort. (Amal)*

The discourse marker ‘And yeah so’ was just used as a filler in a thinking process as shown in Extract 12:

> *Extract 12.*
> ***And yeah so**, the... they came back home and unpacked presents from family and friends. (Huda)*

Finally, ‘Well’ was used to signal a topic transition, as well as to connect between the two utterances (Extract 13):

> *Extract 13.*
> *They went to the show and they loved it and they’re still wondering who gave them the tickets. **Well**, when they got home they discovered they’d been robbed and there was just a single note left on the table said ‘now you know’. (Mona)*

On the other hand, high achievers’ writing also contained a large number of discourse markers used as connectors, such as those appearing in bold in the following extracts:

> *Extract 14.*
> ***Right after** their wedding, they went to a tropical resort for a honeymoon. (Amal)*

> *Extract 15.*
> ***Despite** their efforts they couldn’t figure it out, **and** went to the performance still guessing. (Mona)*

> *Extract 16.*
> *They **then** began opening their presents and discussed its placements. (Huda)*

Extract 17.
***Eventually**, they agreed that silverware would go in a decorative case, decorations would be put on the wall and all clothing would go into their drawers. (Abeer)*

Extract 18.
*There was no return address on the envelope, **so** they did not know who sent the tickets. (Huda)*

Extract 19.
*2 months ago, Mary and Jason got married. **Immediately after**, they went on their honeymoon. (Huda)*

By comparing the high achievers' use of discourse markers in speech to their use in writing, it was observed that discourse markers often occurred across both spoken and written registers. However, many discourse markers that were used in speech were not seen in writing, as they were only fillers in a hesitation/thinking process or reformulation, which does not occur in writing. This indicates that while the discourse markers used in speech served a variety of functions, such as reformulation, indicating an attitude or expressing a hesitation, all the discourse markers used in writing, as shown in the previous extracts, fulfil the same function of linking one sentence to the next.

This means that high achievers used discourse markers in speech primarily for cognitive and interpersonal purposes, such as 'I think' and 'actually', while they tended to use structural and textual discourse markers in written discourse like 'and', 'despite' and 'so'.

Low achievers. With respect to low achievers' speech, a single discourse marker was identified and was produced consistently by the same participant, Ebetsam. Other participants in this group failed to produce any discourse markers in their speech. Ebetsam kept repeating 'ok' at the end of almost every sentence, and this excessive use made the word 'ok' sound like an unconscious verbal tic punctuating her speech rather than a discourse marker. It might also have been used to provide space between topic segments. Here is an extract of this participant's speech.

Extract 20.
*Mary and Jason are wedding and they are arrangement to their holiday **ok**. Umm uh, they go to visit city beautiful city ok and in the city visit some villages in it and they have they were tanning in it **ok**. (3.0). When they back from holiday **ok** they found a lot many of gifts from friends and family. (Ebtesam)*

By contrast to speech, low achiever students frequently used discourse markers in writing, although they are quite repetitive and within a narrow range (mostly ‘and’, ‘and then’) as shown in Extract 21:

> *Extract 21.*
> *They came to home* ***and then*** *they open the gifts* ***and*** *they were very happy.* ***After that*** *they see 2 tickets* ***and*** *they do not know from where. They become very happy because the tickets was to very famous show.* ***Then*** *they found a paper write on it ‘guess who’ but they can't know who.* ***After that*** *they go to the show* ***and*** *it was very good.* ***Finally,*** *when they come to home they can't find anything in their house* ***and then*** *they know someone stole their house. (Mada)*

In sum, the qualitative analysis revealed differences between high achievers and low achievers in the use of discourse markers. High achievers used discourse markers frequently in both of writing and speaking, whereas low achievers were able to produce discourse markers in writing but not in speech. Turning from the frequency to the variety of discourse markers, low achievers used repeatedly and redundantly a restricted set of discourse markers (sequencing connectors such as: and/then/after that). On the other hand, high achievers incorporated more varied discourse markers.

4.3.3 Contraction in speech and writing

As there are two types of contractions in English—‘not’ contractions (e.g., aren’t, hasn’t, didn’t) and verb contractions (e.g., they’re, it’s, I’m)—this analysis includes both types.

High achievers. Firstly, by comparing high achievers’ speech to their writing in relation to the negative contractions, HAs were found to use ‘n’t’ as opposed to the negative full form ‘not’ in each negative sentence in speech.

In contrast, negative contractions were totally absent throughout their written texts. The two extracts below are from the same student (high achiever) using ‘n’t/not’ in speech and writing respectively:

> *Extract 22.*
> *Speech: They* ***couldn't*** *figure out the tickets' sender. (Amal)*

> *Extract 23.*
> *Writing: They could* ***not*** *identify who sent the tickets. (Amal)*

Another example for the use of ‘n’t’ and ‘not’ in speech and writing by another student from the high achieving group is demonstrated in Extracts 24 and 25:

Extract 24.
Speech: They received two tickets to a musical show in the mail but it ***didn't*** *say who's the sender. (Huda)*

Extract 25.
Writing: There was no return address on the envelope, so they did ***not*** *know who sent the tickets. (Huda)*

Secondly, by looking at the verb contractions in HAs' writing and speech, HAs were observed to produce three verb contractions on average in their speech (see Table 4.23). The following extracts illustrate the verb contractions produced by HAs in speech:

Extract 26
They talked about things ***they'd*** *do in the resort/At first she didn't* ***wanna*** *go but then she her husband convince her to attend. (Amal)*

Extract 27
They discovered ***they'd*** *been robbed/It all began when a young couple named whose name I* ***dunno*** *Mariam and Jason I think. (Mona)*

In writing, however, HAs did not use any verb contractions, as shown in the following example, where a high achiever contracted the verb 'had' in speech, but not in writing:

Extract 28
Speech: They discovered ***they'd*** *been robbed. (Mona)*

Extract 29
Writing: It ***had*** *been stripped of every item of value. (Mona)*

Low achievers. Similar to high achievers' results in spoken negative contractions, low achievers replaced 'not' with 'n't' in all negative sentences they produced in their speech. In writing, on the other hand, the low achievers produced the same pattern observed in their speech, where negative contractions were consistently used; and there was no occurrence of the negative full form 'not'. The extracts below are from a low achiever producing negative contractions in both speech and writing:

Extract 30
Speech: It ***wasn't*** *easy to have the ticket. (Hanouf)*

Extract 31
Writing: They ***didn't*** *know the person sent these tickets. (Hanouf)*

Regarding the verb contractions, low achieving students could only produce one particular contracted form in speech, which was of the verb ‘to be’ as in Extracts 32 and 33.

> *Extract 32*
> ***This's*** *a young couple names um umm uh sorry* ***I'm*** *not good with names. (Mada)*
>
> *Extract 33*
> ***They're*** *happy and excited. (Norah)*

The LAs did not produce any verb contractions in writing, not even the ones they produced in speech from the forms of the verb ‘to be’. It is important to note, however, that all the ‘to be’ verb forms that the LAs used in their writing were in simple past tense (i.e., was, were). While the simple present tense of ‘to be’ can be contracted with a subject (as is the case in Extracts 32 and 33), the simple past tense of ‘to be’ offers no valid contractions.

To sum up, the overall results revealed that the high achievers used negative contractions, as well as verb contractions, in speech, but never in writing. The low achievers, however, produced negative contractions in both speech and writing, whereas verb contractions were seen only in their speech, not in their writing. Table 4.22 compares the written contractions produced by high and low achievers.

Table 4.22 Mean frequencies of contractions used by learners in writing

Learners	Negative contractions in writing	Verb contractions in writing
High achievers (HAs)	0	0
Low achievers (LAs)	2	0

As indicated in Table 4.22, high achievers did not use any negative contractions in their writing, while low achievers produced two on average. For the verb contractions in writing, no difference between the groups of learners was identified. Conversely, a comparison of the spoken contractions used by high and low achievers is given in Table 4.23.

Table 4.23 Mean frequencies of contractions used by learners in speech

Learners	Negative contractions in speech	Verb contractions in speech
High achievers (HAs)	2	3
Low achievers (LAs)	2	2

Table 4.23 shows that both groups of learners display the same pattern of behaviour in regard to spoken negative contractions (i.e., two negative contractions were produced on average). Turning to verb contractions in speech, while both HAs and LAs used few contractions, the low usage of verb contractions was more noticeable with the LAs.

Based on Tables 4.22 and 4.23, it is clear that learners did not use contractions (negative and verb contractions) very often in language production. It is possible that the low number of negative contractions in the learners' output was due to the text on which the task was based. The original text of the picture story used in this study contained only two negative sentences, which may have influenced the learners' use of 'not'.

On the other hand, the low number of verb contractions in the learners' output was unlikely to be a result of task design. In fact, there was a number of verbs that could have been contracted in the learners' speech, but were not. For instance, the modal particle 'would' in the following extract could have been contracted to 'they'd' but the low achiever student chose to use the full form of the verb instead:

Extract 34
Speech: They said they ***would*** *go to the show and (3.0) they* ***would*** *have fun. (Nourah)*

The same happened with the verb form 'had' in the next quote produced by a high achiever:

Extract 35
Speech: They began unpacking the presents they ***had*** *received from friends. (Abeer)*

This suggests that verb contractions may be more difficult to produce by learners than negative contractions (to be discussed in Chapter 6).

4.3.4 Abbreviations in speech and writing

All types of abbreviations such as *initialisms*, *acronyms* and shortened forms of words that are neither acronyms nor initialisms, but just abbreviations (see more detail in section 3.4.2) were examined in this analysis.

High achievers. The qualitative analysis indicates that high achieving students used abbreviations in their speech, but did not use any in writing. For instance, the two quotes shown below are taken from the speech and writing of one student referring to the same action:

Extract 36
*Speech: They were really excited **'cause** it was impossible to get these tickets. (Abeer)*

Extract 37
*Writing: It was not easy to obtain these tickets **because** of its popularity. (Abeer)*

The speaker in this excerpt uses the full form of the word 'because' in writing while she abbreviates it in her speech. Here is another example from another student where the speaker used the shortened form of family, 'fam', in her speech and replaced it with the full word 'family' in her writing:

Extract 38
*Speech: They decided to open all the gifts they got from the **fam**. (Mona)*

Extract 39
*Writing: They started unpacking all the presents that their **family** and friends have given them. (Mona)*

The following is also an example of an abbreviation, 'info', identified in a high achiever's speech. In the written text produced by the same student, neither the full form 'information' nor the abbreviation 'info' was used:

Extract 40
*Speech: They opened the envelope and looked for any **info** about the tickets' sender. (Huda)*

Extract 41
Writing: There was no return address on the envelope, so they did not know who sent the tickets. (Huda)

Low achievers. Low achievers did not produce any abbreviations, either in speech or in writing. For instance, the abbreviation 'cause', for 'because', which was used frequently by high achievers in speech, was always seen in a full form in low achievers' speech, as exemplified in the quote below:

Extract 42
*Speech: They were very happy **because** it is hard to get the tickets. (Nourah)*

To sum up, neither high nor low achievers produced abbreviations in their writing. In speech, however, several abbreviations were identified in the HAs' speech, but none in LAs'. Moreover, all the abbreviations used by HAs (e.g., 'cause', 'fam', 'info') are colloquial and can only be heard in informal situations.

4.3.5 Colloquialisms in speech and writing

Colloquial words in the students' language were identified according to the researcher's perception of colloquialism and intuition. Then, two English dictionaries available online (*English Oxford Living Dictionaries* and *The Free Dictionary*) were used to double check the informality of the assigned word.

High achievers. The qualitative analysis showed that high achievers clearly differentiated between speech and writing in terms of colloquialisms. High achieving students used a number of colloquial words in their speech, which they replaced with formal ones when referring to the same action in writing. The difference is shown in the following when the colloquial word 'freaking' was changed to 'very' in writing:

> *Extract 43*
> *Speech: They were so* ***freaking*** *happy. (Huda)*

> *Extract 44*
> *Writing: The couple was* ***very*** *excited. (Huda)*

The words in bold in the following quote provide further examples of colloquial words heard in the high achievers' speech:

> *Extract 45*
> *They found this gift* ***kinda sketchy****. (Amal)*

'Freaking' (used as an intensifier), 'kinda' (informal form of 'kind of') and 'sketchy' (informal way of saying something is not right) are all labelled as informal words in English dictionaries, such as the *English Oxford Living Dictionaries* and *The Free Dictionary*. More colloquial words such as 'wanna', 'dunno', 'cause', 'fam' and 'info' were identified in HAs' speech, but not in their writing (see previous sections nos. 4.3.3 and 4.3.4).

The words 'quaint' and 'protagonist' were the most difficult/uncommon words highlighted by students while reading the original text of the story (see Chapter 3, section 3.3.3). The majority of students did not use these words in their reproductions. Yet, two students of the high achieving group managed to correctly use them in writing but did not attempt them in speech:

Extract 46
Speech: They were given tickets to a show that had that starred a really famous actor. (Amal)

Extract 47
Writing: They received a pair of tickets to a show that starred a ***protagonist*** *who was a well-known actor. (Amal)*

Extract 48
Speech: They went to their honeymoon and visited some local villages. (Huda)

Extract 49
Writing: They went on their honeymoon where they spent time in a tropical area and visited ***quaint*** *villages. (Huda)*

Low achievers. Low achievers tended not to use colloquialisms in either speech or writing. For instance, for the same content referred to in Extracts 43 and 45, low achieving students did not introduce a colloquialism:

Extract 50
*They were very happy (*not 'freaking' happy*). (Nourah)*

Extract 51
*They were shocked when they saw the gift with no names (*not 'kinda sketchy'*). (Mada)*

Interestingly, in regard to the uncommon words 'protagonist' and 'quaint', two students in the low achiever group attempted to use the word 'protagonist' in both writing and speech, but misspelled it in the written task and mispronounced it in the spoken task, as shown in Extracts 52 and 53:

Extract 52
Speech: They were so excited because the show was...it has very famous ***portagenist****. (Hanouf)*

Extract 53
Writing: One of the presents was tickets for musical show for a ***prategnist****. (Hanouf)*

While the high achievers tended to use the uncommon or difficult words ('quaint' and 'protagonist' in this case) in writing rather than speech, low achievers tended to use them in both speech and writing.

In sum, colloquialisms were used by HAs in spoken tasks, but never appeared in their writing. LAs, on the other hand, did not use colloquialisms either in speech or in writing.

4.3.6 Language quantity

Although quantity is a factor that fits more correctly into the quantitative analysis, the quantitative results have been used here to illustrate the nature of the differences between the high and low achieving students, as well as the differences between the same students' speech and writing. The analysis revealed differences between high achievers and low achievers in relation to the number of words used. High achievers used the greater number of words in both writing and speech. In speech, they produced 264 words, whereas low achievers used 162 words on average. That is, HAs used 102 more individual words than LAs, although the mean duration of the LA students' speech was nearly double that of the HA speakers. On average, high achievers spent two minutes (120 seconds) and used 264 words, whereas low achievers spent 3.8 minutes (228 seconds) to produce 162. The following chart shows the number of words and the period of time spent (in seconds) on the speech task by each learner in the high and low achiever groups.

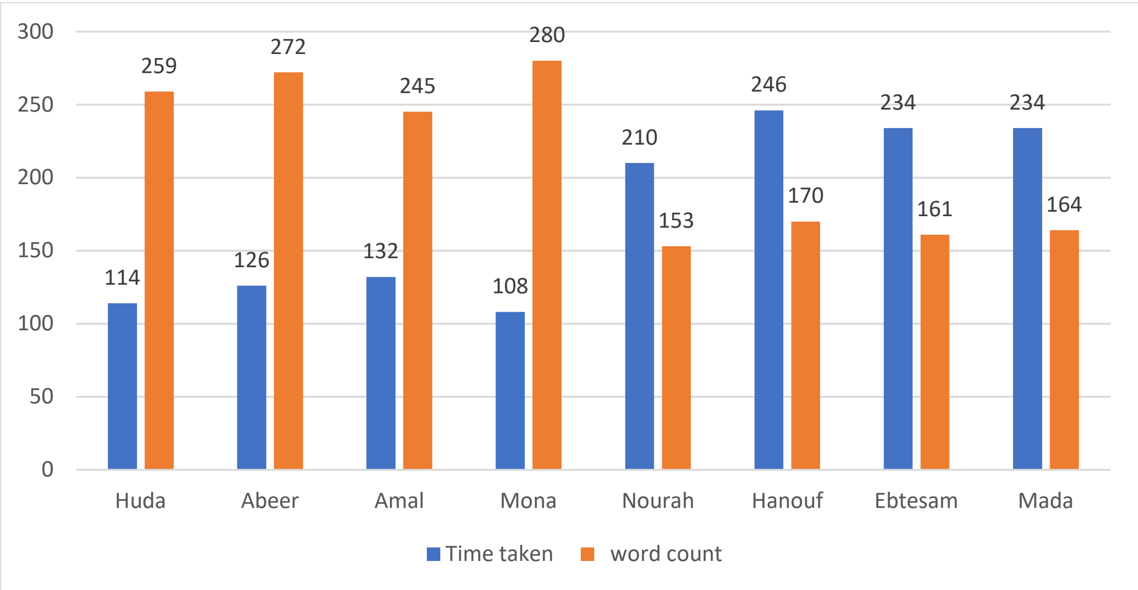

Figure 4.1 The number of words used and the time spent in the speech task

The first four learners in Figure 4.1 represent the high achiever group who scored the highest figures in the word count (shown in orange) and the lowest figures in terms of the time taken to relate the story (shown in blue). On the other hand, the other four learners represent the low achiever group who produced the opposite pattern; they scored the lowest figures in the word count and the highest for the time taken.

In writing, on the other hand, the mean number of words produced by high achievers was 335 words while only 211 words, on average, were used by low achievers. In other words, high achievers' written compositions contained on average 124 more words, compared to low achievers' writings. Table 4.24 compares the number of words produced by each participant in speech and writing:

Table 4.24 The language quantity in learners' speech and writing

Learners	Speech	Writing
High achievers		
Huda	259	333
Abeer	272	337
Amal	245	329
Mona	280	341
Mean	264	335
SD	7.67	2.58
Low achievers		
Nourah	153	199
Hanouf	170	224
Ebtesam	161	202
Mada	164	219
Mean	162	211
SD	3.53	6.17

Moreover, it can easily be seen from Table 4.24 that both groups of learners used more vocabulary in their writing than in their speech. Overall, for high achievers, the difference between writing and speech was 71 individual words, while low achievers only used 49 more words in their written composition than in their spoken task. Overall, learners tended to include much less detail in their spoken accounts than they did in their writing. The following extracts are an example of the details included in speech and writing by a high achieving student:

> *Extract 54*
> *Speech: They begun unpacking the presents they had received from friends and and they discussed the and they talked about where they put them. Yes, and luckily they tended to agree on everything. Two weeks later, they received two tickets to a very famous show. (Abeer)*

Extract 55
Writing: They started opening their presents and putting them away. There was a discussion over where to put the present. Eventually they agreed that silverware would go in a decorative case, decorations would be put on the wall and all clothing would go into their drawers. (Abeer)

Thus, in writing, the student mentioned the different types of gifts and their placement, which the couple agreed on, whereas in speech she just said, ‘They tended to agree on everything’.

To sum up, in both writing and speaking tasks, high achievers used more individual words (more than 100 words) than low achievers. To assist in the interpretation of the results described earlier (i.e., the results of the writing and speaking tasks), the results of a short questionnaire completed by Saudi students are presented in the next section.

4.4 Questionnaire results

This section presents the results of a short questionnaire completed by the Saudi participants to find out about their exposure to English-based activities outside the classroom. Table 4.25 shows the percentages of the positive responses received by students for each statement mentioned in the survey in relation to the frequency of the activities.

Table 4.25 How often students use English outside the classroom

Statement	1= Every day	2= Once or twice a week	3= Once or twice a month	4= A few times a year	5= Every few years	6= Never
1. Chatting online with friends and relatives	16.6%	25%	8%	41.6%	0%	8%
2. Using instant messaging (e.g., Twitter) with strangers (e.g., celebrities)	20.8%	45.8%	12.5%	4%	0%	16.6%
3. Watching TV	8.3%	16.6%	16.6%	12.5%	4%	41.6%
4. Watching movies	8.3%	45.8%	16.6%	29%	0%	0%
5. Reading books or magazines for pleasure	12.5%	16.6%	33.3%	4%	20.8%	12.5%
6. Listening to music	16.6%	12.5%	20.8%	4%	0%	45.8%
7. Listening to the radio	4%	8.3%	16.6%	8.3%	16.6%	45.8%
8. Participating/attending English events or talks	0%	0%	8.3%	12.5%	12.5%	66.6%
9. Talking in English during travels abroad	20.8%	12.5%	4%	0%	0%	62.5%
10. Speaking English in the local community	20.8%	16.6%	16.6%	8.3%	12.5%	25%
11. Using English courses at home	16.6%	16.6%	16.6%	16.6%	8.3%	25%
12. Having a private tutor	41.6%	25%	12.5%	0%	0%	20.8%

The figures in Table 4.25 show that all respondents used English outside the classroom occasionally while nobody selected 'never' to all statements in the survey. However, only a small proportion of the students responded that they frequently used English. As seen in Table 4.25, the percentage of students who were using English every day did not exceed 20.8%, except for the statement relating to having a private tutor (41.6%). That is, the majority of students did not use English outside the class on a daily basis.

Moreover, the positive responses obtained for the daily and weekly use of English combined did not even reach 50% of the total respondents, except for the use of three English language activities: using instant messaging, watching movies and having a tutor. This means that more than half of the students did not engage in most of the language activities mentioned in the survey on a frequent basis, not even as frequently as once a week. In other words, more than 50% of students were using English sporadically, sometimes as infrequently as once a month or less.

To analyse the data and record the results, the English activities in which the students engaged outside the classroom were divided into four main categories:

- speaking
- listening
- writing
- reading.

4.4.1 Speaking

Across the survey, the questions on speaking English outside of class (nos. 8, 9 and 10 in Table 4.25) provided the least positive responses, with many students selecting 'never' as their answer. For example, around 65% chose 'never' for participating in English events or having conversations in English during travels abroad. Regardless of the frequency, only 33.3% out of the 24 participants attended or participated in events offered in English, and 37.3% out of 24 students stated having conversations in English when they travelled abroad. While neither participating in English events nor talking in English during travels were activities in which Saudi students engaged frequently, English events were the least popular activity across the survey. No one chose the 'every day' or even 'every week’ frequency categories. This indicates that even the high achieving/most fluent learners did not engage in this activity very frequently to improve their English.

Based on these results, it appears that speaking in English outside the class community is not very common for Saudi students. The only exception was speaking English within the local community. The question regarding speaking with friends, relatives or local people received many positive answers from the majority of participants, almost 75%, although with different frequency rates. More than half of the total participants responded that they spoke English with members of the local community at least once a month. Another 20% occasionally spoke English with friends and family at long intervals—months or even years.

4.4.2 Listening

The participants listened to English outside of class more frequently than they spoke it, but listening to English, for example on the radio or as recorded music, was nevertheless not a common activity. 45.8% of participants selected ‘never’ to questions 6 and 7 shown in Table 4.25. However, a high percentage of participants responded that they did watch English language movies, which can improve listening skills. More than half of the study participants watched English speaking movies at least once a week, and no one responded ‘never’. Therefore, watching movies is likely to be one of the most influential sources of exposure to English language outside of class.

Conversely, watching English language television was not a very popular activity among Saudi students, given that 41.6% of respondents chose ‘never’ for this statement. However, in responding to the open-ended question at the end of the questionnaire, students mentioned a number of interesting activities in relation to visual-aural skill practices that had not been included in the survey. Watching TED talks or watching lessons on applying makeup for girls, offered by English speakers, were examples of these activities.

Students therefore seem more interested in listening to English language sources when they had some visual component rather than just audio.

4.4.3 Writing

Students reported using English frequently outside of the classroom when instant messaging. At least once a week, 66.6% of students used instant messaging with strangers and over 41.6% chatted online with friends in English. The data indicated that the students were more likely to write English with strangers than with friends and relatives.

With friends or relatives, half of the respondents reported that they used English only 'a few times a year' or 'never'. On the other hand, the percentage of students who 'never' wrote English to strangers or wrote 'a few times a year' was only 20%.

It is worth noting that the writing activities mentioned in the survey, such as chatting online and using instant messaging (e.g., *Twitter* or *Snapchat*), usually involved the less formal types of writing which teenagers use in a comment or a chat (to be discussed in Chapter 7).

4.4.4 Reading

Only 33.3% of students recorded reading books and magazines written in English once or twice a month. This result demonstrates less interest in reading in English than in the other three skills. Another 20.8% reported reading English language books and magazines every few years. Participants who read on a daily or weekly basis constituted 29% of all respondents. However, 41.6% of all respondents continued to develop their skills by taking English language courses at home and having a private tutor. Table 4.25 shows that among all the activities used on a daily basis, having a private tutor was by far the most common.

The data generated by the questionnaire was examined for correlations between the activities queried in the questionnaire in order to ascertain patterns that might assist in the interpretation of the findings. The correlation coefficient was used to calculate the strength of the relationship between each two variables (activities) shown in the survey. The values for the correlation coefficient ranged between -1.0 to 1.0. A correlation of 1.0 suggests a perfect positive relationship between the two variables, whereas a perfect negative correlation is represented by -1.0. Correlations were not considered significant until the value surpassed 0.5. A number of statistically significant correlations between the activities was calculated, as shown in Table 4.26.

Table 4.26 Correlations between the participants' English-based activities outside the classroom

	1- Chatting online	2 Instant messaging	3- TV	4- Movies	5- Books	6- Music	7- Radio	8- Events in English	9- Travels abroad	10- Speaking with friends	11- Courses at home	12- Tutor
1- Chatting online	1											
2- Instant messaging	0.134362849	1										
3- TV	0.459301169	0.013952507	1									
4- Movies	0.488765325	-0.093910819	0.303511136	1								
5- Books	0.259439505	0.181266961	0.419165877	0.330080963	1							
6- Music	0.360854985	0.134019732	0.665717641	0.43449969	0.70131417	1						
7- Radio	0.324115758	-0.258806179	0.541874958	0.378932373	0.46481824	0.514518747	1					
8- Events in English	0.278616544	0.231744887	0.301031613	0.155113347	0.18162149	0.366197802	0.428585709	1				
9- Travels abroad	0.413303619	0.180481118	0.630076815	0.417663273	0.585844801	0.62728056	0.706110449	0.418611726	1			
10- Speaking with friends	0.244405395	-0.080045075	0.443877682	0.446470098	0.460037373	0.498275576	0.761318882	0.504973227	0.783191481	1		
11- Courses at home	0.462969167	-0.158930569	0.450604969	0.367625303	0.163632339	0.329031508	0.511279461	0.201705788	0.341263816	0.366681681	1	
12- Private tutor	-0.719388084	-0.542659205	-0.567145542	-0.439135322	-0.465958817	-0.541754981	-0.278512809	-0.570758028	-0.585862066	-0.424521457	-0.324999452	1

As indicated in Table 4.26, speaking English during travels abroad, as well as having a private tutor, seemed to have the strongest correlations with the other activities. On one hand, having conversations in English during travels correlated positively to speaking English with friends (.78), listening to the radio in English (.70), listening to music (.62), watching TV in English (.63) and reading books (.58). On the other hand, having a private tutor correlated negatively to chatting online in English (-.72), speaking in English during travels abroad (-.58), attending events offered in English (-.57), watching TV in English (-.56) and listening to English music (-.54).

These results suggest that students who have opportunities to travel abroad are unlikely to employ a private tutor, but more likely to engage in a number of English-based activities, including listening to radio, music, reading books, watching movies and TV shows. In contrast, students who employ a private tutor tend not to engage in most of the other activities that involve contact with other English speakers, either online or through travels or attending public events in English. This is a very interesting finding which could be related to attitudes towards Western culture (to be discussed in Chapter 7).

4.4.5 Open-ended question

Finally, in answer to the open-ended question ‘Have you ever lived in another Saudi city, or in another country? If yes, where, and for how long?’, seven positive responses were received from the students as follows:

> *Yes, I was born and raised in Sudan. (Amal)*
>
> *Yes, I lived in Al-hofuf city, north of Saudi Arabia, until I reached the age of 12, then my family and I moved here. (Huda)*
>
> *I used to live in Egypt when I was a child. (Mona)*
>
> *Yes, I finished my primary school in Sudan. (Abeer)*
>
> *I have studied some English courses in California, USA for about 8 months when my mom was receiving treatment there in 2012. (Rand)*
>
> *Yes. My father was working for the Saudi embassy in Ankara, Turkey from 2010 to 2012 and during that time I was studying there. (Haifa)*
>
> *I go to London to stay with my sister for about two to three months every year (every summer break). (Sarah)*

The first four responses were received from the high achieving group in the current study. Interestingly, all four students in the high achieving group shared the common characteristic of having spent their childhood in a different location from the location of the current study.

After presenting the questionnaire results of all Saudi participants, the following table compares the responses received from the high achieving group (HA) and those of the low achievers (LA). This comparison helps to further understand why HAs were more fluent in English than their classmates. In Table 4.27, the frequency with which an activity was performed was identified as follows: 1= every day; 2= once or twice a week; 3= once or twice a month; 4= a few times a year; 5= every few years; 6=never.

Table 4.27 How frequent HAs and LAs use English outside the classroom (all values are considered averages)

	Chatting online	Instant messaging	Watching TV	Movies	Books	Music	Radio	Events in English	Travels abroad	Speaking with friends	Courses at home	Tutor
HA (N=4)	1	1.75	1.5	1.5	1.25	1	2.5	3.5	1	1	5.5	6
LA (N=4)	4	2	6	3.75	4.25	6	6	4.75	6	4.75	1.5	1.75

As seen in Table 4.27, high achievers engaged in most of the activities mentioned in the survey on a daily or weekly basis (most HAs' values in the table range between 1 and 2). However, HAs were unlikely to practise the English language activities that involved intentional learning, such as studying English language courses at home or studying with a private tutor. Moreover, HAs did not attend or participate in English-based events as frequently as one would have expected, compared to the other activities mentioned in the survey. This might have been due to the lack of access to these events in the Saudi community (to be discussed in Chapter 7).

On the other hand, most of LAs' values in Table 4.27 range between 4 and 6. This indicates that LAs were not frequently exposed to English-based activities outside the classroom, except for using English courses at home (1.5), instant messaging with strangers (2) and having a private tutor (1.75). LAs recorded using the last three activities at least once a week.

The overall results of the students' background questionnaire confirm that Saudi students were exposed to a number of English language activities outside the classroom setting. However, only a small proportion of students engaged in these activities frequently.

4.5 Chapter summary

This chapter focussed on Phase 1 of the current research study, which was designed to investigate the participants' awareness of lexical differences between spoken and written English. The chapter presented the quantitative and qualitative data generated from two language production tasks (speaking and writing). The chapter began by presenting the results of the quantitative analysis before proceeding to describe the qualitative data. After that, the results of the students' background questionnaire were presented.

As can be seen from the quantitative results of Phase 1, Saudi EFL learners showed a very modest difference, no more than 1.28 points on average, between writing and speech in relation to lexical coverage and lexical sophistication. Furthermore, in the formality measure, the average formality level of Saudi participants' speech and writing was nearly identical, with 53.06% for writing and 52.72% for speech.

Regarding the lexical diversity, however, average D-values differed significantly, by almost 9 points between speech and writing. By comparing the two groups of learners who showed the most divergence in their fluency (high achievers and low achievers) when compared to native speakers, the quantitative analysis revealed that native speakers showed greater differentiation between speech and writing than both high and low achievers in all the factors investigated in this study (i.e., lexical coverage, sophistication, formality and diversity).

The similarity between learners' speech and writing suggests that neither group of learners differentiated much between spoken and written registers, except in relation to lexical diversity, or, at least, did not vary their vocabulary as much as they should have, according to native speakers' norms. Interestingly, while the statistics in the quantitative analysis showed that neither high nor low achievers differentiated much between spoken and written English, the qualitative analysis showed that high achievers used a more informal register in speech than in writing (e.g., contractions, abbreviations), whereas low achievers failed to do so.

The comparison between native speakers and learners also showed that both high and low achievers used considerably more high-frequency English words than native speakers in both writing and speaking. This suggests that Saudi EFL learners overused the most frequent words when using English, particularly in written language, which is normally expected to include more infrequent words. The results obtained from the questionnaire helped to understand this finding, showing that EFL learners engaged in a number of informal English activities outside the classroom. That is, the external opportunities for exposure to informal English (e.g. watching movies and chatting online) resulted in an excessive use of the most frequently used English words when producing the language. The next chapter describes Phase 2 of the present study in which the potential role of classroom instruction and materials in developing the students' ability to discriminate between spoken and written registers was investigated.

Chapter 5

Results of Phase 2: The role of classroom instruction and materials in developing students' awareness of different registers

The current research investigated the ability of EFL learners to distinguish between spoken and written English in relation to vocabulary, and how this ability develops. While the previous chapter showed the extent to which Saudi EFL learners differentiated between spoken and written registers, this chapter will focus on the second aim of this project, which was to investigate the role of classroom instruction and materials in developing the students' ability to discriminate between spoken and written registers.

The chapter presents data from three sources used to address this aim. The first source of data was a one-month observation of EFL lessons in a Year 12 level course in Saudi Arabia. The second source was a one-hour interview with the teacher of the observed class. Data from these two sources are reported together in one section in this chapter (section 5.1). The last source of data was an in-depth evaluation of the EFL textbook *Traveller6*.

5.1 Results of the classroom observation and teacher's interview

The main aim of the interview and classroom observation was to investigate the teacher's and student participants' awareness of, and performance in relation to the lexical differences across English registers. This section begins by presenting a snapshot of the target EFL class, based on my observations and the interview with the teacher. The observation data are reported under three main themes:

- English vocabulary in class
- the four language skills (writing, speaking, reading and listening) in class
- different registers in class.

The interview data are then presented similarly using the following themes:

- teaching vocabulary
- teaching differences in register
- students' assessment.

5.1.1 A snapshot of the class

The foremost observed feature of the class was the extensive use of the Arabic language, the L1 shared by both the teacher and students. The teacher provided Arabic equivalents for almost every sentence she uttered in English, even when there was no apparent need to do so. She also gave instructions in Arabic. During the interview, the teacher justified her excessive use of Arabic in class by saying: 'I believe that L2 is better taught through L1' (more details are provided in section 5.1.3).

During classroom observations, students worked either individually or in pairs but never in groups. Given that Saudi students usually have the same seats in class during an entire semester, pair work in the target class unsurprisingly led to the students sitting and working with the same classmates every day. Moreover, although the teacher occasionally allowed some time for pair work, teacher talk was predominant during class time. Little time was available for students to speak in class; they spoke only to answer the knowledge-testing questions asked by the teacher. Therefore, communicative interaction in English was rarely observed in the classroom.

As a consequence, the majority of the students did not appear attentive. Many drew idly on their writing pads or whispered among themselves, especially those who were rarely called on to answer a question or participate in an activity. The few engaged students were the focus of the teacher's attention. They were called on to answer all the questions, and the teacher never sought to devise ways to reach out to their disaffected classmates.

On the other hand, the teacher did spend considerable time focussing on the pronunciation of new vocabulary, using a speak and repeat method in which all students participated. This particular aspect of her teaching is not discussed in detail because it is not relevant to the current study. The teacher also had an interesting way of introducing 'today's topic' for students, which always drew students to express ideas and talk about themselves. Unfortunately, this type of discussion was always completed in Arabic (more details are given in the next section).

During class observations, it was noticed that the teacher usually skipped some parts of the lesson included in the Student's Book, such as the speaking or writing sections, because of time constraints. Furthermore, the teacher did not follow some of the suggestions offered in the Teacher's Manual. For instance, although it is recommended that some of the exercises in the Workbook be done in class (the

Teacher's Manual: 'Outline of the Course', p.1), the teacher never used the Workbook during the classes under observation. When interviewed, she explained that the Workbook was a repetition of the exercises that were in the Student's Book, and she did not see this repetition as necessary for her students. Similarly, the listening materials (CDs) accompanying the Student's Book had never been used in class, because the Ministry of Education had not sent them to the school.

5.1.2 Summary of classroom observations

The observation data were analysed using basic in-class themes as follows:

- Teaching vocabulary: to identify the ways in which new vocabulary was introduced.
- Four language skills in class: to look at whether writing, speaking, reading and listening skills were practised in class.
- Different registers in class: to show how differences in registers were taught.

Teaching vocabulary. The teacher usually started the lesson by handing out a small slip of paper to every student with previously-introduced vocabulary written on it, and asked students to translate these words into Arabic. After five minutes, she collected the slips and distributed them in a different order to the students. Then, she asked students to grade and correct each other's slip.

As soon as this activity was completed, the teacher introduced the topic of the lesson by showing some objects or asking questions until students figured out what the lesson was going to be about. The introduction to the lesson was always interesting and kept the students engaged in finding out the lesson's title. For instance, for the lesson of 'What's on the Menu?', the teacher began by holding a plate of food and acted out the role of a waitress. She then asked the students what their favourite restaurant was and what they recommended from its menu. Thus, everyone was keenly waiting for their turn to express their favourite food locations. As a result, the students became interested in knowing about each other's favourite restaurants and food and indicated that they might be inclined to go to some of these places later. However, these discussions were mainly conducted in Arabic and offered few opportunities to practise English since using English language in discussions was optional.

When the theme/title was introduced, the teacher started teaching a list of unfamiliar words, shown in the Student's Book, using English first to pronounce the words (an average of eight new words are listed at the beginning of each lesson in the Student's Book). Then, the new vocabulary was taught mainly in an inductive way using photos, objects, and gestures and sometimes acting and miming. The students tried to guess the meanings of the words by giving Arabic equivalents and providing examples. If they failed to work out the meaning, the teacher would provide them with a translation.

The students would then be asked to repeat the newly introduced words to improve their pronunciation. One of the constructive points that was observed during this class was the noticeable effort from the teacher to make the students pronounce the words correctly. She demonstrated an awareness of the particular issues Arabic-speaking students experience when they learn English, such as using the letters b, f instead of p, v, which is an issue for Arabic speakers since /P/ and /V/ do not exist in the Arabic language.

The teacher monitored their pronunciation by providing assistance where needed, for example, modelling the words for students. For instance, some students had difficulty pronouncing certain words in a reading passage, such as 'persuade' and 'pearl'. To assist them with pronouncing these words correctly, the teacher pronounced the words and asked students to repeat after her. However, it was very clear that the teacher focussed more on teaching the meaning and pronunciation of the unfamiliar word than teaching how to use it in context. While the pronunciation drills were inevitably completed during every single class, training students to use the newly-introduced words in context was not done.

The teacher then would explain the assigned grammatical structures for the lesson. The teaching of grammar is beyond the scope of this study and for this reason these observations are not discussed in detail here. Exercises and activities on vocabulary and grammar were completed in class. Most of these exercises were matching words and corresponding pictures or filling in the gaps. A substantial amount of time from each lesson was also devoted to spelling drills and studying regular and irregular verbs.

Teaching language skills. All the previously-mentioned teaching steps were repeated in every lesson that was observed. The rest of the time was spent differently during each lesson. Different language activities, described in the following paragraphs, were performed occasionally, depending on the class time left.

Sometimes the teacher would read a passage from the textbook, while students followed in their textbooks. When an unfamiliar word was reached, the teacher paused for explanations and questions. In fact, reading activities always ended up as a vocabulary activity; the teacher spent much time explaining the passage's vocabulary, and then asked only one or two comprehension questions. Three or four students read a few lines aloud from the reading passage.

The Listening section was altogether avoided, and the students therefore had never listened to the CD that was provided with the textbook. Repeated observation of the students in class indicated that they always opened their textbooks, proceeded to the Listening section and deleted it by drawing lines or marking it through with a big X. Therefore, the only exposure to spoken English for students in class was the teacher's talk.

Some classes included a writing activity at the end of the lesson when the students worked individually to use the newly introduced words/structures in sentences. Some students would then volunteer to come to the board and write their sentences and others would correct mistakes, if there were any. Occasionally, students were also asked to work in pairs or individually to complete free-writing activities (e.g., to write a paragraph or an email). This kind of activity always started in class and was completed as homework due to time constraints.

Regarding speaking practice, which rarely occurred in class, all speaking activities performed by students were rehearsed, and were supported by scripts or notes. English speaking activities were usually completed on the basis of key words or phrases provided by the teacher who asked students to write notes on a specific subject, then initiate a dialogue in pairs and finally read out the prepared dialogue to the class. One common activity, which the teacher referred to as a speaking activity, was to ask two students to read or 'act out' scripted dialogues from the textbook. The final way of practising English speaking in the target class was to do a presentation in front of classmates. At the beginning of each semester, the teacher asked students to prepare a presentation on a topic of their choice, and throughout the semester the teacher would choose some students randomly to do their presentations in front of the class using their written notes or *PowerPoint* slides. This meant that not all students would perform their presentations. During the month the class was observed, only four students gave presentations.

Teaching different registers. When the research participants were observed in class, it was noted that the teacher presented students with samples of different language registers, yet their attention was not drawn specifically to differences in register. Many of the receptive skills activities in which the class engaged (i.e., reading and listening activities) could have been viewed as opportunities to teach different registers. For instance, during some classes, students were asked to read scripted dialogues provided in their textbooks, as well as factual texts or journalistic pieces. Many features of informal register included in the written dialogues were not seen in the reading texts, such as discourse markers, contractions and unfinished sentences. However, the teacher did not take advantage of these opportunities to discuss differences in register explicitly.

Turning from the receptive to the productive skills activities (i.e., writing and speaking activities), the latter provided fewer opportunities for teaching different registers than the former. In fact, out of all the productive activities observed during the month, there was only one occasion in which the teacher could have drawn the students' attention to different registers, but passed the opportunity to do so. During one class, the teacher demonstrated to students how to write an e-mail to a friend or a family member. During this activity, the teacher drew the students' attention to the box in the Student's Book containing set phrases for e-mails addressed to family and friends. The phrases varied between formal (e.g., 'I am writing to tell you about …') and less formal (e.g., 'Hi Noor, how's it going?'), yet neither the teacher nor the textbook made an explicit distinction between them in terms of register.

In sum, although the lessons provided some exposure of different registers, the teacher did not teach differences between formal (written) and informal (spoken) registers. However, it was impossible to tell whether students could differentiate between their speech and their writing in relation to vocabulary usage when they participated in class because they rarely spoke English in class. Even in the few cases when students were asked to speak in class, speech in English was not spontaneous. All the speech tasks were scripted, rehearsed and, in essence, performed.

5.1.3 Summary of the teacher's interview

The exploration of the teaching of different registers in the Year 12 classes observed in this study would not have been complete without including data regarding the teacher's attitudes and views surrounding teaching different registers to help clarify the observations made in the previous sections. In this section, the findings in relation to the Year 12 teacher's interview are presented. To a large extent, the teacher's responses mirrored the observations described in the previous section. The interview findings have been assigned to three main categories as follows: teaching vocabulary, teaching differences in registers, and assessment methods.

Teaching vocabulary. According to the teacher, the textbook *Traveller6* placed a strong emphasis on the acquisition of vocabulary. However, the textbook also features valuable content regarding the four language skills: writing, speaking, reading and listening. As a result, the textbook was very comprehensive, and it was not possible to complete all activities, as the teacher stated:

> *The textbook's author designed each lesson to be a reference to teach a new set of vocabulary, new grammatical structures and to practise all the four language skills which neither the time would help me to do that nor would the students bear with me. I believe that each lesson should concentrate on one or two skills at the most, besides some new vocabulary and grammar forms.*

The teacher continued by stating that if she had covered every part available in the textbook in the lesson, the students would have become quickly confused with such large amounts of information. As a result, she chose to devote nearly half of the class time to teaching vocabulary and the rest of the time was spent on teaching other language items (e.g., grammar structures) or skills (e.g., reading or writing). This was because she believed that vocabulary is the key to language mastery.

The teacher also reported that vocabulary was taught mainly in an inductive way, which was obvious during my observation of the class, as she explained:

> *If the unknown words were listed as isolated items in the textbook, I usually use photos to explain meanings. On the other hand, when the target word was introduced within a context, I prefer using context clues to help define the word. (Teacher)*

The teacher believed that if students discovered the meaning of the unfamiliar words themselves, that knowledge was very likely to be retained longer rather than learning the word deductively. However, when the teacher was asked if she used a deductive way of teaching vocabulary, she reported that she usually used the technique of direct translation into Arabic when students failed to discover the meaning of a word.

Teaching differences in registers. The teacher appeared unfamiliar with the idea of teaching differences between language registers. When queried about the ways in which she taught the language differences between writing and speaking, she asked for more clarification. When provided with further explanation, she understood the meaning of the question, but she then stated that she never tried to teach register in the class or even thought about doing it:

> *Teaching different registers never crossed my mind. I barely find time for teaching the main language skills, and I believe that the skill of distinguishing between language registers is not one of these skills. In fact, it is not a teachable skill, but rather an ability that is acquired and developed naturally through an extensive exposure to the target language. I prepare students to write and speak in English, and I accept any choice of words as long as it conveys the general idea/message students want to generate. (Teacher)*

Unsurprisingly, as the teacher did not teach differences between registers to her students, she never assessed this skill either.

As shown in her last comment, the teacher claimed that she was preparing students to ‘speak in English’. Yet, at some point in the interview, the teacher contradicted this claim when she argued that she encouraged her students to participate in class by using whatever linguistic choices they had, even if it was in L1. She added that the use of Arabic language (L1) in class improved students’ confidence and performance. She once tried to conduct an English-only lesson with the students, but, ‘the lesson failed in every aspect’ and most students were reluctant to participate in any of the class activities. Furthermore, the teacher believed that classroom discipline was best maintained using the students’ L1.

In response to a question about whether there were activities in the textbook that were designed to teach differences between registers, the teacher pointed out that she had been using the same textbook for nearly three years and had not noticed any information related to register. Moreover, in response to a question about whether she had considered using supplementary materials, the teacher said that she had not thought of using supplementary materials. This is because her first priority was to finish as much of the lesson content as possible within the forty minutes of class time.

Students' assessment. Firstly, responding to a question about the formal criteria for the English subject assessment in Saudi public schools, the teacher explained that the formal criteria are sent to all Saudi schools by the Ministry of Education, and stipulated:

- 50 marks for the final exam (writing-based exam)
- 50 marks for course work (i.e., 10 for the mid-term writing exam, 10 for the mid-term speaking exam, 5 for attendance, 5 for class participation, 5 for students' notebooks, 5 for homework and 10 for a research project).

When questioned about the strategies she used to assess students' abilities to write formally, the teacher said that the mid-term exam and final exam were mainly designed to assess this skill. In response to a query about the types of questions she included in these exams, the teacher reported that she usually gave students three written texts and asked them to go through them at home. During the exam, they would be asked to rewrite one of the texts. Students were free to memorise a chosen text from the three supplied by the teacher, and write the exact same text in the exam, or write a similar text in their own words. The rest of the exam consisted of matching words, filling in the gaps, correcting sentences, and sometimes completing a set of reading comprehension questions.

Conversely, when it came to the informal assessment of students' writing, the teacher commented that activities and exercises in the textbook were used, such as sentence completion exercises, asking students to include newly introduced vocabulary in sentences or writing a paragraph on a set topic. However, the teacher added that free writing activities, such as writing a paragraph, were usually initiated in class but completed at home as homework assignments. As a result, the teacher was never sure whether the student was the one who completed the homework, or if someone else (e.g., a tutor) completed it. In other words, formal and informal assessments of writing skills were conducted in the target class, yet the techniques used for both types of assessment were likely to produce inaccurate, unreliable results due to possible plagiarism issues.

Regarding the formal assessment of students' speaking abilities in class, the teacher mentioned that only 10 marks out of 100 were assigned to the oral exam, as indicated in the assessment criteria devised by the Ministry of Education. The teacher described the speaking exam as follows:

> *Students sitting the speaking exam anticipate short-answer questions such as: where did you go last weekend? How was the weather? Who else was with you? (Teacher)*

The teacher justified her choice of questions and the fact that she did not ask students to speak freely on a given topic by saying: ‘I do not trust my students’ speech skills and, as such, I would rather save the time and ask students short-answer questions’. The same reason was restated by the teacher when she was talking about the decision she made regarding the five marks for participation (refer to the assessment criteria mentioned above).

To accommodate the fact that not every student had the chance to participate in class, the teacher offered two choices to obtain the five marks for participation. Students could choose either completing a presentation in class in English or a written test. The majority of the class, as reported by the teacher, chose the first option, arguing that they just didn’t have a good enough command of spoken English.

The teacher added that completing a written test did not need any oral skill, nor did it require standing in front of their classmates, which many students found extremely embarrassing. Students’ performance in a written test was confidential, given that only the teacher had access to the content. The teacher argued that giving students two or three methods of assessment to choose from made students more comfortable than forcing them to complete a task they did not want to do.

However, the teacher added that students still had to prepare and complete presentations from time to time in order to practise presenting topics and speaking in front of the class, but they were never assessed on the presented material. In addition, the teacher mentioned that there were exercises and activities in the textbook that could be used as informal assessment to review the students’ speech abilities, such as reading a dialogue from the book or asking students to prepare a few sentences on a certain topic and then speak to the class. The teacher noted that speaking activities were time consuming. As the classes were restricted to forty minutes per lesson, there was little time for speaking in class. The teacher was under pressure to try to finish the lesson early and leave some spare time for these activities.

This conversation on assessment led the teacher into a discussion with the researcher on how to deal with vocabulary errors. The teacher reported that she corrected and graded every piece of writing which she returned to students. From time to time, she used a list of common mistakes for class discussion. When asked about her techniques for error correction in speech, she stated that students seldom spoke English spontaneously in class; instead, they were always prepared with rehearsed speaking. Consequently, she did not remember many cases where she corrected a word in students' speech. The following example was the only case the teacher could recall:

> *The mistake was using a wrong verb in the sentence 'I own a big thanks to my teacher' where the student meant 'I owe a big thanks to my teacher'. I stopped the student and corrected her explicitly: you mean the verb owe not own, right? And I explained the difference in meanings between the two verbs. (Teacher)*

According to the teacher, the most common spoken error was the clear mispronunciation of words where the teacher used recasts to draw students' attention to such errors.

To sum up, the key message that the teacher repeated throughout the interview and used to conclude the interview was the need to reduce the amount of information included in the prescribed textbook because of time constraints. Otherwise, she suggested that more classes and more time should be allocated for English language teaching in schools.

Moreover, it was apparent from the teacher's comments that she did not believe teaching differences between registers was important. Therefore, if teaching different language registers was not a priority, the teacher naturally would devote the time she had to develop other skills.

5.2 Textbook evaluation results

The EFL textbook *Traveller6*, written by Mitchell and Malkogianni and published by mm publications in 2013, was examined to determine whether it contained explicit instruction on lexical differences between spoken and written registers. This section starts with a general observation about the target textbook's components, followed by a summary of the textbook evaluation.

5.2.1 A general observation about the textbook components

The *Traveller6* English textbook comprises a Student's Book, Workbook, and Teacher's Manual, all of which are written in English, accompanied by CDs. Each component is described briefly here.

Firstly, the student's Book is organised in eight units, each of which is based on a general topic. The units are well-organised within a consistent framework. Each unit consists of an introductory page, five, two-page lessons, a revision section and a culture page for extra reading.

Secondly, the Workbook is closely linked with the Student's Book providing further practice of all the linguistic items dealt with in the Student's Book. The Workbook includes ten pages per unit. The pages consist mainly of writing tasks, and a number of reading and listening tasks. Speaking activities are completely missing from the Workbook. It is recommended that some of the exercises in the Workbook be done in class while some should be assigned for homework (Teacher's Manual: 'Outline of the Course', p.1).

Thirdly, the Teacher's Manual includes tables of the functions, structures and vocabulary introduced in each lesson and useful notes for teaching, as well as ideas for optional activities. Answers to all exercises, transcripts for the listening exercises and the aims for every activity in the Student's Book are also included in the Teacher's Manual. Lastly, the CDs include the dialogues, texts and poems from the Student's Book, as well as prepared tests corresponding to the units of the book.

The analysis of the text includes each component mentioned above, and the results are presented thematically under three headings:

- Presenting vocabulary in the course book
- Teaching different registers through texts
- Textbook's approach to assessment

The results presented here were drawn from an analysis of two sample units (Unit 2 and Unit 6). Because of the similarity in structure of all the units in the text, two units were considered to be a good sample. Unit 2 was from the first half of the book, while Unit 6 was from the second half (see section 3.3.3 for details).

5.2.2 Summary of the textbook evaluation

Presenting vocabulary in the course book. A first look at the target textbook reveals that the teaching emphasis was on vocabulary. The front cover of the Teacher's Manual states explicitly that the course has a 'special emphasis on vocabulary building'. This emphasis is not only a statement of intention by the authors but indeed a fact that can be easily seen throughout the textbook. Eight new words on average, with corresponding illustrations, are presented in a separate section at the beginning of each lesson. This is followed by examples of usage and finally with activities for the learner to practise. Furthermore, other new vocabulary is also presented in context through the listening and reading material. According to the Teacher's Manual, almost all the textbook's activities and sections have two aims in common, which are either 'to present new vocabulary' or 'practise the vocabulary presented in the lesson'.

Thus, vocabulary is either presented as a list of discrete items at the beginning of each lesson or within a context. In both cases, the textbook tends to encourage an inductive teaching approach through which the student is encouraged to discover the meaning of an unfamiliar word from contextual cues. Each lesson, therefore, begins with an inductive activity to introduce the vocabulary listed at the beginning of the lesson. The inductive activity asks students to read through the listed phrases/words, look at the corresponding pictures and deduce the meaning of any unknown words from the content of the pictures. To explain the word 'events', for example, the instructions in the Teacher's Manual (p.77) say: 'Draw students' attention to the picture and ask them: Where are the people? Do you like going to crowded places?'

Given that some of the new vocabulary in *Traveller6* is also presented in context, the question arises as to how this vocabulary should be introduced to students, given that new words used in context are not always listed in the Teacher's Manual. For example, one of the aims for a reading activity mentioned in the Teacher's Manual (p.84) is 'to present vocabulary, structures and functions in the context of a text about an event' but there was no specific list of the new vocabulary that was introduced in context. Similarly, the instruction 'explain any unknown words', which is repeated in almost every activity throughout the lesson, implies that teachers are supposed to choose what they believe are unfamiliar words for their students, or students have to identify the words they don't recognise themselves. Therefore, although the textbook does not always determine which words are new in a particular context, the Teacher's Manual still emphasises that all new words should be explained in an inductive/communicative way using visuals and questions to generate discussion and interest.

Throughout the units under study (Unit 2 & Unit 6), the Teacher's Manual never commits to a deductive approach in teaching vocabulary. Indeed, from the very beginning, the authors reveal their preference for an inductive teaching/learning method over a deductive one. This is made clear when the key features of the course are provided:

Inductive approach to the presentation of the grammar and vocabulary, relating new information to prior knowledge with warm-up activities, asking open-ended questions, through problem-solving activities, etc. (Teacher's Manual: 'Outline of the Course: Syllabus', p.1)

As the authors' underlying teaching approach is essentially an inductive approach which is very much student-centred, the textbook unsurprisingly provides many communicative activities, such as pair and group activities. In each lesson, there is a speaking or writing activity, sometimes both, that is designed to practise the newly-introduced vocabulary through pair work as is in the two activities reported in Box 5.1.

> ***Speaking activity:***
> *Refer Ss to the poster in activity 2. Ask Ss to read through the prompts and the speech bubble. In pairs, Ss take turns to ask and answer questions, using the prompts given, about which events they are going to attend next week. Go around the class helping Ss when necessary. Tell Ss to swap roles. Choose some pairs to act out the dialogue. (Teacher's Manual, p.79).*
>
> ***Writing activity:***
> *Write an email to a friend giving him/her information about the Teacher's Day event and telling him/her about the activities you are going to attend. Use ideas from activity 5. (The Student Book, p.79)*

Box 5.1 Example of two activities available in the Student Book

The textbook contains many speaking and writing activities such as those in Box 5.1. However, do these activities actually provide students with any understanding of the differences between spoken and written registers? In other words, is learning the differences between registers an objective of the text and/or is there sufficient content to reflect this objective? These questions are answered in the following section.

Teaching different registers through texts. In the target units (Units 2 and 6), little attention is given in an explicit way to the issue of different registers. Within the entire two units (each unit consists of 14 pages), only a brief comment is found that is relevant to the topic of register: 'We mainly use the short forms when we talk or when we want to sound informal' (the Teacher's Manual, p.23). The manual does not provide ideas and keys for the instructor to teach lexical differences in registers, except the previously mentioned comment.

The lack of emphasis on register is also seen in the textbook activities. Writing activities are usually followed by speaking activities. This situation could present a great opportunity for students to learn about differences between spoken and written registers while dealing with the same topic. Yet, these activities were not exploited to teach this aspect of language. For instance, in lesson 6e, students are asked to talk in groups of three using the following key phrases (Box 5.2).

Student A invites student B and student C to an event. Student B refuses the invitation and student C accepts it.

-***Inviting***:

1-Would you like to come to....?

2-How about coming to ...?

3-I would like to invite you to....

-***Accepting***:

1-Sounds great.

2-I am really looking forward to it.

3-Thanks for inviting me.

-***Refusing***:

1-I am afraid I cannot make it because...

2-It was nice of you to invite me but ...

3-I am sorry, but I have to ...

Box 5.2 Set phrases to invite and accept or refuse an invitation

In the same lesson, the writing activity was to write an email invitation for an event. The same list of set phrases (shown in Box 5.2) is given for both activities (writing and speaking).

This is an example of a missed opportunity to draw students' attention toward differences in registers. For instance, students could have been asked to classify the helping phrases mentioned above into formal and less informal lists and further draw their attention to the point that the informal list is commonly used in speaking, or when addressing close friends, whereas the formal one is to be used otherwise.

Students should be aware that phrase no.2 of the invitation phrases, phrase no.1 of the accepting phrases and phrase no.3 of the refusing phrases sound less formal and therefore are more common in spoken invitations between friends, compared to the other phrases. In this way, students could become familiar with the relevant registers involved in the topic of invitations, and with the general concept.

Although writing and speaking activities are included in almost each lesson in the Student's Book, the Workbook is mainly designed to practise writing skills and review new vocabulary. Notably, there is not a single activity for speech within the Workbook, although this book is meant to be used in class occasionally. That is, writing activities appear to be of first priority in the design of the book compared to speaking activities. There are many writing exercises, and these contain much variety. Students are asked to write full answers for open-ended questions, to write a paragraph, email, story or letter.

Speech activities included in the Student's Book, however, always provide students with key words and phrases, asking them to write answers or notes on a specific subject, then to initiate a dialogue in pairs and finally read out the prepared dialogue to the class. Consequently, there are two clear shortcomings regarding the speech activities in *Traveller6*. Firstly, there is no variety of exercises for practising speaking, as the exercises are usually dialogue exercises. There are no speaking tasks for training students to perform solo short talks, in the form of oral presentation to the class or telling a story, for example. Secondly, the speech content is often prepared and written before the oral exercises. The textbook does not provide students with the space and encouragement for prompting them to speak in unscripted, spontaneous language.

If the textbook's writers claim that they aim to train students to communicate in English in everyday life (Teacher's Manual, p.3), speech activities should progress from controlled to free practice. When using language in everyday life, students are not able to write notes before they speak, as is the case in the target textbook. Moreover, the Year 12 students who use this course should have sufficient experience—built over a number of years of study—and linguistic and communicative competence to be able to engage in unscripted conversations.

One simple activity (let's call it 'In the hot seat') could be used with students to practice free speech in English. In this activity, a student is requested to sit on a chair fronting the whole class and to provide a sentence about an activity they did recently (e.g., 'I watched a great movie last night'). Then, the other students ask questions about this topic, to which the student must reply instantly. Some questions might be answered in a couple of sentences, while other questions might need a summary of the story of the movie to be answered. This type of activity is likely to train students to speak directly, with no preparation or prewritten notes, deal with unexpected questions and most importantly, practise using the spoken register in class.

In addition, most speaking activities in Units 2 and 6 seem to be specifically devised for practising particular structures and vocabulary rather than having a real-life context. For example, the speaking activity in lesson 2a asks students to complete a chart about their daily routines (get up early, do housework, cook, etc.) and then complete the chart about their friend. After that, students are required to talk in pairs, as in the example: 'I get up early on weekdays, but I don't get up early at the weekend. What about you?' (Student's Book, p.23).

The same talk must be done with every daily activity mentioned in the chart. It appears that this activity has been made up for the purpose of practising the affirmative and negative forms of present simple (the grammar structures presented in the same lesson) rather than having a natural dialogue that reflects real life interactions. In other words, this activity sounds like a grammar drill that has been given some personal meaning, which is classified by Brown (2007, p. 183) as a 'meaningful drill'.

The artificial nature of the speaking activities in the Student's Book appears contrary to the original nature of reading and listening activities included in the other sections of the textbook. All the texts and audio recordings included in Units 2 and 6 seem to be very convincing examples of actual usage of the language. This is to say that reading and listening materials in the textbook appear to be authentic English that represents different registers. Audio materials are well recorded with British speakers to make sure that students are exposed to as much authentic English as possible. The speakers do not sound like they are reading aloud a scripted dialogue; i.e., the speakers appear to speak in an unscripted or spontaneous way (even if the conversation has been written specifically for the lesson). For example, many discourse markers, pauses, contractions and unfinished sentences are found in the listening material. These features of spoken English are also seen in the written dialogues included in the textbook.

There seems to be, therefore, no resistance to writing informal English in the *Traveller6* textbook, as shown in Extracts 1 and 2 in Box 5.3.

Extract 1:

Omar: When do we have a lunch break?

Hamid: Are you hungry already!

Omar: No, it's just....

Hamid: I'm only joking, Lunch is from 1:30 till 2:30.

Omar: And where's the editor's office?

Hamid: Erm...it's here.

(Student's Book, Lesson 2b: p.24)

***Extract 2**:*

Peter: Hi, Clive

Clive: Peter! I don't often see you in the library. What's going on?

Peter: I'm looking for information about World Animal Day.

Clive: Oh, you started working on the project!

Peter: that's right.

Peter: Hey, why don't you join me?

Clive: good idea! Thanks!

Peter: you know, it's sad that ....

(Student's Book, Lesson 6c: p.82)

Box 5.3 Extracts from the Student's Book from dialogues between colleagues/friends

The extracts show some features of informal spoken English, such as abbreviations (it's, I'm, Where's, don't), unfinished sentences (it's just…), pauses (Erm…), and discourse markers (you know). Therefore, although the students are exposed to hundreds of pages of formal written English in the textbook, it cannot honestly be argued that the book offers only a few hours of informal spoken English in audio CDs. On the contrary, the course provides informal English on CDs, as well as in the book itself, as shown in the scripted dialogues above.

However, the vocabulary contained in written texts other than dialogues varies in formality, depending on genre. There is a variety of reading material, such as factual texts or magazine articles, which are written in more formal English than the dialogues. There are also examples of recipes, emails, brochures, and notes which seem to be less formal than factual texts, but more formal than dialogues. For example, the authors used contractions and colloquial language (such as 'Don't miss out!' 'Join in the fun', 'A lot of activities', 'Teachers *vs* students') in the text for an advertisement, 'Teacher's Day', in lesson 6a (the Student's Book, p.78).

Conversely, neither contractions nor informal expressions were identified in the article in lesson 6d (the Student's Book, p.84), which is talking about a religious event Eid Al-Adha. In a word, the textbook provides written texts that exemplify different levels of formality, but does not explicitly explain when to use formal or informal language, or something in between.

The lack of explicit information is not surprising, when one remembers that the teaching of different registers is not one of the course objectives listed in the outline of the course (as shown in the Teacher's Manual, p.1).

Textbook's approach to assessment. The textbook is accompanied with a Test CD-ROM which contains eight prepared tests corresponding to the units of the book, two final tests and the recordings of the listening texts in the tests. The tests can be printed in their original form. All the tests follow the same pattern by including six different sections as follows: vocabulary, grammar, communication, listening, reading and writing. Vocabulary and grammar questions are mainly multiple choice or matching exercises. Examples of vocabulary questions from Test 2, Unit 2 and Test 6, Unit 6 are shown in Box 5.4.

-Match the two columns (from Test 2, Unit 2):

1.	*mop*	*a. shopping at the mall*
2.	*do*	*b. out with friends*
3.	*hang*	*c. the floor*
4.	*go*	*d. the washing-up*

-Choose the correct words (from Test 6, Unit 6):

Jackie needed some money, so I lent/borrowed her some.

It's cold. Take your jacket/leaflet with you!

Melanie arranged/cancelled her trip because she was ill.

Box 5.4 Examples of vocabulary questions available in the Test CD-ROM

These questions test the students' understanding of the meaning of words (receptive knowledge), but they do not provide opportunities to determine how well students can use the vocabulary successfully. In other words, the textbook tests would be improved if the writers included questions to assess students' ability to produce English vocabulary in a meaningful context (e.g., make a sentence using the word X).

In the communication section of the textbook tests, all tasks consisted of a dialogue to be completed by the student using phrases provided with each dialogue. An extract of the communication task taken from Test 2 is shown in Box 5.5.

-Complete the dialogue with the phrases in the box.

How often do you come here?
Do you like shopping?
So, what do you think of this place?
Would you like to come?

1. *Beth: Jess and I want to go to the mall.*

   ....

2. *Jane: I don't know. I can't stand being there.*

   Beth: We just want to buy a pair of shoes.

   ....

   Jane: Well, not really. I'm so bored.

Box 5.5 Example of communication tasks available in the Test CD-ROM

The example in Box 5.5 highlights the fact that the students do not have the autonomy to complete the dialogue in their own words but must choose from the provided phrases. This arrangement is in keeping with the general organisation of the textbook, which does not provide opportunities for students to speak spontaneously. Most importantly, given that the tests do not have 'speaking sections', and the 'communication sections' are always composed of dialogues, it must be assumed that the 'communication questions' are meant to assess students' oral skills. However, if that is the case, communication questions should be completed orally rather than as written exchanges and should progress from controlled to free speech.

On the other hand, the writing sections in the textbook tests seem to be good examples of writing skills assessment as the task is always to compose a free writing text on a given subject, as shown in the following example from Test 6 (Box 5.6).

-Write an email to a friend inviting him/her to a get-together of yours.
Explain to him/her what is going to take place during the get-together.

Box 5.6 Example of writing tasks available in the Test CD-ROM

Free writing tasks help to evaluate students' overall understanding of a topic, their ability to organise their thoughts, be creative and original. Finally, the reading and listening sections in the tests usually contain reading/listening materials with content-related questions to be answered by the student.

Like the textbook, the tests, therefore, cover the basic language items and skills (i.e., vocabulary, grammar, communication, writing, reading and listening), but, as has been noted, the textbook does not teach or test the ability to differentiate between spoken and written registers.

Furthermore, in terms of assessment, there is no guidance provided to the teacher as to what should be done about speaking mistakes. The Teacher's Manual does not make it clear whether the teacher should draw students' attention to their speaking mistakes explicitly or implicitly, or just ignore them. Regarding writing mistakes, on the other hand, the authors state their approach clearly:

> *Students' written work should always be corrected (not during class time) and returned to students in due date. When correcting writing, it is suggested that a list of commonly-made errors is made. The information gathered could then be pointed out to students orally or in written form on the board. (Teacher's manual, p.3)*

In sum, the textbook evaluation shows that vocabulary teaching has been given priority as part of the course design. Moreover, although students are presented with samples of different registers in the target textbook, their attention is not drawn specifically to these differences. This being the case, it would be unfair to expect that students learn much about register throughout this course.

5.3 Chapter summary

The current research study involved two phases: learners' ability to use different registers (Phase 1) and the role of classroom instruction in developing this ability (Phase 2). While the results of Phase 1 were fully described in Chapter 4, the main findings of Phase 2 have been presented and explained in this chapter. Three sources of data were used in Phase 2—classroom observation, teacher's interview and textbook evaluation. The data demonstrate that teaching practices and teaching materials are strongly biased toward vocabulary learning. In the classroom, there is a lack of speaking and listening practice and extensive use of Arabic (L1) by the teacher and students.

In terms of teaching different language registers, it was clear from classroom observation and textbook evaluation, that the students were exposed to different registers. However, their attention was not drawn specifically to these differences. During the teacher’s interview, the teacher stated that she never intended to teach different language registers in class and did not believe that the teaching of differences between spoken and written registers was important. Similarly, learning the differences between registers is not one of the objectives specified in the Teacher's Manual. Furthermore, the teacher reported that the Ministerial curriculum requires teachers to test the students’ writing skills, but rarely speech (only 10 marks out of 100 were assigned to the oral exam). Therefore, it is to be expected that the teacher, as well as the textbook, would follow these guidelines, paying little attention to the speaking skills.

In the following chapters, the results of the two phases of this research are discussed in more detail and with reference to previous research, and in the light of the research questions that this study seeks to investigate.

Chapter 6

Discussion

The context of this study was teaching and learning English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia. Of particular interest was the ability of Saudi Arabian EFL students to distinguish between written and spoken English vocabulary and how this ability is developed in the classroom. Firstly, the spoken and written English vocabulary of a group of high school EFL learners in Saudi Arabia was examined. Secondly, the role of teaching practices and teaching materials in developing the ability to differentiate between spoken and written registers was investigated. Accordingly, the research was divided into two phases:

Phase 1: Learners' ability to use lexical differences between spoken and written registers productively

Two language tasks (speaking and writing) were assigned by the researcher to be completed by the students. This was followed up with a survey to provide insight into their skills and personal background.

Phase 2: The role of classroom instruction in teaching different language registers

The students and teacher were observed in the classroom, and the teacher was interviewed. The teaching textbook was also evaluated.

In this chapter, the quantitative and qualitative findings from the speaking and writing tasks (refer to Chapter 4) are discussed with particular reference to the extent to which Saudi students discriminate between spoken and written English vocabulary. In the following chapter (Chapter 7), the results of the student questionnaire, classroom observation, teacher's interview and textbook evaluation are discussed in order to identify the factors that are likely to affect the students' choice of vocabulary in the speaking and writing tasks.

The current discussion revolves around the interpretation of the findings, and outlines what they mean in relation to both the research questions and existing knowledge. Prior research in the field of language registers is re-examined as it relates to the outcomes of the study. Therefore, this chapter highlights how the current research reflects, differs from and extends current knowledge of language registers. If similarities between the current study and the existing work of others are found, the chapter highlights these similarities and discusses how this research has reinforced what is already known about the area. The chapter also outlines a number of new and unexpected findings, compared to what is already known in the literature, and explains how this research identified these differences. Finally, the results of the quantitative and qualitative analyses of the language tasks are integrated and discussed.

6.1 The quantitative findings of the speaking and writing tasks

This section explores the results generated by the quantitative analysis of the speaking and writing tasks. The quantitative results will be discussed under four headings as follows:

- findings of lexical coverage measure
- findings of lexical sophistication measure
- findings of lexical formality measure
- findings of lexical diversity measure.

Some of the reasons explaining these findings are highlighted.

6.1.1 Findings of lexical coverage

The lexical coverage measurement calculates the frequency of the 2,000 most frequently used English words that appear in a written or oral text. The results of lexical coverage measurement revealed that, a maximum of 97.43% of those 2,000 words appeared in the writing samples produced by Saudi students, while 98.77% were used in their speech samples. The minimum percentages were approximately 92% for writing and 93% for speech.

These high percentages for frequently used word coverage indicate a substantial mastery of these common words on the part of the Saudi participants. This finding supports the claim made by Harrington (2018), Nation (2001) and Milton (2009) that high-frequency words in a language tend to be the first to be mastered among learners. And, because they are so fundamental, they form a useful foundation to functionally communicate in the foreign language. The data for this current study indicates, however, that the participants were actually overusing the most frequent words for a number of reasons discussed below.

Previous research in lexical coverage has been mostly concerned with native speakers, and a thorough review of the literature was unable to locate any study that has been conducted on the lexical coverage of English interlanguage produced by Arabic speakers, the subject of the current research. Previous studies have concluded that coverage of the 2,000 most frequent word families is generally around 95% (Adolphs & Schmitt, 2003) or 99% (Schonell et al., 1956) of spoken English, but only 80% of written English (Francis & Kucera, 1982; Milton, 2009; Nation, 2001) when either is produced by English native speakers.

However, while the results of the present study indicate a similar coverage, on average, for spoken English (95.90%), far more coverage for written English (94.62%) was measured than the percentages indicated in previous studies. The results indicate that the learners failed to use more infrequent words in their writing than in their speech, and, therefore, the coverage of the most common vocabulary was very high and similar for both writing and speaking. The results for spoken English in this study were, therefore, consistent with previous research, while the results for written English were greater than the 80% expected rate.

The high lexical coverage of the most frequent words in the participants' written English could be explained by the fact that, compared to the native speakers, which most studies have used as their subjects, the EFL participants in the present study were still developing their L2 vocabulary knowledge. Results from Alhazmi and Milton's (2015) study suggest that Saudi university learners know, on average, between 1,650 and 3,000 words in English around the time of entry to university. Compared to Alhazmi and Milton (2015), Al-Hazemi (1993) proposes lower figures for Saudi students' vocabulary size, indicating that Saudi high school leavers know between 800 and 2,000 words with an average score of approximately 1,000 words. On the other hand, according to Goulden, Nation, and Read (1990), educated native English speakers know between 17,000 and 20,000 words. Accordingly, native speakers have significantly more vocabulary available to them beyond the basic 2,000 most common words and can make use of them in any language task, while EFL learners are constrained by the limits of their vocabulary.

While it was expected that writing would express more variety in vocabulary than speech, the Saudi students made extensive use of the 2,000 most common words in both their speech and writing. The frequencies of words varied only slightly between the learners' speech and their writing (only 1.61% difference for high achievers and 0.77% for low achievers), compared to the larger variation of 9.42% between native speaker participants' oral and written output. The similarity of lexical coverage between the learners' speech and writing suggests that the participants could not differentiate between spoken and written registers, or at least they did not differentiate as much as was the norm for native speakers.

It is being argued in this thesis that this finding might be explained by the lack of awareness of different registers on the part of Saudi EFL learners, meaning that the participants failed to appreciate the lexical differences between writing and speech. On the other hand, it is possible that the learners were aware of the differences between writing and speech, and simply failed to reflect this awareness while completing the writing and speaking tasks.

The high lexical coverage of frequent words in the learners' writing might merely reflect their underdeveloped writing skills. It is possible that some of the participants lacked advanced writing skills and vocabulary even in their native Arabic, deficits which would be reflected in their English usage. This is the argument supported by Ankawi (2015).

Furthermore, it is also possible that some of the participants were able to understand a wide range of vocabulary but were unable to reproduce it in context. According to Milton (2009), it is more likely that frequent words will be both understood receptively and used productively than less common words, which are often restricted only to receptive knowledge. This could explain the relative scarcity of infrequent words found in Saudi learners' written tasks.

However, it was apparent that the measurement for high lexical coverage differed for both speech and writing according to the fluency of the learners. The written and spoken language of high achieving (HA) learners contained more than 97% of high-frequency words on average, with the percentage declining to less than 94% in the case of low achieving (LA) learners. This might be because high achievers spoke more fluently using idiomatic English and discourse markers composed largely of high-frequency words, while low achievers did not have many formulaic expressions to draw upon in their English interlanguage. This led to a higher coverage rate of the most frequent words in the high achievers' narratives.

Interestingly, given that low achievers (LAs) produced fewer frequent words in both writing and speech compared to high achievers, this made the lexical coverage statistics of low achievers closer to that of native speakers (as shown in Chapter 4, Table 4.17). That is, while HAs sounded more competent because they were more fluent and used high-frequency vocabulary and discourse markers in speech (hence approximating native speaker's usage), LAs actually appeared to be closer to native speakers when quantitative measures were used. A potential reason is that high achievers wanted to show their ability to sound native-like by using informal language, but they ended up using an excessive number of common words, compared to how native speaker participants performed.

6.1.2 Findings of lexical sophistication

The opposite of lexical coverage is lexical sophistication, which is measured by calculating the frequency of uncommon words in a written or oral text. That is, whereas the measure of word coverage (Web VocabProfile) is based on the use of common words, the sophistication measure (P_Lex) is based on the use of infrequent/sophisticated words.

The results showed that the Saudi learners in this study used a limited number of sophisticated, or uncommon, words, with average lambda values of .86 for spoken tasks and 1.13 for written tasks. The *P_Lex* manual states that, 'in practice, lambda values range from about .5 to about 4.5. Higher and lower values are possible, but do not occur frequently in real life'. Therefore, even the minimum lambda values recorded by the participants were below the manual's expected low point of the spectrum, for both spoken (0.49) and written (0.28) English, while the maximum lambda scores were less than half the maximum expected according to the P_Lex manual (4.5) at 1.78 and 1.42, respectively.

This outcome accords with the already observed very heavy use of the most common English words. This suggests that the learners may not yet have acquired a range of more sophisticated words, or they may have only acquired them receptively. In addition, the picture story which was used in the speaking and writing tasks was rather extensive, comprising a series of 14 pictures focussing on a single topic (see Appendix 7), thus providing opportunities for vocabulary to be frequently repeated.

A study of teenage novels by Hirsh and Nation (1992), which adopted the same style of narrative English that was being examined in the current study, indicated that lexical coverage of common words in these simple narratives was far higher, at 90%, than what was expected of writing by previous researchers (80%) (Francis & Kucera, 1982; Milton, 2009; Nation, 2001). Hirsh and Nation argue that since a novel is an ongoing narrative from one person's perspective, it encourages the repetition of words relevant to the story, resulting in more extensive use of the most common vocabulary at the expense of more sophisticated vocabulary.

Hirsh and Nation (1992) also argue that scarcity of sophisticated vocabulary in teenage novels is a function of writing for a broad public audience, a point confirmed by the native speaker participants in this study. Although native speaker participants gained the highest lambda values in both speaking and writing tasks among all participants, they still recorded relatively low lambda scores (3.11 in writing and 2.15 in speech) when compared to the manual's predicted maximum lambda score (4.5).

The native speakers had been expected to approach the highest score of lambda, but the nature of the task, a picture-based narration, meant that it could be completed with very few sophisticated words. Consequently, although we would expect a lexical sophistication measurement to indicate the size of a speaker's productive vocabulary, a single piece of writing or speaking does not reflect a speaker's full range of vocabulary due to the fact that word selection is highly dependent on the genre of the text, register, and other contextual factors (Milton, 2009). The native speakers who participated in this research almost certainly would have selected more sophisticated words if the textual context were academic in nature rather than the non-academic text used in the study. The usefulness of sophistication measures may therefore be limited to the assessment of texts within a particular genre (Daller & Phelan, 2007).

However, the coverage of the most frequent words produced by English learners in the current study even exceeded the 90% shown in Hirsh and Nation (1992) study with about 5% to 6% increase on average (94.62% in writing and 95.90% in speech). Across all the lexical coverage studies of which the researcher is aware, the coverage of the most common words in a transcript written by native speakers has never scored above 90% in narrative English and 80% in all other kinds of English. This indicates that the EFL participants in this study failed to produce the least amount of infrequent words

(10%) when they wrote in English. Furthermore, the results of the lexical sophistication measure indicated that the difference between native speakers' writing and speech outputs reached .96 on average (around one point), while the difference in the learners' case was merely .21 for high achievers and .27 for low achievers (around a quarter). This means that the native speakers' word selection differed between writing and speech three times more than did the learners.

This could be due to the fact that native speakers simply have more knowledge of, and the confidence to select, more sophisticated words than learners. Native speaker participants have access to an enormous number of unusual words amassed and integrated into their understanding throughout their lifetime, and thus they could easily produce them in a language task. On the other hand, the Saudi learners were limited to what they had learned in a much shorter period of time, which was largely within the range of the most common 2,000 words, so they had to function mostly using words within that limited range. This argument is supported by previous studies revealing that ESL/EFL language skills are heavily dependent on learners' knowledge of vocabulary (refer to Hsueh-Chao & Nation, 2000; Shen, 2008; Waring & Nation, 2004).

While the usage of low-frequency vocabulary was low in both the spoken and written tasks, there were nonetheless more sophisticated words in the writing than in the oral task, with a modest noticeable difference (1.13 and .86 mean lambda values in writing and speech respectively). This general characteristic appeared as well in the output of participants who were native English speakers, perhaps simply because of the inherent characteristics of written communication.

People typically experience less pressure when writing than when speaking face-to-face, since writing allows them to plan what they are going to say, select and arrange their words strategically for the best effect, as well as edit and revise their work before it is sent off to someone else. Therefore, the opportunity to introduce complex vocabulary into written communications is much greater. Alternatively, in spoken situations, speakers are under pressure to come up with ideas, as well as the right words to express those ideas, on the spot, without being able to revise and edit what they have said. The result is that the most common, and particularly structural words, are predominantly called on to manage and structure the spontaneous, evolving, rambling nature of unrehearsed speech. Cornbleet and Carter (2001) describe this phenomenon with the following:

> *In speech we tend to use simple words rather than complex ones. We would therefore normally keep to core vocabulary, the central words in a language- small, happy, dress- rather than spending time searching for words at the extreme ends of the language spectrum- minuscule, ecstatic, robe. This is a huge generalisation as, of course, there are times when restricted core vocabulary simply does not convey the right meaning and when minuscule, ecstatic, robe are precisely the words needed. (Cornbleet & Carter, 2001, p. 62)*

Again, as the high achieving and most fluent of the students used the greatest number of high frequency English words, it should be expected that they would also use the lowest number of infrequent words, and therefore gain the lowest lambda scores (i.e., as the usage of frequent words increased, the occurrence of infrequent words decreased). The low achieving and least fluent students, on the other hand, actually produced more infrequently used English words than did the high achievers.

Contrary to what might be expected, therefore, with increasing fluency in English, the use of uncommon words decreased, and the usage of more common words increased, for both spoken and written language. It is possible that because the high achievers had more exposure to informal language through their out-of-class activities, their language was overall more informal, in comparison to low achieving students. This will be discussed later in the next chapter (Chapter 7).

6.1.3 Findings of lexical formality

The results of the language tasks show that the Saudi EFL learners returned relatively high scores in the formality measure (F-score) proposed by Heylighen and Dewaele (1999). The mean F-scores for both writing and speech were greater than 50%, with no score under 44%. As F-scores range from 0 to 100% but do not reach these limits (Heylighen & Dewaele, 1999), the statistics suggest that the participants produced relatively formal English.

The results of the F-score might appear contrary to the earlier pattern of lexical coverage. All students' scores in the lexical coverage measure in both writing and speech were more than 91%, which suggests that the EFL learners relied heavily on highly frequent words to write and speak in English. This can be explained by the fact that the formality measure (F-score) quantifies 'deep formality' rather than 'surface formality' by using deixis only (percentage difference between deictic and non-deictic parts-of-speech, regardless of word frequency level).

According to Heylighen and Dewaele (1999, p. 5), 'deep formality' essentially means 'the avoidance of ambiguity by minimising the context-dependence and fuzziness of expressions'. This is to say that the F-score indicated the extent to which participants utilised unambiguous expressions in their written and spoken communications. Therefore, in terms of word frequency, the Saudi learners used a very large number of the most frequent 2,000 words in English. On the other hand, they selected more non-deictic words than deictic ones, which resulted in high F-scores.

The relatively high values of F-scores in the learners' language can be attributed to the unlimited time given to the participants to perform both the speech and writing tasks. Saudi participants were given all the time they needed to include as much detail in their narrative as they wanted, which enabled them to increase the precision of their narratives. This necessarily resulted in heightened F-scores since, according to Heylighen and Dewaele (1999), avoiding ambiguity is the hallmark of formality.

This finding confirms Biber and Conrad's (2014) argument that 'involved' situations, where the speaker is under the stress of time constraints, increase the difficulty of achieving precision in language. Furthermore, the high level of formality in learners' writing and speech might be explained by the fact that the learners were talking to an adult stranger (the researcher), who was also older and coming from a university, although efforts were made to make learners feel at ease (i.e., they were asked to imagine retelling the story to a close friend, errors were not corrected and there was no time-restriction).

According to Pavlick and Tetreault (2016), informality is an important way of expressing closeness with someone, and thus formality should be higher when speakers do not know each other. However, native speaker participants did not know the researcher and still managed to produce less formal speech than did learners. This may be due to cultural differences. In the Saudi cultural context, students are expected to be careful, precise and formal when talking to people with higher status (teachers, researchers, supervisors). Australian culture, on the other hand, is usually described (e.g., Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010) as less concerned with power distance.

However, on the basis of the results described in Chapter 4, in both writing and speaking, the mean formality scores of the language used by the students decreased with an increase in language fluency.

The average formality scores of both written and spoken discourses produced by the least fluent students reached nearly 57%, whereas the most fluent students ended up with the lowest scores of formality among the learners and averaged around 48% in both tasks. Moreover, the native speakers produced the least formal language and thus obtained the lowest average F-scores in both of writing (45.2%) and speech (42%) among all participants.

This suggests that as language users improve their language fluency, they become more relaxed and confident that the addressee will understand their language output, and therefore they do not feel the need to select more formal words to express their thoughts/ideas in order to avoid ambiguity (low precision leads to low formality scores according to the F-score).

Moreover, the results of this study indicate that not only were the F-scores of the participants' writing and speech relatively high overall, but were similar to each other as well, with a very modest increase in writing (0.25% for HAs and 0.5% for LAs). This was contrary to the results of the native speaker group in the current study. The average formality score of native speakers was three points greater for written communication, in which correct interpretation was deemed a higher priority than for spoken communication, in which the speaker shares the same context as the listener (see Table 4.20). Consequently, it may well be that the speakers worried less about misunderstanding and could reformulate the phrase if ambiguity were perceived. These findings suggest that native speakers differentiated between spoken and written registers in the formality measure whereas EFL learners did not.

However, the trends in the learners' speech and writing were inconsistent between the individual learners. There was a wide range between the maximum and minimum scores in the F-score, which produced large standard deviations. Not all learners expressed the same degree of formality in their writing compared to their speech to the extent that the overall formality scores would suggest. Some learners produced written text that was more formal than speech, while others produced speech that was more formal than their writing. Such inconsistency was found even between learners at the same level of fluency. Native speaker participants, however, produced a consistent pattern in the F-score in which they all used more formal English in writing than in speech.

The variation in the Saudi students' results could be the result of personal differences between participants, some of whom simply preferred a degree of formality without regard to the medium of expression (writing or speaking). It is also possible that other, non-linguistic factors, such as psychological or socio-linguistic variables, affected the Saudi participants' formality, resulting in this variation.

These non-linguistic factors were beyond the scope of this study. More investigation is needed to produce a clear trend in Saudi EFL learners' writing and speech in relation to lexical formality.

6.1.4 Findings of lexical diversity

As shown in Chapter 4, the factor of lexical diversity produced the greatest degree of variation between the speech and writing of the participants, compared to all the various factors investigated. The Saudi learners used a more diverse vocabulary when writing than they did when speaking, with a significant gap of roughly 9 points separating them in the lexical diversity measure (mean D-value in writing = 52.36 and in speech = 43.80). In contrast to this result, Yu's (2010) research yielded an insignificant difference in mean D-values between speech and writing (average D-value of writing = 76.2895, standard deviation = 27.81; average of speaking = 74.1079, standard deviation = 14.73).

Yu suggests that the lexical diversity of English interlanguage may not be affected by 'the task type' (i.e., writing or speaking). A comprehensive literature review undertaken as part of this study indicated that Yu (2010) is the only researcher to compare the word diversity of speech and writing from the same EFL participant, using the same measure of lexical diversity used in the current study, i.e., D-value (Malvern & Richards, 1997). The results of the current study suggest that lexical diversity is likely to be sensitive to language registers (i.e., writing and speaking).

The difference between Saudi learners' speaking and writing may be due to what was described in the section on lexical sophistication—pre-writing planning and constant revision and editing during their preparation of a written narrative. Participants engage in an ongoing process of selection, evaluation, correction, and revision for each word as they make their way through the text. The participants, however, were not given any time to prepare in advance for their spoken narratives, increasing the likelihood of repeating vocabulary and decreasing the level of lexical diversity.

Although the Saudi EFL learners adjusted their vocabulary between writing and speech, the difference was still not as much as that produced by native speaker participants. The results presented in Table 4.21, illustrating the within-group differences between D-values for speech and writing show that, as expected, native speakers were clearly selecting vocabulary from a larger lexicon than the EFL learners. These results may simply illustrate the fact that the native speakers had superior lexical resources and experience with English. They unconsciously and easily distinguished between their written and oral outputs.

Interestingly, the results for the lexical diversity measure indicated that as the Saudi participants improved in language fluency, the diversity of their vocabulary often increased. The high achievers, those most fluent in English, were able to speak and write with greater diversity than low and medium achievers, who were less fluent. Therefore, the high achievers obtained higher D-values in both writing and speech, compared to low and medium achievers.

Furthermore, as presented in Chapter 4, the rise in the mean D-value in tandem with the rise in fluency was systematic in both spoken and written narratives, comprising roughly a 13-point increase at each degree of fluency, except for the increase in the speech mean D-values between low achievers and medium achievers. Overall, D-values for HA learners were about 13.4 points greater than medium achievers' average scores in both writing and speech. Similarly, medium achievers scored on average 13.07 points higher than low achievers in writing but only 7.3 points higher in speech. This is to say that the D-values of a written or oral text appear to closely track the participants' degree of fluency in the foreign language.

However, this does not mean that the lexical diversity measurement can be used alone to assess the fluency level of language learners or to judge, in any way, the overall quality of a particular sample. The lexical diversity measurement is only useful in terms of its limited ability to determine the diversity of words. It cannot tell us anything about where and how the words are placed or if they are even the right ones for the context. Incoherent speech and compositions can still record high scores in the lexical diversity measure if a large vocabulary is used.

Since lexical diversity is given a prominent role in many computer-based writing evaluation programs, this brings up many notable implications for the development and improvement of such systems in the future. As Shermis and Burstein (2003) have pointed out, a poorly-written discourse may be able to still score highly merely by increasing lexical diversity and effectively tricking the system. The obvious implication here is that more measures are necessary, in addition to lexical diversity, to meaningfully evaluate the quality of spoken and written discourse, as well as fluency more generally.

To conclude this quantitative findings section, it should be noted that this project was initiated with the assumption that there would be few lexical differences, if any, between spoken and written English produced by Saudi learners, and that speech would sound a lot more formal than the results of this study have indicated. Based on the quantitative results of the writing and speaking tasks, the first part of this assumption held true for the current study. That is, the Saudi students did not discriminate much between the words they produced in speech and the ones they used in writing. Their use of English vocabulary did not come close to matching the native speakers' norms.

The assumption that EFL learners would use the formal English they learned at school in both their speech and writing, giving their speech an overly formal tone, was not observed in the data. The Saudi participants tended to make heavy use of high-frequency words in language production even when more formal vocabulary was required, as in a written task. As a result, their spoken and written work were very similar and often informal. In other words, the Saudi EFL students had trouble differentiating between written and spoken registers, but in an opposite way to what had been anticipated.

Moreover, these findings contradict reports in previous literature in relation to Saudi students' speaking skills (Al-Hazmi, 2017; Al-wossabi, 2016; Alharbi, 2015; Aljumah, 2011; Batawi, 2006; Ben Duhaish, 2015; Elyas & Al Grigri, 2014; Rababah, 2003). Previous studies have indicated that Saudi EFL learners can demonstrate a high level of competence on writing-based exams, but many of them cannot speak English effectively in everyday contexts (discussed in detail in Chapter 2). The results of the current study suggest the opposite; Saudi EFL learners are competent in the case of everyday speech, but experience problems establishing a formal tone in writing.

Indeed, it is not uncommon for Arabic-speaking students to experience difficulties when taking part in academic activities, despite completing academic English programs in school (Gauntlett, 2006; Hassan, 2002). According to Al Hamdany (2015) and Galloway, Stude, and Uccelli (2015), such difficulties are likely to be due to the fact that the learners have only experienced the traditional grammar instruction offered during their original schooling, which do not sufficiently address the fact that academic skill development takes place by participating in academic tasks. The effect of classroom pedagogy on the Saudi students' ability to use different language registers is discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

6.2 The qualitative findings of the tasks

A qualitative analysis of the speaking and writing tasks was necessary to examine a number of important language items that had been excluded from the quantitative analysis, such as contractions, abbreviations and discourse markers. The qualitative analysis focussed on the differences in language usage between the high and low achieving students, as well as the difference between each individual's spoken and written language.

Speech pauses. The first language item investigated in the qualitative study was the types of speech pauses (filled or silent) exhibited by high and low achieving students. The results indicate that pauses were frequent among both groups of participants, which can be explained by the fact that foreign language learners not only have to search for the next idea, but also for the next linguistic element(s) in a language in which they have limited proficiency (Cenoz, 2000).

However, the choice between silent and filled pauses is most likely related to the learner's fluency in the target language. Learners who exhibited a high level of fluency (high achievers) used filled pauses when they needed time to plan the next utterance, attempting to avoid a silence which could be viewed as a sign of a lack of fluency (Lindblad, 2011). On the other hand, learners in the low fluency group (low achievers) tended to apply silent pauses while speaking, indicating that that they were less concerned with fluency than accuracy. This can be also seen in their frequent 'self-repair' in speech, such as the correction of grammar in 'they *go* they *went*' and 'the place *was* the place *is*' (as shown in Extract 5 and 6 in section 4.3.1).

Self-repair is defined as a strategy that a learner performs as part of a self-monitoring and error-detection process (Fincher, 2006; Smith, 2008). There are several forms of self-repair, such as repetitions, deletions, substitutions and insertions (Pillai, 2002), where words or smaller units are repeated, deleted, substituted or inserted.

Discourse markers. Differences between high achievers and low achievers were also identified by the use of *discourse markers*. The results indicate that high achievers' speech and writing were rich in a variety of discourse markers that fulfilled different functions. Low achievers, however, were able to produce a limited number of discourse markers in writing (sequencing connectors), but none in speech, except an excessive use of 'okay' by one student. As a Saudi national, I would argue that the use of 'okay' by this student was likely to be the result of the unconscious, frequent use of this word in the speaker's native language. The word 'okay' is commonly used by Saudis when they talk in their native Saudi Arabic, and they use it mainly as a confirmation check. So, in this sense, the word 'okay' is similar to tag questions or raising intonation in Australian English.

Thus, the results show that both groups of Saudi learners were able to use discourse markers in writing, whereas only high achievers demonstrated an ability to use discourse markers in speech. The most likely explanation is that written discourse markers are likely to be explicitly taught to Saudi EFL learners while spoken discourse markers are not. Although there was not any evidence of this during the classes that were observed or in the textbook investigated for this study, students may have been taught written discourse markers at some point during their previous school years.

In other words, students' attention may not have been drawn specifically to discourse markers in speech during their EFL classes by either their teachers or textbooks. Although high achievers were receiving the same English instruction as low achievers during the time of this study, their childhood education, as well as their frequent exposure to informal English outside the class (as shown in the questionnaire results), are likely to be the reasons behind the participants unequal mastery of discourse markers.

Contractions. The qualitative study also examined the use of English contractions by high and low achievers, with the results revealing that HAs used negative contractions, as well as verb contractions, in speech but never in writing. LAs, however, produced negative contractions in both speech and writing. Regarding the verb contractions, one particular contracted form of verbs, which was of the verb 'to be', was seen in low achievers' speech, but not in their writing. This suggests that high achievers were able to differentiate between speaking and writing in relation to the use of contractions, whereas low achievers were not.

However, as shown in Chapter 4, there was a number of verbs that could have been contracted in HAs' and LAs' speech but were not (see Extract no.34 and 35 in section 4.3.3). This could be due to the lack of the practice necessary to automatically contract verbs. Another explanation could be that the negative contraction might be easier for Saudi EFL learners to produce than the verb contraction, which requires knowledge of the varied contracted forms of a large number of verbs. This finding could be of interest to L2 teachers and textbooks writers; i.e., language learners are likely to be able to acquire negative contractions before verb contractions. Consequently, teachers and textbooks should introduce these two types of contractions accordingly.

According to Pienemann's (1998) Processability Theory, second language learners reformulate their knowledge system of the second language in the order in which they are able to, based on their current level of development (scaffolding). Therefore, the order of grammar instruction should be based on the level of L2 learners' readiness. In other words, an improvement in L2 learning can only be achieved when teaching focusses on the grammatical structures that L2 learners are able to process at that time. Similarly, Tang (2014) argues that the sequence in which grammatical structures are introduced in the textbook affects language learning and teaching outcomes significantly. Thus, it would be beneficial for teaching to follow the path of learnability, that is, the developmental sequence of L2 acquisition.

Abbreviations and colloquialisms. Similar to the results for 'contractions', high achievers clearly differentiated between abbreviations and colloquialisms in both speech and writing, while low achievers did not. Several abbreviations, which can only be seen in informal contexts such as *fam* and *'cause*, were identified in the HAs' speech but not in their writing. The HAs' use of the full words (e.g., 'because', 'family') in writing and the shortened forms ('cause', 'fam') in speech is likely to be a result of their awareness of the differences in formality between spoken and written registers.

In addition, HAs used a number of colloquial words in their speech (e.g., *freaking* happy) and replaced these words with formal ones when referring to the same action in writing (e.g., *very* happy). On the other hand, low achievers did not produce abbreviations or use colloquialisms in either speech or writing. These findings are in line with the statistical results from the lexical sophistication measure (*P_Lex*) presented earlier, that low achievers used more sophisticated/infrequent words in their output, resulting in higher lambda values, compared to high achievers.

Quantity. Finally, the differences between high achievers and low achievers included the number of words used by both groups in language production. The results were as intuitively expected. As the learners improved in language fluency, their increased vocabulary meant they tended to also increase the number of different words they used for writing and speech.

As high achievers were the most fluent learners in the sample, they logically produced the greatest number of words in both writing and speech. On average, HAs managed to produce 124 more individual words than LAs in writing, and 102 more in speech, even though the mean duration of the LA students' speech was nearly double that of the HA speakers. A possible explanation is that low achievers' speech contained a large number of non-lexical utterances such as 'um', 'huh' and 'erm' as well as silent pauses, as shown in Chapter 4, which took a good deal of time during the speaking session and which were not included in the word count. This suggests that the LAs monitored their language and took more time to think before they spoke because of their less advanced language skills, while HAs were altogether more comfortable and spontaneous with word choice. This confirms the formality measure findings, discussed earlier, where the F-score was greater for the LAs than for the HAs, indicating that the HAs used more ambiguous and fuzzy expressions than the LAs because HAs created their utterances as they were speaking. Low achievers, on the other hand, tended to be more careful in choosing their vocabulary to avoid ambiguity, and therefore they took more time in language production, in comparison to high achievers.

6.3 Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the quantitative and qualitative results of the speaking and writing tasks completed by Saudi EFL learners. The statistics generated from the quantitative analysis demonstrated that the high achievers produced the greatest number of high-frequency words among all the learners.

The qualitative analysis confirmed this finding in the case of speech, revealing that the high achievers spoke fluently in colloquial/informal English using mostly high-frequency vocabulary (e.g., discourse markers such as *you know*, *I mean*, *well*), while the low achievers did not.

As will be discussed in the following chapter, external opportunities may have influenced the results of the language production tasks. For example, students who had more opportunities for exposure to informal English usage outside of class spoke more fluently, using the most common vocabulary.

The overall results of the quantitative study indicate that both high and low achievers did not differentiate much between spoken and written English, apart from the lexical diversity measure. However, the qualitative analysis demonstrates just how much high achievers could, and did, differentiate between the two registers. High achievers composed their written texts in a more formal way compared to their speech. Contractions, abbreviations, fillers and colloquial expressions (e.g., *kinda* and *sketchy*) were identified in high achievers' speech but not in their writing.

This shows that focussing on quantitative data and analysis only does not allow us to paint a full picture of the situation. In other words, one of the contributions of this study is that it emphasises the need for mixed methods in this type of research. The contributions of this research are discussed in detail in section 8.2.

In the next chapter, the results of the student questionnaire, classroom observation, teacher's interview and textbook evaluation are discussed. The discussion explores the factors that are likely to affect the students' choice of vocabulary in the speaking and writing tasks and highlights the practical implications of these findings.

Chapter 7

Emerging factors and practical implications

The previous chapter explored how learners write and speak English as a foreign language in relation to vocabulary. In this chapter, the potential effect of classroom instruction and out-of-class language activities on productive vocabulary choice and the use of appropriate register are discussed.

The chapter begins by discussing the findings of the questionnaire to highlight the most common extra-curricular activities among Saudi EFL learners. Then, the results of the classroom observation, teacher's interview and textbook evaluation are articulated to determine the main pedagogical constraints hampering the acquisition of different language registers in Saudi EFL classes. Chapter 7 also focusses on the practical implications of the results. This chapter ends with a summary of the study and of the results obtained from the data analysis.

7.1 Findings of the questionnaire

The questionnaire filled in by the students was designed to gather information that would indicate how Saudi students were able to complete the speaking task despite the lack of speaking practice in the classroom, where communication was largely in Arabic. It was hoped that information from the questionnaire would also help explain the disparities in fluency among the students, although they were all being taught by the same teacher in the same context.

7.1.1 The amount of exposure to or practice using English outside the classroom

The responses indicated that the students had access to other sources of English language outside the class, which may have contributed to improved speaking skills. All the study participants used English language outside the classroom occasionally. The following discussion describes the most popular and influential out-of-class student activities where English was spoken.

Tutors. Analysis of the data demonstrated that having a private tutor for English language learning was one of the most common extra-curricular activity, with 41.6 % indicating that they had outside tutoring on a daily basis and that 25% used this activity on a weekly basis. According to the General Authority for Statistics, a Saudi Arabian government agency, Saudi families spent SR752 million for private tuition in 2017 (Aziz, 2018). Engaging a tutor for their children is a very common practice among Saudi families, especially for what are perceived to be difficult subjects, such as English and Maths. This could explain the relative high percentage of participants who used the services of a private tutor.

Instant messaging. In addition to the large percentage of students having tutors, using instant messaging (e.g., *Snapchat* and *Twitter*) with strangers played a very significant role in the participants' lives. The results of the questionnaire indicated a wide exposure to English through this activity, with 66.6% of the participants using instant messaging with strangers (e.g., celebrities) at least once a week. The high frequency rate recorded for this activity could be due to the popularity of social media sites such as *Snapchat*, *Instagram* and *Twitter* among teenagers.

As English is considered a lingua franca, or 'bridge language', because of its ability to enable communication between people of many diverse languages (Crystal, 2012; McKay, 2003), teenagers use English to express their admiration for preferred celebrities through social networking. Internet forums and social networking sites provide a very good opportunity to practise English with different people around the world, and the Saudi participants seemed to use more English when communicating online with strangers than with family or friends. Half of the respondents reported that they chatted online in English with English speaking friends or relatives only 'a few times a year' or 'never'; 41.6% performed this activity at least once a week; and 8% used it at least once a month. When communicating online with strangers, however, the percentage of students who 'never' wrote English to strangers or wrote 'a few times a year' was only 20.6%, with 66.6% of students messaging with strangers at least once a week and 12.5% messaging in English at least once a month.

The results indicate that the majority of students could, and indeed did, use English online, but switched to L1 Arabic when communicating with family members or friends. The frequent socialising online, as discussed earlier, could be a reason behind the participants' infrequent reading of English language materials. According to the survey, the majority of the students did not read English books or magazines regularly. Although 70% of the students read English language materials sporadically, this could be as infrequently as once a month or less. A possible explanation is that the students had limited time for reading at all, regardless of the language used, and that socialising with people online took up most of their leisure time. Furthermore, the lack of reading among teenagers might be also a behaviour that they have grown accustomed to in Saudi society, as noted by Masrai and Milton (2018).

Movies and music. Students in Saudi Arabia have a number of ways to access English language movies. They can download them online, rent DVDs, stream on websites such as Netflix (see Al Motiri, 2016) and, most recently, go to the cinema (refer to section 1.5.3). Based on the results of the questionnaire, as shown in Chapter 4, watching movies was a common source of English exposure and always elicited positive responses from the participants. There were no negative responses to the question about watching movies, and over half of the respondents said they watched English-language movies at least once a week. This study is consistent with that of Bhuiyan (2016) in which 63% of Saudi students reported that they liked watching English movies, whereas only 29% read books or newspapers in English. Bhuiyan (2016) concluded that Saudi students prefer audiovisual materials to books and text-dense materials when practising English. Moreover, the high frequency of watching movies among students could be due to the fact that movies are a quasi-universal form of entertainment for most people all over the world (Mcdiarmid, 2017).

Given the paucity of Arabic movies in comparison to those made in the USA, it is perhaps to be expected that teenagers watch English-language movies rather than those filmed in Arabic. It is also possible that students choose to watch English-language movies in order to improve their English. Whether this is the case or not, according to Carraher (2017), movies in the target language allow for vocabulary and cultural points learning and are an entertaining way to learn without investing much effort. Movies, because they are made for entertaining rather than delivering lessons, are believed to give students more intrinsic motivation than videos made for EFL or ESL instruction (King, 2002, p. 510). By watching movies, learners have the opportunity to access the content on a cognitive, as well as on an emotional level (Kuimova, Uzunboylu, & Golousenko, 2016).

Interestingly, whereas none of the participants nominated ‘never’ to watching English-language movies, 45.8% of students responded ‘never’ to listening to English-language music. That is, English-language movies seemed more appealing than English-language music among the participants. This can possibly be explained by the fact that movies include visual and aural sources which help students understand the material more easily than listening to aural-only sources (i.e., it might be difficult for the students to recognise or understand lyrics with no visuals).

This finding is reinforced by Mayer's (2009) *theory of multimedia learning.* Built on the 'dual-channel' assumption developed by Mayer that information is processed through two different channels (visual and auditory), the 'limited capacity' assumption of Mayer's theory assumes the mind has a limited attention span for information coming from only a single channel, such as only auditory information. In other words, learners can maintain focus and increase the depth of their learning when they experience multi-sensory stimulation rather than stimulation from a single source. According to Mayer (2009), it is the combination of picture and text, visual and audio that defines multimedia, which in turn is what enables learning, the construction of meaningful and interconnected representations of a mixed visual and auditory nature, in the mind.

This theory is also supported by Van Merrienboer and Sweller (2005), who argues in *cognitive load theory*, that the ideal conditions for learning are those that follow the 'architecture' of human cognition, integrating multiple elements and structures to enable economic, long-term memory formation with the memory elements united in easily accessible clusters of meaning and association. Thus, when learners are given material that stimulates many different information channels, such as combined video and audio, the load on working memory is eased, as incoming information is distributed across the senses. Rather than relying overwhelming on one sense which leads to loss of attention and comprehension, the sensory inputs reinforce one another and lead to greater retention and deeper understanding.

In second language acquisition research, numerous studies accord with this observation, and have expressed the idea that language is easier to understand when there are animations and images to complement the words since novitiate English learners can use visual clues to scaffold and support their comprehension (Frumuselu, De Maeyer, Donche, & Colon Plana, 2015; Lee & Liang, 2012; Ogunbote & Adesoye, 2006). Furthermore, it has long been understood that learners retain more and understand better when a variety of senses is engaged in processing information (Ogunbote & Adesoye, 2006).

Similar to the results for English music, English radio and television did not play a significant role in the life of the participant teenagers. Over 41% of the respondents chose ‘never’ to listening to the radio or watching TV in English. The most likely reason for this is the lack of English programs available on Saudi television or radio, as most of the TV and radio programs are produced in Arabic.

English language events. The least popular English-language activity among Saudi students was attending or participating in English-language events, which had the highest percentage (66.6%) for the ‘never’ category across the survey, and 0% in the ‘every day’ or ‘every week’ categories. This indicates that even the most fluent students did not engage in this activity very frequently. Upon investigation, it is important to note that no public events in English were offered in the participants’ city, and this could be the reason behind the apparent unpopularity of this activity among students.

Travel abroad. Speaking English when travelling abroad was also recorded as one of the least popular activities among the participants. In the survey, no one chose the ‘every day’ or ‘every week’ frequency categories. However, the students would not travel to an English-speaking country very frequently (i.e., every day or every week); therefore, there was little opportunity to have the experience of speaking English outside of Saudi Arabia.

Local community. Based on the results of the two previously-mentioned activities (i.e., English language events and travel abroad), it would appear that speaking in English outside of class was not very common for these Saudi students. However, interestingly, the results showed that 75% of the students spoke English with members of the local community, although with different frequency rates. Those members of the local community could be friends, family, private English tutors or foreign domestic workers, who usually speak fluent English.

According to statistics issued by the Ministry of Labor and Social Development in Saudi Arabia, there were 963,723 foreign domestic workers and 1.4 million foreign chauffeurs in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by the end of 2017 (Saudi Gazette, 2018). It is possible that the high percentage of the students who spoke English in their local community was the result of the large number of foreign workers with whom the students interacted using English.

Although the results of the students' background questionnaire showed that Saudi students were exposed to a number of English language activities outside the classroom, only a small proportion of the students engaged in these activities frequently. According to the survey, the high achieving/most fluent students used English more often outside of class than did the low achieving/least fluent group (i.e., HAs engaged in most of the activities mentioned in the survey on a daily or weekly basis, as indicated in Table 4.27).

7.1.2 The correlation between greater exposure to English and greater fluency

Analysis of the data indicates, therefore, that there was a positive correlation between English usage outside the classroom and language fluency. According to the data, the more frequently a student engaged in out-of-class language activities, the more fluent she was in the writing and speaking tasks. There are many studies which support this finding and demonstrate the importance of practising outside the classroom to facilitate language acquisition (Chang, 2007; Inozu, Sahinkarakas, & Yumru, 2010; Lai & Gu, 2011; Pearson, 2004; Pickard, 1996; Sundqvist, 2011).

Richards (2009) reported that students learning English in Northern Europe, for example, demonstrated a higher level of English language proficiency than students in many other countries, such as those in East Asia, as well as students from Southern Europe (such as Spain). His results indicated that the Northern Europeans in his study watched more English movies and television shows than their counterparts elsewhere, to which he credited their greater fluency.

Likewise, a study of Swedish learners of English by Sundqvist (2011) found that learning outside the classroom had a significant positive correlation with the size of students' vocabulary (0.36) and their oral proficiency (0.31). Larsson's (2012) examination of Swedish students' English language engagement outside of school also concluded that learners who engaged in activities involving English outside of school generally did better on a state-wide English exam—National Test of English—than students who did not. Finally, Nunan (1991) showed that English learners who attain high levels of fluency usually credit their achievement to learning and practice in authentic situations outside the classroom. A strong message emerges from these multiple studies, that the more learners integrate the second language into their lives outside the classroom, the more confident they become in using the target language and increase their fluency.

Learning environment. There seems to be a connection between the environment of the learner's early childhood education and their language fluency. The four most fluent learners in the current study were the only students who had lived in a different country or city during their childhood. These participants were the ones who engaged in more language activities outside the classroom and who appeared more fluent. It is possible that these students received better English education or had more opportunities to practise English at an early age than other study participants, which helped them achieve a higher level of language fluency than their classmates.

There is an extensive literature demonstrating that the age at which a language is acquired negatively correlates with level of fluency. That is, learners who begin a second language later, especially after early childhood, find it harder to learn and typically do not reach the same degree of fluency as those who are exposed to the language early (Birdsong, 1999; Johnson & Newport, 1989). While these facts are undisputed, the reasons why learning is affected this way remain to be determined. Current explanations include individuals' biological development, such as the existence of a 'critical period' for language acquisition, being the most popular. The differences between adult and child learning contexts has also been noted as a determinant factor (Lenneberg, 1967; Perani et al., 2003).

Furthermore, as shown in section 4.4, there is a number of statistically significant correlations between the activities mentioned in the survey. Those students who had opportunities to travel abroad, tended not to have a private tutor, but had opportunities to use English in a range of other contexts, including access to radio and TV programs in English. On the other hand, those students who had a private tutor tended not to engage in most of the other activities that involved contact with other English speakers, either online, or through travels or community events in English.

It can be hypothesised that these correlations can be attributed to each family's attitude towards Western culture. As explained in Chapter 2, in Saudi society, at one extreme there are open-minded families who encourage their children to learn about different cultures and languages, while at the other, very conservative families hold negative attitudes towards learning EFL, believing that English or any foreign language conflicts with their Islamic values (Al Darwish, 2018; Alharbi, 2015; Asiri, 2017; Khan, 2011a; Osailan, 2009; Shah et al., 2013).

Study participants from liberal families would have had more opportunities to travel abroad and were the students most likely to be allowed by their parents to engage in other activities that involved contact with Western culture, such as watching movies or TV in English or listening to the radio or music in English. Given that these students tended to engage in a variety of English language activities, one could expect to see a negative correlation between having a private tutor and engagement in the other activities. The study participants who were provided opportunities to practise English in a variety of contexts, it was hypothesised, would require less assistance from a private tutor than students who rarely had opportunities to practise English outside the classroom. In other words, it is possible that students engaged private tutors to compensate for the lack of their exposure to English. Moreover, some students, perhaps because they were not really interested in speaking or learning EFL, did not often engage in English language activities outside the classroom, except when they interacted with a private tutor to help them pass the English subject in school.

7.1.3 The overall impact of the types of exposure to English

While 24 students is too small a sample to be conclusive, the results from the questionnaire do shed some light on how, despite the lack of speaking practice in Saudi EFL classes (Al-Hazmi, 2017; Almutairi, 2007; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; Fareh, 2010) and in the target class in particular (see section 5.1.2), the students still demonstrated the skills to narrate a story orally in English. Students' exposure to everyday language outside the class provided them with a commonly used vocabulary, which facilitated not only their spoken language, but also influenced their writing.

Students’ exposure to largely informal English (e.g., English movies) resulted in a tendency to use a high percentage of widely used words, even when more formal vocabulary was required, as in writing, as observed in the results of the writing and speaking tasks. Even the participants’ written activities outside of class were likely to draw from informal registers, such as chatting online and using instant messaging.

This high exposure to informal English might be the reason behind the lack of formal tone (i.e., the high percentage of common words) in the students’ written tasks. Having never been taught the differences between spoken and written registers in respect to vocabulary, they predominantly used the same vocabulary for both tasks. Findings from previous studies provide evidence that a learner’s vocabulary can be extended considerably by practising the language informally outside of class (Horst & Meara, 1999; Masrai & Milton, 2018; Mitterer & McQueen, 2009; Talaván, 2007).

According to Talaván (2007) and Mitterer and McQueen (2009), authentic videos, such as movies, are of great benefit to ESL learners because, unlike so many learning materials, they represent colloquial language as people live it, rather than language used in contrived contexts. To measure the learner's vocabulary uptake from theses language sources, Masrai and Milton (2018) conducted a case study on a Saudi EFL learner in which he was exposed to 50 hours of English movies with subtitles. After using measures of vocabulary uptake, the results showed that his orthographic vocabulary had increased by about 900 words. Similarly, Horst and Meara (1999) found that a learner's rate of vocabulary acquisition was nearly 30 new words per hour when reading comic books, much faster than that observed by Masrai and Milton (2018).

As language learners seem most likely to learn a wide vocabulary from exposure to informal language outside the classroom, based on the previously-mentioned studies, it makes sense, therefore, that learners would use the same vocabulary when speaking or writing, as the participants did when completing the tasks in this study. This usage indicates that they may not appreciate the difference between formal and informal English.

The most fluent students among the participants used many discourse markers, contractions and colloquial expressions in their speech (see section 4.3), and their answers to the questionnaire indicated that this was the result of their more frequent exposure to informal English outside of class. On the other hand, students who had infrequent access to informal English outside of class were the least fluent students who neither produced discourse markers nor colloquial expressions in their speech.

The results suggest that frequent opportunities for English exposure outside the classroom help to develop greater fluency. Indeed, successful language learners are frequently found to take their learning into their own hands, searching for and consuming whatever materials they can discover beyond the classroom (Borrero & Yeh, 2010; Gao, 2010; Lai, 2013), and language learning outside the classroom has been demonstrated to have a positive relationship with language proficiency (Inozu et al., 2010; Larsson, 2012; Richards, 2009; Sundqvist, 2011).

However, although using English outside the classroom assists students to build their vocabulary and to improve their speaking skills, the participants' most common sources of interaction in English or experience with English were highly informal, and, as shown in the quantitative study, even the most fluent of the students could not differentiate much between spoken/informal and written/formal registers.

The similarity between the students' writing and speech suggests that in order to appreciate the lexical differences between language registers, initial explicit instruction should be given to students in class to draw their attention to the differences in register and vocabulary. Then they could be exposed to more differences implicitly either inside or outside the class (refer to section 7.2 for details).

Implications. The benefit of out-of-class language activities for EFL learners is reported in the literature (Horst & Meara, 1999; Masrai & Milton, 2018; Mitterer & McQueen, 2009; Talaván, 2007), and affirmed for Saudi EFL learners by the results of this study. Given the lack of speaking and listening practice in the target class, out-of-class language activities were likely to be the reason the participants' speaking competence was a good as it was.

One of the outcomes of this study was the demonstration of the popularity of particular sources of English exposure outside the classroom. Therefore, the language sources that were observed to have much popularity among Saudi students should become or remain the greatest asset to a teacher of EFL in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere. For instance, as watching English movies was the only statement that did not receive any 'never' response from the Saudi students, and over half of the respondents said they watched English language movies at least once a week, English teachers should consider movie clips to enhance classroom instruction and thereby language learning.

In fact, the effects that video and auditory input has on language acquisition is a decades-old topic of study across multiple fields. Some of this research demonstrates that learning outcome is positively correlated with increased use of audiovisual material (Chiu & Churchill, 2016; Frumuselu et al., 2015; Lee & Liang, 2012; Talaván, 2007). According to Miller (2009), video clips increase learner engagement in a lesson and provide essential visual scaffolding for developing conceptual schemata.

Moreover, video contents viewed in the classroom provide useful resources for students to reflect on and for prompting shared discussion (DeWitt, Naimie, & Siraj, 2013). Additional pedagogical benefits of videos incorporated in instruction are the raising of cross-cultural awareness and increasing knowledge of the target language (Kuimova et al., 2016). As claimed by Talaván (2007), what makes authentic videos so valuable is their ability to realistically represent the context and culture of language through the commanding synergy of auditory and visual stimulus.

Additionally, some research has used test scores to point to the efficacy of media integration into classroom learning. In Lin and Wu's (2016) study of EFL learners in Taiwan, the vocabulary test scores of a group of students taught with increased audio-visual input were significantly higher than those of the control group taught without. Not only did the group taught with audio-visual materials score higher on the vocabulary test, but they also reported greater levels of satisfaction, engagement and mental stimulation from these lessons (Lin & Wu, 2016). As technology continues to become ever more present in our lives and ever more powerful as a tool of instruction, it will become increasingly imperative that audiovisual sources be integrated into Saudi EFL classes for successful learning.

The role of classroom instruction and the textbook in teaching different language registers is discussed in the next section.

7.2 Findings of classroom observation, teacher's interview and textbook evaluation

Three sources of data were used to address the second aim of the current research; i.e., to investigate the role of classroom instruction and materials in developing the students' ability to discriminate between spoken and written registers. The first source of data was a one-month observation of EFL lessons in a Year 12 classroom in Saudi Arabia. Students in Year 12 have an English lesson four times a week and each lesson lasts 40-45 minutes. The second source was a one-hour interview with the teacher of the observed class. The last source of data was an in-depth evaluation of the EFL textbook *Traveller6.*

In this section, the results of the classroom observation, teacher's interview and textbook evaluation are explored and integrated to reveal the main pedagogical constraints preventing students from discriminating between spoken and written English vocabulary (see Figure 7.1). The discussion also focusses on the pedagogical implications of these findings. It should be noted that there are personal factors, such as anxiety and motivation, that might be detrimental to the acquisition and use of different language registers, but they are not included in this discussion as they were not examined in the current investigation, being beyond the scope of this research.

The four pedagogical constraints shown in Figure 7.1 (lack of emphasis on productive vocabulary; the excessive use of L1 and teacher-centred approach; lack of free speaking and writing practice in L2; and lack of explicit teaching in language registers) are discussed in order in the following sections.

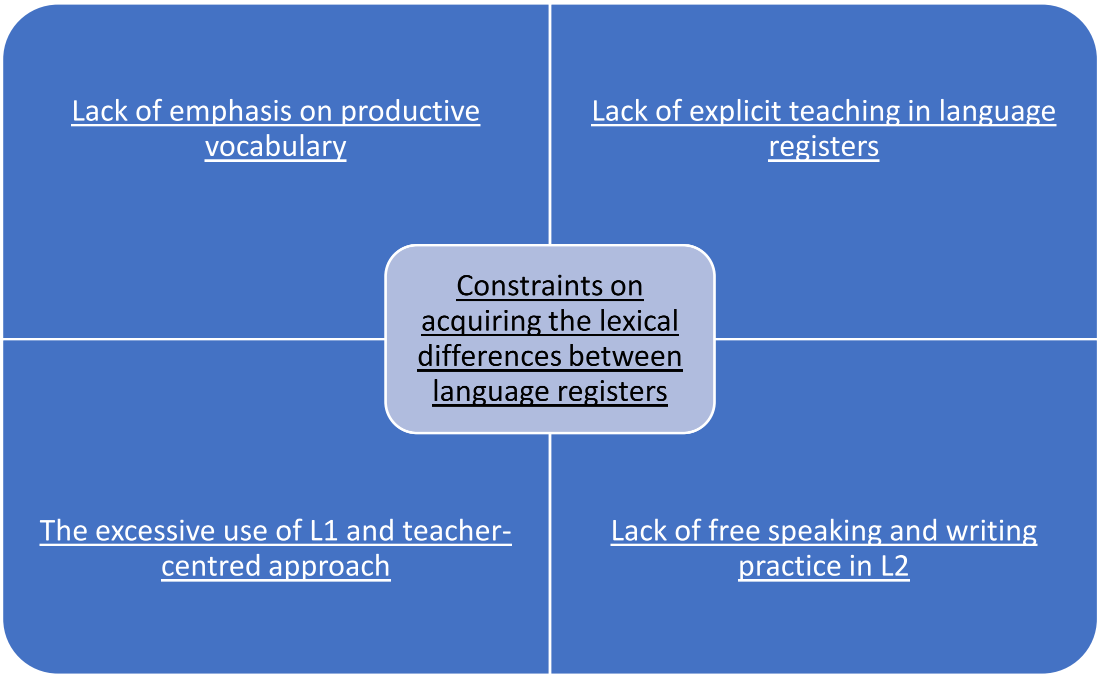

Figure 7.1 Pedagogical constraints on the acquisition of different registers

7.2.1 Lack of emphasis on productive vocabulary

As highlighted in Chapter 5, the teacher, as well as the textbook, emphasised the teaching of English vocabulary, and the teacher chose to devote nearly half of the class time to teaching vocabulary because she believed that vocabulary was the threshold of language mastery. However, the emphasis appeared to be on teaching the meaning and pronunciation of unfamiliar words rather than on teaching how to use them in a meaningful context that would deepen the students' knowledge of the target language.

A substantial amount of time from each lesson was devoted to inductive teaching of the new words using photos or objects to prompt students, spelling drills and pronunciation drills, yet the teacher did not always provide opportunities for students to use the newly-introduced vocabulary in context (see section 5.1.2). In fact, seldom were the students introduced to new words in context. Classroom observation revealed that the teacher presented an average of eight new words, illustrated with photos, as a list of discrete items (i.e., out of context) in a separate session at the beginning of each lesson.

This observation relates to receptive, as opposed to productive vocabulary knowledge, a fundamental aspect of vocabulary acquisition. According to Zhong (2018), receptive vocabulary refers to what the learner can understand from listening and reading, whereas the productive vocabulary is what they can produce, based on their knowledge and understanding, in their own writing or speech. When the teacher introduces a word by using visuals and pronunciation drills, learners may increase their vocabulary, but the words are not necessarily acquired in depth. That is, learners might learn much vocabulary which they can recognise in a test but may not be able to retain that knowledge or use the words in a meaningful way; as a result, the study participants' vocabulary remained generally receptive.

The teacher clearly made every effort to ensure that the students learned new vocabulary, but her teaching style encouraged passive, not active, learning. The students' productive ability was not given much attention. She checked their understanding of new vocabulary orally, with students quietly nodding to the teacher's constant question of 'have you got it?'. Although exercises and activities on vocabulary and grammar were completed in class, most of these exercises tested students' receptive vocabulary knowledge (i.e., matching words with corresponding pictures or filling in the gaps). Only in a limited number of classes, generally before the end of the lesson, would the teacher ask students to work individually and use the newly introduced words in English language sentences.

The lack of access to wide, productive vocabulary resources likely forced most learners to rely on the most commonly used vocabulary when speaking or writing. As a result, spoken and written narratives by Saudi EFL learners turned out very similar in relation to vocabulary. And, although students were exposed to a larger and more diverse vocabulary beyond the high-frequency words in class, they received this knowledge fairly passively, and therefore found it difficult to produce low-frequency words in their tasks since they had little experience of the word.

This supports claims made by previous researchers that high frequency words are learned before low-frequent words (Harrington, 2018, p. 15), and the former are usually acquired receptively and productively at the outset of learning (Milton, 2009; Nation, 2001).

Pedagogical implications. The results of this study point to vocabulary knowledge as being a continuum on which knowledge of a word should develop from receptive to productive. According to AlSaif (2011), it is generally believed that vocabulary is first acquired receptively and later becomes a part of active, intentional vocabulary through incidental and intentional learning. While there is still much that remains unknown about the process of what moves vocabulary knowledge from receptive to productive, it is almost universally agreed that the receptive vocabulary of second language learners is much greater than their productive vocabulary (for further discussion, see Ishii & Schmitt, 2009; Read, 2007; Webb, 2008).

The study findings indicate that the 2,000 most commonly used words, which are very few in the context of a language, nevertheless provide a basis to narrate a story in English. It follows that these basic words should be a top priority in ESL instruction and ESL learning. Yet, according to Engels (1968, p. 215), even though a rudimentary vocabulary can carry 95% of a text, a much wider range is necessary to fill in the last 5%. Therefore, English learners must continuously expand their productive vocabulary even after mastering the basics in order to achieve near-native proficiency. Following the acquisition of the most common words, Nation (1990) argues that teachers should focus their efforts on enabling their students to learn and integrate less-common words, in order to expand their vocabulary through a variety of strategies, such as extensive reading.

The Saudi students largely used the same words in both writing and speaking tasks, which can be attributed to the students' lack of a more productive vocabulary, and paucity of productive tasks. This study highlights the need to place a greater emphasis on productive vocabulary teaching and learning for Saudi EFL learners in order to allow them to distinguish more readily between their written and spoken vocabulary.

Given these observations, EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia need to increase their efforts to improve students' productive vocabulary, or at least provide learners with ample opportunities to use L2 vocabulary both productively and receptively. Some strategies for improving the breadth of both productive and receptive vocabulary include the use of vocabulary enhancement activities, such as solving problems, storytelling, and information transfer, which have been found to be helpful for enabling students to make productive use of new words (Alqahtani, 2015; Maskor & Baharudin, 2016).

Furthermore, Saudi students need to be more active and independent in their learning and improve their vocabulary size and productive skills themselves. Today's world of technologies and Internet is the perfect avenue to develop an autonomous learning approach, and Saudi EFL learners should understand that they have countless opportunities to learn English outside the classroom, as suggested by Moskovsky (2018). For example, learners can increase their exposure to English through digital media, and they can also engage in meaningful communication online.

7.2.2 The excessive use of L1 and teacher-centred approach

The classroom observations demonstrated that the teacher-centred approach and the large amount of Arabic spoken in class were both critical factors that influenced, in this case negatively, the acquisition of the target language vocabulary and ways of speaking. Students were rarely given the opportunity to work in groups or to speak in class, and when the chance did arise, they often talked in Arabic. Even the teacher spoke mostly Arabic in class and did not make a significant attempt to 'locate' the learners in an English-language environment. The teacher provided Arabic equivalents for almost every sentence she uttered in English, even when there was no apparent need to do so. As a result, students were unlikely to pay attention to the English part of the teacher's speech, waiting only for the Arabic translation, except for the proficient students who might focus on the English to improve their language skills.

An example of the unnecessary use of Arabic in the target class was seen at the beginning of each lesson. The first task in each lesson required students to translate newly-introduced English words into Arabic. Similarly, through the inductive teaching of new vocabulary, students attempted to guess the meanings of words by giving Arabic equivalents. In these two tasks, the teacher could have asked her students to provide English synonyms instead. Another example of excessive use of Arabic was the translation from English to Arabic of easy every-day instructions such as ‘open the book’, ‘turn over the page’ or ‘be quiet’. Such observations concur with several studies in the Saudi Arabian context showing that the Arabic language (L1) is widely used in teaching English (Al-Nofaie, 2010; Alhawsawi, 2013; Alkhatnai, 2011; Almutairi, 2007; Alshammari, 2011; Fareh, 2010; Khresheh, 2012; Machaal, 2012).

In her interview, the participant teacher justified her use of Arabic, arguing that it saved time. According to Fageeh (2011), using L1 in the class is sometimes understandable, given the pressure to complete the syllabus on time, and the difficulties that many students seem to experience in an English-only (i.e., immersion) lesson. However, since classroom instruction might be the only time during which students experience English in a familiar learning context, students need as much exposure as possible to the language (Burden, 2000; Harbord, 1992; Polio, 1994) when in class.

This does not mean that the target language should be the only medium in foreign language teaching, as argued by the supporters of a L2 only or natural approach (e.g., Atkinson, 1987; Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Rather, as has been widely documented, educators should do their best to use the target language, but at the same time they should not feel guilty when switching to the native language if it is necessary. Judicious use of the first language in EFL classes has been shown to be helpful and has gained some support in the scholarly literature (Butzkamm, 2003; Cook, 2005; Schweers Jr, 1999; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003). L1 can be beneficial when explaining complex ideas or structures or abstract words in order to save time and avoid long and exhausting explanations. Duff (1989, as cited in Harbord, 1992, p. 355) presents the balanced argument that, ‘unless the mother tongue can enhance the quality of the learning experience in the classroom, it should be avoided’.

In addition to time constraints, another reason for speaking Arabic in class, according to the teacher, was that the use of L1 in class was to improve students’ confidence and performance. Contrary to the teacher’s claim, the excessive use of Arabic observed during this study did not appear useful for students. Rather, it jeopardised the desired learning outcomes (confidence and performance). According to Harbord (1992), when students and teachers depend heavily on their mother tongue, it can erode the confidence of students in their ability to use the target language.

That is, students begin to assume that they can only understand the teacher when he/she translates every single word, or they may continue to use their first language for ideas that they would be able to express in the target language with encouragement. For instance, based on their results in the spoken tasks, the majority of the Saudi participants in the study had good levels of English speaking competence, which they could have been using in class, yet they mainly spoke Arabic in the classes observed during the research.

This reliance on Arabic can significantly minimise students' opportunities to practise English and the obvious consequence of this is reduced L2 vocabulary learning. On the whole, the lack of English speaking practice in class observed in this study, accompanied by the infrequent exposure to English input outside the classroom, arguably reduced the low achievers' capacity to acquire words and phrases that frequently occur in the language of English native speakers (e.g., discourse markers), and as can be seen from the data, they did not produce any in their speaking tasks.

Pedagogical implications. Since the classroom might be the sole place for experiencing English, at least for some learners, it is quite clear that English speaking practice should be maximised to ensure that students become familiar with the spoken language, as well as the written language. There is a range of options available to encourage students to speak English in an EFL classroom that take account of the fact that there are many identified reasons why students use their native language when they should be using the target language.

The first reason is low proficiency in the L2 (Souriyavongsa, Rany, Abidin, & Mei, 2013). To overcome this obstacle, it is recommended that teachers choose manageable speaking activities that are within, or slightly beyond, the learners' proficiency level, as suggested by Rodrigo, Krashen, and Gribbons (2004). In the context of multi-proficiency levels, various types of exercises can be used. Scaffolded activities that bring students up to the level required can also be used (Vygotsky, 1984).

Another reason for the reluctance to use L2 in class might be the lack of interest in learning the L2 (Littlewood & Yu, 2011). The solution to this could be found in raising motivation. That is, discussing with students the value of using the L2 in class and constant encouragement to speak L2.

The teacher can design interesting tasks where the target language is an unavoidable part of completing the task, such as strip stories, retelling activities and pretending to be L2 speakers.

Shyness and lack of confidence in the use of L2 can also be a reason for the students' preference for using L1 in class (Al-Amrani, 2013; Nation, 2003). In this case, as acknowledged by authors who have studied the connection between language teaching and effect (e.g., Fallah, 2014; Jamila, 2014; Savaşçı, 2014), the teacher should avoid using threatening, embarrassing or overly difficult topics, and ask students to speak in groups while the teacher stays out of the groups and provides assistance when required.

Moreover, an innovative idea in EFL classes is the creation of monitoring systems that remind learners to use the target language. For instance, one student in each group can be given the role of encouraging and reminding others to use the target language when they perform group work tasks. Teachers may also use a personal approach and ask students individually why they are reluctant to use L2 in class and seek their suggestions to encourage more oral participation.

7.2.3 Lack of free speaking and writing practice

Observation of the English language class made it clear that students were not being given the opportunity to produce extended free speech or writing in class. Because of the lack of authentic speaking and writing practice, students did not have the chance to learn and practise the differences between spoken and written vocabulary, and therefore they spoke and wrote in a similar way, as shown in the language production tasks.

All of the speaking activities included in the textbook or performed by students in the classroom were based on scripted written materials, such as acting out a dialogue from the book or asking students to prepare a few sentences on a certain topic and then present it in front of the class, which always resulted in students reading their written notes out loud.

These activities were not really speech-making but rather script-reading. Neither the textbook nor the teacher encouraged the students to speak in a spontaneous manner, use unusual vocabulary or launch into a longish talk in English. Although these activities are similar to acting out a rehearsed written speech, they only occurred when the teacher finished the planned lesson early and had extra time to devote to these activities.

The lack of extended use of their English vocabulary in class reflects the assessment criteria devised and distributed by the Saudi Ministry of Education (MoE) for the English language module. The value placed on different activities in the English module by the MoE is indicated in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 The assessment criteria for the English language module, as reported by the teacher

Marks	Aspect of course
50	final exam (written)
10	mid-term writing exam
10	mid-term speaking exam
5	attendance
5	class participation
5	students' notebooks
5	homework
10	research project

If the Ministerial curriculum requires teachers to mainly test the students' writing rather than speech (only 10 out of 100 marks is allocated to speaking skills), it is to be expected that the textbook and the teacher would follow these guidelines and pay little attention to speaking skills.

This emphasis on writing skills in the L2 is highlighted by the design of the textbook, which is heavily weighted toward writing tasks. However, although a range of writing activities is included in the textbook, such as writing an email, a paragraph or a story, most of the writing activities conducted in lessons during the research were restricted to writing sentences. Occasionally, free writing activities were initiated in class and completed at home as homework assignments because of time constraints. As a result, the teacher was never sure if the homework was completed by the student or someone else, such as a tutor.

Moreover, the teacher reported that she usually gave the students three written texts and asked them to go through them at home. She also informed them that they would be asked to rewrite one of these texts in the exam. In practice, this strategy taught students to copy someone else's writing without achieving much in terms of their own English writing skills. By simply memorising written content and reusing it in the exam, the students were very likely to pass writing-based exams and obtain high marks in English without really learning the language (Alkubaidi, 2014; Nather, 2014; Rajab, 2013).

Additionally, providing students with written content to be reused in the exam, or assigning free writing activities as homework assignments indicates that students did not have many opportunities to practise writing in class using different registers.

In sum, while this study is consistent with previous studies showing that Saudi EFL classes do not prepare students to speak spontaneously in everyday life (Al-Hazmi, 2017; Al-Seghayer, 2014; Almutairi, 2007; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; Ben Duhaish, 2015; Rajab, 2013), it must also be acknowledged that Saudi students did not have many opportunities in the classroom to practise their English writing either. Data from this research strongly indicates that Saudi students are likely to face issues in both written and spoken English even when they study the language at school.

Pedagogical implications. The main constraint that prevents the teacher from encouraging students to produce free writing and speaking in class is the time factor, as stated by the participant teacher in the interview. According to the teacher, when there are only 40-minute class periods four days a week, coupled with the large class size of 36 students, it is practically impossible to complete the curriculum as well as effectively teach productive language skills within the time allocated.

This finding concurs with many studies in the Saudi Arabian context recommending that a greater amount of class time be designated for English language learning (Al-Hazmi, 2017; Al-Seghayer, 2014; Alamri, 2011; Shah et al., 2013). This means that, to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of English teaching, and to increase the opportunity time for practising free writing and speaking in class with greater individual attention, the decision makers in Saudi Arabia should consider allocating more time in the day to language learning and decrease class sizes.

Moreover, teachers are central to the goal of improving language instruction and language learning, and must understand that teaching writing and speaking is a priority. They should ensure that there is time for teaching these skills effectively, even when time is limited, by reducing the large amounts of time spent on drills which could be completed by learners as homework through the use of CDs associated to the textbook, for example.

Additionally, teachers in Saudi EFL classes need to appreciate that the English language is more than just another school subject to pass or fail. English is a vibrant, living language that holds the key to many benefits in their students' futures. However, the key is useless if their students cannot use it effectively, so their teaching methods must reflect this reality and be shaped around it.

For instance, teachers should avoid giving students written texts to memorise for the sake of passing exams, or asking them to prepare and write notes based on key phrases for every speech that is to be delivered in class. In real life, they cannot rely on notes every time they speak and write, but must be more spontaneous; this demands greater mastery of L2 vocabulary in context, which should be the point of doing such a course. In-class writing and speaking activities can be improved by moving from controlled to free practice to enable students to learn different ways of speaking and writing, and to differentiate their language outputs according to the context.

7.2.4 Lack of explicit teaching of the lexical differences between language registers

As a result of the observation and discussion so far, it is quite clear that the English language was not heard much in the classroom. That is, the emphasis was on using written texts as support for teaching and learning English during lessons, at the expense of spoken English. In spite of the exposure to written texts, however, the Saudi participants did not acquire much formal vocabulary. For both written and oral tasks, the students relied heavily on the most common English vocabulary items, which gave their writing an overly informal tone.

This could be explained by the fact that students were asked to read, not only factual and journalistic texts, but scripted dialogues from their textbooks during lessons. These dialogues featured informal vocabulary and phrases, such as discourse markers, contractions and idiomatic expressions. Unfortunately, neither the teacher nor the textbook explicitly noted or discussed the differences in register represented by the different types of writing, which means the inexperienced students were unlikely to become consciously aware of the significant vocabulary and syntax differences.

The use of scripted, informal passages of text runs counter to my initial expectations and to previous studies' claims (e.g., Alfahadi, 2012; Alharbi, 2015; Batawi, 2006; Ben Duhaish, 2015) that Saudi EFL learners are not exposed to everyday English in the classroom. This study demonstrated that Saudi learners may not hear or speak English during lessons, but that they were nevertheless frequently exposed to informal vocabulary in written texts as part of 'scripted speech'.

This observation is very interesting in light of the results obtained in the story-retelling tasks. The students' heavy use of the frequent English words in writing might not be only a result of their exposure to informal English outside the classroom, but could also be attributed to the informal passages of text contained in their textbook (e.g., scripted dialogues). This would also explain why students were not able to differentiate between their spoken and written vocabulary, as their attention was rarely drawn to the lexical differences between the scripted speech and formal texts. According to this research, the lack of explicit training in recognising the differences between language registers might be detrimental to the adoption of appropriate registers in language production (e.g., the use of a formal register when writing).

Although the teacher participant did not intentionally teach the lexical differences between registers, it is possible that attentive students learned the differences implicitly. By looking at written texts that exemplified different levels of formality presented in their textbook, such as a scripted dialogue as opposed to an article, alert students might notice and implicitly perceive the lexical differences between informal (spoken) and formal (written) English. However, as indicated in the language production tasks, most Saudi students wrote and spoke similarly to one another, using mainly informal vocabulary, which suggests that most of the students were not able to acquire the lexical differences between language registers implicitly.

The students' failure to use the appropriate register when producing the language will likely affect their academic studies or career in the future or even their daily life. If students use less formal vocabulary than expected in a given context, as was the case in this study, this might have a negative effect on the relationship between the student and his/her interlocutor and might even lead to serious communication breakdowns (Vu, 2017).

Vu, a lecturer at a university in Vietnam, once felt disrespected and even annoyed when one of her students addressed her in a less formal way than she was expecting by calling her by her first name instead of using her title and family name as is in the norm in Vietnam. Glaser (2014) points out that it is vitally important to produce language appropriate to the context, which is part of a learner's pragmatic competence.

The consequences of pragmatic misunderstandings and mistakes, unlike errors of grammar or pronunciation, are usually interpreted at the personal or social level, rather than as an innocent mix-up in the process of learning a new language (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003, p. 38). Therefore, L2 pragmatic competence has been recognised by SLA researchers and scholars as a vital component of a learner's communicative competence and L2 proficiency (Bachman, 1990; Bachman & Palmer, 2010; Canale, 1983; Liao, 2014; Taguchi, 2011; Yates, 2010). According to Thomas (1983, 1995), due to the serious consequences of pragmatic failure as well as the difficulty of acquiring pragmatic features in a natural way because of their invisible nature, it is vitally important to incorporate pragmatics into L2 instruction. Kasper and Rose (2001) recommend that in contexts of ESL/EFL teaching, curricula and materials developers designing English programs should adopt a pragmatic approach as their organising principle or at least include strong pragmatic components.

Pedagogical implications. In an EFL context like Saudi Arabia, teachers are viewed by their students as language role models who are trusted to demonstrate the appropriate L2 forms and expressions (Ben Duhaish, 2015; Fageeh, 2011). Accordingly, English teachers in Saudi Arabia are expected to not only teach grammar and vocabulary, but also to model appropriate usage. However, it is clear from this study and previous studies (e.g., Al-Hajailan, 2003; Al-Hazmi, 2017; Al-Seghayer, 2011; Alamri, 2011; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015) that teachers in Saudi EFL classes still rely on Arabic to teach English, with the primary aim of achieving linguistic competence rather than preparing the learners to use English appropriately to communicate effectively.

This has resulted in students having issues when attempting to use English appropriately beyond the style and vocabulary modelled in the classroom. In the current study, students were unable to differentiate between spoken/informal and written/formal registers in relation to vocabulary. Indeed, differences between English registers is one of the most difficult aspects of language to teach in an EFL environment, due to the relative lack of access to authentic English, and lack of explanation about what makes it authentic.

For students to understand the lexical differences in language use, there is a need to teach a variety of registers in class, by setting up a variety of situational contexts, which may be actual or imaginary. English teachers should expose students to the vocabulary that native speakers use in restaurants, meetings, emails, or over the phone. Then, a variety of teaching approaches could be followed by the teacher to draw students' attention to the vocabulary used in different registers. As illustrated by this study, students are unlikely to acquire this skill implicitly. This study therefore strongly advocates using an explicit approach in teaching language registers. Equally, Al Hamdany and Picard (2015) showed that adult Iraqi EFL learners valued the English programs that featured explicit teaching in academic and non-academic registers and provided opportunities for students to experience and practise these registers in meaningful contexts. In time, teachers may turn to implicit instruction. Once students are introduced explicitly to the important concept of register, it should become easier for them to notice the differences between types of texts, even if the teacher does not draw their attention to it every time.

Much research has been devoted to the benefits or drawbacks of explicit and implicit instruction (Cohen, 2008; Kasper, 2001; Kasper & Roever, 2005; Koike & Pearson, 2005; Nguyen et al., 2012; Rose, 2005; Salemi et al., 2012; Shively, 2011; Soler, 2002). None, however, to the best of my knowledge, has focussed on how they might interact. Explicit knowledge can guide learning, while the implicit system works in parallel, based on the initial guidance.

For instance, the teacher could explicitly tell their students that oral communication uses less sophisticated vocabulary than writing. Self-referencing pronouns like 'we' and 'I' are used extensively in informal language, for example, whereas they tend to be less frequent in formal texts. In addition, in comparison to writing, sentences are generally incomplete, interrupted and resumed, and include a large number of discourse markers, such as 'so...' and 'anyway', as well as contractions which do not occur in formal writing.

Speakers also use simple sentences connected by many 'ands' and 'buts'. It would not be necessary to teach this explicitly in each and every lesson. However, the students' understanding should be monitored over time to make sure that they understand and are able to apply their knowledge. The practice and assessment task activities could include students booking a room in a hotel by writing an email to the hotel, for example. Then they could act out a conversation with a hotel receptionist to make a reservation over the phone. Discussing and comparing the language of the two tasks should be conducted with students in class. This skill could therefore be improved naturally later on outside of class.

Several classroom activities have been suggested by the British Council (2017) to help students enhance their sensitivity to English registers, as receivers as well as producers of language. For example, teachers may have students listen to an authentic conversation drawing their attention to implicit social factors, such as the relationship between the speakers or their likely location in order to make them aware of the importance of these contextual cues to meaning. For production tasks, on the other hand, differences between registers can be taught by giving students opportunities to use them in scripted dialogues, or role plays, where they can experience a variety of social contexts together with their particular pragmatic considerations.

To illustrate this, in spoken practice activities, students can be assigned a character role like 'best friend', 'older stranger', or 'teacher' and asked to talk to each other, keeping in mind their own and the other person's roles and adjusting their vocabulary and linguistic structures accordingly. Teachers should draw students' attention to the particular structures native speakers prefer to use for certain contexts and with whom they prefer to use them.

It is important to note that instructional practices cannot be modified by teachers alone. Education in Saudi Arabia is controlled by a textbook-driven curriculum which describes the content to be taught and how it should be taught. For teachers to adopt other practices, they require administrative support. Administrators, decision makers and textbooks writers must structure the system around research-proven, results-based teaching strategies, and understand that pragmatic competence is as important for language learners as linguistic competence.

More specifically, administrators should consider that understanding the varieties of possible registers and using those registers appropriately to achieve one's communicative goals is part of learners' communicative, and pragmatic competence, which need to be taught and assessed in Saudi EFL classes.

However, formal assessment criteria for EFL in Saudi schools has been designed largely to assess linguistic competence, and only limited time has been allocated to teach and assess other skills. Teaching the differences between spoken and written registers does not help students pass school exams, and therefore is not presently considered a priority for teachers. If teachers were to focus on a skill such as recognising differences in using registers, they would have to reduce the time allocated to vocabulary or grammar instruction, both of which are emphasised in the exam. It is likely that either the students nor their parents would be happy about this.

Many Saudi students and their families care more about examination marks than actual learning (Fareh, 2010; Khan, 2011a; Shah et al., 2013). Thus, the responsibility for positive change rests with the decision makers in the Ministry of Education, who should be encouraged to vary the assessment criteria of the English curriculum to include other language skills, such as the ability to differentiate between spoken and written registers. The textbook content and classroom instruction methods could be adjusted to accommodate this change by placing more emphasis on this skill.

This could be achieved, most importantly, through teacher training programs which should be available for all EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia. In these programs, teachers' awareness should be drawn to the importance of teaching different registers in EFL classes. These programs would provide opportunities for pre-service or practising teachers to demonstrate the best ways to teach and assess this aspect of language. Finally, if the Ministry of Education wishes to improve English instruction and learning for Saudi citizens, it should make listening materials and audio resources available to teachers while amending the textbook and examinations.

7.3 Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the role of classroom instruction and extra-curricular activities in developing learners' awareness of lexical differences between language registers. The findings discussed in this chapter emerged from four data collection methods—students' background questionnaire, classroom observation, teacher interview and textbook evaluation.

According to Richards (2015):

> *There are two important dimensions to successful second language learning: what goes on inside the classroom and what goes on outside of the classroom. (p.1)*

Richards suggests that out-of-class language activities can be equally important to classroom instruction for second language learners. The findings of this research support Richards's claim and provide evidence that much vocabulary can be acquired outside the classroom in the informal, everyday interactions of life, and out-of-class language activities have a significant role to play in improving students' speaking skills.

In spite of the fact that participants were not exposed to much English aural input in the classroom because of the lack of speaking and listening activities, students still managed to narrate a story orally in English, as shown in the speaking task. The results obtained from the questionnaire helped to explain this finding, showing that EFL learners engaged in a number of informal English activities outside the classroom, which likely helped their speaking.

However, the results show that Saudi EFL learners overused the most frequent words when using English, particularly in written language, which normally includes more infrequent or formal words. That is, the external opportunities for exposure to informal English may help students in speaking, but they may also contribute to an excessive use of the most commonly used words when either writing or speaking the language. Moreover, the informal register emphasised in the textbook is likely to be a cause of the students' overuse of informal language.

The question is how to maintain the advantage of exposure to informal English to assist in speaking while avoiding the side-effect of this exposure, that is, using informal language excessively in writing. The explicit teaching of the differences between spoken and written registers to students would make them aware of the fact that they should vary their speech and writing according to situations and context. Simple exposure to English outside the classroom, mostly through media sources, is not enough to teach students the greater vocabulary skills required to successfully use a knowledge of registers. This accords with previous researchers' claims that awareness and attention are important in the learning process for a new language (Alanen, 1995; Jourdenais et al., 1995; Leow, 1997, 2000, 2001; Rosa & O'Neill, 1999; VanPatten, 1990).

The study findings thus suggest that students' attention be specifically drawn to the differences between spoken and written registers during classroom instruction. However, the deeper analysis of the data also indicates that in the current circumstances, without support from administrators and curriculum designers, it would be extremely difficult for the teacher to achieve the goals that the textbook's writers set for each semester or complete the whole syllabus. These unrealistic goals led the teacher participating in this investigation to skip parts of the lesson and neglect some language skills due in part to time restrictions and the purely linguistic-focus exam-driven assessment.

As a result of this analysis, a number of practical suggestions were offered for teachers and administrators to consider. For developing students' ability to distinguish between language registers, EFL teachers need:

- to maximise L2 input in the classroom while minimising the L1 support
- to place greater emphasis on productive vocabulary teaching
- to reduce the amount of teacher talk and encourage students to talk
- to provide free, unscripted speaking and writing practice in class
- to draw students' attention to the differences between language registers explicitly
- to create opportunities for students to experience/practise different registers in class
- to monitor students' understanding of different registers over time

Administrators specifically need to address the issue of facilitating new ways of teaching by:

- decreasing class sizes in public schools
- allocating more time to English language teaching
- making listening materials and audio resources available to teachers
- working in conjunction with curriculum designers and textbook writers to amend the textbook to integrate explicit instruction on different language registers
- expanding the focus of the assessment to integrate pragmatic skills, such as the ability to differentiate between spoken and written registers
- setting up teacher training programs that emphasise the importance of teaching different registers and the best methods to teach and assess this aspect of language.

These practical suggestions were discussed in detail earlier in this chapter (refer to the implications sections).

In the Conclusion chapter, the answers to the research questions are provided, along with the contributions and limitations of the study, as well as suggestions for further research.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

The research presented in this thesis constitutes a case study that:

- investigated the lexical differences between spoken and written tasks completed by a group of high school EFL learners in Saudi Arabia
- determined the role of classroom pedagogy and teaching materials in demonstrating to students the differences between language registers.

The results of this study offer insights into learning and teaching English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia based on the students' adoption and use of English vocabulary for writing and speaking in light of their experiences in and out of class.

This final chapter provides a summary of the results with respect to the research questions:

RQ1 To what extent do the participants discriminate between spoken and written registers?

RQ2 How do elements of the teaching and learning context/environment, including textbook and teaching approach, contribute to learners' ability to use different registers?

The contribution of the present research to the existing literature is then highlighted and a number of limitations of this study are discussed. Finally, potential areas for future research as highlighted by this study are presented.

8.1 Answers to the research questions

RQ1 To what extent do the participants discriminate between spoken and written registers?

RQ1.1 *How does the Saudi participants' speech differ from their writing in regard to word coverage, sophistication, formality and diversity?*

In Phase 1 of the study, speaking and writing tasks were designed to compare the lexical differences between spoken and written narratives produced by participants. The oral and written texts produced by participants were analysed using four different measures:

- *Web VocabProfile* (Cobb, 2009): to measure the proportion of the most frequent 2,000 English words produced by participants in writing and in speech (word coverage).

In terms of word coverage, the Saudi EFL learners in the sample were observed to depend heavily on the most frequent 2,000 English words both when speaking and writing. The most common words covered on average 94.62% of learners' writing and 95.90% of their speech. That is, the difference between writing and speech was only a modest 1.28%.

- *P_Lex* (Meara & Bell, 2001): to calculate the proportion of vocabulary in a text that are not among the most common 2,000 words used in English (lexical sophistication).

  In terms of lexical sophistication, the Saudi participants used a very limited number of sophisticated/infrequent English words in their spoken and written tasks. Moreover, the degree of average difference between spoken (.86) and written (1.13) sophistication levels was relatively small (.27).

- *F-score* (Heylighen & Dewaele, 1999): to assess a text's level of formality in terms of vocabulary (lexical formality).

  In the formality measure, the average F-scores were very close, with 53.06% for writing and 52.72% for speech, suggesting that the formality level of learners' speech and writing was nearly identical. However, it must be noted that there was considerable variation between individual participants in the formality measure.

- *D_Tools* (Meara & Miralpeix, 2004): to assess the range of vocabulary produced by participants (lexical diversity).

  While the results of the lexical coverage, sophistication and formality measures show a slight difference on average (no more than 1.28 points) between written and spoken narratives completed by Saudi EFL learners, the lexical diversity values differ by almost 9 points between learners' speech (43.80) and writing (52.36). The measured difference between the learners' writing and speech in terms of lexical diversity is statistically significant.

Generally speaking, it can be concluded that the Saudi students did not show a significant difference between their written and spoken vocabulary, except in the area of lexical diversity.

RQ1.2 *Do the Saudi participants use vocabulary in their speech and writing in the same way/proportion as native speakers?*

Phase 1 of the study compared the performance of the two groups of student participants who showed the greatest divergence in language fluency (high achievers and low achievers) with the performance of native English speaker participants. The results revealed that the native English speakers showed a greater differentiation between speech and writing than both high and low achievers on all measures (i.e., lexical coverage, sophistication, formality and diversity)

It is worth remembering that when this research was initiated, it was assumed that Saudi students would both speak and write in a formal way, leading to an overly formal language in speech. This means that students would naturally rely on the more formal vocabulary they were being taught in class when writing and speaking in the target language. The results indicated, however, that both high and low achievers made substantial use of more common/informal English words, regardless of writing or speaking, whereas more formal words were supposed to feature in their writing according to native speakers' performance. In the written task, native English speakers used fewer frequent words (85.12%) than high achievers (97.4%) or low achievers (93.18%) among the student participants. The results of the students' background questionnaire helped to understand this finding. The results of the questionnaire indicated that the students' exposure to informal English outside the class—through English movies or online communication, for example—was very influential in shaping the learners' interlanguage. They tended to produce a high percentage of common words, even when more formal vocabulary was required, as in writing.

RQ2 How do elements of the teaching and learning context, including textbook and teaching approach, contribute to learners' ability to use different registers?

RQ2.1 *What teaching approach is used in the classroom in relation to these differences?*

RQ2.1.1 *Does the teacher provide a variety of input samples for learners to be able to observe these differences? For example, do they use informal spoken registers in English as well as more formal registers?*

In Phase 2 of the study, the target Year 12 class was observed for nearly a month and the teacher who taught the class was interviewed. Classroom observation and teacher's interview were conducted to determine the effectiveness of the teacher's approach on the students' ability to differentiate between language registers.

The constant use of Arabic by the teacher and the students, and the lack of speaking and listening practice in class, strongly suggested that the learners were rarely exposed to spoken/informal English inside the classroom, with the exception of some classes when they read out dialogues written in informal registers in the textbook.

Formal English was not heard frequently in the classroom, either, except during the lessons in which students were asked to read passages from their textbooks. The teacher devoted most of the class time to teaching vocabulary and grammar while speaking in Arabic. Pronunciation and spelling drills were also common class activities.

RQ2.1.2 *Does the teacher draw learners' attention explicitly to differences in registers?*

Although the students were asked to read formal and less formal texts from their textbook occasionally, and to complete speaking and writing activities in class, the teacher did not take these opportunities to draw students' attention explicitly to the lexical differences between language registers. She reported that she had never tried to teach the differences between registers in class and was unlikely to do so in the future. In fact, she believed that distinguishing between language registers was not a teachable skill, but rather an ability that would be acquired and developed naturally through extensive exposure to the target language.

RQ2.2 What teaching approach does the textbook use in relation to these differences?

RQ2.2.1: *Does the textbook provide a variety of input samples for learners to be able to observe these differences?*

In Phase 2 of the study, two sample units of the English textbook used by Saudi students at the time of conducting this research were evaluated in depth to examine its role in developing the students' ability to differentiate between spoken and written registers. The results show that students were presented with samples of different language registers in their textbook. Scripted dialogues with features of an informal register, such as the use of discourse markers, contractions and idiomatic expressions, were included in the prescribed textbook, as well as factual texts written in a more formal register.

RQ2.2.2: *Does the textbook follow an explicit or implicit approach to teach differences in registers?*

Although the textbook provided written texts that exemplified different levels of formality, there was no explanation of when to use formal or less formal language. Within the entire two units being sampled (a unit = 14 pages), only a brief comment was found that related to language registers: 'We mainly use the short forms when we talk or when we want to sound informal' (Teacher's Manual, p.23). If the students were to come to appreciate the differences between language registers, this learning was clearly expected to happen implicitly in class or through out-of-class language activities.

However, the overall results of the speaking and writing tasks demonstrated that the majority of students did not differentiate between speaking and writing in relation to vocabulary. This suggests that they were unable to appreciate the lexical differences between language registers implicitly.

8.2 Contributions

It is generally accepted that native English speakers rarely write in the same way as they speak, even when it comes to the same topic or audience. Yet this supposition remains to be thoroughly examined in the realm of English interlanguage (e.g., Yu, 2010), where the extent to which English learners are able to recognise and use vocabulary differences in their written or spoken discourse remains unclear. Surprisingly, a survey of the literature found no research that examined this phenomenon in the context of the Arab World, in spite of the popularity of English language education in the Middle East. The current study addresses this gap.

This research is the first of its kind to investigate the differences between spoken and written English produced by Arabic-speaking learners. Failure to appreciate that different contexts require different vocabularies may contribute a partial or total breakdown of communication when the EFL learner engages with a native English speaker (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003; Glaser, 2014; Taguchi, 2011; Thomas, 1983; Yates, 2010) (refer to section 2.3.2). The importance of a research project such as this one, therefore, comes from the need to know how (if at all) EFL learners develop this aspect of their L2 pragmatic competence (i.e., being able to discriminate between spoken/informal and written/formal registers and use them appropriately according to context). While evaluating and improving learners' pragmatic skills is important in every language context, the teaching of this socio-pragmatic competence is particularly needed in the Saudi Arabian educational context.

What this study highlights is that the explicit teaching of pragmatics is overlooked in EFL classes in Saudi Arabia. Judging from the most recent studies, our understanding of Saudi language students' pragmatic knowledge is undoubtedly inadequate, and more pragmatics studies are indeed necessary, especially given the large number of Saudi students going to pursue their educational degrees in English speaking countries (Al-Seghayer, 2015; Alanazi & Widin, 2018; Alharbi, 2015; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; Bani Younes & Albalawi, 2016).

It is necessary to evaluate to what degree students are prepared, or not prepared, to cope with the linguistic and cultural demands of studying abroad and interacting with native English speakers, as well as writing, speaking and reading in English. The current research can be seen as a significant contribution to the investigation of Saudi students' awareness of the varieties of possible registers when speaking EFL, and their ability to use the appropriate language register to achieve their communication goals, an area which is receiving little or no attention in Saudi Arabia.

The overall results of the study indicate that in most cases Saudi EFL learners use their English vocabulary similarly in both spoken and written narratives, except for lexical diversity, for which the difference turns out to be quite significant. In the data from the current study, there was little to no evidence that the student participants appreciated the need to differentiate between written and spoken English by modifying their vocabulary.

Observation of the participants in class demonstrated that several instructional factors affected the students' ability to appreciate the need to adopt different language registers according to context. This research has therefore pedagogical implications with regards to helping English teachers plan and deliver lessons more effectively with the aim to impart their students with greater confidence in using written and spoken English.

Additionally, this study presents the first in-depth investigation of the prescribed textbook *Traveller6*, which has been in use in Saudi public schools since 2013-2014. Given that school textbooks are considered the basic pillar of the teaching-learning process in Saudi Arabia (Al-Seghayer, 2014; Alamri, 2008; Allehyani et al., 2017; Batawi, 2006; Fareh, 2010; Nather, 2014), the findings of this study can be used towards enhancing English language education in Saudi Arabia by improving the textbooks used in public schools.

The outcomes of this research could contribute to assisting textbook writers and EFL curriculum designers in Saudi Arabia to better take into consideration the importance of teaching different registers to students and to incorporate explicit pragmatic teaching in the English curriculum accordingly. Furthermore, scholars and researchers seem to agree that the main aim of case studies is understanding the complexities and idiosyncrasies of one given case, yet the implications and insights drawn might be applicable to other, similar contexts (Adelman et al., 1976; Stake, 1988; Wolcott, 1990a). Therefore, the results of this research could offer insightful ideas to teachers and educators in similar EFL contexts to be adopted in their educational institutions.

Finally, a significant contribution of this study is that it demonstrates the need for mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) in this type of research. While the overall results of the quantitative study indicated that neither the high nor the low achievers among the student participants differentiated much between spoken and written English, apart from the lexical diversity measure, the qualitative analysis showed that high achievers did clearly differentiate between the two registers. The most fluent students composed their written texts more proficiently and formally compared to the way they spoke. Contractions, abbreviations, fillers and colloquial expressions were identified in their speech but not in their writing.

This observation shows that focusing on quantitative data analysis alone does not produce a complete picture of the situation. In accordance with this study, many language researchers, such as Creswell and Clark (2017), Neuman (2013) and O'Donoghue and Punch (2003), have called for greater use of a mixed methods methodology, arguing that the mixing or ‘triangulation’ of research methods together makes up for their individual shortcomings. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) go so far as to consider mixed methods to be a method of its own due to the fact that it utilises both qualitative and quantitative approaches, yet transcends them by responding to issues which could not be otherwise comprehended.

8.3 Limitations

Limitations are inevitable in research. In this study, there were four main limitations. First, this research is a case study conducted with a single class in Saudi Arabia (24 Saudi students with their EFL teacher). It can be argued that the findings of this study cannot be generalised to all Saudi EFL learners because of the small sample size. This, however, presents some advantages in that it allowed familiarity and the development of a rapport with the student and teacher participants, which would have been difficult if more classes had been included in the study sample. Working within such limitations, the case study presents very much an 'inside view' of the field.

As discussed in Chapter 2, English teaching in Saudi Arabia is centralised and under the authority of the Ministry of Education. English teachers at every grade level are required to teach the same syllabus, which is designed by the Ministry of Education, with the same guidelines and deadlines, and the same textbooks. The teachers have little autonomy in setting teaching objectives, approaches, materials and assessments (Shah et al., 2013). As a consequence of this uniformity, it is possible that one class could be representative of Saudi public EFL classes.

Second, because of the limitations of time and access to English native speakers, only five native English speaker participants could be recruited. However, the native speakers were not the focus of the current study and served only as a point of reference to examine the language behaviour of two groups of EFL learners—high achievers (four students) and low achievers (four students). Therefore, although the number of native speakers (five students) was small, it was still comparable with the number of learners in each study group (four students).

Third, it is worth noting that personal factors, such as stress, motivation and anxiety, are just as influential as instructional factors in shaping learners' vocabulary choices. Nonetheless, the possible influence of these personal factors on language performance remained beyond the scope of this study. The focus was solely on the lexical characteristics of Saudi EFL learners' speech and writing as a result of classroom instruction. Thus, it is important when considering the data analysis, to remember that the present study was limited with respect to out-of-class factors which appeared incidental, but which could be critical to the acquisition of registers. Undoubtedly, further research using more sophisticated methodology could incorporate additional, out-of-class observations or surveys.

Finally, other considerations impacting this study include Saudi culturo-religious norms around female privacy; for example, the strong disapproval of recording or videotaping girls at school, even for strictly academic purposes. Therefore, class observations were recorded in writing and in detail during classes. When the class was finished, a reflective report on that class was written from the notes taken during the observation.

Moreover, because of the gender-separated education system in Saudi Arabia, no male students could be accessed. If male and female participants could have been included in this study, gender-differences in relation to the ability to recognise and use different language registers would have been an interesting investigation to complement to the present one.

8.4 Future research

Given the lack of prior research into EFL/ESL students' ability to discriminate between spoken and written registers, much more research is needed to explore the lexical differences in the speech and writing in English interlanguage, so that general trends and conclusions can be made in relation to the process of learners' acquisition and the factors that contribute to differentiation of language registers (writing and speech).

The data in this analysis is relatively limited in scope, and informative research could be done by expanding the sample size or repeating the study with other Arabic-speaking participants, but using different tasks, such as retelling a movie rather than a picture story. Furthermore, it would be fascinating to conduct similar research on other English-learning language groups, such as Chinese, Hindi, and Spanish, in order to observe cross-cultural trends in learners' speech-writing differentiation.

It would also be interesting to conduct the same research on male Saudi students and compare the results with those of the female participants in this study. It can be assumed that there would be gender differences between male and female students, as boys in Saudi Arabia usually have more opportunities to practise English as a second language (e.g., travelling abroad) than girls.

It would also be valuable to expand the research by including learners' personal characteristics (e.g., gender, status, anxiety, motivation, learning style) to see what effect these might have on learners' language acquisition (see Ortega, 2014). Investigating the impact of personal characteristics could also offer insight into unusual results in datasets, such as the findings of the formality measure in the current research, which were puzzling. Analysis of the data produced no predictable pattern or consistency in relation to the degree to which the learners differentiated between writing and speech in terms of formality. It is possible that the individual preferences of the students to use formal, less formal or informal language, regardless of whether they speak or write, dictated their choice of vocabulary. Psychological or socio-linguistic factors may also affect the level of formality of Saudi students' performances. Personal choices are an issue worth investigating in future studies.

Further research could make use of different quantitative measures than those used in the current study to calculate the word coverage, sophistication, formality and diversity. By using different measures, researchers could recommend the most effective ones to be adopted in future research. For instance, this study demonstrated that the outcomes of the formality measure (F-score) devised by Heylighen and Dewaele (1999) must be treated carefully (see section 4.3 for details). Although the F-score may not be perfect in calculating language formality, it was the only quantitative tool available to carry out this task at this time.

This also points to the need to use more qualitative measures in order to compensate for the limitations of the quantitative tools currently available, as discussed earlier in section 8.2. A detailed qualitative analysis was conducted in the current study to complement the quantitative formality measure and study the language formality from a qualitative perspective.

8.5 Concluding thoughts

This study started with the assumption that EFL teachers and textbooks in Saudi Arabia heavily focus on formal English vocabulary, with little instruction related to casual spoken forms. This assumption reflected my own experience, as well as other research in the context of Saudi Arabia (e.g., Al-Nofaie, 2010; Almutairi, 2007; Batawi, 2006; Ben Duhaish, 2015). It was anticipated that this study would find that the Saudi classroom does not prepare students to practise different language registers, and that the students would use the formal English they learn at school in any spoken or written task at any time (refer to my experience in the UK in section 1.2).

To examine the accuracy of this assumption, this research investigated the ability of 24 Saudi EFL students to differentiate between spoken/informal and written/formal registers in relation to vocabulary. The findings show that Saudi students participating in the study did not significantly vary their vocabulary between speaking and writing, as expected. However, these Saudi EFL learners used common/informal words rather than more formal ones as the basis of their writing and speech, in spite of the fact that there was little English speaking and listening practice in class.

After conducting the study, it has become clear that current Saudi students' experience of foreign language learning is different from the experiences of students of my generation. The data demonstrated that current students have more access to the English language outside the classroom, which can compensate for the lack of language practice in class and help them improve their speaking skills. Richards (2009) makes the timely observation that:

> *It has taken us a while to realize that while good teaching is no less important than ever, today's learners are not as dependent on classroom-based learning and teaching as they used to be. (p.10)*

Similarly, Liddicoat (2016) has demonstrated that language learners work towards meaning, and by interpreting their encounters with the L2 outside class they develop new awareness and knowledge of language and culture for communication. According to Kern and Liddicoat (2008, as cited in Liddicoat, 2016), language learners are social actors who have different identities and personal resources for meaning-making that shift and alter how their second language is acquired and used. This indicates a need for more research in order to understand what participants bring to their formal, classroom experiences by investigating the types of learning that occur outside the classroom environment.

A recent study by Alkhalifah (2018, p. 116) shows that the majority of his participants (high school students) used English language learning applications on their smartphones. More recent studies go a step further to explore how online communication and interaction outside the classroom affect learners' foreign language development (see Dooly & O'Dowd, 2012). The hybrid nature of online communication, very popular with teenagers, in terms of speech-writing characteristics hides the distinction between registers (refer to section 2.6) since the English language used by students online almost exclusively reflects everyday speech and is largely informal. Zwiers (2013) and Gillett (2011) argue that academic spoken language has many of the key features of writing, while many common, informal usages of writing, such as advertising, more closely resemble speech. Additionally, this overlap has increased after the arrival of texting and emailing. Writing an informal email usually involves a similar degree of informality to that of speech (Gibbons, 1998), for example.

Given the reality of the students' persistent exposure to informal English, the explicit teaching of different registers should be given more attention in language classes to assist the students achieve greater competence and a more well-rounded appreciation of language overall.

Overall, this research concluded that Saudi students were unable to differentiate between spoken and written registers in terms of vocabulary, and one explanation could be that the type of instruction received by Saudi students in schools is not as effective as it should be in supporting the development of this competence. While the findings of this study were not intended to make a generalisation for other Saudi students, they do, however, point out useful lessons to be considered in Saudi EFL classes, as well as in similar EFL classes (the reader can find more details about the pedagogical implications of this research in Chapter 7).

The findings of this study are evidence that EFL teachers need to integrate the skill of discriminating between different language registers into the core of their teaching practice, particularly in Saudi EFL classes where opportunities for initiating authentic pragmatic experiences are still shunned. The classroom can and should become the ideal place where learners can acquire an instinct for appropriate language use. Teachers should make every effort to help students appreciate the differences between language registers, so that they will be prepared for real language use in real life. To be unprepared is to risk many faux pas, bruised feelings, and misunderstandings because of the misuse of vocabulary and poor choice of register when speaking or writing in particular contexts.

This study also demonstrates, for the developers of English materials in Saudi Arabia, that English textbooks that cover an adequate amount of different language registers would be undoubtedly useful and valuable to produce more successful language learners. Furthermore, this research lays the foundation for more studies to expand knowledge of language registers in Saudi Arabia.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethics approval

Dear Ahlam,

The Chair of the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (SBREC) at Flinders University considered your response to conditional approval out of session and your project has now been granted final ethics approval. This means that you now have approval to commence your research. Your ethics final approval notice can be found below.

FINAL APPROVAL NOTICE

Project No.:	**7073**
Project Title:	Lexical Differences between Spoken and Written English among High-School leavers in Saudi Arabia
Principal Researcher:	Mrs Ahlam Algofaili
Email:	algo0012@flinders.edu.au

Approval Date:	16 November 2015	Ethics Approval Expiry Date:	**1 October 2019**

The above proposed project has been **approved** on the basis of the information contained in the application, its attachments and the information subsequently provided

Appendix 2: Information sheet

INFORMATION SHEET

Title: "Lexical Differences between Spoken and Written English among High-School Leavers in Saudi Arabia"

Investigator(s):

Mrs. Ahlam Algofaili
School of Humanities, Education and Law
Flinders University
Ph: +61 402053541

Supervisor(s):

Dr Antonella Strambi
School of Humanities, Education and Law
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Ph: +61 8 82012622

Dr Eric Bouvet
School of Humanities, Education and Law
Flinders University
Ph: +61 8 82012104

Description of the study:

This study is part of the project entitled 'Lexical Differences between Spoken and Written English among High-School Leavers in Saudi Arabia'. The project is designed to investigate students' awareness of differences in registers and related pedagogical practices. This project is supported by Flinders University, Department of Languages and Applied Linguistics.

Purpose of the study:

The aims and objectives for this project are basically twofold:

1- To compare the vocabulary that EFL learners in Saudi Arabia use in writing and in speech, and compare their performance to English native speakers' performance.
2- To understand how learners' ability to distinguish between different registers develops through instruction.

What will I be asked to do?

If you are a teacher, you are invited to attend a one-on-one interview with the principal researcher who will ask you a few questions in relation to 'lexical differences between registers' (your views, attitudes and teaching methods). The interview will take about 20 minutes. The interview will be recorded using a digital voice recorder to assist with data analysis. The voice files will be destroyed once the results have been finalised. The researcher would also like to observe your professional activities with your students in class without any kind of audio or video recording; (only some written notes to be taken by the researcher). Class observation will continue for nearly a month.

If you are a student, either Saudi or Australian, you are invited to take part in two different tasks of language production. Each session will take about 20-30 minutes of your time. There will be an interval of three days between the two tasks. In the first session, you will be asked to look at a picture story with a text under each picture. Then you will be given the picture story with no texts and asked to retell as much as you can remember from the story in writing. The same technique will then be repeated in the second session to elicit oral texts. You will be asked to look at the same picture story and retell the story orally. The session will be recorded to be transcribed by the principal researcher. All the handwritten compositions will be processed in Notepad to be saved as texts. Your response in this study is completely confidential.

What benefit will I gain from being involved in this study?

Although you may not have any direct benefit, the sharing of your experiences will contribute in enhancing English teaching in EFL classes. The implications of this project will help English teachers to plan and deliver effective English lessons which are as communicative as possible. The results of this research will be of interest to the decision makers in EFL contexts who are concerned to improve English teaching and learning in schools. In addition, you will receive a $20 voucher after completing the two sessions.

Will I be identifiable by being involved in this study?

We do not need your name and you will be anonymous. Once your speech has been transcribed, the voice file will then be destroyed. Any identifying information will be removed, and your comments will not be linked directly to you.

Are there any risks or discomforts if I am involved?

There is no likelihood of discomfort or risk associated with participation. However, there might be a slight inconvenience and time commitment associated as the language production tasks which you are expected to complete take up to one hour of your time overall.

How do I agree to participate?

Participation is voluntary. You may refuse to take part in this study and you are free to withdraw at any time without effect or consequences. A consent form accompanies this information sheet. If you agree to participate please sign the form and email it to: algo0012@uni.flinders.edu.au

How will I receive feedback?

Outcomes from the project will be summarised and given to you by the investigator if you would like to see them.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and we hope that you will accept our invitation to be involved.

Appendix 3: Letter of introduction

Flinders
UNIVERSITY

Antonella Strambi

Senior Lecturer

Department of Languages and Applied Lingusitics

GPO Box 2100

Adelaide SA
5001
Australia

Tel +61 8 82012622

Dear Sir/Madam

This letter is to introduce Ahlam Algofaili who is a PhD student in the School of Humanities, Education and Law at Flinders University. She will produce her student card, which carries a photograph, as proof of identity.

She is undertaking research leading to the production of a thesis on the subject of "Lexical Differences between Spoken and Written English among High-School Leavers in Saudi Arabia". She would like to invite you to assist with this project by agreeing to be involved in an interview and being observed in the classroom, if you are a teacher, or agreeing to take part in a language task, if you are a student. More details about the research design and procedures are provided in the information sheet attached to this letter.

Be assured that any information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and none of the participants will be individually identifiable in the resulting thesis, report or other publications. You are, of course, entirely free to discontinue your participation at any time or to decline to answer particular questions.

Since Mrs. Algofaili intends to make a tape recording of the interview and the language experiment, she will seek your consent, on the attached form, to record your speech, to use the recording or a transcription in preparing the thesis, report or other publications, on condition that your name or identity is not revealed, and that the recording will not be made available to any other person.

Any enquiries you may have concerning this project should be directed to me at the address given above or by telephone on (+61 8 82012622), fax (+61 8 82012784) or e-mail (antonella.strambi@flinders.edu.au).
Thank you for your attention and assistance.

Yours sincerely,
Antonella Strambi
Senior Lecturer
Department of Languages and Applied Linguistic

Appendix 4

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

I …..

being over the age of 18 years hereby consent to participate as requested in the information sheet for the research project on Lexical Differences between Spoken and Written English.

1. I have read the information provided.
2. Details of procedures and any risks have been explained to my satisfaction.
3. I agree to audio recording of my participation.
4. I am aware that I could retain a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form for future reference.
5. I understand that:
    - I may not directly benefit from taking part in this research.
    - I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and am free to decline to answer particular questions.
    - While the information gained in this study will be published as explained, I will not be identified, and individual information will remain confidential.
    - Whether I participate or not, or withdraw after participating, will have no effect on any treatment or service that is being provided to me.
    - Whether I participate or not, or withdraw after participating, will have no effect on my progress in my course of study, or results gained.
    - I may ask that the recording be stopped at any time, and that I may withdraw at any time from the session or the research without disadvantage.
6. I agree to the audio file/transcript being made available to other researchers who are not members of this research team, but who are judged by the research team to be doing related research, on condition that my identity is not revealed.

Participant's signature……………………………………Date…………………...

I certify that I have explained the study to the volunteer and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

Researcher's name……………………………….……………………..................

Researcher's signature…………………………………..Date……………………

Appendix 5

CONSENT FORM FOR OBSERVATION OF PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY

I hereby give my consent to ………………………………………………………………….......... a researcher/research student in the Faculty of ………………………………………………. at ………………………………………………………………………………………………

whose signature appears below, to record my work activities as part of a study of my professional activities and role.

I give permission for the use of these data, and other information which I have agreed may be obtained or requested, in the writing up of the study, subject to the following conditions:

My participation in this study is voluntary, and I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

SIGNATURES

Participant…………………………………………Date………………………...

Researcher…………………………………………Date…………………………….

Appendix 6: Advertisement for recruiting native speakers of English

Research Subjects wanted..

Female students are needed to participate in a research study about the lexical differences between writing and speaking in English.

-Participants must be girls age 18 who are native speakers of English.

-Subjects will be asked to take part in 2 different tasks of language production which will be held at Flinders University.

-The participant will be asked to look at a picture story and retell the story orally and then in writing.

-Each task will require about 20-30 mins and there will be an interval of three days between the two tasks.

-The speech task will be recorded to be transcribed and all data maintained will be de-identified for confidentiality purposes.

-Subjects will be compensated $20 after completing the two tasks.

-To participate or for more information, please contact Ahlam at algo0012@uni.flinders.edu.au

Appendix 7: The Picture Story used in this study (with texts)

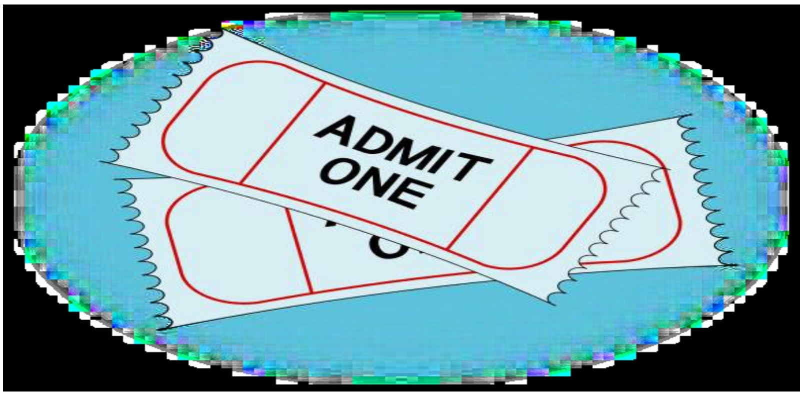
Approximately two months ago, Mary and Jason, a young couple, celebrated their wedding.

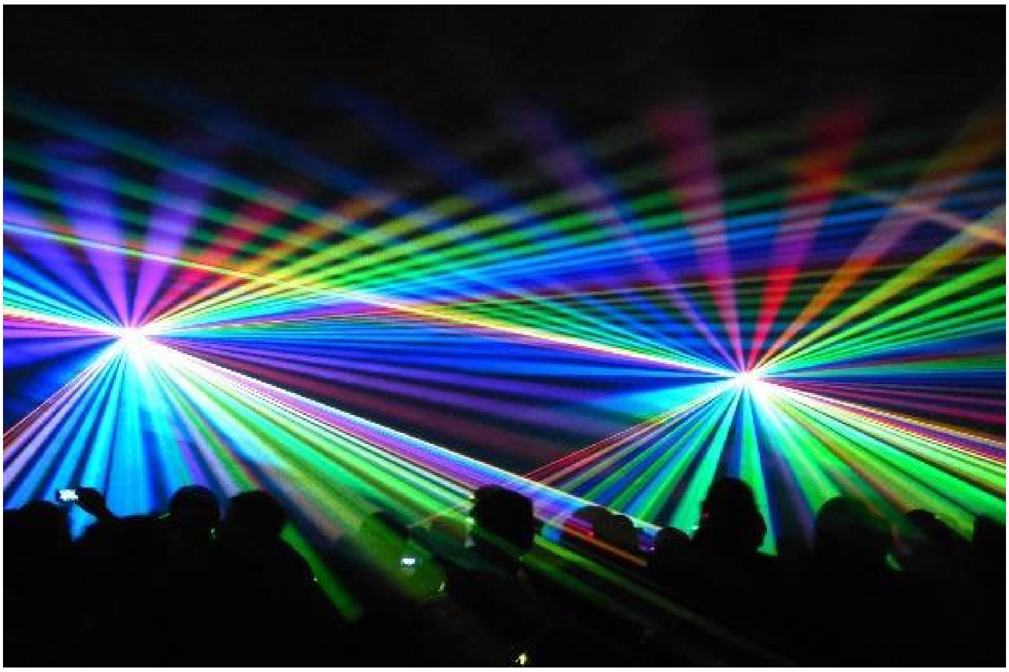
Immediately following the ceremony, they left for their honeymoon. They stayed at a tropical resort and enjoyed lazing in the sun and visiting quaint local villages.

Two weeks later, they returned to their new home, and begun unpacking all the presents they had received from friends and family for their wedding.

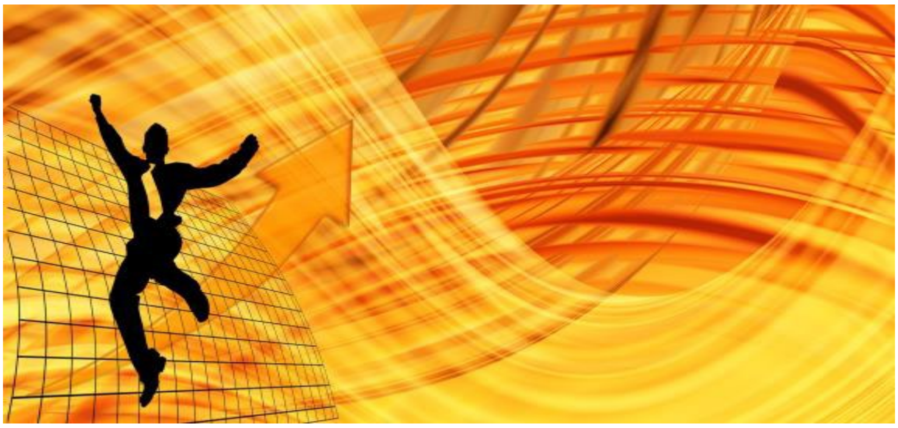


They engaged in some discussion to establish where each object should be stored, but they were pleased to discover that they tended to agree rather easily. The silverware found its place in an antique cabinet, decorative items were displayed on walls or shelves, and items of clothing were placed in the bedroom drawers.

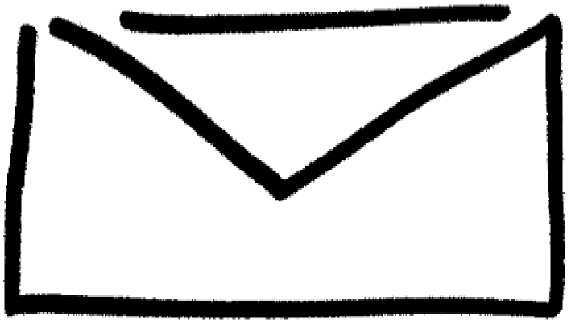




One more week went by. Then, they received in the mail two tickets for a musical show. The show starred a famous actor as the protagonist and had been directed by an internationally acclaimed artist. It was nearly impossible to obtain tickets due to its popularity.



Therefore, they felt very excited and warmed by the gesture of the person who had sent the tickets.



envelope by Tim Morgan (2005)
https://www.flickr.com/photos/timothymorgan/75699271/
Attribution (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/)
Photo Attribution by PhotosForClass.com

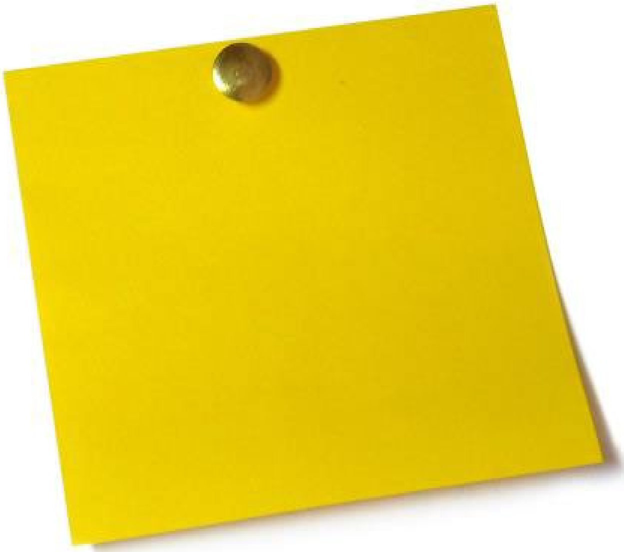
When they looked inside the envelope, however, all they could find was a small slip of paper bearing a single line: "Guess who sent them”.

The pair attempted to identify the donor but failed in the effort.

On the night of the show, they went to the theatre, and had a wonderful time.

On their return home late at night, still wondering about the identity of the unknown host, they found the house stripped of every article of value.



POST-IT sticky note by Peters B (2009) https://www.flickr.com/photos/flatcat/3555774083/
Attribution, Non Commercial (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0/)
Photo Attribution by PhotosForClass.com

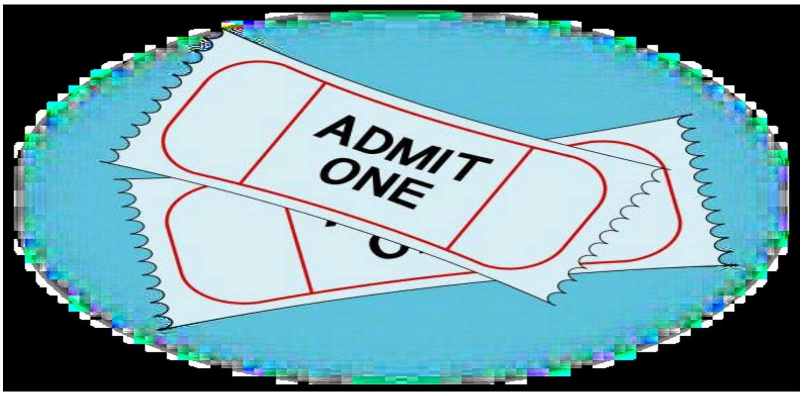
And on the bare table in the dining room was a piece of paper on which was written - in the same hand as the enclosure with the tickets:

"Well, now you know!"

(Adapted from: http://urbanlegends.about.com/od/crime/fl/Anonymous-Wedding-Gift.htm)

Appendix 8: The Picture Story when excluding the text

Presents!! by fahrenheit45one (2006) https://www.flickr.com/photos/catjannik/334121655/
Attribution, Non Commercial (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0/)
Photo Attribution by PhotosForClass.com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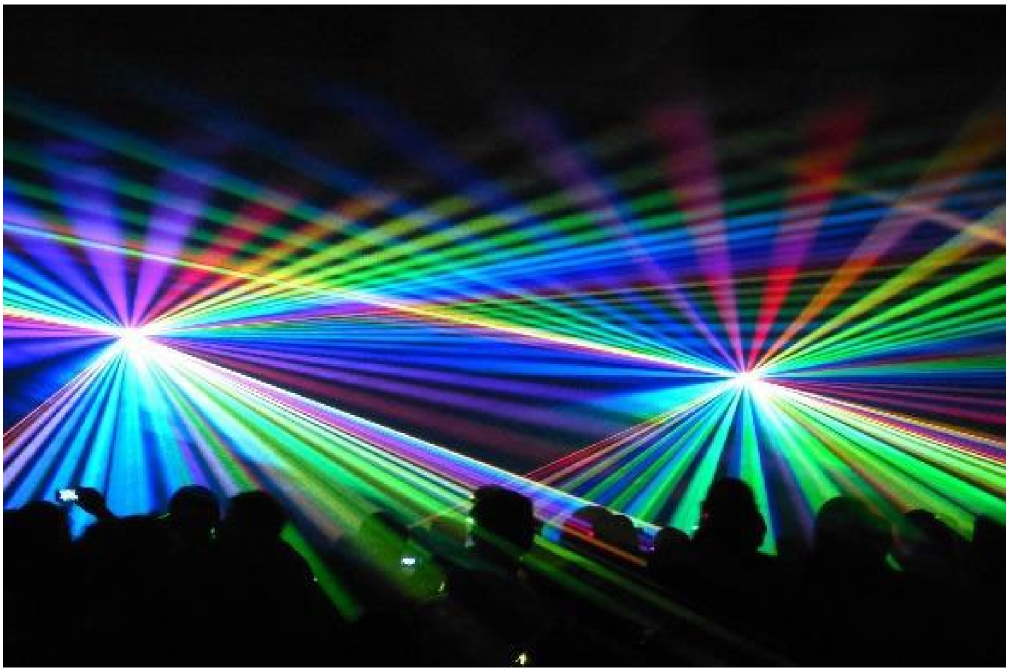

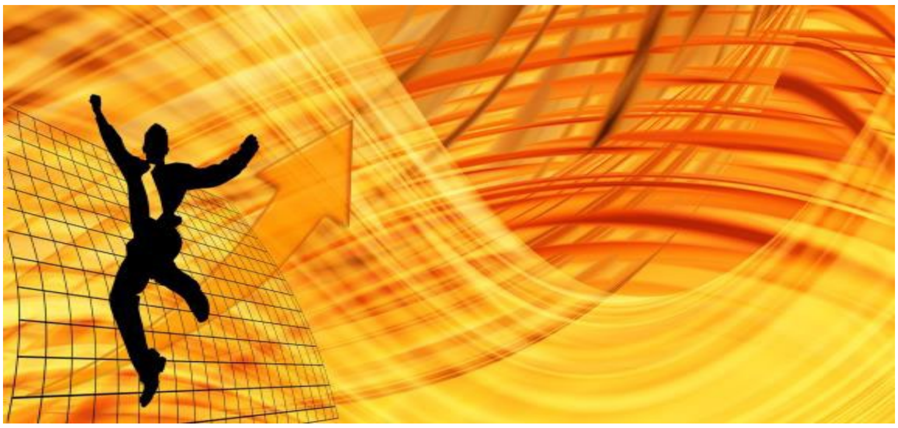

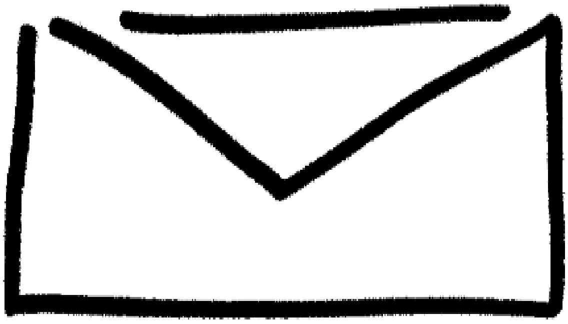

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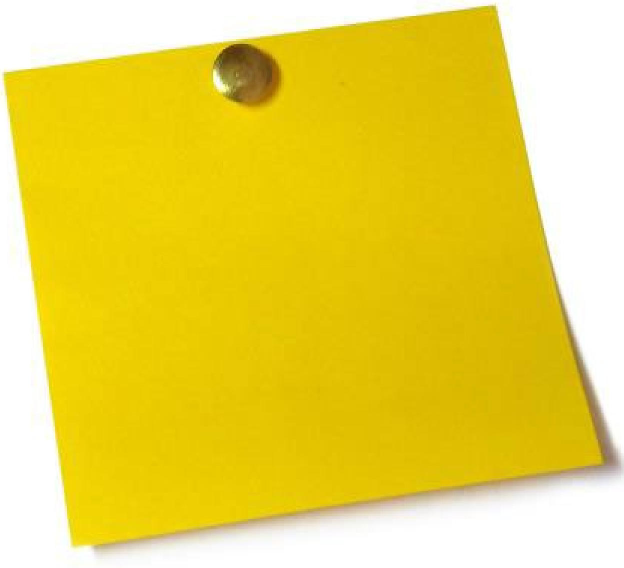


Appendix 9: Student participants' background questionnaire

Name:………………………………………………………………………………

Have you ever lived in another Saudi city, or in another Country? If yes, where, and for how long?

____

____

How often do you use any of the following strategies out of class to practise your English language skills? Please tick the relevant columns.

	Every day or almost every day	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	A few times a year	Every few years	Never
1. Chatting online with English-speaking friends or relatives						
2. Using instant messaging, Twitter, and other forms of online communication with strangers (e.g., celebrities)						
3. Watching English language TV						
4. Watching movies in English						
5. Reading books or magazines in English for pleasure						
6. Listening to music with English lyrics						
7. Listening to the radio (or podcast) in English						
8. Participating/attending events, talks or exhibitions that are offered in English.						
9. Having conversations in English during travels abroad						
10. Speaking English with other people at school, in the family or in the local community						
11. Having a private tutor						
12. Using English language courses at home (e.g. textbooks CDs, websites)						

If you use any other technique, please indicate below

____

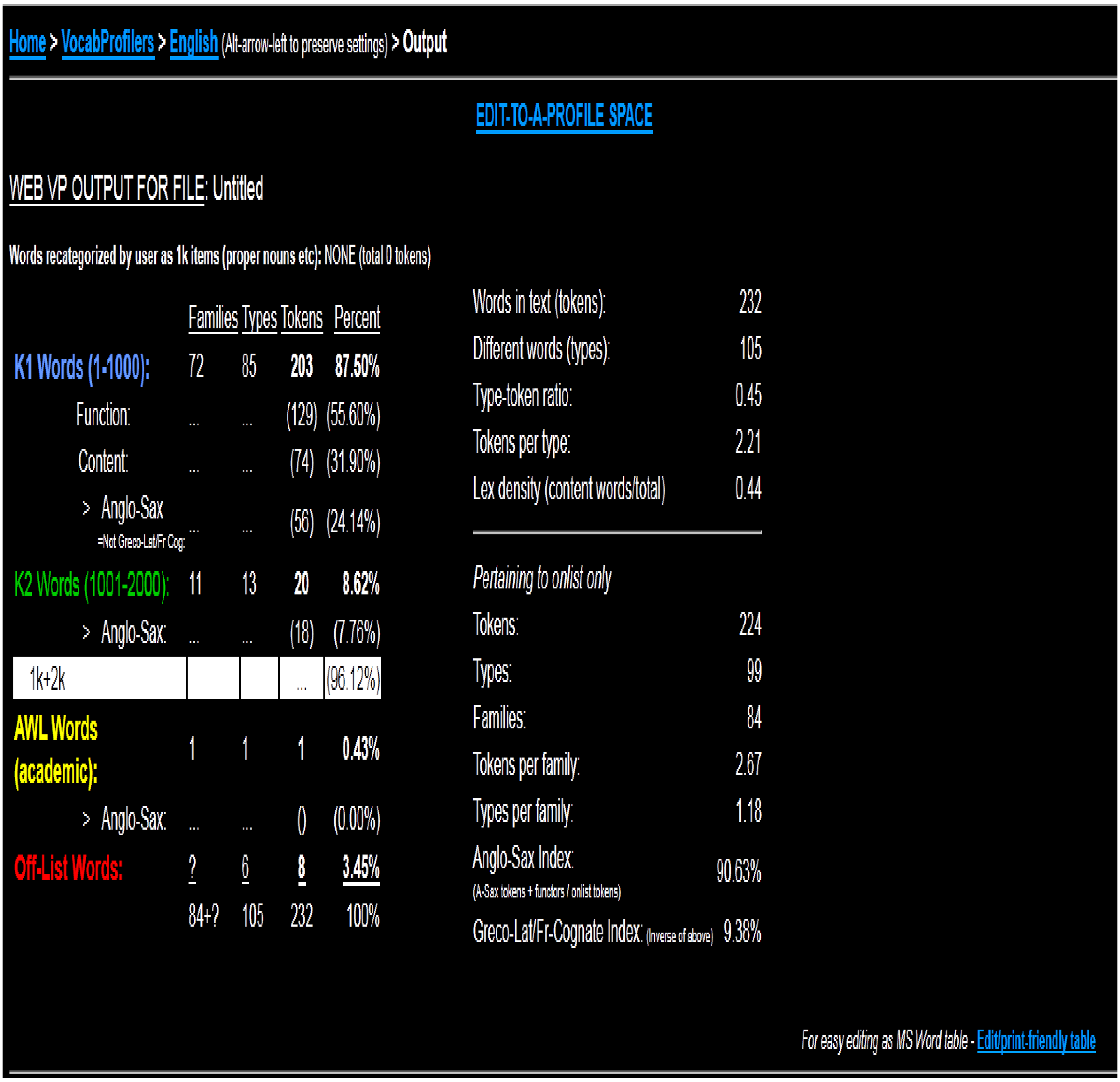
____

____

____

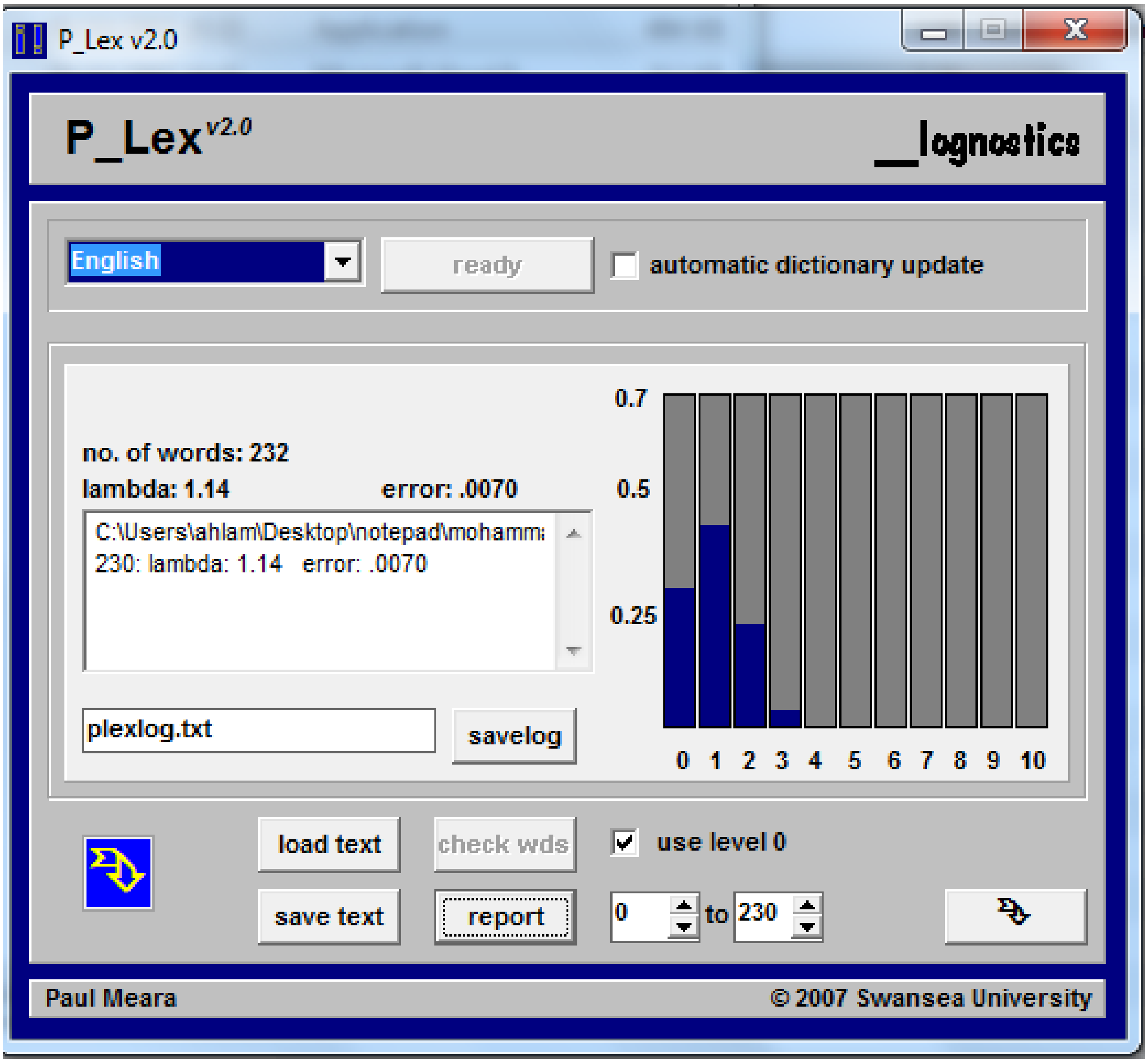
Thank you for responding to this questionnaire.

Appendix 10: Example of computer screen layout of *Web Vocabprofile*



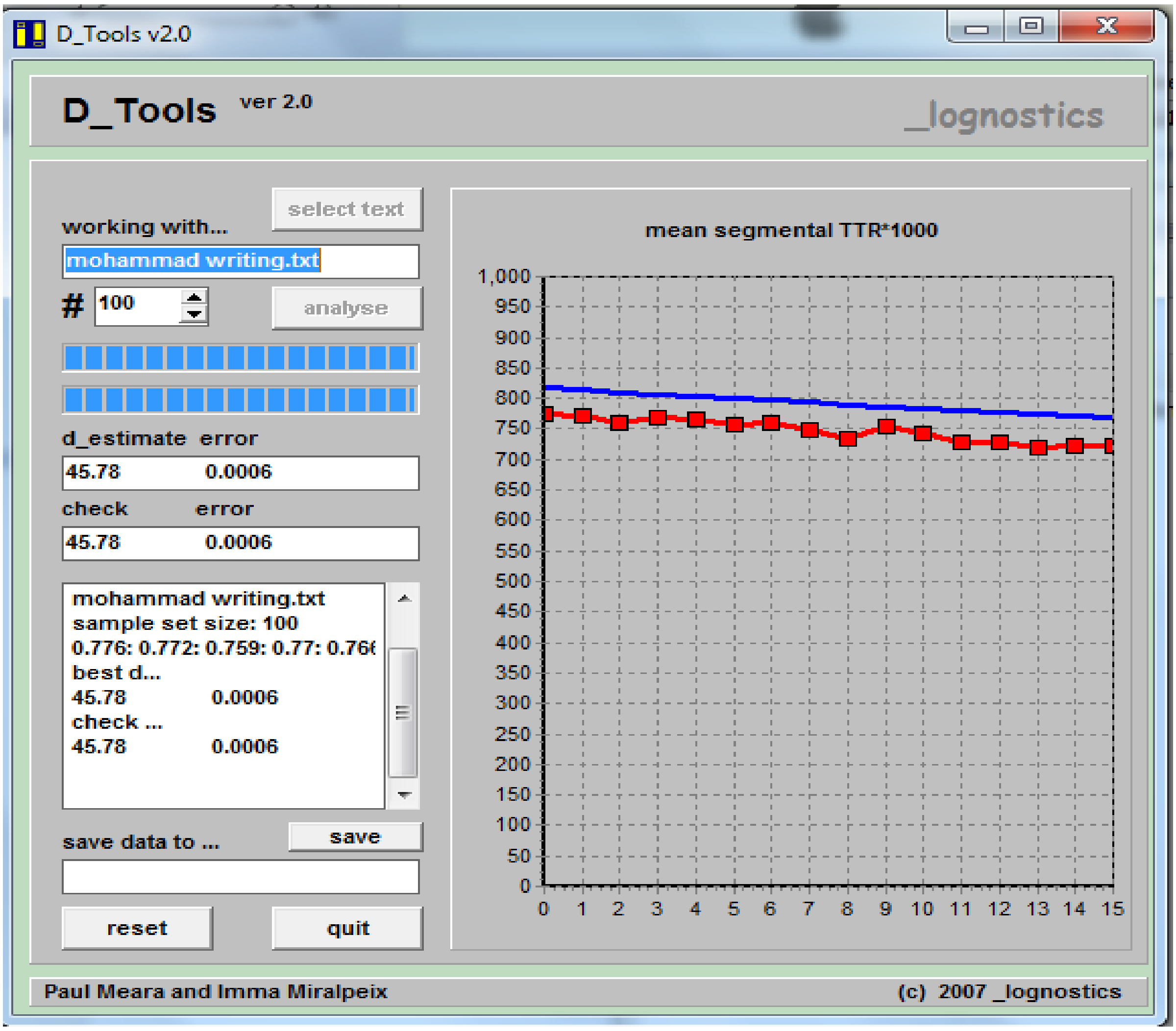
Source: http://www.lextutor.ca/

Appendix 11: Example of computer screen layout of *P_Lex*



Source: http://www.lognostics.co.uk/tools/index.htm

Appendix 12: Example of computer screen layout of *D_tools*



Source: http://www.lognostics.co.uk/tools/index.htm