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THE ROLE OF FIRST LANGUAGE LITERACY ON SECOND LANGUAGE
LITERACY: THE PERCEPTIONS OF GRADUATE SAUDI STUDENTS IN US
UNIVERSITIES

by

Muhammad A. Alrayes

A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Major: English

The University of Memphis

May 2020



*In the Name of Allah, the Most
Beneficent, the Most Merciful*

Dedication

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

Say, “Indeed, my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allah, Lord of the worlds. *Al-Ana‘aam* (6:162)

*This work is dedicated to:
my mother and father,
my wife and children,
my brothers and sisters,
my grandparents, uncles and aunts particularly
those who passed away may Allah have mercy on them رَحْمَةً مِنَ اللَّهِ
And to all the seekers of knowledge.*

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All praises and thanks are due to Allah the Almighty. I praise Him for the opportunity, perseverance and strength that He bestowed on me to complete this work. Peace and blessings of Allah be upon His last messenger Muhammad.

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Abstract

Alrayes, Muhammad AbdulMohsin. PhD. The University of Memphis. May 2020. The Role of First Language Literacy on Second Language Literacy: The Perceptions of Graduate Saudi Students in US Universities. Major Professor: Dr. Emily Thrush.

This study attempted to gather the perceptions of graduate Saudi students in the United States about the role of their first/second languages' (L1/L2) literacy transfer during their graduate work. The ultimate goal of this study is to reach a level of understanding about what specific role a student's L1 literacy and educational background could play in shaping their L2 literacy during graduate studies in an ESL context. Building on existing literature of L1/L2 literacy transfer, this study asks: How do graduate Saudi students in the US perceive their L1/L2 literacy transfer during their graduate work? The main theoretical framework this study follows is James Cummins' *Common Underlying Proficiency* (CUP).

A mixed-methods approach is used to achieve the purpose of this study. A questionnaire was distributed among fifty participants, who were divided into two groups: 25 males and 25 females. The questionnaire was followed up by a semi-structured interview where four of the participants were selected using purposive sampling serving the purpose of this study. The qualitative analysis model followed in this study during the different stages of analyzing the interviews includes: organizing the data, categorizing and coding the data, proposing themes based on the categories made previously, and writing the results.

The findings of this study support the existence of L1/L2 literacy transfer, whether it is negative or positive. There was emphasis on the need to improve the teaching of L1 literacy skills in Saudi Arabia, according to the participants of this study. Also, the findings

revealed that participants' L2 academic writing was a challenging stage they have faced during their L2 learning journey, due to the negative L1/L2 transfer. Finally, some participants indicated the positive transfer role of their rich L1 vocabulary toward their L2 literacy success. However, further longitudinal/comparative studies are recommended to focus on specific learners with strong/limited L1 literacy skills who continue their studies in the second language.

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Abbreviations

BICS: Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills

CALP: Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency

CLT: Communicative Language teaching

CUP: Common Underlying Proficiency

EAP: English for Academic Purposes

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ELLS: English language learners

LEP: Limited English Proficiency

EOP: English for Occupational Purposes

ESP: English for Specific or Special Purposes

ESL: English as a Second Language

KSAU-HS: King Saud bin Abdul-Aziz University for Health Sciences

L1: First Language

L2: Second Language

NS: Native English Speaker

NNS: Non-Native English Speaker

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

SACM: Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission

ZPD: Zone of Proximal Development

UG: Universal Grammar

Chapter I

Introduction

Introduction

The role of first language literacy on second language literacy has been an interesting topic in the second language acquisition (SLA) field in past few decades. Research until now has not, however, covered the issue from all perspectives. There have been some attempts every now and then tried to look at specific areas in the issue of transfer between first and second language literacies and/or literacy within one language. There are also some studies, as we shall see in the next section, which dealt with this issue from cultural perspectives.

Most of the work on first/second language literacy transfer has been mainly conducted on young children and more specifically of immigrant families. The work on adult learners and particularly graduate students is evidently scarce in the field. This study has two main focuses; a more general focus on L1/L2 literacy transfer as suggested by James Cummins *Common Underlying Proficiency*, and a more specific focus on the L2 academic writing of advanced L2 learners who are pursuing their graduate degrees in their L2. Therefore, this study is going to examine the perceptions of Saudi students doing their graduate degrees on their second language in the United States about the first/second language literacy transfer with a focus on their L2 academic writing. Hence, the study examines in its first (more general) part L1/L2 literacy transfer based on professor James Cummins' *Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP)*; i.e. whether the first language literacy (Arabic in this case) has any particular role on shaping advanced learners' second language literacy (English). The other more specific part this study aims to examine is the L2 academic writing of the study's participants and whether there were any positive/negative literacy transfer from the students' perspectives. This study focuses specifically on Saudi students doing their graduate degrees

in the US who are expected to prove their second language academic writing abilities to meet their degrees' requirements.

Like many second language learners, graduate Saudi students tend to face many challenges when writing their assignments, academic papers, and/or final projects. Investigating such a problem thoroughly and from different perspectives is of significant importance. The other problem that those students usually face is the negative evaluations from professors and the lower grades they often get compared to their native-speaking classmates. Some students claim that the most important part of writing is the content, regardless of the quality of writing; however, this is not the ideal scenario by most writing teachers according to Currie (1990). Since strong academic writing skills are required in most (if not all) graduate courses, Saudi students will find themselves in critical situations. Consequently, if the students cannot overcome those difficulties, perhaps they will earn low grades in most of their coursework and eventually end up on academic failure. In fact, their inability to meet their teacher's expectations would also be reflected in the students' lower self-esteem, which may impact their academic progress in the second language context.

This study aims to investigate this issue from the perspective of literacy transfer. Some of the concerns that many Saudi students' teachers provided about this issue is the inadequate teaching of writing skills in the students' first language (Arabic); therefore, this shortcoming negatively transfers into students' second language writing. I chose to conduct this study on the perceptions of some successful (advanced) Saudi students in the US to explore the issue from inside and attain a stronger grasp of the many factors that influence the second language literacy of Saudi students in the United States.

Learning Language (English) & Culture

This section will explore the issue of culture from different perspectives. However, it is more beneficial to discuss what language is first and English purely as a language without considering the cultural influence. According to Jordan (1997, as cited in Alrayes, 2017), there are three main levels or purposes for studying English: general purposes, social purposes, and specific purposes. An example of the first level would include small children learning English without knowing exactly why. The second level would include people interested in travelling or making friends from different cultures, or for shopping and general social purposes. The last level can be divided into two categories: English for vocational purposes and English for academic purposes. An example of vocational purposes would be teaching English to physicians, engineers, or other professional workers. The academic purposes would include teaching students from various disciplines the English language they would need during their coursework or reading textbooks written in English.

According to Atkinson (2004) and Williams (1983), *culture* is a complex term. Swann *et al.* (2003) gave one definition of culture as a set of daily ideas, practices, and beliefs which can identify a particular community; this would also include a community with a unique identity that continues through generations. There are other ways of viewing culture through various scholars; some of them linked culture to social behaviors, or as knowledge and a way of thinking that is conveyed through language. However, most scholars agree that culture tends to distinguish one group of people from another in various ways. The question to be asked here is: Do culture and language relate to each other or impact each other in any way?

Scholars' views have also varied in regard to where to draw the line between culture and language. One opinion is that language is a separate entity and independent of culture. For instance, Jones (1998) believes that teaching language is culture free and can be taught without any cultural background, such as English as a lingua franca. However, there is

another famous school of thought that believes that language as a communication system is inseparable from culture and that the teaching of any language should be part of teaching the target culture. It justifies its position claiming that in order to understand the native speakers of a particular language, the teaching of its culture is required, especially if those learners are supposed to live in the target language's community.

ESL/EFL learning/teaching Contexts

English as a second language (ESL henceforth) vs English as a foreign language (EFL henceforth) as contexts for learning were examined greatly in the last decades of research studies in the field of second language acquisition (SLA henceforth). First, let me define the term ESL, which refers to the teaching of English in a country whose first language is English; whereas, EFL refers to the teaching of English in a place where English is not considered the native or official language. Therefore, it seems obvious that many educators, not to mention language learners, would prefer the ESL context over EFL for different reasons. This not the place to tackle the pros and cons of each context, rather the researcher would try to practically recommend some ways that would help teachers and learners in both contexts, particularly the EFL one.

The main problem or challenge with EFL learning context is the balance between what is required from foreign language learners and what is not. The clarity of distinguishing the aims and objectives between EFL vs ESL learning contexts has not been made clear among many educators in the field. To be precise, what language skills their students should focus on and master, and/or they may consider ignoring or pay less attention to. As a researcher in the field, it seems to me that most foreign-language learners and teachers do not have a clear understanding of the nature of such questions, nor do they have answers, which is more important; consequently, that is the source of the problem. It would be safe to state

that learning foreign languages affects the learner's native culture and values. According to Phillipson (1992, as cited in Alrayes, 2017), English Language Teaching has been misused and contextualized for a time as linguistic imperialism; this is due to the various views on how to categorize the *ideal* EFL learning such as: English only as the medium of instruction, or what he describes as *the monolingual fallacy*. Also, Kabel (2009) supported Phillipson in this regard and added another point about *nativespeakerism*, which he believed is a representation of power and a privileged position. He further explained, "it entails images of 'Modern Self' and 'Traditional Other.'" This topic could be discussed further with varying opinions from each side, but the researcher cannot present everything here; it would be more beneficial to offer recommendations that hopefully would facilitate both learning and teaching in the EFL context.

Primarily, the researcher considers learning about the target context in which EFL will be conducted as a cornerstone in the process of reaching English as a foreign language learning success. After exploring the specific context, then the needs analysis step occurs. Here, learners, teachers, and learning materials are supposed to be included and carefully identified in this process. After that, there is a need to identify the learning goals in the learners' and teachers' minds and address any misunderstandings. Once everything is prepared, then the quality of teachers, materials, and learning resources can be discussed. Due to the sensitivity of this topic in some cultures and religions, those objectives and goals have to be repeatedly presented and clarified in the minds of EFL learners throughout the course as well as at its completion. The researcher believes this would help learners and impact their level of motivation once they realize the role they are taking on and the future expectations.

Saudi Arabia and Education

The educational system for students in Saudi Arabia starts from the age of four to twenty-two. Students can enroll in universities after the age of eighteen when they finish high school. The first university in Saudi Arabia was opened in 1957. According to the Ministry of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia (2010), there are more than 24 universities throughout the kingdom. As for foreign languages taught, English is the only one which has been around in the Saudi education system for a long time; however, Chinese has been added, according to officials. According to Crystal (2012), English is the international language of the world. Although English is considered the second language in Saudi Arabia, most Saudis use their first language, Arabic, in everyday life and rarely use English in public. According to several studies (Al-Shammary, 1984; and Al-Mashary, 2006), Arabic is being used by non-Saudis in their daily activities. As a matter of fact, they even tend to learn Arabic as well, even if their main purpose for living in the kingdom is not for studying. This notion makes it reasonable for many Saudi students not to focus on mastering English in their schools; rather, they just consider it a course that has to be taken, then forgotten.

According to several studies (Al-Mashary, 2006; Al-Oadi, 2000 and Alansari, 1995), English proficiency among Saudi students who finished high school is considered low level. The teaching of English in the Saudi education system started a long time ago. Unfortunately, the materials and teaching methods at the time were not suitable nor successful, according to Al-tuwaijri (1982). The situation has improved; the Ministry of Education has instituted new curricula and required new texts to meet the specific needs of Saudi students, including the appropriate presentation of Saudi costumes and culture and the students' attitudes. Despite these good-intentioned efforts and improvements in the last decade, poor English proficiency among graduates is still evident. Nevertheless, this is not unique to Saudi society; many other populations experience problems when studying foreign languages (Nomnian, 2008; Park,

2006; Kaur, 2006; and Gajdzik, 2005). Currently, the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia sends students abroad to pursue higher education and concurrently master the English language.

Teaching English or foreign languages in general in Saudi Arabia has a few challenges. For example, the Ministry of Education is focusing on a balance between the accurate and professional teaching of English without negatively affecting the culture or religion of the country. The Saudi officials believe in the importance of teaching foreign languages to its citizens and to open more doors with other cultures; yet, they have to be sure that their culture and traditions are not harmed or touched by any means. Moreover, Saudi officials will never tolerate when they see their first language or Islamic teachings being negatively influenced or replaced by any external factors. Interestingly enough, it is significant to point out that this scenario is not what they called Saudis' conserved society or way of thinking; the same case can be found in other Arab and Muslim countries where there is a similar concern. One example would be the Omani government. Fahmy and Bilton, (1992) stated that, although it supports teaching English as a foreign language in Oman and seeks economic growth, the government fears that going to the extreme may cause cultural contamination and social unrest. Finally, Heiman (1994) stated that the cultural values are to be protected in EFL settings rather than destroyed, he added:

"If we accept that language cannot be taught without teaching culture, we must be cognizant of which aspects of the culture we are presenting and how we are presenting them. EFL instruction does not have to foist on others aspects of our culture; they can be discussed as a point of view rather than as universal truth." (p.6)

Study Context

This study is primarily conducted on the United States of America where English is the official and first language, and hence, for foreign students, this is considered English as a Second Language (ESL) context. The study's participants are graduate ESL Saudi students pursuing their higher degrees in the US schools. Most of the Saudi students come to the US with low English proficiency level, therefore the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission (SACM) offered those students about a year in English language institutes to reach the second language level required before joining their potential program of study. Saudi students come to the US with variety of age groups; i.e. from 18 years old to around the age of 40 years old. The focus of this study would only include graduate students, whether they are working on their master's or PhD's degrees in various universities around the US.

Statement of the Problem:

This study tries to seek the perceptions of graduate Saudi students in the US about the role of L1/L2 literacy transfer during their time in graduate school. The main problems those students usually face during their study in an ESL context are twofold: cultural and educational background. Therefore, this research intends to gather information from the students themselves about the issue at hand with a particular emphasis on the Arabic language as their L1 and the Saudi culture where the participants come from.

The ultimate goal of this study is to reach a higher level of understanding about the role that Saudi students' L1 and their educational background could play on shaping their L2 and their graduate studies in an ESL context. It is essential to investigate such problems from students' perspectives not only to benefit those students solely; rather it would also be beneficial for their sponsors, educational institutions, their language teachers and university professors, as well as contributing to the field of SLA and specifically bilingual transfer.

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the field of SLA in the area of L1/L2 literacy transfer. It is also hoped that this study will fill the gap found in the literature above, as well as provide the ESL Saudi students with a comprehensive view to utilize their L1 literacy during their L2 academic studies. This study also aims to examine James Cummins' Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) with highly advanced L2 learners pursuing their higher degrees in an ESL context. Finally, it is hoped that this study will bring about a practical explanation of the problems faced by graduate international students in the US represented by the sample participants of this study.

By studying advanced L2 learners, this study will try to identify the current situation of the importance of focusing on L1 literacy during L2 academic studies. Exploring successful learners' perceptions would provide the field with more effective and practical methods for better learning. The findings of this study will also be significant to the ESL teaching community who are involved with international students in the US or any other ESL contexts. Finally, it is hoped that the findings of this study would shed light on specific recommendations for the application process of admitting international students into graduate programs in English speaking countries.

Research Questions:

The issue of L1/L2 literacy transfer has been investigated mainly on L2 children learners as have been explained above, particularly regarding Cummins' CUP. Yet, there have been very few empirical studies and research about their adult counterparts. In this study the researcher is going to shed light on this neglected group of learners from their own perspectives about the investigated issue on hand. Questionnaires will be used as well as conducting interviews to insure the comprehensive coverage of this issue.

This study will also try to find out whether those learners were influenced by the sociocultural context during their early L1 education. In order to present this topic as objectively as possible, the focus of the study would be on the voice of the participants, who are part of the learning process rather than speaking on their behalf. Most of the previous studies focused on the L2 writers' texts without considering the role of L1 literacy. Considering L2 learners' educational background and social context is as important as examining their actual current L2 academic writings. This research study would try to answer the following two main questions and four sub-questions:

Main questions:

- 1. How do graduate Saudi students in the US perceive their L1/L2 literacy transfer during their graduate work?**
- 2. What was the main role of participants' L1 literacy and other influential factors (social, education, attitudinal, etc.) on their academic achievements and potential projects?**

Sub-questions:

- a. Was there any positive transfer between L1/L2 literacy among the participants of the study? How?**
- b. Was there any negative transfer between L1/L2 literacy among the participants of the study? How?**
- c. What is the role of participants' L1/L2 literacy on their L2 academic writing?**

d. What impact do cultural, educational, and social contexts have on participants' L1/L2 literacy skills?

Chapter II

Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Background:

2.1.1 Introduction

Learning other languages in today's world has become a necessity. Yet, the learning situations and environments have various forms and circumstances across the globe. There are many countries in the world today are considered bilingual or multilingual. In such areas, the need for addressing the issue of learning first and second language literacies is an ongoing topic. The case is not the same with monolingual countries. The main problem people face from countries with more than one language is the availability of education in the language they understand or speak as their mother tongue. It is unfortunate that such a decision to make education available for all minority groups in their first language is a difficult one. Many factors play some role in making this decision including religious, social, economic reasons.

This issue about the importance of providing education in people's first language is evident in many linguistics theories. Most linguists support the idea of making children literate first in their mother tongue before becoming literate in the second language. That is, when a person becomes literate and proficient in their first language, this literacy will transfer to their second language if it has been introduced successfully in the first place. Dutcher (1996, as cited in Hauser, 2008) supports this view of literacy transfer from L1 into L2 which would impact the proficiency of learning the second language positively. Dutcher (1996), in her study, presented several studies from different countries including United States, Canada, Nigeria, Guatemala, and others which supported the same theory about the better impact for

learning the second language in a later stage after mastering L1. Those studies found that learners who did not start learning L2 until mastering their first language then transitioned to learn a second language, achieve better results than their counterparts who were introduced literacy in L2 at an earlier stage. What is more interesting is that those groups of learners did not perform better in the second language only; they were even better academically and surpass other groups who were introduced to the second language earlier. Dutcher (1996) commented about this as 'the most important conclusion'. Finally, another research by Herschell (as cited in Hauser, 2008) in Australia investigated the situation of the Aboriginal before and after 1970. Before that year, the native language of the Aboriginal was despised and rejected, and English was forced as a means by the dominant power in society. After 1970, however, there was “growing awareness of social and political rights, ... consciousness of the political and social value of Aboriginal language and identity” (2004). Such studies and more proved the importance of first language literacy and how that would contribute learning of second language, self-esteem and academic skills in general for students both in L1 and L2.

2.1.2 Definition of terms

It is necessary to contextualize the topic by defining essential terminologies, even if they appear broad or obvious. According to the Oxford dictionary (cited in Alrayes, 2017), *language* means "The method of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way." The term *learning* is defined as "acquiring knowledge of a subject or a skill by study, experience, or instruction." *Teaching* means "showing or helping someone to learn how to do something, giving instructions, guiding in the study of something, providing with knowledge, causing to know or understand" (Brown, 2014). Before discussing the history of teaching ESL, it is critical to

distinguish between three terms associated with teaching: approach, method, and technique. According to Anthony (1963), *approach* relates to a research paradigm or a model- theory. *Method* can be described as a set of actions, which would be more specific on how to teach second/foreign language and seems less broad than approach. *Technique*, the most specific of the three, relates to a classroom device or activity, such as imitation and repetition, etc.

Traditionally, *literacy* or language literacy relates to the ability to read and write in a language (Roberts, 1994). However, according to Gee (2014), literacy is a sociocognitive phenomenon more than simply a cognitive skill or ability. It will also include the social goals achieved through literacy (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 8); therefore, any kind of literacy cannot be restricted to a particular text or person, nor it can be perceived as a single entity or excluded from its environment or social practices. This notion would include reading and writing, and the construction of meaning, purpose of text, and perceptions and/or attitudes of readers/writers. When the word *literacy* is associated with the word *practice*, then we are considering how particular cultural contexts think about the actions of reading and writing, currently known as "literacy practices" (Street, 2000).

There are the two terms introduced by James Cummins: *BICS* (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) and *CALP* (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency). They refer to language skills. *BICS* is narrower and limited to language skills used for basic communication purposes only. *CALP* refers to the academic language that is more complex and needs more time for mastering compared to *BICS*. According to Krashen (2000), *CALP* is the ability to read short literary texts, write book reports and other academic papers, and comprehend more complex texts. *LEP* (Limited English Proficiency) refers to *ELLs* (English language learners) who have not reached a level appropriate to their age and/or grade compared to the native speakers of English. *L1* (First Language) refers to the native language

or the mother tongue of learners, whereas L2 (Second Language) refers to the target language or mainly English in this paper.

Another main term in this research is *perception*. According to Schermerhorn, Hunt, and Osborn (2003), it can be defined as "the process by which people select, organize, interpret, retrieve and respond to the information from the world around them." This definition would explain why the researcher chose to investigate graduate students' perception and not undergraduate students. Perception is mainly based on knowledge and background experiences, which would be more prominent among graduate students.

Since this study aims at exploring literacy of graduate Saudi students in the US, it is important to shed light on the purpose and expectations of graduate students' L2 academic writing skills. According to Caffarella and Barnett (2000), graduate students are expected to be proficient writers. The purpose of graduate students' writing is to enhance their content knowledge, critical thinking, and encourage them to take part in academic communities (Coffin, Curry, Goodman, Hewings, Lillis, & Swann, 2003). Moreover, Pecorari (2006) believes the success of graduate students in any academic field is dependent on their advanced academic writing skills. Therefore, this study chose to focus on the academic writing skills of the participants in both L1 and L2 from their perspectives. In the next section, a historical overview about the modern second language acquisition theories, language transfer, and language literacy will be discussed.

2.1.3 Modern Second Language Theories

A brief overview about modern second language learning/teaching theories is essential before elaborating on the main hypothesis in this research *CUP* by James Cummins. After Chomsky's Universal Grammar (UG), the shift in the second language learning field had moved to the role of the learners' environment and interactional levels in the learning

process. Such theories include those which focused on second language learners' input (Input Hypothesis), output produced by second language learners (Output Hypothesis), and second language interaction in conversations and other social dialogues (Interaction Hypothesis).

Input Hypothesis (Stephen Krashen)

The relation between first and second language acquisition was obvious in the Input Hypothesis. In its original shape, the Input Hypothesis was another way of looking at second language learners and interaction just like the way of looking at 'baby talk'. The simplified use of language to address children, is quite close to what is called 'foreigner talk'; simplified and pidgin-like variety to talk to second/foreign language speakers (Long, 1996). Thus, the comprehensible input seems to be an obvious component in second language learning, however Krashen's Input hypothesis was the defined contribution in the linguistics field about the role and development of comprehensible input on the second language learning. Krashen (1985) stated that the only way for acquiring human language comes from understanding the messages-or receiving of "comprehensible input," explaining the role of speaking a language as a result of acquisition but not the opposite and believing that grammar is automatically processed when there is existence of comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985, p. 2). A final point about the Input hypothesis is that Krashen explained how the input processed to 'intake' in three steps: first, the learner understands the second language form, then the learner notices the process between the second language form and the current interlanguage he/she is controlling, and finally, the recurrence of the second language form with minimal frequency (Krashen, 1983).

Interaction Hypothesis (Long)

This Interaction hypothesis is, according to Long (1996), an extension of Input hypothesis by Krashen. This hypothesis was first introduced after Long conducted a study of conversation exchanges between two groups of speakers: native speaker-native-speaker and native speaker-non-native speaker. The conversations were to discuss informal situations, instructions, playing games, and so on, and Long found that there were not many differences in regard to linguistics and grammatical complexities in particular between the two groups. The main difference Long found between the two groups was on managing the conversations and keeping it going. With the native speaker - non-native speaker group, Long found that they tended to use more nonlinguistic tactics, such as confirmation checks, repetition, clarification requests, etc. to overcome communication difficulties that were not found among the native speaker - native speaker group. According to the Interaction hypothesis, such situations in the case of native speaker - non-native speaker conversations are useful for language collaboration and language learning in general. This way of using such tactics would increase the level of comprehension and also be a better adjustment to the current level of the second language learner's input.

Output Hypothesis (Swain)

Fluency in the second language is regarded as a main goal for second language learning. Therefore, output is the key factor and plays a major role in attaining fluency in the second language learning process. In this regard, Swain (1997) developed three functions for second language learner's output:

- Noticing/triggering function,
- Hypothesis-testing function,
- Metalinguistic function.

She stated that the production in the target language (use of output) would make the learners aware of their current gaps and problems in their learning process (noticing function). Also they will be able to reflect on and discuss explicitly those gaps (metalinguistic function), and during this process of output production, second language learners would be able to try out their new forms (hypothesis-testing function).

There were other researchers who focused on second language learners' output opportunities and their language development particularly vocabulary size. Ellis and He conducted a study among low proficiency learners of English as a second language. The study divided the learners into three groups and they were tested for new vocabulary items. The task was conducted on a designed apartment layout on which participants were asked to place pictures of furniture around this layout. The first group was not allowed to negotiate meaning, the second group was allowed to discuss only when meaning is not clear, and the last group was asked to conduct the task and give instructions to an interlocutor. The study used pre-test and post-test of specific vocabulary items which found out that the third group 'output' outperformed the other two groups. Other similar studies were conducted on other than English language settings and came to the same results.

Socio-cultural Theory

Lev Vygotsky, a Russian researcher and theorist, was born in 1896, and some of his many writings about language and child development were translated into English, such as *Thought and Language*. Vygotsky's work was very influential among both psychological theorists, and education researchers. Some of those researchers in Education have attempted to put his theories into application in classroom environments including Mercer (1995 & 2000) and Wells (1999).

The most well-known of Vygotsky's theories was the Zone of Proximal Development. He based this view on how children (or unskilled individuals) learn anything through the guidance of more skilled people around them like parents or teachers, through the process of *other-regulation* by the use of language as a mediator. So, this process will include some shared activity through collaborative talk. Eventually learners would be able to grasp the new skills themselves. *Learning*, according to this theory, is on the shift between the collaborative inter-mental activity to the autonomous intra-mental activity. Thus, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is where learning takes place. That is, it is the stage when the learners are not capable of grasping specific skills or knowledge in general independently, rather they could achieve their learning through relevant scaffolding help.

Socio-cultural Theory and Second Language Learning

As mentioned above in regard to how learning takes place, according to Socio-cultural theory through the collaborative activity, second language learning is no exception to this rule according to this theory. The second language learners can reach the meaning through the collaborative activity with the target language users. This view may go against what is known as *performance and competence* by Chomsky. Actually, according to the Vygotskian Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), all the learning processes: instruction, organized learning, and naturalistic development are merged together in a single place. Also, more studies in second language learning have come to conclusions that support the socio-cultural theory, particularly the transfer knowledge of the target language between the speakers. However, one of the criticisms about those studies is that they *mostly* were conducted in a classroom environment rather than in less formal settings. It is primarily due to the following of Vygotskian ZPD that the interaction should be between an expert and

novice, which was teacher and student in the cases of those studies. Finally, the more modern socio-cultural theorists have included more forms of collaborative activity than just expert and novice interaction; i.e. they included things such as pair, group-work learning, and, therefore, learning can occur among people collaboratively, regardless of the presence of the teacher or the expert.

2.1.4 Language Literacy Transfer & Cummins' Hypotheses

My initial hypothesis' main focus was on the transfer of the learners' linguistic ability from L1 to L2. Cummins presumes that ELLs benefit from their L1 literacy by transferring their prior academic skills and the cognitive expertise they have from their L1 to their L2.

There were three main theories that have been proposed by James Cummins about L1/L2 literacy transfer. According to Baker and Jones (1998, cited in Hauser, 2008), the main three hypotheses related to bilingualism are: *threshold theory*, *common underlying proficiency theory* and *interdependency theory*. The first (threshold) focuses on a minimal level of proficiency a learner needs to achieve in order to make use of the literacy transfer between languages. The second (common underlying proficiency) relates to a specific ability in the brain that deals with all language a person uses within a single linguistic capacity or underlying proficiency. The third (interdependence) is a restatement of the threshold, which affirms that language proficiency would be transferred to other learned languages. Baker and Jones (1998) commented on the debatable idea of measuring bilingualism and who is considered bilingually proficient or not. They explained the two concepts (BICS) and (CALP); i.e. there are cases where L2 learners may struggle with specific classroom instruction even if their English communication skills are quite proficient. In fact, those learners need more than just the communication skills; (CALP) cognitive/academic language proficiency is actually what such learners need in order to succeed in their classes.

According to Krashen, (2000), a figure in the field, the transfer does exist between first and second languages. Moreover, according to the same source he believes that second language learners, what he called 'ELLs' referring to English language learners in this case, could outperform native speakers due to their background knowledge in their L1 (Krashen, 2000). Krashen's idea becomes more interesting when applied to those specializing in English literature, linguistics, and/or teaching English as an academic major, as well as in other academic disciplines. He believes any concept, piece of knowledge, or skill that a learner mastered in his/her L1 will be transferred to their L2 in any academic subject, including level of vocabulary or the linguistic abilities. Consequently, learners with rich L1 vocabulary will achieve rich L2 diction. Krashen also thinks that literacy in the L1 leads to literacy in L2, stating that the process of reading, for instance, is universal across languages and the development of vocabulary of different languages follow the same process as well as the competency transfer from L1 to L2. He added that transfer occurs among all languages, regardless of their alphabetical systems, i.e. transfer happened from Chinese, Arabic, Japanese, and Spanish to English (Krashen, 2001).

Thus, if we reach a conclusion about the definite impact of the ELLs' L1 literacy on their L2 literacy and academic achievement in general, then we have to comprehend how bilingual education should look like. Cummins (1986, as cited in Alrayes, 2017) believes that bilingual children should receive instruction in their L1 to make sure they start their educations successfully. He added that skills developed initially in L1 can be transferred to English as the knowledge transfer was "evidenced consistently" in the bilingual literature. Moreover, he emphasized the involvement of L1 instruction having a positive impact on the children's home environment by including their culture in learning "should operate to challenge the devaluation of the community in the wider society, and thus contribute to

students' academic success" (Cummins, 1999, p. 2). Then, examining Cummins' views with advanced adult L2 learners would be worth investigating in this study.

When handling the issue of L2 acquisition or 'development' as Cummins calls it, he provided two distinctions: BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) and CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency). Unfortunately, many L2 educators, not to mention L2 learners, are confused between these two features of L2 development as presented by Cummins. That is, many people assume BICS is all they need to begin studying in their L2; however, this is false, particularly when we consider L2 literacy, learning skills, and cognitive abilities. What is required is what Cummins calls CALP to have ELLs proficient for their academic and learning challenges and achievements. Other studies match Cummins and Krashen's ideas about the positive transfer of L1 prior knowledge to L2 learning/acquisition. Saville-Troike (1991) clarified how CALP is more important than BICS; "the attainment of a high level of academic competence requires the ability to decode and encode meaning in context-reduced tasks, such as reading and writing". Tucker (1999) also gave a thorough picture of the related work; he stated that "a child who acquires basic literacy or numeracy concepts in one language can transfer these concepts and knowledge to a second or third or other later-acquired languages" (p. 3).

2.1.5 First/Second language literacy

Research in the second language acquisition field (SLA) has gone through different levels in considering the relationship between first language and second language. I believe there has been great amount of studies that discussed this specific issue; i.e. whether to deal with second language acquisition the same way we deal with our first language acquisition or not. Another thing is about what are the best teaching methods that would help second language learners achieve the highest amount of fluency and proficiency. Such issues have

been investigated thoroughly and empirically; however, this study is not going to address those issues from the same perspectives. Rather, the focus of this study is twofold: investigation of first/second language literacy transfer including role of mother tongue's learning context, and the other part is specified to investigating the L2 academic writing skills from the perspective of the participants in the study.

Most Saudi students who have completed their early education in Saudi Arabia were exposed to almost one way of teaching. Saudi Arabia is a monolingual country (more details about education in Saudi Arabia were introduced in the previous chapter in 1.4 section), therefore multi teaching approaches are very rare to be found in Saudi public education particularly before 2010. This study would address this issue from the perspectives of graduate (or advanced) Saudi L2 learners in the US who had their early education in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the first language literacy of those Saudi students is of significant importance in this study particularly because they have achieved advanced level in their second language literacy as well as their academic disciplines.

In the case of biliterate or multiliterate students, the first language literacy has to be taken into consideration when introducing to new literacies. In fact, empirical studies about this idea of incorporating the first language literacy as a main playing role on the second language(s) literacy have not appeared on surface up until late 1980s. Most of such studies focused on second language writing development based on learners' first language writing experiences (more elaborations about previous studies in the next section).

Previous Studies:

Studies about Students' Perceptions

The focus of this research is to explore graduate students' perceptions; therefore, it is important to shed light on this concept with some elaborations. One of the main figure writers

who discussed perception is Johns (1997), and she believes that the student-centered approach should explore students' perceptions and their personal theories of literacy. Such personal theories (experiences and strategies of students), she believes, are of direct influence on students' perceptions and eventually learning outcome. In fact, being aware of students' perceptions would improve their learning as well as help teachers provide the right and appropriate tasks which meet their students' immediate needs (Pajares & Valiante, 2006).

Some of the previous studies that explore students' perceptions include one by Cai (2013). This study aimed to explore the perceptions of students' academic writing. The researcher used two data elicitation tools: focus group interviews and questionnaires. The questionnaire was divided into three main sections to explore students' perception in regard to learning purpose, difficulties of academic writings, and general language problems. Then follow up interviews were conducted with focus group of six participants only. The interviews were used in this study to support the distributed questionnaire questions and to clarify about any vagueness that may be found in the interviewees' responses as well. The results of this study stated that the participants were not happy to use academic language and they used it only for school purposes. An interesting finding in Cai's study is that the participants mentioned few of the problems they encountered such as use of library resources, references and databases, and critiquing the previous literature. Also, the finding stated that participants faced difficulty with the methodology chapter, particularly analyzing the data and revising the results.

Another noteworthy research study was about investigating the perceptions of doctoral students in the US about their writing process. This study by Caffarella and Barnett (2000) looked at forty-seven PhD students' perceptions of the feedback and critique they received from their supervisors as well as their classmates. The participants revealed that they felt they benefited from those critiques particularly in forming their final writing drafts. They,

additionally, admitted that it was sometimes hard to tolerate the criticism and emotionally disturbing.

Another study that investigate the perceptions of graduate students is by Yeh (2010) who focused on four Taiwanese graduate students in Applied Linguistics. The study's main data elicitation tool was conducting interviews. The researcher asked his interviewees about their perceptions of academic writing course that they are taking in their second language L2 (English). The participants indicated some difficulty with this course particularly when writing their literature review. This study seems to share some commonality with the aforementioned Cai (2013) particularly in the findings sections. Both studies indicated that participants had stated the difficulty they faced during the wiring of their literature review chapter. In Cai (2013) for instance, participants specifically talked about the challenging they faced when critiquing previous studies in the literature. Whereas in Yeh (2010), the participants talked about the general difficulty of writing chapter two without much details about it.

Shaw (1991) investigated the perceptions of international graduate students toward writing their dissertations. The study's participants were twenty-two students in a UK university and they were interviewed during this study by the researcher. The focus of the interviews was on the participants' perceptions of their writing process, role of mother tongue, relationship with academic supervisor, etc. The finding in this study revealed that students faced difficulty writing their discussion section in the dissertation, and some of the participants indicated differences in their writing style in English compared to their mother tongue. They specified that they tend to write longer sentences in English compared to shorter ones in their first language.

Most of the studies mentioned above dealt with graduate students in the western universities. It could be added that most of those studies investigated the students' perceptions

in regard to their academic writing including thesis or dissertation, also some of them touched on the relationship between the students and their academic supervisors and/or the feedback they get from them as well as from their colleagues. Those and other studies prove how importance is to get graduate students' perceptions on their own academic experience and learning. It can now be anticipated that graduate students are an excellent target to find rich data particularly those studying outside their own countries; i.e. international students.

There still seems to be a gap in the literature that needs to be addressed to focus more on the issue of literacy. That is, filling the gap of first and second languages' literacy transfer. It is true that there has been some work out there about academic writing, which is part of literacy); however, this angle of L1/L2 literacy transfer on Saudi graduate students in the US has not been investigated as far as the researcher knows. Therefore, it is aimed to focus this study on the perceptions of graduate Saudi students in the US toward their L1/L2 literacy transfer. Graduate students usually have rich experiences and their metacognitive skills are often better than the undergraduate students. As quoted above, Johns believes about the importance of exploring perceptions of students which she described as students' personal theories of literacy (1997). Finally, the students' perceptions are main components to understand and meet students' needs which plays a vital role in the learning process and eventually impacts learning outcomes.

Chapter III

Study Method

Mixed methods:

Mixed methods will be used in this research study employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Mixed methods have been defined by many scholars in social sciences and in applied language studies. Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007) defined mixed method as follows:

...the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration. (p 123)

The focus of this definition is on how such methods would serve the research purpose for a better and deeper understanding of the investigated problem. This could be achieved only through the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches and their data collection/analysis instruments.

One of the main advantages of mixed methods is about reliability of the findings. That is, we can explore one topic from different sides, and, for that reason, we need to use more than just one research instrument (Dörnyei, 2007). By doing so, we would be able to combine the advantages of the two approaches; the depth and richness of data would be achieved through the qualitative approach, and the breadth of participants' data would complement and confirm the findings through a quantitative approach. Those are the main reasons for employing the mixed methods in my current study.

The mixed methods in this study will help me answer the research questions regarding the Saudi students' perceptions about the role of L1/L2 literacy transfer during their graduate

studies in the US. Hopefully, this methodology will enable me to gain a deeper understanding about the participants' successful experiences on their L2 literacy and academic writing career and how exactly they made use of their L1 literacy background toward achieving the success in the second language setting. According to Dörnyei (2007), the flexibility and adaptability of the mixed methods approach make it efficient for applied linguistics research in particular and educational research in general. Thus, this approach was chosen to serve the purpose of this study and attain its goals of exploring those advanced and successful L2 learners' experiences through their own voice.

Participants

The focus of this study is to investigate the role of L1/L2 literacy transfer among graduate Saudi students in the US. It is going to explore the perceptions of those participants according to their experiences with L2 accomplishments in the graduate level and with a particular focus on academic writing skills. In order to conduct this study using the mixed-methods approach, fifty Saudi students were selected as the study's participants. As stated before, they were all at the graduate level studying in different schools around the US. The participants were divided by gender groups: 25 female and 25 male students. They were contacted via social media applications. At the end of the survey, they were asked if they were interested in participating in a follow up randomly-chosen interview.

Piloting;

According to Teijlingen and Hundley, V. (2001), pilot studies refer to the “mini versions of a full-scale study (also called 'feasibility' studies), as well as the specific pre-testing of a particular research instrument, such as a questionnaire or interview schedule.” Therefore, the main purpose for conducting a pilot study in this research was to test the validity and reliability of the research instruments. The pilot study was one of the earliest

steps in the data collection process in this research. I met with a number of the participants and distributed a draft copy of the questionnaire; while the intended participants were filling out the form, there was discussion and testing the comprehension of each of the questionnaire items. The result from the pilot study was significantly important and led to few changes in some items of the questionnaire before distributing the final version.

Instruments:

Questionnaire

The use of the questionnaire as data collection tool is very common among research on exploring participants' perceptions. In the area of L2 learning/acquisition, a questionnaire is also widely used by researchers in the field. Using a questionnaire is highly practical from different perspectives; i.e. a questionnaire often can be approached and administered easily by both participants and researchers, can provide comparable information, and, more importantly, can be used for mixed-methods research and “provide both qualitative insights and quantifiable data, and thus are very flexible for use in a range of research” (Macky & Gass, 2005).

Semi-structured interview

The semi-structured interview was used in this study as the second data collection tool. It worked as a complementary instrument to the questionnaire for serving the purpose of this study. About four of the participants were selected using purposive sampling to take part in the interview. This kind of sampling technique is defined as "a type of non-probability sampling that is most effective when one needs to study a certain cultural domain with knowledgeable experts" (Tongco, 2007). The interviews were conducted face-to-face, on the phone, and by using smart phone applications, such as WhatsApp and other similar applications.

Interview/questionnaire instruments are often found to be more convenient and fit the preference diversity of a study's participants. The interviews also help in the data collection/analysis process; i.e. explain unclear questionnaire result, elaborated interviewees' responses, and enrich the amount of data for the study as a whole. Finally, different areas of L1/L2 literacy transfer were investigated and asked about in both the questionnaire and semi-structured interview.

Procedure

The questionnaire survey was in two main sections in addition to the consent form. After filling out the consent form, the participants were moved to the first section which contained some questions about their demographic and personal information. They were asked about their age, years of learning English, gender, etc. then were directed to the second part of the questionnaire which was a Likert-type scale. In this section, participants were asked specific questions about their L1 literacy (reading/writing) skills, L2 literacy influence by L1 literacy skills (positively/negatively), academic writing skills and publications in both languages, and the role of cultural, social, and educational background in both L1 and L2 learning experiences on the participants' overall literacy skills. A sample of this questionnaire survey is included in appendix A.

Validity

The study applied two methods to examine and measure the validity of the questionnaire:

Experts Validation

Through the expertise of my supervisor in the field and her valuable feedback, the questionnaire was evaluated and revised based on her recommendations.

Internal Validity

To insure the validity of the questionnaire, a statistical analysis test was used. It is the internal validity test (Pearson Test), which measures the correlation coefficient between each item in the questionnaire and the whole group of items that answer each of the research questions.

Internal consistency

The questionnaire's internal consistency was evaluated after conducting a study by measuring the correlation coefficients between each item in the questionnaire and the main research variables.

As shown in Table (1), the correlation coefficients between each item of the first section in the questionnaire and the first research question are located between (.678) and (.906), which are high enough to be valid. These correlation coefficients indicate the correlation significance at level ($\alpha = 0.01$), where all p-values are less than (0.01), so it can be said that the items of this first section in the questionnaire are consistent and valid to measure what they were set for.

Table 1 questionnaire's internal consistency (section 1)

The correlation coefficient between each item of the first section in the questionnaire and the first research question.

Item	Pearson correlation coefficient	p-value (sig.)
My READING skills in the first language L1 are highly proficient.	0.845	0.000**

Table 1 Continued

Item	Pearson correlation coefficient	p-value (sig.)
I READ extracurricular materials in my L1 Arabic more than in English.	0.748	0.000**
My WRITING skills in my L1 Arabic are highly proficient.	0.799	0.000**
I WRITE extracurricular materials in my L1 Arabic more than in English.	0.548	0.000**
My READING skills in the second language L2 (English) are highly proficient	0.912	0.000**
My WRITING skills in the second language L2 (English) are highly proficient	0.654	0.000**
My L1 literacy skills (reading/writing) has influenced my L2 READING positively.	0.533	0.000**
My L1 literacy skills (reading/writing) has influenced my L2 WRITING positively.	0.758	0.000**
My weak L1 literacy skills (reading/writing) has influenced my L2 literacy.	0.652	0.000**

** significance at $\alpha=0.01$

As shown in Table (2), the correlation coefficients between each item of the second section in the questionnaire and the second research question are located between (.501) and (.796), which are high enough to be valid. These correlation coefficients indicate the correlation significance at level ($\alpha = 0.01$), where all p-values are less than (0.01), so it can be

said that the items of this second section are consistent and valid to measure what they were set for.

Table 2 questionnaire's internal consistency (section 2)

The correlation coefficient between each item in the second section of the questionnaire and the second research question.

Item	Pearson correlation coefficient	p-value (sig.)
My L1 literacy skills (reading/writing) has influenced my L2 ACADEMIC WRITING positively.	0.796	0.000**
I will (or already have) published and contribute to the Arabic academia.	0.558	0.000**
I will (or already have) published and contribute to the English academia.	0.632	0.000**
There is no relation between my academic writing skills in my L1 and L2.	0.725	0.000**
The scarcity of Arabic written materials in my field impacted my L1 academic writing skills.	0.501	0.000**

** significance at $\alpha=0.01$

As shown in Table (3), the correlation coefficients between each item of the third section in the questionnaire and the third research question are located between (.672) and (.799), which are high enough to be valid. These correlation coefficients indicate the correlation significance at level ($\alpha = 0.01$) where all p-values are less than (0.01), so it can be said that the items of this third section are consistent and valid to measure what they were set for.

Table 3 questionnaire's internal consistency (section 3)

The correlation coefficient between each item in the third section in the questionnaire and the third research question.

Item	Pearson correlation coefficient	p-value (sig.)
If Arabic is used as the medium of instruction in SA with developed sciences 'Physics, Math, Engineering, etc.' it will show and prove success.	0.725	0.000**
English has become more prestigious language due to the prevailing cultures.	0.799	0.000**
The attitudinal and social concepts toward Arabic language has influenced the literacy skills among its speakers.	0.672	0.000**
Improving the educational and social environments of teaching Arabic literacy skills would positively impact English literacy skills among Saudi Students	0.695	0.000**

** significance at $\alpha=0.01$

Reliability

Reliability of a questionnaire is the degree of consistency in which it measures the level of consistency of the questionnaire result, particularly when the questionnaire is distributed several times under the same conditions. In other words, questionnaire reliability means that the questionnaire will give the same results if it is distributed several times to the

study sample in specific time periods. For most purposes, a reliability coefficient above 0.7 is considered satisfactory.

The Cronbach's Alpha statistical test was used to measure the questionnaire's reliability. The Alpha values of each section in the questionnaire and the total number of questionnaire items were calculated using Cronbach's Alpha test. As illustrated in Table (4), the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for all questionnaire items is (0.778), which is high to ensure the reliability of the questionnaire.

Table 4: Cronbach's Alpha for Reliability

Section	No of items	Cronbach's Alpha coefficient
First	9	0.875
Second	5	0.769
Third	4	0.687
Total	18	0.778

Statistical Analysis Tools

The study employed mixed method approach. The analysis tools were used for both qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative data analysis was made utilizing (SPSS22).

The study utilized the following statistical tools:

- 1) Pearson correlation coefficient for Validity.
- 2) Cronbach's Alpha for Reliability Statistics.
- 3) Frequency and Descriptive analysis.
- 4) One-sample T test.

Qualitative Analysis Tools

The follow up interviews were the qualitative aspect of this study. In order to analyze the interviews, the researcher followed partially the analysis model suggested by Naoum (2008) who offered different stages for analyzing interviews including: organizing the data, categorizing and coding the data, proposing themes based on the categories made previously, and finally writing the results.

The following illustrates the emerged categories and themes of answering each research question from the qualitative data:

Emerged themes for first research question:

- **Most influential Literacy transfer aspects between L1 & L2**
- **Poor L1 literacy teaching among Saudi students**
- **Good L1 learning would result in better L2 achievement (interviewee's case)**
- **Exposure to enough input in L1/L2**

Emerged themes for second research question:

- **Poor L1 literacy abilities led to limited academic writing skills**
- **Exposure to authentic sources**
- **Publishing in Arabic**

Emerged themes for third research question:

- **Bad L1 Literacy habits in the society**
- **Practice is more important than just learning**
- **Role of home and personal characteristics**
- **Learning two languages simultaneously at early age**

Ethics and Conclusion

Following the guidelines and principles of ethics in research, the researcher in this study has met such principles by informing the participants of this study in a written consent form beforehand. The data is owned primarily by the researcher to protect the confidentiality of the participants. The data was designed for purely educational purposes and that was made clear to the participants as well as to maximize the authenticity of the data.

Finally, this chapter presented the methodology and justifications for why this mixed method approach was used in this study. Also, it provided detailed explanations about the data collection and analysis tools.

It is hoped that such an approach would have met the study's aims and covered all the requirements in order to investigate the topic of "The role of the first language on second language literacy among graduate Saudi students in the US."

Data Analysis (Quantitative)

Introduction:

This section of data analysis deals with the quantitative part of the study. The main data collection tool in this study was done through distributing questionnaires. The questionnaire was divided into two main sections: ethnographic and overall assessment of participants' L1/L2 literacy levels in the first section, and a Likert-scale addressing the focus of the study about L1/L2 literacy transfer in the second section.

Age:

The first question in the survey asked participants their age. This is of a significant importance to the research focus on adult learning and answering research questions related to perceptions of graduate Saudi students on the role of L1/L2 literacy transfer. The age range of participants varies and was distributed into four groups as the table (5) below shows:

Table 5: Age distribution of study's participants (N=50)

Age	Frequency	Percent
23-27	4	8.0
28-32	31	62.0
33-37	11	22.0
38 and above	4	8.0
Total	50	100.0

This table shows the four age groups from 23 years old to above the age of 38 years. Each group covers a four-year stage; i.e. between 23-27 is four years, between 28-32 is four years and so on for the remaining groups. The second age group (28-32) was the highest among the four groups with 62%. This finding was expected as it is the common age among Saudi students to do their graduate work. Another interesting finding from the age of the

study's participants was the first and last groups which were (23-27) and (above 37) as they received the minimum percentage with 8% for each group. I can see this finding as a positive for the purpose of this study; i.e. having a few years gap between finishing a bachelor's degree in the first language and starting graduate study in the second language would reflect positively whether there was literacy transfer between the two languages or not. Finally, linking this age distribution with the literature in chapter 2, it is interesting to have older participants in order to grasp a better understanding about the role of age on the acquisition and mastery of the second language in general and literacy skills in particular.

Gender:

The following table (6) shows the gender distribution of the participants in this study.

Table 6: Gender distribution of study's participants (N=50)

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	25	50.0
Female	25	50.0
Total	50	100.0

Time spent in US:

Figure No. (4.1) shows that 42% from the participants spent " more than 5 years" in the US for study, and 32 % from the sample chose "3-5 years " for the time they stayed in the US for study purposes, and 26 % of the participants lived in the US for study between "1-3 years". It was evident that no one stayed less than one year simply because it is practically impossible to obtain a graduate degree in the US in less than a one-year period.

Table 7: Time spent in the US for study (N=50)

Time spent in US	frequency	percent
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Table 7 continued

Time spent in US	frequency	percent
1-3 years	13	26.0
3-5 years	16	32.0
more than 5 years	21	42.0

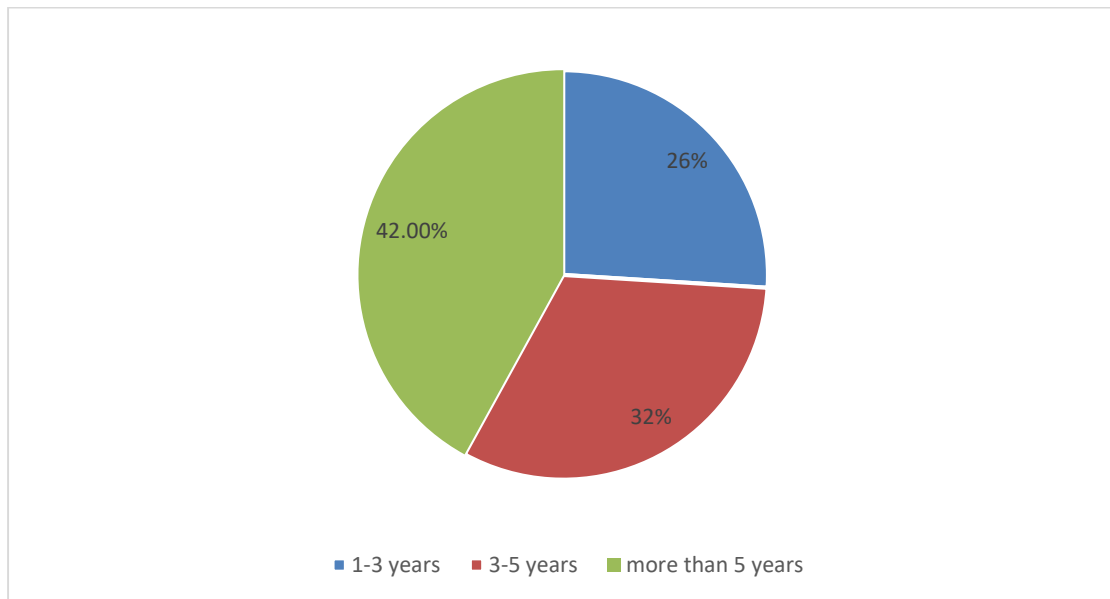


Figure. 4.1

Overall assessment of L1 & L2 Literacy Level:

In order to obtain an overall understanding about the participants L1 literacy level from their perspective, they were asked the following question:

- **How do you assess your first language (L1) literacy (reading/writing) level?**

Table No. 8 shows that 90% from the sample have chosen "Excellent", and 10% from them have chosen "high intermediate" based on how they assessed their L1 literacy levels.

Table 8: Overall assessment of L1 Literacy Level (N=50)

Level	frequency	percent
Excellent	45	90.0

Table 8 continued

Level	frequency	percent
high intermediate.	5	10.0
Intermediate	0	0
Total	50	100.0

In order to obtain an overall understanding about the participants L2 literacy level from their perspective, they were asked the following question:

- **How do you assess your second language (L2) literacy (reading/writing) level?**

Figure No. 4.2 shows that 48% from the participants have chosen "high intermediate", and 44 % chose "Excellent ", and only 8 % from the sample have chosen "intermediate".

Overall assessment of L2 Literacy Level (N=50)

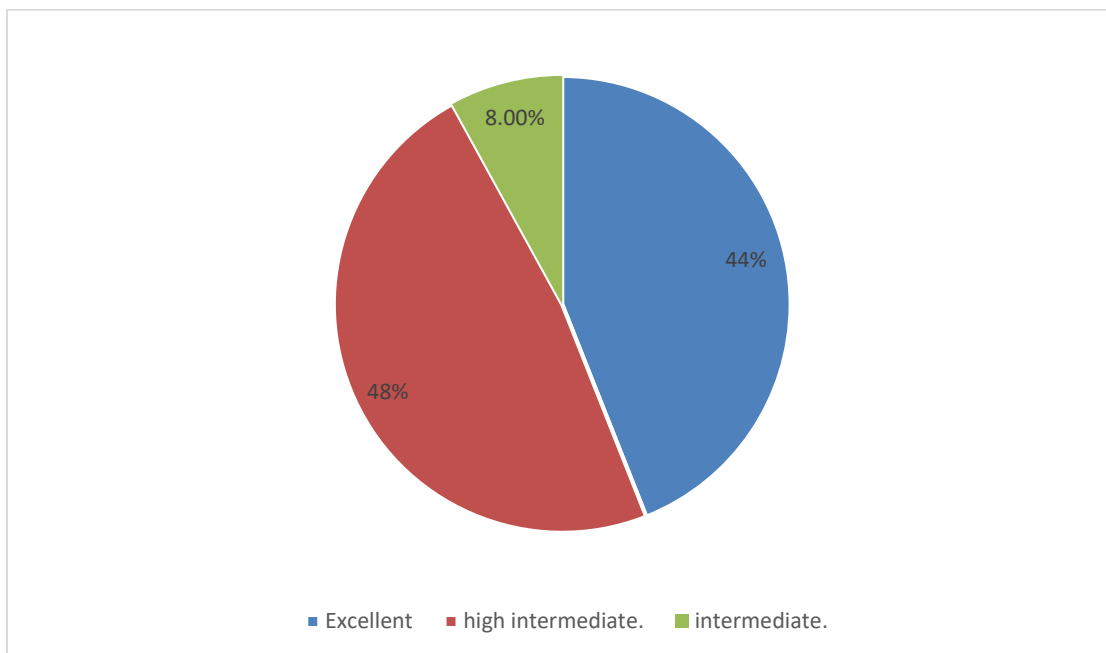


Figure 4.2

Likert Scale analysis:

Section 1 in the Likert-scale

This first section of the Likert-scale in the questionnaire answers the first research question including the first two sub-questions:

1. How do graduate Saudi students in the US perceive their L1/L2 literacy transfer during their graduate work?

a. Was there any positive transfer between L1/L2 literacy among the participants of the study?

b. Was there any negative transfer between L1/L2 literacy among the participants of the study?

The research's questions were answered using T-test. The analysis of the questionnaire items and how they are correlated is also established using the T-test. Another reason for using the T-test was determining the statistical mean of each item in the questionnaire's sections and can be comparable with the neutrality degree of (3).

The comparison between the responses to the survey items whether it is equal to the neutrality degree of (3) or significantly different would define the result of the test.

Table (9) illustrate the results of using One-Sample T test in analyzing each item in this first section which answers: " Was there any positive or negative transfer between L1/L2 literacy among the participants of the study?"

Table 9: Means and Test values (Section 1)

“Was there any positive or negative transfer between L1/L2 literacy among the participants of the study”

Items	mean	Standard deviation	Weight mean	t- value	p- value
My READING skills in the first language L1 are highly proficient.	4.86	.35	97.20	37.523	.000

Table 9 continued

Items	mean	Standard deviation	Weight mean	t- value	p- value
I READ extracurricular materials in my L1 Arabic more than in English.	3.74	1.19	74.80	4.390	.000
My WRITING skills in my L1 Arabic are highly proficient.	4.32	.87	86.40	10.759	.000
I WRITE extracurricular materials in my L1 Arabic more than in English.	3.50	1.27	70.00	2.793	.007
My READING skills in the second language L2 (English) are highly proficient	4.24	.69	84.80	12.765	.000
My WRITING skills in the second language L2 (English) are highly proficient	4.16	.77	83.20	10.714	.000
My L1 literacy skills (reading/writing) has influenced my L2 READING positively.	3.88	.87	77.60	7.134	.000
My L1 literacy skills (reading/writing) has influenced my L2 WRITING positively.	3.72	1.05	74.40	4.846	.000
My weak L1 literacy skills (reading/writing) has influenced my L2 literacy.	2.89	1.31	57.80	-.558	.579
Total	3.93	.48	78.67	13.842	.000

As shown in table (9), the mean of the item: “My READING skills in the first language L1 are highly proficient.” equals 4.86 (97.20%), Test-value = 37.523, and P-value = 0.000 which is smaller than the level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$. The sign of the test is positive, so the mean

of this item is significantly greater than the hypothesized value 3. It is concluded that the respondents agree with this item.

The mean of the item: "My weak L1 literacy skills (reading/writing) has influenced my L2 literacy." equals 2.89 (57.80%), Test value = -0.558, and P-value = 0.579 which is larger than the level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$. The sign of the test is negative, so the mean of this item is significantly smaller than the hypothesized value 3. It is concluded that the respondents disagree with this item.

The mean of this section "Was there any positive or negative transfer between L1/L2 literacy among the participants of the study" equals 3.93 (78.6%), Test-value = 13.8, and P-value= 0.000 which is smaller than the level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$. The sign of the test is positive, so the mean of this section is significantly larger than the hypothesized value 3. It is concluded that the respondents agree with this hypothesis.

Section 2 in the Likert-scale

This second section of the Likert-scale in the questionnaire answers the third sub-question of the study:

What is the role of participants' L1/L2 literacy on their L2 academic writing?

The research's questions were answered using T-test. The analysis of the questionnaire items and how they are correlated is also established using the T-test. Another reason for using the T-test was determining the statistical mean of each item in the questionnaire's sections and can be comparable with the neutrality degree of (3).

The comparison between the responses to the survey items whether it is equal to the neutrality degree of (3) or significantly different would define the result of the test.

Table (10) illustrates the results of using One-Sample T test in analyzing each item in this section " What is the role of participants' L1/L2 literacy on their L2 academic writing?"

Table 10: Means and Test values (Section 2)

“What is the role of participants' L1/L2 literacy on their L2 academic writing?”

Items	mean	Standard deviation	Weight mean	t- value	p- value
My L1 literacy skills (reading/writing) has influenced my L2 ACADEMIC WRITING positively.	3.60	1.07	72.00	3.969	.000
I will (or already have) published and contribute to the Arabic academia.	2.76	1.32	55.20	-1.288	.204
I will (or already have) published and contribute to the English academia.	4.14	1.18	82.80	6.842	.000
There is no relation between my academic writing skills in my L1 and L2.	2.86	1.32	57.20	-.756	.453
The scarcity of Arabic written materials in my field impacted my L1 academic writing skills.	3.44	.97	68.80	3.200	.002
Total	3.37	.58	67.32	4.447	.000

As shown in table (10), the mean of the item: “I will (or already have) published and contribute to the English academia.” equals 4.14 (82.80%), Test-value = 6.842, and P-value = 0.000 which is smaller than the level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$. The sign of the test is positive, so the mean of this item is significantly greater than the hypothesized value 3. It is concluded that the respondents agree with this item.

The mean of the item: “I will (or already have) published and contribute to the Arabic academia.” equals 2.76 (55.20%), Test value = -1.228, and P-value = 0.204 which is larger than the level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$. The sign of the test is negative, so the mean of this

item is significantly smaller than the hypothesized value 3. It is concluded that the respondents disagree with this item.

The mean of this section: “What is the role of participants' L1/L2 literacy on their L2 academic writing?” equals 3.37 (67.32%), Test-value = 4.447, and P-value= 0.000 which is smaller than the level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$. The sign of the test is positive, so the mean of this section is significantly larger than the hypothesized value 3. It is concluded that the respondents agree with this hypothesis.

Section 3 in the Likert-scale

This third section of the Likert-scale in the questionnaire answers the second research question and the fourth sub-question:

What impact do cultural, educational, attitudinal, and social factors have on participants' L1/L2 literacy skills?

The research's questions were answered using T-test. The analysis of the questionnaire items and how they are correlated is also established using the T-test. Another reason for using the T-test was determining the statistical mean of each item in the questionnaire's sections and can be comparable with the neutrality degree of (3).

The comparison between the responses to the survey items, whether it is equal to the neutrality degree of (3) or significantly different, would define the result of the test.

Table (11) illustrates the results of using One-Sample T test in analyzing each item in the field.

Table 11: Means and Test values (Section 3)

“What impact do cultural, educational, attitudinal, and social factors have on participants' L1/L2 literacy skills?”

Items	mean	Standard deviation	Weight mean	t- value	p- value
If Arabic is used as the medium of instruction in SA with developed sciences 'Physics, Math, Engineering, etc.' it will show and prove success.	3.46	1.28	69.20	2.539	.014
English has become more prestigious language due to the prevailing cultures.	4.00	1.14	80.00	6.187	.000
The attitudinal and social concepts toward Arabic language has influenced the literacy skills among its speakers.	3.80	1.03	76.00	5.491	.000
Improving the educational and social environments of teaching Arabic literacy skills would positively impact English literacy skills among Saudi Students	3.90	1.17	78.00	5.463	.000
Total	3.79	.74	75.80	7.537	.000

As shown in table (11), the mean of the item: “English has become more prestigious language due to the prevailing cultures.” equals 4.00 (80.00%), Test-value = 6.187, and P-value = 0.000 which is smaller than the level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$. The sign of the test is positive, so the mean of this item is significantly greater than the hypothesized value 3. It is concluded that the respondents agree with this item.

The mean of the item: “If Arabic is used as the medium of instruction in SA with developed sciences 'Physics, Math, Engineering, etc.' it will show and prove success.” equals

3.46 (69.20%), Test value = 2.539, and P-value = 0.014 which is smaller than the level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$. The sign of the test is positive, so the mean of this item is significantly larger than the hypothesized value 3. It is concluded that the respondents agree with this item.

The mean of the section “What impact do cultural, educational, attitudinal, and social factors have on participants' L1/L2 literacy skills?” equals 3.79 (75.80%), Test-value = 7.537, and P-value= 0.000 which is smaller than the level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$. The sign of the test is positive, so the mean of this section is significantly larger than the hypothesized value 3. It is concluded that the respondents agree with this hypothesis.

This chapter concludes that the quantitative data analysis results agrees with the research hypothesis in each of the research questions. It is true that some of the items have shown negative correlation; however, the mean of the entire section (total number of questionnaire items in each section) have shown positive correlation, which was in line with the original research hypothesis.

Data Analysis (Qualitative)

Introduction

Student Focus Group Interview

Four graduate Saudi students in the US universities labeled (IW1) to (IW4) were interviewed after taking the questionnaire survey step. Two of them were males and two were females. This follow-up step aimed to enrich the study's data and clarify any level of vagueness that might have occurred during the survey process. After conducting all the interviews, the researcher went back to the recordings and transcribed them. Then, the transcriptions were read several times and related themes that emerged from the interviews were highlighted. Finally, the themes were classified and analyzed in accordance with the research questions, as well as several quotations from the interviews were provided.

4.2 Answering Research Question 1 (including sub-questions 1&2)

The research's first two sub-questions investigated whether there is any positive or negative transfer between L1/L2 literacy among the participants of the study, and how? The following themes emerged from the interviews when responding to that question.

4.2.1 Most influential Literacy transfer aspects between L1 & L2:

One of the core components of this research was investigating the basic language level relation between L1/L2 literacy, i.e. the interviewees were asked about the most important L1 linguistic component they noticed had influenced their L2 learning. Their answers varied slightly; however, about half agreed upon grammar as the most important factor which played a significant role in shaping their L2 literacy. When interviewee (IW1)

was asked to prioritize the most significant L1 linguistic features including grammar, vocabulary, reading, etc. from his own learning experience, he answered:

I believe grammar comes first automatically and unconsciously, whereas vocabulary comes later when the learner reached the level of translation between the two languages Arabic and English.

His response seems to be in line with Krashen's *input hypothesis*, which has been detailed in chapter three. Krashen (1985) believes that the only way for acquiring human language comes from understanding the messages- or receiving of 'comprehensible input'. Therefore, learning to speak a language resulted from acquiring that language first; moreover, grammar, according to Krashen (1985), as this interviewee indicated, is automatically processed when there is an existence of comprehensible input.

Interviewee (IW4) agreed with the former interviewee about the importance of grammar as the core of language, and she referred her success in English as a second language and excelling in its literacy skills to her mastery of L1 grammar, she said:

My Arabic language was at an excellent level. I was raised in a home where we used to read a lot; that helped me reach the level of mastery of L1 Arabic grammar.

On the other hand, interviewee (IW3) believes vocabulary is at the top of the list among language skills that would benefit L1/L2 literacy transfer. He stated:

Vocabulary comes first, grammar is second and finally is the background knowledge. I realized this when I was studying my undergrad in translation major; I was looking at the dictionaries and benefited a lot from the

amount of vocabulary and synonyms I have to deliver a particular meaning compared to classmates who have limited vocabs.

Although this last interviewee emphasized the importance of vocabulary and put it on the top of the list, it was obvious that he could not ignore the significant role of grammar. In fact, he placed it second immediately after vocabulary. I believe there is a level of agreement compared to what we found from the survey's results in the previous chapter about the role that L1 grammar plays toward L2 literacy skills.

4.2.2 Weak L1 Literacy Teaching Among Saudi Students:

It seems there was almost a consensus on this particular problem according to the interviewees' experiences. The problematic situation which exists in their L1 education system was obvious in their responses. Interviewee (IW2) commented:

It is sad that I do not remember we have ever followed any specific methodology in teaching Arabic writing during my elementary school years. It is true we had a writing class (Ta'abeer), nevertheless we've just used to write from our memorization about various topics such as the tree or something else without particular teaching instruction nor following the writing styles.

The teaching of L1 Arabic writing in Saudi Arabia seems to have some problems with regard to teaching style and methodology. It has been noted several times in those interviews that participants' L1 writing was never considered a strength as a result of their early education. I believe this gave evident support to the struggle most Saudi students encounter when firstly arriving at a US educational institution particularly if they come for graduate studies.

Another interviewee (IW4) commented sadly about the negative impact of the poor L1 education in Arabic, she said:

.. good education is the most important factor and the turning point which will solve all the other problems. I believe it is unfortunate that our L1 education is now deteriorating and not deep especially in reading and writing, and everything is going superficial with no depth. In my personal experience, my language teacher never motivated me, nor did she encourage me to improve my good writing skills.

I felt there was a consensus about this problem among my interviewees. It is unfortunate that I did not meet with any graduate student who gave credit to his/her early L1 education system with regard to their literacy learning success particularly toward their writing. However, this seems to be in line with previous studies which indicated the difficulty their participants (international graduate students) faced during the writing of their literature review chapter Cai (2013) and Yeh (2010).

Below is a third example from the interviewee (IW3) who linked this problem specifically with the limited reading habits among Saudi students in their native language. He tried to explain the relation between reading in L1 and its impact on reading in L2 among Saudi students:

We have a problem as Saudis in general in reading in our mother tongue; therefore, we struggle when we read in the second language. That is, we did not get used to it from the young age, so it became difficult for us to read more when grownup in both languages.

4.2.3 Good L1 learning would result in better L2 achievement (interviewee's case):

One of my interviewees (IW4) shared her experience when she started studying MA in Applied Linguistics. She thought there was no relation between her Arabic L1 and English L2 until she began a master's degree in the US in her second language. She commented:

Honestly, I thought there was no relation between my L1 and L2 until I started my master's degree. We studied about the relation between mother tongue and the mastery of the second language, and I read a few research papers on this topic, I then realized that was the reason for me behind grasping the L2 literacy skills; i.e. I never started from scratch, instead I was building on my strong L1 basis. The same scenario happened with a classmate who used to be a good L1 learner as well.

I found this excerpt related to the main goal of this research. I believe one of the main reasons for me to conduct this research was to find such situations where successful L2 learners would tell us (from experience and knowledge) where the turning point in their success of mastering L2 literacy skills occurred. This case also seems to agree with previous studies mentioned in the second chapter about the view of literacy transfer from L1 into L2. Dutcher (1996) and Herschell (2004) found out how L1 literacy skills would impact the proficiency of learning the second language. Moreover, Krashen (2001) believes that learners with rich L1 vocabulary will achieve rich L2 diction as well as the competency transfer from L1 to L2.

4.2.4 Exposure to Enough Input in L1/L2:

One of my interviewees (IW3) enrolled in an Islamic school in seventh grade. Islamic school in the Saudi education system starts from the seventh grade and optional for students who decide to join them or just continue in the public schools. The main difference between such schools and public schools is the extra emphasis on Islamic studies in addition to the typical curricula found in the public schools. This interviewee explained how this step changed his literacy skills dramatically due to the huge exposure to L1 input compared to his first six years of study. He said:

The turning point started when I joined the Islamic school in the seventh grade. I learned the right way how to read and write due to the amount of stuff that we were required to study which gave us more exposure to L1 inputs which we actually lacked before.

Another interviewee (IW1) talked about the significant role of providing enough input when he noticed the low levels among his undergraduate students. He commented:

We did a study on our English major undergraduate students and found that about 70% of them have limited language skills in both L1 and L2. They could not translate from English to Arabic nor vice versa due to the lack of exposure to enough input.

It is interesting how those two interviewees agreed upon the role of getting enough input to improve literacy skills in both languages. As a matter of fact, a third interviewee also brought up the need to provide enough writing input; her comment will be discussed in the following section when answering the third research question about L1/L2 academic writing.

4.3 Answering research sub-question 3

The research's third sub-question investigated the role of writing skills in general and whether it transfers between L1/L2 among the participants of the study. The following themes emerged from the interviews when responding to that question.

4.3.1 Poor L1 literacy abilities led to limited academic writing skills:

An interesting observation one of my interviewees (IW4) noticed among her students was their poor Arabic writing skills during her teaching of the English language before starting her graduate studies. When I asked how she knew about their Arabic writing level while she was English teacher, she answered:

My students used Google translate to get vocabulary from Arabic to English, the strange thing I noticed was that they were unable to write the Arabic words correctly in the first place and then they got totally unrelated English equivalent! At that point I asked them about it, they complained: It's difficult to write in English because we don't know how to write in Arabic in the first place.

This finding relates to the previous one above in 4.2.2 where interviewees showed the problems they faced due to their poor L1 literacy teaching. Another interviewee (IW3) commented on writing problems as a result of the weak education system. He explained:

The education system here [in Saudi] is just orally based; this negatively impacted students' reading skills which absolutely influenced writing.

4.3.2 Exposure to authentic sources:

This theme seems to be related to the one in 4.2.4 section about exposure to enough input; however, my interviewee (IW1) repeated this information several times even when talking about his drive toward the love of writing. Moreover, when I asked him about ranking the most important language components that helped him during his L2 learning stages, he responded grammar and exposure to authentic language sources. He clarified:

Whoever becomes proficient in Arabic grammar and gets exposed to authentic language resources such as the Quran, Hadiths, and classical literary works, they would definitely improve their writing skills and they will start loving to write more effectively.

4.3.3 Publishing in Arabic:

This question was asked in the survey questionnaire and the result indicated that the majority chose either neutral or disagree. However, this interviewee (IW2) selected strongly agree. Therefore, I asked her during the interview to elaborate more, and she said:

This is a very important issue for me, particularly because I am working on learning Arabic as a second language in my research and found very few resources talking about this topic in Arabic. In short, my answer is yes. I will publish in Arabic as well as English.

4.4 Answering research sub-question 4

The research's fourth sub-question explored the impact of cultural, educational, attitudinal, and social factors on participants' L1/L2 literacy skills and whether this has been transferred between L1/L2 among the participants of the study. The following themes emerged from the interviews when responding to that question.

4.4.1 Bad L1 Literacy Habits in the Society:

The role of society was obvious around all the interviews, including my first interviewee (IW1). When I asked him about whether the teaching style is a major problem for L1 education in Saudi Arabia, he replied:

No, it's not the only one. The entire society doesn't read a lot according to statistical studies compared to other developed countries.

Another interviewee (IW3) indicated a similar note and explained the issue of poor L1 reading habits:

On regard to the issue of reading, we as Saudi society have a problem with reading in our L1, therefore we face challenges when we try to read in

second languages because we did not get used to the habit of reading from our young age.

4.4.2 Practice is more important than just learning:

I found this theme very interesting, even though it was brought up by only one interviewee. As I mentioned above, my main purpose of this study was to dig deeper on the experience of those successful L2 learners and take the lessons from their journey of learning until they reached the advanced level in the second language literacy. Interviewee (IW3) emphasized on the importance of practice to excel in literacy skills more than just the pure theoretical learning style. He said:

I believe I can write in my L2 better than L1 basically because of practice. I do not practice writing in Arabic compared to writing in English; therefore, I found myself writing better in English, no doubt.

In fact, this particular interviewee claimed he is actually able to write in his L2 better than the native speakers of that language. This case supports Krashen's hypothesis when he indicates that many ELLs may outperform native speakers due to their background knowledge they have learned in their L1 (Krashen, 2000). When I asked this interviewee about his L2 writing skills now, he immediately replied: "excellent because of practice." Furthermore, I asked him, do you compare your writing skills with those whose English is considered their mother tongue? He answered:

I am trying even to outperform the native speakers with regard to writing skills in my L2.

4.4.3 Role of home and personal characteristics:

This theme had emerged several times in the interviews, one of them was with interviewee (IW4). She explained how her home environment influenced her positively toward the love of reading as a habit and the Arabic language in general; yet she never felt her school had no role on that which was supposed to do. Interviewee (IW4) complained in another place in the interview about the negative experience she had in school, her comment on the role of home environment was:

I was raised up in a home where we used to read and write a lot. I loved the Arabic language and became expert in its grammar as well.

Another interviewee (IW2) commented on how she started loving reading. She thought having some stories and journals around in their home increased her love towards reading. She said:

I read some stories and journals that I found home, I just read them for fun and/or to chat with relatives about some puzzles I've read.

4.4.4 Learning two languages simultaneously at early age:

This theme had also emerged only once with interviewee (IW1) when he was asked about the importance of quality early L1 education to insure better L2 learning later on, he commented:

I do not think this is accurate. According to academics in the fields there is no fear of teaching two or three languages simultaneously for young children especially if there is language policy at home.

Although the question was not directly addressing the idea of teaching more than one language for young children, this interviewee found it useful to share his opinion on that matter according to his experience. I found this theme to be an interesting one to add, even

though it was not covered in the survey; that is the good part of conducting follow-up semi structured interviews. This situation confirmed what was mentioned above in ch.2 about what John (1997) described as students' personal theories of literacy. This also emphasized the idea of exploring graduate students' perceptions who usually have better metacognitive skills and rich experiences.

4.5 Conclusion

The analysis of the focus group interviews discussed the topic of L1/L2 literacy transfer from different perspectives. Several themes were highlighted in accordance with each research question. In the first section, interviewees explained how their limited L1 literacy skills had impacted their L2 learning negatively. Some have also indicated that when they reached advanced level in their second language, their L2 literacy skills surpassed their L1. Similar points of view specified the L2 academic writing skills and the challenges they faced while working on their L2 writing. As a matter of fact, some interviewees indicated that they faced such challenges during their entire L2 learning process not only writing which can be found in the second section at this chapter. In the last section in this chapter, interviewees emphasized the significant role of other factors such as home environment, personal characteristics, practicing, exposing to authentic input, etc. on the improvement of L1/L2 literacy skills. Finally, this chapter proves the significant role of exploring students' perceptions which may be considered as main components in order to understand and meet students' needs which plays a vital role in the learning process and eventually impacts learning outcomes.

Interpretations, Implications, and Conclusion

Summary of Study

This study aimed to explore the role of first language literacy on the second language literacy by examining advanced second language learners. The participants of the study were 50 Saudi students at the graduate level who are pursuing their higher degrees in their second language in the US. The study investigated the research problem by exploring the participants' perceptions throughout their successful journey of L2 learning. The study's main data collection instruments were designing a survey questionnaire and conducting a focused group interview to elicit participants' perceptions.

The ultimate goal of this study was to reach a level of understanding about the role that Saudi students' L1 and their educational background could play on shaping their L2 and their graduate studies in an ESL context. It is essential to investigate such problems from students' perspectives not only to benefit those students solely; rather it would be very beneficial for their sponsors, educational institutions, their language teachers and university professors. Hopefully, the findings of this study will provide the field with more effective and practical methods for better learning and would also be significant to the ESL teaching community involved with international students in the US or any other ESL contexts, as well as contributing to the field of SLA and specifically bilingual transfer. Finally, it is hoped that the findings of this study would shed light on specific recommendations for the application process of admitting international students into graduate programs in English speaking countries.

In the following section in this chapter, a brief presentation about the overall research findings of the study, implications, conclusions, and recommendations for future research.

Interpretations and Summary of Findings

The findings of this study were divided according to the methodological approach either quantitative (questionnaire) and qualitative (semi-structured interviews). The first one was detailed in chapter four and the second one was analyzed and discussed in chapter five in this research.

Summary of Findings (Quantitative section):

Research Question 1.

The first section of the Likert-scale in the questionnaire answers the first research question including the first two sub-questions. First research question:

How do graduate Saudi students in the US perceive their L1/L2 literacy transfer during their graduate work?

Sub-questions:

a. Was there any positive transfer between L1/L2 literacy among the participants of the study?

b. Was there any negative transfer between L1/L2 literacy among the participants of the study?

The research's questions were answered using T-test. The analysis of the questionnaire items and how they are correlated is also established using the T-test. Another reason for using the T-test was determining the statistical mean of each item in the questionnaire's sections and can be comparable with the neutrality degree of (3).

The summary after analyzing the findings using T test stated that the mean of this research question equals 3.93 (78.6%), Test-value = 13.8, and P-value= 0.000 which is smaller than the level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$. The sign of the test is positive, so the mean of this section is significantly larger than the hypothesized value 3. It is concluded that the respondents agree with this hypothesis.

Research Question 2.

The second section of the Likert-scale in the questionnaire answers the third sub-question of the research study. The question:

What is the role of participants' L1/L2 literacy on their L2 academic writing?

The research's questions were answered using T-test. The analysis of the questionnaire items and how they are correlated is also established using the T-test. Another reason for using the T-test was determining the statistical mean of each item in the questionnaire's sections and can be comparable with the neutrality degree of (3).

The comparison between the responses to the survey items whether it is equal to the neutrality degree of (3) or significantly different would define the result of the test.

The summary after analyzing the findings using T test stated that the mean of this research question equals 3.37 (67.32%), Test-value = 4.447, and P-value= 0.000 which is smaller than the level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$. The sign of the test is positive, so the mean of this section is significantly larger than the hypothesized value 3. It is concluded that the respondents agree with this hypothesis.

Research Question 3.

The third section of the Likert-scale in the questionnaire answers the fourth sub-question of the research study. The question:

What impact do cultural, educational, attitudinal, and social factors have on participants' L1/L2 literacy skills?

The research's questions were answered using T-test. The analysis of the questionnaire items and how they are correlated is also established using the T-test. Another reason for using the T-test was determining the statistical mean of each item in the questionnaire's sections and can be comparable with the neutrality degree of (3).

The comparison between the responses to the survey items, whether it is equal to the neutrality degree of (3) or significantly different, would define the result of the test.

The summary after analyzing the findings using T test stated that the mean of this research question equals 3.79 (75.80%), Test-value = 7.537, and P-value= 0.000 which is smaller than the level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$. The sign of the test is positive, so the mean of this section is significantly larger than the hypothesized value 3. It is concluded that the respondents agree with this hypothesis.

Summary of Findings (Qualitative section):

Research Question 1.

The research's first two sub-questions investigated whether there is any positive or negative transfer between L1/L2 literacy among the participants of the study, and How? Here is a brief summary about related themes that emerged from the interviews when responding to that question:

- **L1/L2 grammar transfer:** the majority of interviewees agreed upon this theme of L1 grammar transfer according to their L2 learning experience. This seems to be in line with Krashen's *input hypothesis* (1985).

- **Weak L1 literacy teaching:** this theme has appeared among all interviewees and there seems to be a consensus about this problem. It explained the negative transfer between L1/L2 when the base of learning L1 literacy was not solid. This theme also be in line with previous studies such as Cai (2013) and Yeh (2010).
- **Good L1 learning would result in better L2 achievement:** this theme has emerged with one of the interviewees who shared her L1/L2 learning experience and how her strong L1 literacy skills have led her to be a successful L2 learner. This also seems to be in line with Krashen (2001) who believes that learners with rich L1 vocabulary will achieve rich L2 diction as well as the competency transfer from L1 to L2. Moreover, it agrees with previous studies including Dutcher (1996) and Herschell (2004).

Research Question 2.

The research's third sub-question investigated the role of writing skills in general and whether it transfers between L1/L2 among the participants of the study. The following themes emerged from the interviews when responding to that question:

- **Exposure to authentic sources:** this theme has emerged several times during the discussion of this research question and the previous one as well. It seems the majority of interviewees have noticed the impact of getting enough exposure to authentic sources in their L1 for their success in their L2 and vice versa.
- **Limited L1 writing skills:** there was an agreement about the low and limited teaching strategies and styles of L1 writing among the interviewees during their early L1 education which has a negative impact on learning L2 writing more efficiently.
- **Publishing in L1 (Arabic):** one of the interviewees emphasized on the importance of publishing in her L1 (Arabic) for several reasons including the lack of resources in Arabic for teaching writing and improving literacy skills.

Research Question 3.

The research's fourth sub-question explored the impact of cultural, educational, attitudinal, and social factors on participants' L1/L2 literacy skills and whether this has been transferred between L1/L2 among the participants of the study. The following themes emerged from the interviews when responding to that question:

- **Bad L1 literacy habits in Saudi society:**
- **Practice is more important than just learning:** This theme emerged with one of the interviewees who claimed that he is actually able to write in his L2 better than the native speakers of that language. When I asked him about how he assesses his L2 writing skills, he immediately replied: "Excellent because of practice." This case supports Krashen's hypothesis which indicates that many ELLs may outperform native speakers due to their background knowledge in their L1 (Krashen, 2000).
- **Role of home and personal characteristics:** This theme emerged several times with the interviewees when discussing their successful journey of learning L2 literacy in the graduate level.
- **Learning two languages simultaneously at early age:** Although this theme emerged only once, I found it interesting to share since it supports the main aim of this research, which was about exploring the successful L2 learning journey among the participants of the study from their perceptions.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions can be made:

1. The findings of this study support the L1/L2 literacy transfer whether it is negative or positive transfer.
2. There was an obvious indication about the problematic situation in the Saudi educational system for teaching L1 literacy skills according to the participants of this study.

3. The L2 academic writing was a challenge most of the participants have faced during their L2 learning journey due to their lack of L1 teaching of how to write academically. In another words, it is a negative L1/L2 transfer.

4. The exposure to enough input seems a significant factor in improving both L1 and L2 literacy skills according to the participants of this study.

5. Other cultural, attitudinal, social, and educational factors play a significant role in forming the learning abilities and improving L1 literacy skills.

Recommendations and Implications

For shareholders. The shareholders in this study were second language learners, educational systems in Saudi Arabia, and international educational and foreign languages programs.

Second Language Learners: This study's results encourage all students who aim to continue higher education in a second language to work hard on improving their first language literacy skills, as it would have a great impact on their L2 learning success.

Educational System in Saudi Arabia: This study's results indicated a vital need for reforming the educational system for early L1 literacy skills learning/teaching. The majority of this research study agreed upon this specific point which needs to be reevaluated and fixed as soon as possible.

International Educational and Foreign Languages Programs: For international language and graduate programs in general, this study's results could provide thoughtful information regarding the improvement of such programs to meet their international students' needs. It also could benefit teacher education programs that may have foreign language students in their schools.

Future Research

Future research recommendations include:

1. More intercultural studies on first language literacy transfer are needed. Also other studies which consider foreign languages other than English are encouraged to expand the academic field.
2. A longitudinal/comparative study that focuses on specific learners with strong/limited L1 literacy skills who continue their studies in the second language is to be considered.
3. Can the findings of this study be used with other learning setting or contexts?
4. Can teaching multicultural students from different backgrounds and languages be better when considering involvement of their L1 experiences? Would that be beneficial for education programs as well to consider?
5. What do undergraduate or young aged learners do with regard to their L1 literacy skills when studying a second language after high school? What about younger children with immigrant families who had to leave their countries for different reasons?
6. Final suggestion would be to consider conducting a similar study using a qualitative approach which may deepen the investigation and enriching the field with data more than just numbers.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire

Section 1: Background and general information; please choose of the following.

1- Age:

23-27 28-32 33-37 above 38

2- Gender:

3- When did you start learning your second language?

Elementary school junior high school high school university level

4- How many years have you been studying English?

6-10 11-15 16 – 20 21-25

5- Generally, how do you assess your first language (L1) literacy (reading/writing) level?

a. Excellent. B. high intermediate. C. intermediate. D. below intermediate.

6- Generally, how do you assess your second language (L2) literacy (reading/writing) level?

a. Excellent. B. high intermediate. C. intermediate. D. below intermediate.

Section 2: Likert-type scale

Question 1. I learnt how to **READ** professionally and critically in my first language in Saudi Arabia_

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Or N/A	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Question 2. I learnt how to **WRITE** professionally and critically in my first language in Saudi Arabia

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Or N/A	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Question 3. My skills in first language literacy (reading/writing) has influenced my L2 **READING** *positively*.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Or N/A	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Question 4. My skills in first language literacy (reading/writing) has influenced my L2 **WRITING** *positively*.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Or N/A	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Question 5. My academic writing in Arabic has impacted my academic writing in English *positively*.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Or N/A	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Question 6. I write academically in English better than in Arabic.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Or N/A	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Question 7. I have published (one paper or more) in Arabic.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Or N/A	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Question 8. I have published (one paper or more) in English.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Or N/A	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Question 9. The cultural and social environment in the Saudi Arabia has helped me improved my L1 literacy skills (reading/writing).

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Or N/A	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Question 10. The cultural and social environment in the United States has helped me improved my L2 literacy skills (reading/writing).

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Or N/A	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Question 11. The educational environment in the Saudi Arabia has helped me improved my L1 literacy skills.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Or N/A	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Question 12. The educational environment in the United States has helped me improved my L2 literacy skills.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Or N/A	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Question 13. From your perspective, what else would you consider has impacted your L1/L2 literacy development/transfer?

Appendix B

Recruitment Letter

The Role of First Language Literacy on Second Language Literacy: The Perceptions of Graduate Saudi Students in US Universities

Dear Sir/Ma'am,

I am Muhammad Alrayes, a graduate student at the University of Memphis, Department of English, being guided by Dr. Emily Thrush at the Department of English at the University of Memphis, Tennessee, USA, conducts a research to explore graduate Saudi students' perceptions about the role of L1/L2 literacy transfer. You are receiving this email because you are a Saudi graduate student in the US. If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will be among 50 students selected from the graduate Saudi students in the US, which will facilitate the researcher to successfully complete his research on the above-cited topic. The participation is voluntary, and every effort will be made to minimize the time researcher will take for data collection. The web-based survey may take between 10-15 minutes to be completed. Moreover, the researcher tends to be very flexible in his data collection schedule and he is ready to work around the timetable of his respondents. So, this study will have minimal potential risk to impact the on-campus responsibilities of volunteer respondents.

In doing this study, the researcher hopes to explore the graduate Saudi students' perceptions about the role of L1/L2 literacy transfer in order to support the teaching/learning of other languages for academic purposes. This study is anticipated to have the potential benefits which will contribute to the literature and be beneficial for EFL/ESL education and professional development.

If you have any concerns and queries regarding this research study, please feel free to contact Muhammad Alrayes via malrayes@memphis.edu or call/text me at [9013439873](tel:9013439873). You can also contact Dr. Emily Thrush, the advisor for this study via [901.678.4215](tel:901.678.4215) or ethrush@memphis.edu or both.

Thank you and hopefully you will be able to spare time for this research study.

Dear students,

Your contribution to this research project is greatly appreciated. Thank you for your participating. As a follow-up, I would like to invite you to an interview regarding The Role of First Language Literacy on Second Language Literacy: The Perceptions of Graduate Saudi Students in US Universities. If you would like to share your ideas and opinions with me, please leave your contact information below. I will contact you soon to arrange a time for the interview that is most convenient for you.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at malrayes@memphis.edu

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Thank you!

Appendix C

IRB Approval

Date: 10-19-2019

IRB #: PRO-FY2019-116

Title: The Role of First Language Literacy on Second Language Literacy: The Perceptions of Graduate Saudi Students in the US

Creation Date: 9-5-2018

End Date: 10-26-2019

Status: **Approved**

Principal Investigator: Muhammad Alrayes

Review Board: University of Memphis Full

Board Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type Initial

Review Type Expedited

Decision **Approved**

Submission Type Renewal

Review Type Unassigned

Decision

Appendix D

Interview sample 1

انا: حدثني عن تجربتك في الكتابة باللغة الام خاصة اختيارك في الاستبيان خيار أختلف الى حد ما؟

الضيف: أولا عندما نتحدث عن اللغة العربية نتحدث عن لغة تجاوزت 300000 سنة وفيها بناء على مستوى المفردات والقواعد وحتى مستوى التركيب، وبحكم أني درست النحو والصرف من كتاب ابن عقيل وأخذت دروس في المساجد فأعرف أن اللغة العربية ليست سهلة المراس ومن صعب إتقانها فيما يتعلق بالكتابة؛ ربما عندنا السليقة والتنشئة بحكم أننا أبناء صحراء أثرت على اللسان والتربية الدينية بحيث يكون اللسان أكثر فصاحة ولكن فيما يتعلق بالكتابة هنا المخاض هنا يتبين من الشخص إن كان يعرف اللغة أو لا يعرفها. ونعرف ان الكتابة هي عملية مخرجات outcomes وهنا يتبين قوة اللغة ولا يمكن أن تصل لدرجة الاحترافية في الكتابة من خلال الدراسة الأكاديمية ولو كانت ماجستير أو دكتوراه بل تحتاج إلى ممارسة وقراءة واطلاع؛ ولذلك نجد أننا عند قراءة الصحف المحلية بمجرد قراءة سطرين أو ثلاثة تجدها مليئة بالأخطاء من ناحية التركيب والكلمات..

انا: تحديدا كان سؤالي عن لماذا قللت من قدرتك الكتابية بالعربي بينما بالانجليزي كان تقييمك لها أفضل في الاستبيان؟

الضيف: السؤال واضح؛ ببساطة بسبب قلة الممارسة؛ ولقد تعلمنا أن اللغة عبارة عن ممارسة أنا أمارس الكتابة باللغة الانجليزية أكثر من ممارستي بالعربية لذلك أجد أنني أكتب بالانجليزي حاليا أفضل من العربي ولا شك أما القراءة فأنا أقرأ باللغتين بمستوى عالي ومطلع على اللغتين..

انا: فيما يخص محدودية قدراتك الكتابية في اللغة الأم وتأثير ذلك سلبيا على كتابتك باللغة الثانية كان اختيارك في الاستبيان

أتفق تماما؛ ممكن توضح لي أكثر وهل أنت متهم بالبحث عن الكمال في الكتابة وتقارن نفسك بأهل اللغة الأصليين؟

الضيف: أحاول قدر الاستطاعة حتى أفضل من أهل اللغة الأصليين في الكتابة وحتى بالعربي أحرص أن تكون كتابتي بمستوى عالي خاصة في النشر العلمي وخلافه؛ أما كتابة الرسائل القصيرة فهي على السليقة.

الضيف: فيما يتعلق بقضية القراءة فنحن السعوديين كمجتمع عندنا مشكلة في القراءة باللغة العربية لا يوجد عندنا ممارسة

للقراءة مثل القراءة الحرة أو الاستمتاع هذا غير موجود فعناني من القراءة باللغة الثانية؛ بعض الزملاء يشكون في

الدراسات العليا بأن عندهم قراءات كثيرة ومقالات طويلة وفصول من الكتب لأننا لم نتعود نقرأ قراءة سريعة ولم نتعود

عليها من الصغر لذلك صعبت علينا في الكبر ..

انا: كلمني من هذه الناحية لماذا هذا الأمر موجود عندنا هل هي ثقافة أم أزمة في التعليم ؟.

الضيف: أجيبك من ناحية تحليلية كلغوي أو مجرد ضيف مقابلة؟ باختصار نظام التعليم عندنا في السعودية متأثر بالتعليم التقليدي القائم على الحفظ وعدم الممارسة؛ تجد الطالب من دخول الابتدائي وحتى الثالثة متوسط لا يقرأ أمام زملاءه ولا يتحدث عما قرأ فقط حفظ ويملاً ورقة الاختبار النهائي وينجح، هذا من ناحية التعليم كمؤسسات ؛ الأمر الثاني لا يوجد مكتبة للأطفال بالمدرسة في تجربتي لم يكن يوجد مكتبة للقراءة في مدرستنا ولا يعطوننا المعلمين كتب للقراءة أو القصص غير الكتب المدرسية وحتى هذه الكتب المدرسية تجد أننا لا نقرأها على أحد؛ ومجرد اختبار في نهاية العام من 50 درجة يطلب منك المعلم تقرأ عدد قليل من الأسطر ثم يقيمك عليها وانتهى ..

أما ناحية المنزل فالتعليم جديد على البلد ومعظم الأمهات غير متعلمات (أميات) لذلك لا يوجد في المنزل كتب للقراءة ولا حتى الأمهات يحفظن الأبناء للقراءة كقراءة القصص أو المجالات فقط الكتب المدرسية ويطلبون منا القراءة في المدرسة ، و أما في المدرسة فكان عندنا التعليم سمعي فقط فمثلا عند اختبار المعلم للطالب يحاول تذكر ما تم سماعه في الفصل ويجب بناء عليه وليس عبارة عن مذاكرة وقراءة، (وكان لهذا تأثير سلبي على تحبيب القراءة وبدورها أثرت على الكتابة ولا شك لأنه بدون قراءة لن تستطيع الكتابة؛ بدون مدخلات لا يوجد مخرجات.

انا: بالنسبة لك انت متى تحدد نقطة التحول في حياتك العلمية بالضبط تقريبا؟

الضيف: نقطة التحول عندي بدأت معي في المعهد العلمي بل في لحظة المقابلة للدراسة في المعهد العلمي في المرحلة المتوسطة حيث سألني عن الأزمنة والقواعد (هو مقابل للمدرسة المتوسطة وبنفس السن ولكنه يتميز بكثافة المحتوى التعليمي خاصة اللغة العربية والعلوم الإسلامية) وحت أكون صريح فقد تعلمت القراءة والكتابة بشكل صحيح في الأولى متوسط داخل المعهد أما مرحلة الابتدائي كاملة فلم أتعلم فيها القراءة والكتابة؛ نعم أعرف أقرأ كلمات بسيطة ولكن الممارسة لم تبدأ إلا عند دخول المعهد والسبب في ذلك كثافة الكم الدراسي الموجود بالرغم من أن نظام التعليم ليس بعيد جدا عن الابتدائي إلا أن الكم الدراسي اضطرنا للبحث عن مصادر و بدائل اضافية للدراسة حتى خارج المعهد من أجل النجاح والتفوق وذهبنا للقراءة على شيخ في المسجد .

انا: في الاستبيان مهاراتي اللغوية في الأم أثرت على قراءتي باللغة الثانية واخترت انت المفردات والقواعد والخلفية

المعرفية؛ ممكن ترتبهم لي بالأهمية لو سمحت؟

الضيف: المفردات رقم واحد ثم القواعد ثم الخلفية المعرفية؛ واكتشفت ذلك في البكالوريوس في تخصصي في الترجمة واللغويات وذلك عند البحث في القواميس وجدت تأثير الحصيلة اللغوية عندي في اللغة الأم ووجدت عندي حصيلة مفردات متعددة للكلمة الواحدة بالعربي مثلا عند واجبات الترجمة خلال الدراسة وأبحث عن مقابلها بالضبط بالانجليزي بينما زملائي الذين لم يدرسوا بالمعهد العلمي يكررون نفس المفردة العربية لقلة حصيلتهم اللغوية وتبين لي حينها أثر اللغة الأم على اللغة الثانية خاصة بالمفردات..

انا: علق لي على القواعد لو سمحت ألا تظن أن السبب في اختيار المفردات هو ظهورها السطحي بينما تأثير القواعد خفي ولذلك لا يبين دورها الحقيقي للناس؟..

الضيف: ما أظن أن القضية داخلية لدى الانسان innate device ؛ قد يكون صحيح لكن اللغة بالعربية تختلف عن الانجليزية فيما يخص القواعد؛ وقد أجريت دراسة للتراكيب الانجليزية ذات الأصل العربي مثلا if condition وجدت أنها منقولة من اللاتينية ومن قبلها من السامية العربية بالاضافة لأدوات الربط كذلك انتقلت من العربية.. وظهور أثر المفردات بالعربي واضح التأثير على لغتي الانجليزية ولازلت عند جوابي السابق بأن المفردات مقدمة على القواعد في هذه الناحية ولاشك.. والله أعلم

Me: Tell me about your experience writing in your mother tongue, considering your choice in the questionnaire: somewhat disagree?

The guest: Firstly, when we talk about the Arabic language, we talk about a language that exceeded 300,000 years, in which its structure is based on the vocabulary, grammar, and even the level of syntax, as I studied Arabic grammar and morphology from the book of Ibn Aqeel and took lessons in mosques; therefore, I realized that Arabic language is not easy to follow and it is difficult to master in writing. Perhaps due to our nativespeakerism and upbringing as we were born in the desert of Arabia that perfected our tongues and our religious education

makes our tongue is even more eloquent. However, with regard to writing in Arabic the challenge arose, in this stage it is getting apparent whether someone knows the language or does not know it. We know that writing is a process of outputs and produce outcomes, and here the strength of one's language is revealed. Even academic study, such as master's or PhD cannot obtain the level of professionalism in writing, yet it needs more practice; constant reading and exploring. Therefore, when we read local newspapers by simply reading two or three lines, you find them full of errors with regard to composition and words.

Me: Specifically, my question was: Why did you underestimate your writing ability in Arabic in the survey while you rated English writing better?

Guest: The question is clear; simply the reason is lack of practice. We have learned that language is a matter of practice. I practice writing in English more than I do in Arabic. Therefore, I find myself writing in English now better than Arabic; no doubt. For reading, I read in both languages at a high level almost similar.

Me: Regarding your written abilities in your mother tongue and its negative impact on your writing in the second language; you chose in the survey was highly agree. Could you explain more? Are you a perfectionist? In your L2 writing, do you compare yourself with the native speakers?

Guest: I try to the best of my ability, even better than native speakers particularly in writing. In Arabic, I make sure that my writing is of a high standard, especially in scientific publishing and so on. As for writing daily writing, not high standards.

The guest: Regarding the issue of reading, we Saudis, as a society, have a problem reading in Arabic. We do not have a practice of reading such as free reading or for pleasure. This does not exist, so we suffer from reading in the second language. Some colleagues complain in

postgraduate studies that they have many readings, long articles, and chapters of books; because We are not used to the kinds of reading such as fast reading and we didn't develop it from a young age, so it became difficult when we grow old.

Me: Tell me from this perspective, why does this problem exist in our society, is it because of our culture or the problem with our education?

Guest: Do you want me to answer you as a linguist or just as an interview guest? In short, our education system in Saudi Arabia is influenced by the traditional way of education which is based on memorization and lack of practice. You find the student from entry to primary until the third average does not read in front of his colleagues and does not talk about what he read; only memorization and filling the final test paper and passing the test. This is in terms of education as institutions; the second thing there is no library For children in school in my experience there was no library in our school and teachers do not give us books to read or stories other than textbooks and even these textbooks we do not read them with anyone; it's just a test at the end of the year out of 50, the teacher asks you to read a few lines and then evaluate you and done.

As for the home side, education is new to the country, and most mothers are uneducated (illiterate), so there are no books to read in the house, not even the mothers motivate children to read, such as buying stories or magazines. What we only have was just textbooks and they told us to read them in school. At school, we only have auditory education, for example When the teacher examined the student, he tries to remember what he heard in the class and responds accordingly; it is not something that he studied or/and read before, (This had a negative impact on the love for reading which in turns influenced writing; no doubt. For the reason that, without reading you will not be able to write; without inputs there are no outputs.

Me: When was your turning point in your educational life almost?

The guest: My turning point started with me at the religious institute (it is at the same age as the middle school, yet it is educationally dense, particularly the Arabic language and Islamic studies), in fact at the moment of the interview to study at the religious institute; they asked me about Arabic grammar and rules. To be honest I learned reading and writing appropriately in my first year in this institute. I did not learn to read and write appropriately during my entire primary school; yes, I know I read simple words, but the practice did not start until I joined the institute, and the reason for this is the intensity of the existing academic classes and materials. Even though the education system is not very far from the primary, however, the academic intensity forced us to search for additional sources and alternative ways to study even outside the institute to succeed and excel, and we went to read with a sheikh in the mosque.

Me: in the survey, my linguistic skills in the mother tongue influenced my L2 reading and you chose vocabulary, grammar, and knowledge background; could you arrange them based on their importance, please?

Guest: Vocabulary number one, then grammar, and then background knowledge. I discovered that during my baccalaureate in my major in translation and linguistics. When searching in dictionaries, I found the influence of my linguistic quantum in my L1, and found I have a multiple vocabulary outcome for one word in Arabic, for example, when doing homework of translation during the study; I search for an equivalent exact word in English, while my colleagues who did not study at the religious institute repeat the same Arabic word due to

their lack of linguistic quantum, and it became clear to me at that time the influence of the first language on the second language, especially vocabulary.

Me: comment on grammar, please. Do not you think that the reason for choosing vocabulary is its appearance, while the effect of grammar is hidden, and therefore it does not show its significance for people?

Guest: I don't think so, the innate device; it may be correct, but the Arabic language differs from English in terms of grammar. I did a study of English grammatical structures of Arabic origin, for example if condition I found that they were transferred from Latin and before them from Arabic the Semitic; in addition to the conjunction words transferred from Arabic. The effect of vocabulary in Arabic is evident in my English, and I still believe in my previous answer that vocabulary comes first before the grammar in this regard with no doubt.

Allah knows best.

Interview sample 2

أنا: شكرا لحضورك معنا في اللقاء، ايش خلفياتك العلمية..

الضيف: بكالوريوس لغويات تطبيقية في المملكة والماجستير في بنسلفانيا تيسول

انا: كان تقييمك للغة الأم والثانية في الاستبيان بالنسبة لك ممتاز ، هل تعتقدين مهاراتك باللغتين فعلا ممتازتين خاصة القراءة الكتابة..

الضيف: تربيته في بيت دائما نقرأ ونكتب وملمة بقواعد العربية ومتميزة فيها .. اللغة الانجليزية تعلمتها في المدرسة ولكن التطور فعليا كان في الجامعة خاصة أنه كان جميع أساتذتي بالجامعة غير عرب فاضطرت لاستخدام اللغة الانجليزية دائما فلم يكن عندي مشكلة في مهارة التواصل بالانجليزية وتقييمي لنفسى بامتياز في الانجليزي بالتحديد لقدرتي في كتابة بحث باللغة الانجليزي وقدرتي على التواصل بسهولة مع الدكاترة..

انا: هل تعتقدين أن أهمية القراءة عندك بالعربي في الصغر بالبيت لها أثر في مرحلتك الجامعية للغة الثانية أم لا؟

الضيف: بصراحة ما كنت أعتقد أن فيه رابط بين لغتي وما كنت عارفة السبب بالضبط في تميزي في اللغة الثانية بالرغم من أنني لم أبدأ التعليم فعليا إلا في سن متأخرة قريب ال19 سنة؛ ولكن عندما وصلت مرحلتي في الماجستير عندما درست ماجستير وبحثنا في علاقة اللغة الأم بالتميز في اللغة الثانية وقرأت عدد من الأبحاث بهذا المجال فاكنتشفت أن هذا هو السبب الرئيس في تميزي في لغتي الثانية بحكم أنني كنت متميزة في لغتي الأم أصلاً ولم أكن أبدأ من اصفر بل بالبناء على قاعدتي القوية في لغتي الأم وهذا الكلام انطبق على زميلتي في الدراسة كذلك وطبقت هذا الكلام على طلابي أيضا ..

أنا: كيف عرفتي مستوى لغة طلابك العربية وأنها ضعيفة؟

الضيف: الطالبات كانوا يستخدموا مترجم قوغل من العربي للانجليزي حتى يحصلوا على المفردات والغريب في الموضوع أنهم يكتبوا الكلمات العربية بشكل خاطئ أساسا فتخرج لهم كلمات بمعاني ثانية وليست التي يبحثون عنها فنبهتهم لهذا وكان بعضهم يتعذر بصعوبة الكتابة بالانجليزية لعدم معرفتهم الكتابة بالعربي أصلاً..

أنا: كانت اجابتك على سؤال الاستبيان بتأثير معرفتك اللغوية في العربي إيجابي على قراءتك الانجليزية وتحديد معرفتك بالقواعد العربية، هل توضحين هذا الاختيار اكثر..

الضيف: ايه نعم كنت متميزة في اللغة العربية والنحو تحديداً وإلى الان ليس بسبب الحفظ ولكني كنت فاهمتها أكثر ..

انا: فيما يخص التأليف بالعربي لم تختاري الرغبة بالتأليف بالعربي..

الضيف: دراستي كانت بالانجليزي دائماً في المرحتين البكالوريوس والماجستير فكان هذا سبب أني ما أتميز بالمصطلحات بالعربي وحاولت البحث بالعربي من قبل فوجدت المراجع العربية كثيرة في تحليل اللغة العربية خاصة فيما يتعلق بعلاقة اللغة بالدين الإسلامي فذلك كانت كثيرة؛ أظن أننا بحاجة للنشر بالانجليزي اذا أردنا تعريف الناس بلغتنا العربية.

انا: ضعف طلابنا في القدرة على البحث مقارنة بالأمريكان مثلاً هل هي ثقافة شعب أم طرق التدريس هي السبب والتوصيف الدقيق للعملية التعليمية؟

الضيف: واضح لكن أحتاج أنأكد هل تقصد كيف تطور الطريقة لتعليم اللغة الأم في المدرسة أو رأيي الشخصي ف؟ عوامل مختلفة أكيد وأظن أن البيت والمجتمع مؤثر ولكن ونقطة التحول تكون التعليم الجيد وهو أهم العوامل حتى وإن كان البيت أو المجتمع لا يقرأ فإن التلعيم هو أهم شيء و اذا تعدل سيصلح كل الجوانب الأخر.. وأظن التعليم للغة الأم الان متدهور وليس عميق أبداً خاصة في القراءة والكتابة وكل شيء يسير ببساطة بدون عمق وبسبب أساليب التدريس أيضاً حيث لا يوجد تغذية راجعة .. وفي تجربتي الشخصية ما كانت المعلمة تحفزني وتنبهني في تميزي في الكتابة باللغة الأم؛ واكتشفت موهبتي فيها بالصدفة من شخص بالخارج فلو لم يأتي هذا الشخص لم أكن لأعرف موهبتي؛ باختصار نعم لابد ويجب أن يكون هناك وعي بأهمية اللغة الأم وطريقة تدريسها كذلك.

Me: Thank you for joining us at, what is your educational backgrounds?

Guest: Bachelor of Applied Linguistics in KSA and Master of TESOL in Pennsylvania.

Me: in the survey, your assessment of the first and second languages was highly proficient, comment on that please?

Guest: I was raised at a home where we always read and write and I had high mastery of Arabic grammar as well. I learned English language in school, but the improvement was actually in the university. All my professors at the university were non-Arabs so I had to use the English language at all times, therefore I had no problem communicating in English. My

assessment of highly proficient in English because of my ability to write a research in English and my ability to communicate easily with professors in English.

Me: Do you think that the role of L1 reading habit at a young age home had an impact on your second language?

Guest: Honestly, I did not think that there was a link between my two languages , as a matter of fact I did not know the exact reason for my mastery of the second language particularly my L2 learning didn't begin until a late age around 19 years old. However, when I studies my master's degree we discussed the relationship between the mastery of the mother language and the second language; I actually read a number of researches in this field, and I discovered that was the main reason for my mastery in my second language due to the fact that I was distinguished in my mother tongue initially and I did not start from scratch, rather I was building on my strong basis in my L1. Also this situation applied to one of my colleague and I found this applied to my students as well.

Me: How did you know the level of your students' Arabic language?

Guest: The students were using Google translator from Arabic to English to get the vocabulary; the strange thing is that they write the wrong Arabic spelling in the first place, so what they get are unrelated words in English with totally different meaning than the one they are looking for. therefore, I informed them about this, and some of them justified their inability to write in English because they did not know how to write in Arabic initially.

Me: Your answer to the survey question you had a positive impact of your linguistic knowledge in Arabic on your English reading and specifically your knowledge of Arabic grammar. Can you explain this choice further?

Guest: Yes, I was excellent in Arabic and grammar, precisely, because it was based on memorization, rather understanding.

Me: Regarding publishing in Arabic, you chose not to publish in Arabic.

The guest: My studies were always in English at the baccalaureate and master's levels. This was the reason that I did not excel in Arabic terminology. I tried to search in Arabic before, I found many Arabic references in analyzing the Arabic language, especially with regard to the relationship of language to Islamic religion. So I think we need to publish in English if we want to let People know about our Arabic language.

Me: The weakness of our students in writing research compared to the Americans, for example. Is it the cultural reason or the teaching methods, accuracy and clarity, educational process, etc., what are the reasons?

Guest: I need to make sure. Do you mean how can we improve a methodology to teach our first language at school or my personal opinion? Many factors, for sure, and I think that home and the community have influential role, but the turning point is about having good education. This is the most important factor even if the home or society does not read, education is the most important thing and if it is fixed and improved, it will fix all other aspects. I think our L1 education is now deteriorating and not deep at all, especially in reading Writing and everything goes simply without depth. Also, the teaching methods is another reason, for instance there is no feedback. In my personal experience, the teacher would not motivate me and never point out to my distinction in writing in my Arabic L1. I discovered my talent in writing by chance from someone outside, if this person did not come I would never know my talent. In short, yes, we must improve our L1 teaching and there

should be awareness about the importance of learning our L1 and the methods of teaching as well.