

MOTIVATIONAL INFLUENCES ON ADULT ARAB LEARNERS OF  
ENGLISH IN THE UAE

by

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## Abstract

This study explores the motivational influences that impact seven Arab undergraduate learners of English in the UAE as they pursue two semesters of study. The study investigates the role of English in the participants' lives and the different factors that influence their motivation to learn and use English in the multi-national context of the UAE. During a sixteen-week period, three rounds of interviews with the participants were conducted and participants' written responses to four written prompts and a self-portrait were collected to obtain data on the participants' beliefs, emotions, and expectations of learning English. The study draws on Dörnyei's L2 motivational self-system (2005, 2009) to explore the role of English in learners' representations of themselves in the future and the extent to which they consider English a language they ought to learn. The findings of the study suggest that the principal motivational influences affecting the participants' language learning were their previous learning experiences, their personal orientations towards the language, and contextual factors in their formal and informal learning setting. Furthermore, the study highlighted the diversity, dynamicity and complexity of the construct of learner motivation in the learners' learning experiences. Despite apparent similarities amongst the study participants, the data revealed significant differences in the ways they responded to the learning setting, the extent to which they used English outside of class and their perception of the role of English in their lives. The data also reflected change over time in participants' emotions, preferences and investment in the language. Analysis of the data revealed complex interactions amongst the unique characteristics of individual learners and aspects of their motivation resulting in the complex, dynamic system known as the L2 motivational self-system (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009). The study calls for raising learners' awareness of the factors which influence their motivation and strategies which enable them to manage their emotions during the ongoing learning process. It also suggests raising language teachers' awareness of the complexity, dynamicity, and uniqueness of language learner motivation so that they can better monitor and address the multifaceted influences that impact their learners' motivation in different contexts.

**Search Terms:** learner motivation, English learners, motivational influences.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Overview**

This chapter introduces the study by first describing the context where the data was gathered. It then locates the study within the international research on language learning motivation before identifying the focus of the present study. The chapter then outlines the methodology of the study and the research questions it seeks to address before identifying ways in which the thesis contributes to existing research on language learning motivation in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

### **1) Background to the study**

Learning English has become an essential element in most academic learning contexts because English has come to be acknowledged as the international language that facilitates communication among different communities and cultures. In addition to the global significance that English has gained in recent times, the sociocultural context of the UAE reinforces the importance of learning English in this country. Since the UAE is a multi-national community, the need to learn and use English in the UAE is strong because English is one of the means of formal and informal communication among the various nationalities that inhabit this country. Therefore, English is used as a lingua franca that facilitates communication among individuals of different nationalities residing in the UAE.

In addition to its significance as a means of communication in the social context of the UAE, English has gained significance in the varied educational curricula that use English as a medium for teaching. In addition to the Arabic curriculum schools in the UAE, one can find British curriculum schools, American curriculum schools and Indian curriculum schools that adopt the English language as the means of communication (Education in the UAE, n. d). Therefore, learners in the UAE become aware of the importance of English early in their lives. This significance of English in the UAE makes learning and using English extremely important. Hence, learning English and motivating learners to learn it are important issues that need to be considered.

Learner motivation is one of the most significant factors that has been acknowledged to influence language learners' development (Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei



& Ushioda, 2009; Gardner, Tremblay, & Masgoret, 1997; Ma, 2009; Ushioda, 2001). When learners possess a high level of motivation to learn a language, they usually invest more time and effort in learning. Early research on learner motivation by Gardner and Lambert (1959) focused on motivation as a major factor in language learners' success. Initially most researchers focused on quantitatively measuring learner motivation and the way it influences learners in different contexts. However, the complexity of the construct of motivation makes it difficult to measure (Ushioda, 2001; Ushioda, 2009).

Subsequently, research on learner motivation identified a number of influences that impact learners' motivation either positively or negatively (Ushioda, 2001; Shoaib & Dörnyei, 2005). Some of these factors are related to the personal orientations that the learners hold towards learning and using the language. These include the learners' attitudes and emotions towards the target language, their beliefs about the importance of the language in their lives, their previous experiences, and the influence of the teacher.

More recently, motivation has been acknowledged as a complex system due to the many factors that constitute it, each influencing each other and the outcomes of language learning. This new approach to conceptualizing the dimensions of motivation was introduced by Dörnyei, (Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei & Ushioda 2009, 2011), who viewed motivation as a complex construct that should be viewed in relation to the learners' individual selves. This shift in motivational research has highlighted the complexity and the dynamicity of motivation as an influential factor in the learning process.

Research has also consistently indicated the significance of the context in which the language is being learned and the importance of the target language in the learners' lives. Considering the social context and the need to learn and use English in the UAE, it is anticipated that context will play a significant role in learners' motivation to learn and use English in both formal and informal contexts. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate the role of English in the lives of a group of undergraduate Arab learners and gain an insight into the influences that have an impact on their motivation to learn the language.

## **2) Significance of the study**

Although learner motivation has attracted the attention of many researchers in the field of language learning, most of the studies that have investigated learner motivation and the motivational influences on learners have dealt with motivation from a quantitative perspective. Since the earliest studies about learner motivation, researchers tended to view motivation as a construct that could be measured using surveys and questionnaires. Motivation, in these studies, was viewed as a social psychological construct that influenced different learners in different contexts in various ways. Although the quantitative paradigm in previous research into motivation has paved the way for a better understanding of the significance of learner motivation and its relation to success in learning, it fails to consider the individuality of learners and the complex nature of the construct of motivation. Adopting a qualitative approach, however, allows researchers to obtain insights into the unique needs, attitudes, beliefs and experiences of particular learners.

The significance of this study stems from the qualitative methodology that is adopted in the study as well as from the scarcity of studies that investigate learner motivation in the Arab region. The qualitative approach allows the researcher to access learners' opinions, reflections, and beliefs about the role of English in their lives and the motivational influences that impact their English learning. Furthermore, the longitudinal nature of the study makes it possible to document changes in the learners' orientation to learning English over time. The findings of the study, therefore, emphasize the complexity and the dynamicity of the construct of motivation that cannot be measured using only static quantitative methods. Therefore, this study is expected to complement other studies that have explored learner motivation in language learning by emphasizing the complex way in which motivation operates in the experience of the individual learners at the center of the study.

Moreover, although learner motivation has gained importance in applied linguistics research recently around the world, studies that investigated the construct of learner motivation and the motivational influences on Arab learners seem to be scarce. Therefore, it is hoped that this study will enrich research into motivation in the Arab world and perhaps raise awareness of its significance in individual English learners' lives. The findings of this study can also raise English teachers' awareness

of the individuality and uniqueness of language learners and the diversity of the motivational influences that impact them and consequently influence the ongoing learning process.

The aim of this study was to investigate the role of English and the motivational influences in the lives of seven Arab undergraduate learners in the UAE. The two principal research questions are:

1. What role does English language learning occupy in the lives of seven Arab learners enrolled in an undergraduate English language course?
2. What are the motivational influences on seven Arab learners' of English language learning in an undergraduate course?

### **3) Structure of the study**

This chapter has presented the background and significance of the study in light of previous research.

Chapter 2 provides the theoretical and empirical framework for the study by reviewing significant research studies that have investigated learner motivation in different contexts and from different perspectives. The main strands of research and significant theories about learner motivation and motivational influences are discussed in chapter 2.

Chapter 3 presents an outline of the research methodology adopted in this study including a description of the process of data collection and the research instruments used in data collection as well as the process of analyzing the data which led to the findings.

Chapter 4 reports on the findings that resulted from analyzing the data from the interviews, participants' written responses, and the self-portraits. The chapter includes a description of the major themes that emerged from analyzing the data and draws on several examples to illustrate those themes.

Chapter 5 discusses the four major themes that emerged from the findings and that appear to influence learner motivation and considers the implications of these findings for individual English learners and teachers in different contexts.

Chapter 6 draws conclusions from the main findings in the study and indicates its limitations. Suggestions for further research are also provided in this chapter.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Overview**

Learner motivation has been acknowledged as one of the most essential factors in success in language learning (Dörnyei, 2005; Gardner, Tremblay, & Masgoret, 1997; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Ushioda, 2001). Reviewing conceptual and empirical studies of learner motivation can provide insight into the motivational influences on language learning identified in these studies. In this chapter, the major conceptual frameworks of motivation and significant empirical studies that investigated these frameworks are presented. The chapter starts with a historical overview which outlines the main strands that dominated research on learner motivation. Next, a recent theory of learner motivation, the L2 motivational self-system, is presented. This is followed by a discussion of the main methodological approaches adopted in learner motivation studies. Finally, the chapter ends with a synthesis of a number of relevant studies that have investigated learner motivation.

### **1) Historical overview**

Understanding learner motivation entails reviewing the historical development of motivational theories and research into language learners' motivation over the past decades.

#### **1.1. What is language learner motivation?**

Although motivation is acknowledged as a major factor in language learning, there is no general agreement on a definition that includes all its components (Crookes and Schmidt, 1991). Different emphases in research into motivation at different times have viewed motivation as a cognitive, affective, social and contextual variable. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) argue that “no existing motivation theory to date has managed – or even attempted – to offer a comprehensive and integrative account of all the main types of possible motives, and it may well be the case that devising an integrative ‘super-theory’ of motivation will always remain an unrealistic desire” (p. 4).

Nonetheless, researchers over the years have agreed that motivation concerns an individual's choosing a particular action, the degree of persistence with which they pursue that action and the effort they spend pursuing it. For instance, McDonough

(2007) believes that motivation is characterized by four main elements, the reasons for learning, the strength of a learner's desire to learn, the learner's personality, and the learning task. Another attempt to define motivation is presented by Dörnyei & Ottó (1998) who define motivation as "the dynamically changing cumulative arousal in a person that initiates, directs, coordinates, amplifies, terminates, and evaluates the cognitive and motor processes whereby initial wishes and desires are selected, prioritised, operationalised, and (successfully or unsuccessfully) acted out" (p. 64). This definition indicates the complexity of the construct of motivation and, due to its dynamism, the difficulty of capturing it. Attempts to understand L2 motivation have resulted in a number of major theories that have shaped research on L2 motivation during the past six decades.

## **1. 2. The Socio-Educational Model of SLA**

The importance of learner motivation has been acknowledged ever since Robert Gardner and his associates initiated research on language learning motivation in Canada in 1959. In their model, L2 motivation research was based on a social psychological perspective that takes into consideration the social context of learning and the relationships between various linguistic communities (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011) as well as learners' disposition to both. Gardner's work was motivated by a desire to understand the different motivations of Anglophone Canadians' learning of French and Francophone Canadians' learning of English. In this context, learners' attitudes to members of the L2 community were thought to play an important role in learners' motivation to learn the language. Accordingly, these researchers focused their research on the social and psychological aspects of language learners' motivation. Accordingly, in their research participants were asked attitudinal questions about the target language, speakers of the target language and the target language community.

In Gardner's socio-educational model of motivation, he and his associates identified four categories of motivational characteristics: group specific attitudes, course related characteristics, motivational indices, and generalized attitudes (Gardner, 2001). Furthermore, they proposed two key motivational orientations, integrative orientation and instrumental orientation. Integrative orientation refers to

the inner desire of a learner to learn a target language and be integrated in the target language community. This entails a positive attitude towards the target language and the process of learning itself. According to Gardner, “the concept of integrative motivation is associated with a social psychological interpretation of second language acquisition” (2001, p. 2). An instrumental orientation, on the other hand, refers to the desire of a learner to learn a target language for practical reasons such as academic purposes or job interests. Gardner and his associates, based on a significant body of research, maintained that learners with integrative motivational orientations were more capable of learning the target language than learners who learned the language with instrumental motivational orientations (Gardner, Tremblay, & Masgoret, 1997; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995). They argued that this was because of the long-term commitment required for success in language learning and the importance of a positive affective orientation to speakers of the target language.

In his most recent version of the socio-educational model, Gardner (2001) presented two categories of motivational variables, *integrativeness* and *attitudes toward the learning situation*. *Integrativeness*, according to Gardner, might involve emotional identification with the target language community. On the other hand, the motivational variable *attitudes toward the learning situation* involves learners’ attitudes toward any aspect of the learning situation in which the language is learned (Gardner, 2001). The early theories of Gardner and his associates focused on the characteristics of language acquisition as a social and cultural process. Therefore, this phase of second language motivation research “was shaped by a concern to address the unique social, psychological, behavioral and cultural complexities that acquiring a new communication code entails” (Ushioda, 2011a, p. 200).

Gardner's socio-educational model dominated research on second language motivation for more than 30 years. Integrative motivation was one of the most researched concepts in second language learning and in many of these studies integrative motivation was found to be an essential variable that influenced language learning (e.g., Clement, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1994; Csizer & Dörnyei, 2005; Masgoret & Gardner 2003; Tremblay & Gardner 1995). Most of these studies adopted quantitative methodology exploring the attitudes which learners held towards the language or speakers of the language. To do this they used the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) that Gardner and his associates developed to assess the language-related

attitudes of learner motivation. The AMTB was a series of questionnaire items originally developed to assess the motivation of English speaking Canadian learners of French as a second language and French speaking Canadian learners of English as a second language.

Although the Socio-Educational Model of SLA dominated research in second language learner motivation for decades, in 1991 Crookes and Schmidt published a paper which argued that this approach limited research on learner motivation in several ways (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Oxford & Shearin, 1994). In particular, they argued for a focus on motivation in specific learning contexts to complement the concern with identifying learners' general disposition to language learning and to the target language community. Gardner himself acknowledged that the categorization of motivation under integrative and instrumental orientations was a little restrictive and static and indicated that there might be more ways to conceptualize learners' disposition towards learning a second language than the two main orientations (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991). Moreover, the AMTB was criticized for being "a poor measure of the degree to which learners are actually motivated to learn" (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991, p. 475).

Although the Socio-Educational Model has been acknowledged for its major contribution to researching and understanding second language learning motivation, it was recognized that there was a need for new approaches to exploring motivation which could better capture the nature of language learning motivation as it related to classroom contexts. The turning point for this shift occurred when Crookes and Schmidt (1991) suggested that motivation should be viewed as an evolving and dynamic construct that is both affected by and affects classroom experiences of language learning. They also emphasized that motivation should be analyzed in terms of different levels. These levels include the cognitive level, the classroom level, the syllabus level as well as the informal and long-term factors (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991). This shift allowed for more consideration of motivational influences inside the classroom which led to the new consideration of individual learners.



### **1.3. The Shift from the Social to the Cognitive Paradigm**

Crookes and Schmidt's (1991) call for new ways of theorizing and researching motivation paved the way for the consideration of other theories of second language learning motivation including Self Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008) and the Process-Oriented Approach (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998). These theories discussed the cognitive aspects of learner motivation and their impact on learner behaviors. Self Determination theory rejected simplistic conceptualizations of extrinsic motivation (behavior adopted to earn a reward) as impacting negatively on intrinsic motivation (behavior adopted for its own sake) in favor of a more complex understanding related to the extent to which learners' extrinsic goals were internalized within their broader values and beliefs.

Another framework was proposed by Williams and Burden (1997) who adopted a constructivist approach to researching L2 motivation. This approach maintains that each learner is motivated individually and differently from other learners but that individual motivation cannot be viewed as separate from social and contextual influences. Therefore, learner motivation influences should be categorized as either learner internal or external factors. Internal factors include the learner's intrinsic interest in the activity, perceived value of the activity, the learner's sense of mastery, the learner's self-concept and attitudes, and other affective factors such as the learner's confidence, anxiety and fear. On the other hand, the external factors include significant people for the learner, the nature of interaction, the learning environment, and the broader context such as the educational system and the cultural norms (Williams & Burden, 1997).

The emergence of different theories and frameworks reflects an attempt by motivation researchers to understand learner motivation in different contexts and to take account of the range of variables that might impact language learners and the way in which they view and deal with their learning in different contexts.

### **1.4. The Process Oriented Approach**

At the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, another influential approach to exploring language learning motivation emerged. This approach viewed learner motivation as a complex, dynamic process that involves change over time. It is now acknowledged that learner motivation is a complex phenomenon that usually involves either

situation-specific motivational sources or generalized sources that stem from the learner's experiences in the social world (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2002). Resulting from this new view of motivation, there was a shift in the focus of motivational research from the macro level that studies the social influences of the learners' motivation to the micro level that is more concerned with the dynamic and temporal aspect of motivation located in a specific learning situation.

As motivation research developed a more dynamic view of the process of motivation, the need to view learners' motivation in relation to new elements such as the inception of motivation and the temporal aspect was identified. Dörnyei (2000) believed that "the 'time' dimension is relevant to the study of motivation in at least two crucial areas: to account for (a) how motivation is generated and (b) how it fluctuates and further develops over time" (p. 519). In fact, this commitment to exploring the time dimension of motivation can be traced back to Dörnyei and Ottó's (1998) paper, which presented a new conceptualization of the temporal aspect of motivation, referred to as the Process Oriented approach. Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) suggested viewing motivation from a temporal perspective arguing that the motivational process consists of two dimensions, the actional dimension and the motivational influences dimension (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998). The actional dimension consists mainly of three phases: The '*Pre-actional phase*' when motivation is involved principally with goal setting, the '*Actional phase*' during which motivation sustains the learning activity, and the '*Post-actional phase*' where learning is evaluated.

Dörnyei & Ottó (1998) classified the motivational influences operating on the learner according to the different learning phases. In the first phase, the motivational influences include the learner's expectancy of success, learner beliefs about L2 learning, and knowledge of learning strategies. Some of the executive motivational influences that affect the actional phase are sensitivity to aspects in the learning environment, the quality of the learning experience, the learner's autonomy, the influence of the learner group and the learning environment. The motivational influences that impact learners in the final phase include evaluative motivational influences such as attributional factors, self-concept beliefs, and evaluation cues and feedback.

### **1. 5. Motivational influences**

Interest in the influences on motivation led other researchers to also explore the elements that impacted on learner motivation (Dörnyei &Clément, 2001; Masgoret, Bernaus, & Gardner, 2001; & Shoaib & Dörnyei, 2005) and various ways of classifying them. What emerges from these studies is an acknowledgement that affective, psychological, and social variables are all likely to impact on learners who undertake language learning in any given context.

The first dimension of motivational influences that was presented in studies about learners' motivation was related to the affective factors that influence language learners. Researchers identify affect as one of the major influences that impact language learners' motivation in different learning contexts (Dörnyei & Clément, 2001; Masgoret, Bernaus, & Gardner, 2001; & Shoaib & Dörnyei, 2005; Ushioda, 2001). The affective dimension of motivational influences includes the learners' feelings, attitudes and beliefs about the target language as well as their enjoyment (Ushioda, 2001) and satisfaction during the learning process (Shoaib & Dörnyei, 2005). The findings of these studies indicated that learners with positive attitudes and affective relation to the target language were more motivated to learn the language. For instance, Masgoret, Bernaus and Gardner (2001, p. 289) comment that “children with favorable attitudes toward English are highly motivated to learn English and feel that they are, in fact, quite proficient in English”. These findings indicate the importance of the affective personal orientation towards the target language in learners' motivation.

Another dimension of motivational influences that was explored by researchers related to the self-concept dimension (Dörnyei &Clément, 2001; Masgoret, Bernaus, & Gardner, 2001; & Shoaib & Dörnyei, 2005). This dimension is related to learners' self-concept beliefs such as self-confidence and self-worth (Shoaib & Dörnyei, 2005). The self-concept dimension was also found to be an influential motivational factor that influenced learners' motivation to learn the language.

In addition to the personal influences that are related to the learners' orientations towards the target language such as their beliefs, attitudes, feelings towards the language and their self-confidence, researchers also considered the educational context (Dörnyei &Clément, 2001) as an influential motivational factor. For instance, Shoaib and Dörnyei (2005) found in their study that the learning experiences, the learning group and the teacher highly influenced the learners'

motivation. The dimension of learners' experiences in a given learning context was extended to include the learners' previous learning experiences in Ushioda's (2001) study. Ushioda (2001), who was investigating the motivation of university language learners, indicated that learners with a *positive learning history* were highly motivated to learn the language.

Research also found learner motivation to be associated with the notion of learner investment (Busse & Walter, 2013; Dörnyei & Clément, 2001; Masgoret, Bernaus, & Gardner, 2001; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Norton, 2013). Although researchers investigated learner investment using different terms such as *learner intended effort* (Masgoret, Bernaus, & Gardner, 2001), *learners' persistence* (Shoib & Dörnyei, 2005), and *learners' engagement* (Busse & Walter, 2013), all concluded that the time and effort that learners invest in the learning process reflects the language learners' motivation. Norton (2013) indicates that learner investment, which includes learners' values and aspirations, evokes the complex overall environment in which learner motivation operates. Therefore, learner investment does not operate on its own, but:

It is related to the various factors that influence learners in relation to their inner selves as well as their contextual factors. The notion of investment recognizes that learners often have variable desires to engage in the range of social interactions and community practices in which they are situated. (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 420).

Learner investment is therefore another aspect of language learners' motivation that manifests the relationship between the personal and contextual influences in any given language learning environment.

## **2) The L2 motivational self-system**

Although the process-oriented approach attended to the temporal aspect of learners' motivation and investigated motivation as a process of three different phases, it seemed to fall short in several aspects. In his (2005) book, Dörnyei reflects on his process-oriented approach and points out two shortcomings. First, it might be difficult to identify the beginning and the end of the language learning process in any learner's experience; this suggests that the division of the learning process into three separate phases is impractical. Second, the approach assumes that the actional process occurs in isolation without interference from other processes in which the learner

might be engaged (Dörnyei, 2005). However, this is unlikely to be the case. Identification of these shortcomings indicated the need to view learner motivation from a new perspective.

## **2.1. Conceptual framework**

A recent shift in L2 motivational research occurred when motivation began to be viewed as closely related to the inner aspect of the learner's self. L2 learners need to be viewed as real people who are influenced by their own cultural and historical contexts (Ushioda, 2009). Therefore, the identities and motivations of L2 learners are shaped by these factors. Ushioda's argument was that researchers need to "take a relational (rather than linear) view of these multiple contextual elements, and view motivation as an organic process that emerges through this complex system of interrelation" (Ushioda, 2009, p. 220). This conceptual move to exploring the self-concept in relation to L2 learner motivation was led by Dörnyei (2005, 2009). In 2005, Dörnyei utilized the psychological theories of the self to propose The "L2 Motivational self-System". Dörnyei's new system of L2 learner motivation was influenced by two significant theoretical concepts. The first concept is *integrativeness* (integrative motivation), which was first introduced by Gardner and Lambert (1959). Dörnyei believed that Gardner and Lambert's conceptualization of *integrativeness* as the strength of the learner's desire to integrate with the target language community was rather limiting and could not be identified in all learning environments because of the diversity of contexts in which language learning occurs. Therefore, he decided to view it in relation to the learners' selves (Ushioda, 2011a).

The second concept that formed the basis for the L2 Motivational self-system was the concept of possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) which is concerned with individuals' ideas and visions of their selves in the future (Dörnyei, 2009). Dörnyei and Ushioda explain their understanding of the possible selves:

The notion of possible selves concerns how people conceptualize their as-yet unrealized potential, and as such, it also draws on hopes, wishes, and fantasies. In this sense, possible selves act as 'future self-guides', reflecting a dynamic, forward-pointing conception that can explain how someone is moved from the present toward the future (2011, p. 80).

The trigger for Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System was the findings of a large-scale motivation survey of over 13,000 Hungarian L2 learners learning English, French, German, Italian and Russian over a period of 12 years (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2002). Analysis of the findings of this large-scale study indicated that *integrativeness* played an important role in learner's motivation. Since, however, the Hungary-based learners did not have any L2 community with whom to "integrate", Dörnyei sought an alternative theorization of the construct of *integrativeness*. For this he looked to the conceptualization of possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986), suggesting that *integrativeness* was the L2-related aspect of an individual's ideal self. If that individual wishes to become proficient in the L2, proficiency in the L2 can be seen as part of their sense of self. They could then be described as having an "integrative" orientation and the ideal L2 self is a powerful positive motivational force. Thus, "the central theme of the emerging new theory was the equation of the motivational dimension that has traditionally been interpreted as 'integrativeness/ integrative motivation' with the Ideal L2 Self" (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 27). The ideal L2 self is the first of three components of Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System: The Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self, and the L2 learning experience (Dörnyei, 2009).

### **2. 1. 1. The Ideal L2 Self**

The notion of the "Ideal L2 Self" was introduced by Dörnyei to explain the learners' conception of what they hope and wish to become as second language learners in the future. It is closely related to the images through which these learners visualize themselves after they have learnt the language successfully. When L2 learners have a desire to learn the target language, their ideal L2 self is usually associated with positive images and emotions towards the target language. Therefore, the L2 is part of the way they view themselves. Consequently the ideal L2 self is usually a powerful motivational drive because "it represents the learners' desire to reduce the discrepancy between their actual and ideal selves" (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 29). In Dörnyei's L2 motivational self-system, the Ideal L2 self is considered the most important motivational force that leads to successful language learning.

### **2. 1. 2. The Ought-to L2 Self**

In Dörnyei's L2 motivational self-system, the 'ought-to L2 self' represents the motives that are led by social norms and expectations. The ought-to L2 self is usually related to instrumental motivation because it refers to the qualities that L2 learners believe they 'ought to' possess or the behaviors they ought to adopt in order to avoid negative outcomes (Dörnyei, 2009). It is believed that the ought-to L2 self is a weaker motivational drive than the Ideal L2 self because it is more related to extrinsic factors that have less influence on learners than intrinsic factors.

### **2. 1. 3. The L2 Learning Experience**

In addition to the 'Ideal L2 self' and the 'Ought-to L2 self' that were derived from the theory of possible selves, Dörnyei added the "learning experience" dimension to indicate the importance of the situated learning process. According to Dörnyei, the L2 Learning Experience "concerns situated, 'executive' motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience" (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 29). This includes the influence of the teacher, the learning group, the curriculum, and the learner's past experience of success. Dörnyei believes that the L2 experience is conceptualized at a different level from the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self. (Dörnyei, 2009).

According to the L2 Motivational Self-System, motivation develops from the learners' desire to decrease the gap between their actual self and their ought-to self (Ushioda, 2011a). Therefore, the learners' imagined future selves have a strong psychological reality in their current learning experiences and the ability of language learners to engage in current language interactions indicates their ability to engage their L2 future selves (Ushioda, 2011 b). The learners' ability to visualize their future selves is therefore related to their ability to involve themselves in their second language learning.

Several large-scale empirical studies have investigated the possible future selves construct in various L2 learning contexts. For instance, in their comparative study, Taguchi, Magid, and Papi (2009) aimed to validate Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System by investigating its application in three Asian contexts: Japan, China and Iran. The findings of their study indicated that Dörnyei's findings have external validity and supported the Hungarian study findings that *integrativeness* can be

reabeled as the ideal L2 self (Taguchi, Magid, & Papi, 2009). In another study, Csizér & Kormos (2009) also found that the learners' motivated behaviors are partly determined by the ideal L2 self. (See also Al-Shehri, 2009; Ryan, 2009; Li, 2014; and Yashima, 2009).

The L2 motivational self-system has gained importance during the past decade due to the different studies that investigated the application of this conceptualization in learner motivation. As (Ushioda, 2011a) states:

This growing body of research provides empirical support for the possible selves dimension of the L2 Motivational Self System and for the key argument that Integrativeness is better reconceptualized in terms of the ideal L2 self, which is proven to have greater explanatory power in these studies (Ushioda, 2011a, p. 202).

Dörnyei's Motivational L2 Self-System has gained much importance as a theory of L2 learner motivation and prompted many L2 researchers to investigate the validity of the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, and the learning experience in different language learning contexts.

## **2. 2. L2 Motivational Self-System and Imagery**

Imagery lies at the heart of the ideal L2 self (Dörnyei, 2009; Dörnyei, 2011). Although imagery is not stated as a component of the Motivational L2 self-System, it plays an essential part in this system because the conception of the future self requires the learners' ability to visualize themselves in their desired future. The importance of imagery in learners' L2 self-system stems from their ability to visualize themselves in the future and the value of English in this future.

Several studies have investigated the relation between the Motivational L2 Self-System and imagery. Such studies have found that the ability of L2 learners to visualize their future L2 identity is central to the notion of the L2 self-system (You & Chan, 2015). Similarly, Al-Shehri (2009) found that visual learners had a better ability to visualize their ideal selves and this was reflected in their motivated effort and learning behavior. In another study, Dörnyei & Chan (2013) investigated the multisensory dimension of learners' future imagined identities and their findings revealed that the learners' mental imagery abilities (both visual and auditory) were salient components in the learners' future guides.



Imagery has proven to be an essential factor in the Motivational L2 Self-System. It is the means through which L2 learners can imagine their ideal future selves and constitutes an effective motivational force driving them towards success in their learning.

### **3) Methodological approaches**

Research into language learning motivation has been conducted using a range of different methods. Data has been obtained from learners using surveys, self-reports, interviews, and others means of data collection. Recently, research on motivation has experienced some new trends in terms of the methodologies adopted in these studies. One of the current trends in L2 motivational research is adopting diverse methodologies by analyzing data from diaries, observations, interviews, and case studies (Ma, 2009). Of these different methodologies, we are concerned with the application of surveys, interviews, learners' self-reports, and non-verbal data collection because they represent significant approaches that provide insight into the rich, complex characteristics of learner motivation.

#### **3. 1. Surveys**

Surveys have been extensively used by many researchers due to their ability to collect data from a large number of participants. Some of the advantages of surveys might include that they are easy, practical and produce reliable data that can be generalized to other contexts. Nevertheless, one of the major pitfalls that can be associated with the use of surveys is that they cannot provide researchers with access to the unique feelings, opinions, or characteristics of individual learners. Although surveys might provide a general indication of what learners feel and think, they are limited in their ability to explore explanations for the feelings reported by the learners themselves. In contrast, a follow-up question in an interview might explore the deeper realms of learners' emotions and opinions that are less effectively explored by closed items in a survey or Likert scale items.

Most studies in the early days of language learning motivation research that investigated motivation adopted surveys as the main instrument for data collection. The goal of such studies was to develop generalizable models to predict what kind of motivation might lead to success in particular contexts. The analysis aims explicitly to identify the minimum number of variables needed to explain variation in the

outcomes. Survey items focused on elements such as attitudes towards target languages, attitudes towards contact with L2 speakers and interest in the L2 culture. This prevailing methodology is exemplified in the study of Csizér and Dörnyei (2005) who conducted a survey of 8,593 pupils in Hungary in 1993 and 1999. In their study, Csizér and Dörnyei (2005) used structural equation modelling to evaluate the complex internal structure of L2 motivation and its influences on the learners' behaviors. Similarly, Bernaus and Gardner (2008) surveyed 31 teachers and 694 EFL students to investigate their use of motivational strategies in Spain. A few years later, Csizér and Kormos (2009) used a questionnaire that consisted of 65 Likert-scale items and a ten-item section that contained multiple choice and short answer questions to investigate the effects of the L2 ideal and ought-to selves on Hungarian foreign language learners' motivated behaviors.

Using the same quantitative methodology, Al-Ansari (1993) surveyed 155 university students in Bahrain to investigate the relation between motivational influences and the level of English proficiency among first- year university students in Bahrain. He found that the influence of instrumental motivation to learn English differed among language learners according to their level of English proficiency. Another study that adopted surveys to investigate the motivation of L2 learners was a study conducted by Obeidat (2005) in two universities in Jordan. Obeidat (2005) surveyed 173 Malaysian students learning Arabic in Jordan to investigate their integrative and instrumental motivation to learn Arabic. Moreover, Al Rifai (2010) surveyed 107 university students in Kuwait to investigate their attitudes, motivations and the factors that influenced their motivation during learning English. She found that the students who spoke English at home, watched English programs on TV, and had positive feelings towards their teachers and their learning group were more motivated to learn English than other students who lacked these factors (Al Rifai, 2010). One recent study conducted in Iran (Rajab, Far, & Etemadzadeh, 2012) surveyed 308 university students to investigate the relationship between their L2 motivational self-system and L2 Learning.

The previous examples reflect the fact that the research on L2 motivation has been dominated by quantitative research methods. Nevertheless, this does not mean that other methodologies in research have been completely neglected.

### **3. 2. Interviews**

The nature of interviews as a time-consuming data collection method includes the limitation of involving small numbers of participants due to the long time needed for the interviews as well as the process of transcription and analysis. Moreover, interviews might have the risk of the researchers' subjectivity influencing data objectivity. Nevertheless, interviews are typically useful in providing researchers with an opportunity to gain insight into the deep characteristics of individual learners and help in exploring complex situations where surveys might not provide enough information about the unique characteristics of participants.

Although the quantitative methodology in researching L2 motivation has prevailed for a long time, the number of qualitative longitudinal studies that investigated L2 motivation has increased and resulted in obtaining more information about dynamic changes in motivation over a period of time and the influences of learners' motivation on the learning outcomes (Ma, 2009). The focus of qualitative studies of motivation is very different. They aim to document the multiple situational factors that impact on individual motivation in particular contexts. As such, motivation, the self and context lie at the heart of qualitative investigations of motivation. Some such studies used interviews as the data collection method. For instance, Ushioda (2001) explored the role of Irish university students' motivational thinking about learning French by using open-ended interviews. She interviewed 20 university students in two rounds separated by 15-16 months. Another study that adopted the qualitative method (Syed, 2001) collected data about 12 students' motivation to learn Hindi using classroom observations, and formal as well as informal interviews with 5 students out of the 12 participants. Some studies relied entirely on interviews to collect data on learners' motivation and its relation to the learners' identity. For instance, Zaragoza (2011) produced a corpus of 24 hours of recording collected from 33 semi-structured interviews that were carried out in two different universities with 33 learners in Mexico to explore their identity, autonomy, and their motivation.

Interviews have therefore become more popular as a method of investigating L2 learner motivation since they enable researchers to explore individual differences amongst learners. As Ushioda (2001) indicates, "there is clearly scope for a more qualitative approach to the study of language learning motivation to complement this long standing quantitative tradition of research" (p. 95). Learner motivation is not a

factor that can only be measured by numbers. It is closely related to the cognitive, psychological, and individual aspects of learning and thus the methodology adopted to explore it needs to be sensitive to individual differences among learners.

### **3. 3. Self-Reports and Non-Verbal Data Collection**

Researchers' constant search for the best method to investigate language learning motivation has led recently to the introduction of some innovative methods of data collection such as the elicitation of self-portraits and written reports. The method of self-report was used by Kalaja, Alanen, and Dufva (2008) to trace Finnish teacher trainees' development of beliefs about language and language learning. In addition to questionnaires, Kalaja, Alanen, and Dufva (2008) collected visual accounts of the participants' learning experiences by inviting them to draw pictures that represented them as learners of English. The drawings were used as a means of data collection that might reveal factors about the learners' beliefs about learning English. This method was found useful in data collection because it allows learner to express ideas that they may not have the language for, and removes any restrictions on the type of answer provided – the participant is free to draw whatever they want. Moreover, Bagnoli (2009) used nonverbal methods such as self-portraits, the graphic elicitation method, and timelines to explore young people's identities in England and Italy in her attempt to gain insight into the participants' visualizations about themselves as L2 learners.

Self-reports have also been used as a method of data collection in studies that investigated motivation. The importance of such retrospective data collection methods stems from the fact that it allows researchers to understand the participants' thoughts and feelings (Nunan & Bailey, 2009). Murphy (2011) collected data on adult distance language learners of French, German, and Spanish through verbal reports gathered using a monthly log. The log comprised a set of questions with space for open responses. Murphy reports that this log was a useful instrument for obtaining retrospective self-reports from the students concerning the motivational influences that affected their learning (2011).

### **4) Findings of relevant studies**

Numerous studies have investigated language learners' motivation and resulted in various findings. Some of these studies investigated the role of the target

language in the lives of the participants, while other studies reported the importance of several motivational influences on language learners. There also some motivational studies that have been conducted in the Arab world. An overview of a number of these studies is presented next.

#### **4. 1. Role of English**

The role of English in the learners' lives is an essential factor that influences their motivation. This has a relationship to their instrumental motivation because when English plays a major role in the learners' lives they will be more motivated to learn it. This is why Ushioda (2011b) suggests viewing motivation from the perspective of situated learner identity. She emphasizes the importance of different situations in learning the language. The importance of the role of a language in learners' lives was found in Syed's (2001) study in which he explored the motivation of 12 learners of Hindi at a large American university. Syed (2001) concluded that part of those learners' motivation to learn the language was to meet social and familial expectations. These expectations, as Syed (2001) explains, represent several needs to learn the language such as "the need to communicate and connect with family members, the need to fit into their sociocultural communities here in the States, the need to understand their culture and history" (p. 143). For the learners in this study, Hindi played a role in defining their identities and thus this role motivated them to learn the language.

The social value of the target language was also represented in the study of Csizér, Kormos, & Sarkadi (2010) who concluded their study by stressing the role of the target language in the learners' lives because "societal values attached to language learning play an important role in motivating students" (p. 484).

The role of language in learners' motivation to learn was also emphasized in a study by Yashima (2009). Yashima (2009) investigated the L2 self among Japanese EFL learners in relation to international posture and an imagined international community. She found that the lack of a major role for English in the Japanese community and the lack of real communication influenced the learners' L2 self. She therefore called on teachers to present task-based possible selves so that learners might better connect themselves to the target language community.

The role of the target language has also been investigated in the Arab context. Al Ansari (1993) investigated the relationship between the level of attainment in

English and learner motivation among Bahraini university students. Although Al Ansari (1993) explains that Bahrain can be considered an ESL context, English does not really play a major influence in the learners' lives because community life does not entail any interaction with native speakers of English (at that time). He argues that learners of English are mostly driven by the need for English for academic reasons. Since learners of English in Bahrain lack opportunities for actual communicative functions, their motivation influences are restricted to classroom contexts.

The variety in the roles attributed to a target language in the learners' lives is therefore closely connected to the learners' motivation. Learners who need to use the target language in their communication are influenced by this need to learn the language. Other influences that play an essential role in learner motivation in addition to the role of the target language in the learners' lives are discussed in the next section.

#### **4. 2. Motivational influences on learners**

Various motivational influences have been reported as playing a key role in language learning. Several studies investigated the importance of different motivational factors and found that these factors influence learner motivation in different contexts. Some of these influences are related to the learners' past learning experiences, personal factors, and contextual factors.

Learners' past learning experiences were found to influence learners' motivation in different contexts. For instance, Ushioda (2001) found that a positive learning history was correlated with a high level of motivation among 16 out of 20 Irish university students learning French. The same influence of previous learning experience was also found in Shoaib and Dörnyei's (2005) study in which they explored the various motivational influences on university students in relation to their learning history. Moreover, teachers were found to constitute a major influence on learners' motivation among the learners interviewed in Shoaib and Dörnyei's (2005) study where 15 out of 25 interviewees mentioned a negative influence of the teacher in their learning experiences.

Moreover, the personal orientations which learners attribute to language learning play a major role in influencing their motivation. This relationship between the learners' personal factors and their motivation was found in the results of several studies (Shoaib & Dörnyei, 2005; Ushioda, 2001). Factors such as learners' beliefs

and feelings about the target language, learners' self-confidence, and learners' investment in learning and using the language were found to be correlated to the learners' motivation to learn the language. Learners' satisfaction was one of the factors that imposed negative influences on 13 learners out of 25 interviewed by Shoaib and Dörnyei (2005). Similarly, personal satisfaction, language-related enjoyment, and feelings about the target language were considered influential factors in the Irish university learners of French in Ushioda's (2001) study.

The learning context has been found to influence learner motivation as well. Csizér, Kormos, & Sarkadi (2010) interviewed 15 students who studied foreign languages in Hungary and found that the learners' immediate environments and their instructional settings influenced their motivation to learn the language. Contextual factors were also considered influential in other studies such as Shoaib and Dörnyei (2005) and Ushioda (2001). These studies emphasized the importance of the learning environment as well as the larger social context in learners' motivation.

#### **4. 3. Studies in the Arab world**

A number of studies have investigated learner motivation in the Arab world. These studies were located in Bahrain, Kuwait, Jordan, Libya, and Saudi Arabia and investigated the learners' instrumental and integrative motivation, their attitudes towards learning a language, and the influence of the environment on learners' motivation.

Instrumental and integrative motivation among learners were investigated by Al Ansari (1993) in Bahrain, Obeidat (2005) in Jordan, and Aldosari (2014) in Saudi Arabia. Al Ansari found that Bahraini learners of English needed both integrative and instrumental motivation to succeed. However, Obeidat (2005) found that learners of Arabic in Jordan were driven by integrative motivation and that their motivation was not influenced by their proficiency level in the target language. On the other hand, Aldosari (2014) found that both male and female students were driven by instrumental motivation when he surveyed 50 Saudi university students to investigate their motivation to learn English.

Attitudes of learners towards the target language have also been investigated in the Arab world. For instance, Youssef (2012) found that seventy percent of high-school students in Libya had a positive attitude towards learning English. In another study, Aldosari (2014) indicated that female university learners of English in Saudi

Arabia had more positive attitudes towards English and their motivation was higher than their male colleagues.

The influence of the surrounding environment on learners' motivation was investigated by Al Rifai (2010). She found that Kuwaiti learners who used English with their families and those who watched T.V programs in English were more motivated than other students who did not.

All the previously mentioned studies that were conducted in the Arab world depended on surveys as data collection instruments. The scarcity of motivational studies in the Arab world and the fact that these studies adopted the quantitative approach adds to the significance of the current study which aims to investigate learner motivation using a method that might complement other studies that have been conducted in the region.

### **Summary**

This review of the conceptual frameworks and empirical research that has dominated research on L2 motivation forms the theoretical background for the current study. It also provides an account of the two main methodological approaches adopted in investigating learner motivation and the multiplicity of variables identified from these studies against which the present study was conducted. The reported studies from the Arab world suggest the need to investigate the motivation of Arab learners of English in this region using a qualitative approach.



## **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

### **Overview**

This chapter outlines the methodology and the rationale underpinning the methodological decisions taken throughout the current study. This section also provides a description of the context of the study, the participants' details, the instruments through which the data was collected, and the techniques used for data analysis.

### **1) Background to the research**

In a multicultural country like the U.A.E, English plays a very important role in society in general and in the enrollment of students in colleges and universities in particular. Most higher education institutions in the U.A.E, especially in Dubai, adopt the English language as a medium of instruction (Nickerson, 2015). Therefore, to ensure the learners' ability to succeed in their majors, the students are required to take the Institutional TOEFL or the IELTS Tests as a basic requirement for admission. The score limits desired by each institution vary from one institution to another. However, some students are unable to achieve the desired score in TOEFL or IELTS. This is usually explained by the diversity in the curricula offered in high schools in the U.A.E. The curricula include, but are not restricted to, The Arabic Curriculum, The British Curriculum, and American Curriculum. In Arabic Curriculum schools, students learn the different school subjects in Arabic and only learn English as a subject that is usually taught five times per week. This diversity in high school curricula has created a gap between some high-school graduates' English proficiency levels and the level of English required to understand and succeed in higher educational institutions. Therefore, most tertiary institutions include foundation programs in which learners spend about two years studying English and basic skills "to ensure that they have the necessary English language proficiency and other general study skills to manage a Bachelor's degree" (Nickerson, 2015, p. 240). Such foundation programs provide a rich context in which data about learners' motivation can be collected and analyzed.

The data for the current research was collected in a private tertiary institution based in Dubai. The college is an English medium college which offers Diploma (2 years), Bachelors (4 years) and Master's Degrees in Business and Information

Technology. When students seek to enroll in the college, they first sit a placement test to assess their abilities in English and Math. The students who cannot pass the placement test are offered a foundation program in which they can improve their skills in these two subjects. After the students finish the foundation program, they are required to score 500 in the Institutional TOEFL Test in order to be accepted into the college programs. Once the students have been admitted to the college programs, they usually study three English courses throughout their college studies alongside their major subjects. These are English Composition, Public Speaking, and Effective Reading and Writing. English Composition and Public speaking are usually studied in students' first semester in the college. Most of the courses in the college are offered in the evening because the majority of the learners are employed and attend classes after they finish work. Most of the learners enroll in the college because they want to improve their work status by obtaining a higher educational degree.

The college represents a diverse community. The learners who study in this college come from different nationalities. The majority of the students are Emirati and of other Arab nationalities with the remaining students coming from other countries including India, Pakistan, and Iran. The non-Emirati students are residents in the UAE who do not hold UAE nationality.

The researcher selected this particular college because she used to work there as an instructor of English. Therefore, she was familiar with the college, its programs, the procedures adopted for the enrollment of students and the type of students who attended the college in general. This was a practical choice for the researcher because of her rich understanding of the research context.

## **2) Methodological rationale**

Learner motivation is one of the factors that is highly dependent on the psychological, social, and affective factors that intervene in the learning process and influence each learner differently whether in a positive or negative manner. In choosing to investigate such a complex construct, it is essential that researchers select research method approaches that can capture the complexity of various elements that are embedded in the construct of learner motivation. In the present study, the researcher aimed at investigating the role of English in the participants' lives and the various motivational influences that impacted on their language learning. Therefore,

the decision was made to adopt a methodology which allowed participants to respond to open-ended questions that elicit much richer data rather than using a questionnaire which provided a number of multiple choice answers.

Given the study's focus on learner motivation, the researcher chose to adopt a qualitative longitudinal approach because of her interest in obtaining insight into the unique learning experiences of different learners and the changes that might occur in their motivation during a given period of time. While quantitative approaches enable the researcher to include a large number of participants, it was considered that using an instrument such as a survey to explore participants' motivation would fail to provide details about the reasons that lie behind participants' responses. Furthermore, as Richards (2009) indicates, interviews are valuable because, "properly conducted, they can provide insights into people's experiences, beliefs, perceptions, and motivations at a depth that is not possible with questionnaires" (2009, p. 187). Therefore, interviews and other qualitative data collection instruments were considered appropriate for exploring the unique personalities and motivational influences of different learners and "hold out the possibility of understanding the lived world from the perspective of the participants involved" (Richards, 2009, p. 187). Therefore, the researcher chose to adopt interviews as one of three qualitative data collection methods to provide insight into the participants' interpretations and reflections on their language learning experiences. Unlike quantitative methods, qualitative research methods have the potential to capture the unique combination of factors that interact in each learner's conception of their own learning process.

### **3) The role of the researcher**

In qualitative studies, the role of the researcher differs from that in quantitative studies where objectivity is of central importance. In studies where interviews are adopted as one means of eliciting data, the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the participants often influences the quality and quantity of data obtained. This is part of the understanding of the researcher role within the qualitative paradigm. Part of the role of the researcher in qualitative methods lies in "allowing the interview to develop naturally so that the respondent does not feel that they are simply replying to questions" (Richards, 2009, p. 186). While the researcher did not know any of the participants before the process of recruitment, she was

familiar with the institution. During the process of data collection, the researcher attempted to create a friendly relationship between herself and each of the participants in order to put them at ease during the interviews. The fact that the researcher is a native speaker of Arabic helped her conduct the interviews and collect other qualitative data using Arabic whenever the participants required. This was intended to make the process of data collection as natural as possible and to enable the participants to express their thoughts, reflections, and experiences freely. Since the researcher shared a native language with her participants, this is likely to have enabled her to avoid communication misunderstandings that might have resulted had the participants been obliged to communicate only in English.

The researcher's role in the process of data collection consisted principally of asking questions during the interviews, maintaining the conversation in a friendly and relaxed manner, sending the written prompts electronically via email or the "Whats App" smart phone application, and responding to the participants' responses sent via email or "Whats App" using short "thank you" notes.

The qualitative research methodology that was adopted to collect data in this study requires the researcher to interpret the learners' words in the interviews, the written responses, and their self-portraits. This is the nature of qualitative research and is to be expected. It is therefore recognized that the analysis of data gathered in qualitative studies reflects the researcher's subjective interpretation. As Heigham and Sakui (2009, p. 102) argue, in qualitative research "the researchers' subjectivity is assumed, accepted and valued .... however it is also understood that .... [researchers] will do all they can to maintain an open mind and avoid making value judgements".

#### **4) Participants**

Participants were recruited in order to meet three specific criteria. The participants were required to be Arabic (L1) learners of English who were in their first semester in the college and were expected to continue in the following semester. This meant that they were studying (English composition) at the time and were expected to study (Effective Reading and Writing) in the following semester. These criteria were established to ensure that the participants continued in the study for the full duration of 32 weeks (two semesters) in the college. However, the data gathering period lasted for a total of 16-weeks spread over two successive semesters.

The researcher selected participants of different Arab nationalities for three reasons. First, the majority of the learners in the college are Arabs. Second, Arab learners in the UAE tend to have more difficulty learning English than students of other nationalities because many of them attend Arabic Curriculum schools. Third, the researcher's status as a native speaker of Arabic enabled her to have a better understanding of the difficulties these participants might encounter while learning English and enabled her to use Arabic, when required, during data collection to prevent incidents of misunderstanding on the part of the researcher or inaccurate self-expression on the part of the participants.

Participants were recruited two weeks before the start of the study. The researcher visited two classrooms in the college after obtaining approval from the president of the college and introduced herself and the research project to the students. She then explained the significance of the research and the importance of their contribution. The students were invited to participate in the research and those interested were invited to sign a consent form in English and in Arabic.

The participants in the study were therefore all students from different Arab nationalities aged between 18 and 30 years old. While the study started with eight participants, one of them (Hazem) did not complete the study due to his withdrawal from the college. They were all in their first semester in the college and were taking their first English course (English Composition). Table 1 presents detailed information about the participants.

<sup>1</sup>Table 1: Participants' Details.

| Name   | Age | Gender | Nationality | Employed | Need English at work | Living in UAE | Level in College         | High school curriculum        |
|--------|-----|--------|-------------|----------|----------------------|---------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Ahmad  | 22  | Male   | UAE         | Yes      | No                   | Born UAE      | 1 <sup>st</sup> semester | Arabic Curriculum             |
| Basem  | 30  | Male   | UAE         | Yes      | Yes                  | Born UAE      | 1 <sup>st</sup> semester | Arabic Curriculum             |
| Firas  | 19  | Male   | Yemen       | Yes      | Yes                  | 10 years      | 1 <sup>st</sup> semester | British Curriculum            |
| Hadeel | 18  | Female | Jordan      | Yes      | Yes                  | 12 years      | 1 <sup>st</sup> semester | British + American Curriculum |
| Hana   | 20  | Female | Iraq        | No       | –                    | Born UAE      | 1 <sup>st</sup> semester | British Curriculum            |
| Hazem  | 20  | Male   | Iraq        | Yes      | Yes                  | Born UAE      | 1 <sup>st</sup> semester | Arabic Curriculum             |
| Maher  | 19  | Male   | Palestine   | Yes      | Yes                  | 13 years      | 1 <sup>st</sup> semester | British Curriculum            |
| Yasser | 25  | Male   | Yemen       | Yes      | Yes                  | Born UAE      | 1 <sup>st</sup> semester | Arabic Curriculum             |

## 5) Research instruments

The study took place over a period of 32 weeks throughout two successive 16 week semesters. The data was collected via three different qualitative instruments: semi-structured interviews, graphic self-portraits, and learners' written responses to written prompts.

### 5. 1. Interviews

The interview data was collected in three rounds of individual semi-structured interviews. All the interviews were electronically recorded on two devices and the researcher took notes during the interviews. The first round of interviews was scheduled in the middle of the first semester. The first interview was piloted with two English learners in a context that is different from the college to assess the

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<sup>1</sup> All names are pseudonyms

intelligibility, length and practicality of the questions. The second round of interviews was set at the commencement of the following semester, whereas the third and final round of interviews was scheduled in the middle of the second semester. In every round of interviews, the participants were interviewed individually. The interviews lasted between 30 to 70 minutes each and were conducted in the college. The researcher communicated with the participants using email, What's App or by phone and invited the participants to select the appropriate timing for each interview. This was intended to ensure that the participants felt free and comfortable during the interview. The researcher also let the participants decide which language to be interviewed in (English or Arabic). This was intended to ensure a friendly atmosphere between the researcher and the participant and to reduce the possibility of any misunderstanding or miscommunication that might occur due to the participants' proficiency level in English (as indicated above).

The questions in the first round of the semi-guided interviews focused on the participants' general beliefs and attitudes towards English. These included questions about the participants' motivation orientations, their attitudes towards learning English, and the influence of their learning environment (see Appendix A).

In the second round of interviews, the questions elicited information about the participants' experiences, feelings, and reflections about the previous semester and their expectations regarding the new semester. The participants were also required to reflect on the self-portraits which they had completed at the end of the first interview (see Appendix B)

In the third round of interviews, the researcher elicited information about the participants' expectations of their future use of English and evidence for their L2 motivational selves (see Appendix C). This round of interviews also included a graph on which the participants were invited to indicate possible changes in their feelings associated with learning English throughout the duration of the study.

## **5. 2. Non-verbal self-portraits**

At the end of each of the first interviews, the participants were invited to draw a picture that depicted how they viewed themselves in relation to the English language. The participants' pictures were their responses to the question "What is the role of English in your life? How did you learn it and why do you need it?" This

method was used to encourage the participants to express themselves freely in a non-verbal manner. It was considered that this approach might help the participants reflect on their experience of learning English and provide an innovative method of expressing their beliefs and thoughts. Kalaja, Alanen, and Dufva (2008) adopted this method to collect qualitative data about Finnish EFL teacher trainees' beliefs about language learning and their L2 selves. In their study, they asked the learners to draw portraits of themselves as English learners. In another study, Bagnoli (2009) used self-portraits as a means of varying her methods of data collection. Bagnoli (2009) explains the self-portrait method as a projective technique that encourages participants to reflect and think holistically about their lives and identities. She believes that "The longitudinal application of the self-portrait provided valuable results in terms of how young people accounted for change in their lives" (Bagnoli, 2009, p. 552). The researcher in the current study showed the participants pictures drawn in these two studies to encourage and stimulate them to draw their own pictures. The participants' portraits were used in the second round of interviews to elicit affective information and allow the participants to comment on their portraits.

### **5. 3. Participants' written responses**

The written prompts were designed to help the participants express their beliefs freely and comment in their own words on the way they used English in their lives. The written responses were also used to compare the participants' oral accounts of their learning experiences with their written comments. They were also adopted as a method to track the possible changes that might occur and influence the learners' motivation during the time of data collection.

The researcher used four written prompts in weeks 3, 7, 11, 15 of data collection to elicit information about the participants' feelings, attitudes, learning preferences, and expectations of their future use of English. After the first round of interviews in week three, the researcher sent the first written prompt to the participants electronically (see Appendix E). The researcher used two electronic means to distribute the written prompts namely emails and the "Whats App" Smart Phone Application. For the latter, the researcher took a photo of the written prompt and sent it to the participants via "Whats App". The researcher sent two versions (English and Arabic) of each prompt. The prompts were sent in both languages



because some participants preferred to use English during interviews and data collection because they believed this might help them improve their English language proficiency and practice English more. The written prompts were sent to the participants every 3-4 weeks beginning in Week 3 of data collection. The participants were given a period of one week to respond.

## **6) Analysis of the data**

### **6. 1. Analysis of the interviews**

The process of analyzing the interviews started with the researcher listening carefully to every interview. Following each round of interviews, the researcher listened to the recordings multiple times and wrote down the most significant statements contributed by the participants. The researcher translated all the Arabic excerpts into English. Subsequently, in order to ensure that these translations were accurate, the researcher invited another colleague researcher to translate the English excerpts back into Arabic. When the English and Arabic versions were compared, a match of more than 90 % was achieved. After the transcription of each round of interviews was finished (see example of a full transcription in Appendix D), the researcher began to code for emerging patterns and themes. These themes were transferred to a draft Thematic Map which identified themes by codes, learner and data source. This map expanded throughout the study until it included separate categories for all the emerging patterns and themes identified in the data through the coding process. The map was subsequently revised and refined by identifying overlapping and related themes and collapsing these into a smaller number of categories until the final map (see Appendix F) containing 17 categories was arrived at.

### **6. 2. Analysis of the participants' written responses**

The Thematic Map was also used to document themes observed in coding participants' written responses. Following each round of journal responses, the researcher read the participants' responses multiple times searching for patterns and recurring themes. These themes were then added to the Thematic Map with a note made of when they occurred.

### **6. 3. Analysis of participants' graphic self-portraits**

The researcher collected the self-portraits drawn by the participants at the end of the first interview without seeking their comments on them. This allowed the researcher to see what changes the participants could add to their self-portraits in the second round of interviews. Two specific questions were posed to elicit the self-portraits: (1) "What is the role of English in your life?" and (2) "How and where do you use it?" In their self-portraits, the participants drew pictures of themselves using English in school, at work, or communicating with others such as friends, family members, or even strangers. At the end of the second interview, the researcher showed the participants their portraits again and asked them to reflect on them and explain them (see Appendix G). The researcher compared the themes included in the participants' portraits with the patterns that emerged from the data collected from the interviews and the written responses. The patterns that emerged from the participants' self-portraits were then added to the Thematic Map so that by the end of the study it included all the major themes and patterns that had emerged from the different instruments of data collection: interviews, participants' written responses, and their self-portraits.

#### **Summary**

This chapter has outlined the way in which the study was conceptualized, presented the rationale for the methodological decisions taken, and reported on the way each of the three research tools was used.

## Chapter 4: Findings

### Overview

In this section, the findings of the study are presented in relation to the main recurrent themes that emerged during the data analysis. The process of data collection and data analysis aimed to answer two research questions in relation to the participants' motivation for learning English while enrolled in an undergraduate English language course. The research questions identified at the beginning of this study are:

1. What role does the English language occupy in the lives of seven Arab learners enrolled in an undergraduate English language course?
2. What are the motivational influences on seven Arab learners' English language learning in an undergraduate English language course?

Analysis of the data collected in the process of answering these research questions yielded four recurrent themes identified in the participants' oral, written, and drawn data. These themes emerged in the participants' responses to interview questions and the written prompts as well as in the learners' elaboration on personal incidents or their beliefs about learning English. The researcher identified the themes that occurred in the data and designed a thematic map. Initially the thematic map contained all the themes identified (see Appendix F). However, through the process of reading, re-reading and analyzing the data, the researcher reduced these themes and categorized them into four different categories. The four main themes that emerged from the data analysis were the role of English in the participants' lives, motivational influences on the participants' learning, the L2 motivational self-system, and the dynamic aspect of motivation. Each of these is discussed below.

While some participants chose to answer the questions in the interviews and written prompts in Arabic (Ahmad and Yasser), others indicated their willingness to use English as a means of communication with the researcher from the beginning of data collection (Basem, Hadeel, Hana, and Maher). Firas, however, began the first interview and the first written response in Arabic but decided to use English to communicate with the researcher after the first written prompt. One of the reasons that the participants reported for speaking English with the researcher was that they saw

the interviews and the written responses as an opportunity to practice using their English to improve it, as Hadeel reported, “I can learn English while I speak with you” (Interview 1, 5 min). The participants’ decision to use English during the data collection process may suggest a high degree of motivation to learn and use the language.

### **1) The role of English in the participants’ lives**

The multi-national nature of the community in the U.A.E requires the use of English as the main language for communication. Therefore, when investigating learners’ motivation in learning English, it is essential to consider the role played by English in their lives. Because English appears to constitute a major part of the communication process of people residing in the U.A.E in general and in Dubai in particular, people need English in their everyday life. Thus, the first question aimed to investigate the role of English in the participants’ lives. The data for this research question was collected through questions in the first round of interviews, the first written responses of the learners, and the self-portraits that were collected at the end of the first round of interviews. The themes that emerged from the data were sub-categorized into two themes: the value of English for the participants, and the contexts of their use of English. Data classified into these two sub-categories is discussed below.

#### **1. 1. The value of English in the learners’ lives**

The analysis of the collected data indicated that English plays an essential role in the lives of all the participants. All the participants believe that English is an important factor for success in life, work, and communication. However, the value of English for these participants varied according to the role they believed it played in their lives. The participants varied in their beliefs about the value of English ranging from those who considered English essential in their lives to pragmatic users who believed in the importance of English only in certain aspects of their lives. While three participants (Hadeel, Hana and Maher) indicated that English is valuable in every aspect of their lives (work, studies, social interaction, family and everyday interaction), two other participants (Basem and Firas) reported that English for them is a means of communication only in professional and social interaction. The last two

participants (Ahmad and Yasser) adopted a more pragmatic view of English as essential for success in work, studies, and commercial interactions only.

Some participants expressed the view that no successful life could be led without knowing English. A good example for this can be found in Hadeel's comments. Hadeel (an 18 year old Jordanian who moved to Dubai in her first grade at school) values and loves English very much. She indicated that she needed English because in her opinion:

English is the international language. English is the language if you know you can do everything. You can make your future. It is good for everything work, and your future, your studies. When you travel mostly everywhere they know English (Interview 1, 6 min).

Hadeel even went so far as to say:

I think it [English] is life. I think that because when you know English .... O.k. I feel English is really important language, you know ... because anywhere you go ... any ... anything of life you need English (Interview 1, 9 min).

Hadeel made it clear that she considered English a condition for building a good future, obtaining a good job and being able to communicate with others. Hadeel believed that English is a vital factor for success in life.

The value of English is related to the value of life for some participants. For instance, Maher (a 19-year- old Palestinian who has been living in the UAE for 13 years) indicated the importance of English when he said, "It is VERY important, very important. If you don't know English it means you are nothing" (Interview 2, 10 min). While this statement may, to some extent, reflect Maher's perception of society's view of the importance of English, Maher himself seemed to believe that English provided meaning and value in his life.

Some participants, for instance Firas and Basem, indicated the value of English in both social communication and in their professional lives. In commenting on the importance of English in his life, Firas (a Yemeni 19-year-old who moved to the U.A.E when he was six) indicated that English is of great value for people who live in the U.A.E because:

You need it ... if you don't know English ... like ... you can't live in the society. You will also be ashamed like I don't know English... how do I speak with others (Interview 1, 7 min).

Firas also reflected on the importance of English at work and in different communities and said, "you can't type in your language and send to the company, even for travelling you need English if you are going to some countries like London or so ... you need English. They can't understand your language." (Interview 1, 8 min). Therefore, for Firas, English is important as a means of survival and communication with other people for both professional and social purposes both inside and outside the UAE.

The theme of social communication was also present in Basem's (a 30-year-old Emirati) comments when he was asked about his expectations of improving his English:

**Researcher (R):** What do you expect from improving your English? How would that help you?

**Basem (B):** hmm, too many things. Let's say even with communicating with people, because now let's say I want to go somewhere I can't use my mother language... my Arabic language...in this case I have to talk with English...this is the way of communication with others both inside and outside the country". (Interview 1, 8 min).

Basem went on later to explain the importance of English to him:

**R:** So, why is it (English) important here?

**B:** In my opinion hmm... I don't know what to say but this is the way to communicate with all. Let's say in my opinion with Indians, with Arabs, with Europeans, with whoever, you can communicate with this.. this is your way let's say.... Because I can't talk Arabic with all of them." (Interview 1, 19 min).

This indicates that Basem considers English an important factor for survival in the UAE.

The social interaction Basem describes above is extended in his case to include interaction with his family members. Basem's situation is unique amongst the participants because he needs to use English even with his wife who is not a native speaker of Arabic. This might add to the value of the English language in Basem's life

since he explains “with her I only talk English I can’t talk with her Arabic” (Basem, Interview 1, 8 min).

Although some participants considered English an essential part of life, two participants (Ahmad and Yasser) indicated the value of English in three aspects of their lives only, namely work, studies, and communication. Ahmad (a 22-year-old Emirati) indicated that he does not need English a lot in his job. However, he still believed that English is an important requirement for the job sector in any country, “English is needed for the job inside and outside the U.A.E” (Interview 1, 5 min). For him English represents “1- work, 2-opportunities, and 3- exams” (written response 1). Although Ahmad believed that English is important for everyone because it is an international language, English played a role in only three domains of his life principally related to his job and his studies.

This practical view of English can also be seen in the words of Yasser (a 25-year-old Yemeni born in the UAE):

When I think of English I think of opportunities, studies, and work. Actually, the reason for my choices is that English is the language of science is the language of internet and it is a global language. For that, English provides opportunities in all means of business, life and future. (Yasser, written response 1).

For Yasser, English seems to represent more than just a means of communication. He refers to the role of English at this point in history, “This is the language of the new era. Now you can talk to people and communicate with them. It is the trend language in this time” (Interview 1, 4 min). For Yasser, English not only plays a role in his personal communication with other people but also represents the key global language of the time.

The participants seem to agree that English has an important role in the lives of people in general and in their lives in particular. All the participants reported beliefs about the multiple roles of English in different domains of their lives and in different communities. However, the participants’ beliefs in the great value of English did not necessarily translate into their using English in their lives. Therefore, the next section explores the ways in which and the extent to which the participants use English in their lives.

## **1. 2. The use of English in the learners' lives**

This section discusses the role English plays in the lives of participants in terms of real and actual practice. The extent to which these participants use English in their lives indicates the significance of the role of English in their lives. The findings that emerged from the analysis of the data were categorized into three main themes. The first theme relates to the types of interaction in which the participants used English, the second reflects on the English language skills that were used during the participants' interactions using English, whereas the third theme concerns the frequency of the participants' use of English.

### **1. 2. 1. Types of interaction**

People use many types of interaction in their communication with each other. The types of interaction that emerged from the data analysis mainly consisted of three types: professional interaction, social interaction and daily interaction outside the social network.

Professional interaction is used here to indicate interaction at work or interaction in the study environment. Since all the participants are undergraduate students in a college that is an English medium environment, they all indicated that they use English frequently in the college to talk to their professors or their classmates. In their self-portraits (see Appendix G), the participants drew themselves learning English in school suggesting that the study domain was closely associated with their perceptions of English. Some participants, including Firas and Hadeel, drew a figure that represented their teacher and themselves speaking to her. Firas indicated in the self-portrait how his teacher used to tell him to write paragraphs in order to improve his English proficiency level. In addition, Yasser drew himself inside the classroom and his teacher explaining something on the board. Therefore, studying is one of the major environments where the participants need to use English.

Another place in which English is needed for working participants is their job environment. Except for Basem and Maher, all the participants drew pictures of themselves using English at their place of work. Although Ahmad drew himself using English at his work, he indicated that he does not use English frequently in his job



because he mostly deals with Arab customers. Basem on the other hand wrote, “When I think of English I think of work and studying. This is because the use of English for me is related directly to work and studies. I speak English with my friends but I use it less than I do at work or in the college.” (Written response, 1). Interaction in the work place is a functional dimension of using English in the lives of most participants.

Another important type of interaction using English is evident in the participants’ social interactions. The social interaction in which the participants use English can be divided into two main domains, namely the domestic interactions reported by Basem, Hadeel, and Hana, and interactions with friends as represented by Firas, Hadeel, Hana, and Maher. The first three participants (Basem, Hadeel, and Hana) reported that they used English in their interaction with members of their families. For instance, Basem speaks English with his non-Arab wife because she cannot speak Arabic as indicated in section (1.1). Similarly, Hadeel and Hana indicated that they spoke English with their sisters. For instance, Hadeel was proud to say, “I even speak English with my sister at home” (Interview 1, 7 min). Whereas Basem has no choice but to use English with his wife because she cannot speak Arabic, Hadeel and Hana chose to use English to speak to their sisters as a means of using and gaining experience speaking a language that they enjoy.

While the first type of social interaction was categorized as domestic interaction since it occurs at home, the second type of social interaction is represented in the participants’ interactions with their friends. Firas, Hadeel, Hana, and Maher indicated in their self-portraits as well as in the interviews that they spoke English to their friends who could not speak Arabic. Hadeel and Hana, for instance reported that they enjoyed speaking English to their friends because as Hadeel stated, “English is a sweet language, also like for one word there is many other words that can describe this word but in many other languages it is not like that” (Interview 2, 10 min). These participants seem to enjoy speaking English to their friends and value the language for allowing them to have non-Arabic speaking friends.

The third type of interaction that emerged from the data analysis related to the participants’ use of English in their daily interactions outside their social networks. Such use is reported in Ahmad’s words, “I use English almost continuously on a daily basis, at the petrol stations, or in different shopping malls” (Written response 2). The

participants indicated that they used English in their commercial interactions such as “shopping malls” (Ahmad, Yasser, written response 2), supermarkets (Hana, written response2), and the cinema (Hadeel, Maher, written response 2; Ahmad, self-portrait). The participants reported that occurrences of English in this type of interaction (i.e. commercial) are abundant in Dubai because of the dynamic multi-national nature of this city.

### **1. 2. 2. Types of English language skills**

Of the four English language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking), two main types of communication skills of English were reported as being used by the participants, namely speaking and writing skills. Oral interaction seems to be the main use of English in the participants’ lives. For instance, Ahmad, Basem, Firas, Hadeel, and Hana drew images of themselves speaking English with their friends at work. Moreover, Hadeel commented on speaking English, “I speak English with my friends... also .. my sister...yeah ... and at work” (Interview1, 9 min). In addition to using English oral skills in their communication, the participants indicated that they used written skills in English in their studies as well as in their work. For instance, Firas drew himself writing emails on his laptop in his workplace. Similarly, Yasser indicated that he used English to write emails at work and indicated that the course of English he was studying helped him in his work, “My English is improved, the way I write emails at work is improved” (Interview 2, 4 min).

Hadeel referred to an additional dimension of written communication when she drew in her self-portrait that she used all means of social media such as “Whats App”, “Instagram”, and “Viber” to communicate with her friends. The use of writing to participate in social media in English is a new feature used in communication among friends in social relationships. The use of this skill adds a new type of written communication skill to the repertoire of users of English. The use of oral and written English skills were reported to be dominant in the participants’ English language communication. There were no explicit mentions of contexts in which participants listened to or read English. However, given the interconnection between speaking and listening on the one hand, and reading and writing on the other – it is clear that the participants employed all four language skills at different times.

### **1. 2. 3. Frequency of English use**

Although all the participants reported that they used English every day in shopping malls, supermarkets and the cinema (e.g. Hadeel, Hana, and Maher), some indicated that they spoke English a lot in their daily lives while others reported that they used English only for a few minutes at a time. For instance, Maher reported that he used English “in every second of (his) life” (Written response 2), and Basem reported using English with his colleagues at work and with his wife at home for more than 40 hours a week. On the other hand, Firas reported that he spoke English for ten minutes only per week with customers, and Yasser claimed to use English only for five minutes during one particular week. However although the participants’ reported frequency of use of English indicated significant differences, this does not seem to accurately reflect the extent of their actual use of English in their lives. Some participants might have used English more (or less) frequently on different occasions from the particular week they were asked to reflect and report on. For instance, Hana wrote, “Last week on Thursday, I used my English for 5 minutes but normally I talk in English the whole day as you know” (Written response 2). This might indicate that though some participants did not use English a lot during the specific week in which the question was asked, they might speak English more frequently at other times.

The reported findings indicate that English plays a major role in the lives of the participants. The role that is played by English in the participants’ lives is reflected in the value they assign to English as well as the frequency and range of contexts in which they use English. Three major dimensions mapped the value of English in these learners’ lives; namely English as representative of life, English as a means for social communication, and the pragmatic view of English as a factor in success at work, studies, and commercial interaction. From another perspective, the participants’ use of English in their lives was represented by the different types of interactions in which they adopted English, the types of English skills they used, and the frequency with which they used English in their lives. The high value assigned to English and the wide range of contexts of use were not surprising due to the multi-national community of the U.A.E. This diversity in the community in the UAE demands the use of a common language that facilitates communication and understanding among people.

## **2) Motivational influences on the participants' learning**

The second research question was designed to investigate the motivational influences that might have an impact on the participants' learning process. In this case, all the participants were enrolled in English courses in the college and none of them was learning English in other courses at the time of data collection. The motivational influences were conceived of as factors that, positively or negatively, influence learners' motivation and investment in the process of learning the language. These influences include a wide range of factors that might vary according to the learners' individual characteristics and the language learning process. Therefore, the motivational influences that emerged from the data analysis were divided into three sub-categories. These include the learners' past learning experiences, the learners' personal influences, and contextual influences on learning English.

### **2. 1. Learners' past learning experiences**

Learners' past experiences are known to have a great influence on learning motivation. The participants in the study were influenced by several factors related to their past experiences in learning English. These include the role of the teacher, the role of friends, and considering English as a challenge that positively influenced the learners to follow their dreams and overcome obstacles.

English teachers seem to play an essential role in the past experiences of the participants in this study. Most of the participants indicated the importance of their past experiences in learning English in influencing their current attitudes towards learning English. Some of the participants, including Firas, Hadeel, and Hana, reported pleasant experiences with learning the English language. These participants recalled positive stories with devoted teachers who helped them overcome the difficulties they encountered when they moved to the UAE and found it difficult to adapt to the new school curricula and the new encounter with the English language. Firas, for instance, remembered how his teacher had helped him when he arrived in the U.A.E and how she used to ask him to write and write until his English became better, "She used to make me write and then improve my English she was, you know, like my mother" (Interview 1, 4 min).

Hadeel also reported how her English teacher helped her and explained that she moved from her school only because her English teacher moved to another school. She laughed when she said, “so, I changed the school because of my English teacher because she was very nice. Yeah, I liked English because she did not teach me in a bad way” (Interview 1, 3 min). Hadeel continued to report on her problem with English in the first grade at school when she moved to the U.A.E “I used to cry every day, every day I was going to school with crying face but when she joined the school and she ..... came to know me I was happy” (Interview 1, 4 min). Similarly, Hana remembered her English teacher from Grades six to nine saying, “I used to love her because she made me love English” (Interview 1, 3 min). These teachers helped their students enjoy learning English and overcome some of the major issues they encountered during their learning process. The participants’ words indicate that they believe that teachers have an important role to play in making the learners enjoy learning English.

Although most of the past English-learning experiences that were reported by the students seemed to be positive, one participant reported a negative former experience with his English teachers. Hazem (the only participant who did not complete the study) reported some negative experiences with his English teacher when he was in grade 10, “I used to sleep in the class (he laughed). There was a teacher who did not like me, he hated me and I left the school because of him” (Interview 1, 10 min.). This negative experience with the English teacher influenced Hazem to the extent that it made him change his school because of the tension between him and his teacher. This narrative contrasts with what happened to Hadeel who changed her school only because she wanted to continue studying with her English teacher.

The past experiences of the participants were not only shaped by the influence of their teachers. Some of the participants, including Hana and Maher, reported the influence of their friends on their English learning experience. For instance, Maher indicated the importance of his friends when he started learning English and using it in his communication with others. Maher explained how he disliked English in the beginning but then his friends helped him overcome this obstacle:

Before, I used to hate English but after I learned, actually my friends they helped me, they like there is too many people here, you love them

but you can't talk English so they encouraged me to learn English and talk to them. So I used to hate English because I did not know how to speak it (Interview 1, 5 min).

The influence of friends on an individual's learning of English might be positive or negative. In this study, however, the influence of friends in the participants' past experiences seemed more positive.

Another factor that influenced the participants' English learning in their past experiences was considering English as a challenge. Basem, for instance, stated that he considered learning English a challenge that he needed to succeed in. Viewing English from the perspective of a challenge made Basem like English for reasons that he could not specify:

**Basem (B):** Actually, from the beginning, I like this language and when I was in primary stage, I prefer this language because it was ... you know .... Something like a challenge for me. From that time, I was thinking to develop myself in this language

**Researcher (R):** What do you think the reason was for this? Only a challenge?

**B:** Yeah, also the teachers were good, they explain very well. (Interview 1, 3 min)

The notion of viewing the learning of English as a challenge to succeed in added a new dimension to the influences that might have affected the participants' learning of English. While challenge is positively related to some past experiences in Basem's life, sensitivity to challenge is an indicator of personal characteristics that vary amongst the participants. This aspect will be discussed in the next section (Section 2.2).

Learners' previous experiences of learning English are likely to have an influence on their motivation during subsequent English learning experiences. It seems that most of these participants now remember how lucky they were to have had their previous English teachers and their friends during their previous English learning experiences. These experiences might very well shape the learners' beliefs and attitudes towards learning English. Specific learner beliefs are discussed in the next section which deals with the personal influences that the participants reported.

## **2. 2. Personal influences on the learners**

Several personal factors appeared to influence the learners' motivation during the process of language learning. The personal influences that were found throughout the analysis of the data were related to the learners' beliefs about English and learning English, their emotions and attitudes towards English, their self-confidence, and the degree of the effort and time the learners are ready to invest in learning English.

### **2. 2. 1. Learners' beliefs**

In addition to the participants' beliefs about the importance and use of English reported in section (1.1), the participants discussed their views about English as a challenge and an opportunity and about the importance of English teachers.

One belief that the participants spoke about was their viewing English as a challenge and as an opportunity. Basem confessed that he considered English as a challenge in his early stages of school and this is why he wanted to learn it. In his case, the challenge functioned as positive motivation. Moreover, Ahmad, Firas, Maher, Hana, Hadeel, and Yasser viewed learning English as an opportunity for getting a better job and a better life. For instance, Firas stated, "English gives us many opportunities and it enables us meet new friends. So, we must learn English because it helps us in the society and at work" (Interview 2, 11 min). All seven participants spoke of their belief that English is both a challenge and an opportunity in the context of its essential role in their lives.

Another belief that all the participants shared was related to English teachers. The participants believed that the role of teachers in the process of learning English is vital. They reported how different teachers deal with different students and textbooks in different situations. They also emphasized the importance of having a good teacher to be successful in learning English. Ahmad, for instance, stated that "English learning depends a lot on the teacher. Some teachers know how to deliver the information easily and smoothly while other teachers just depend on the textbooks" (Interview 2, 14 min). This belief is likely to have been shaped by the participants' previous learning experiences (discussed in section 2. 1).

The participants' beliefs about the use of English seemed to relate mostly to informal learning settings. When asked about their use of English, they did not refer to their English classes. Moreover, when asked their opinions about their English classes, they did not mention any specific learning-related points of interest or objections. Most of them indicated that the classes were "O.K" and Hadeel reported that she enjoyed the classes because of her friends, "I like being with my friends. They are all great" (Interview 2, 17 min). The participants' failure to reflect on their formal learning setting suggests that they may consider the informal setting a better environment in which to learn and use the language.

The participants' personal beliefs about learning English are likely to influence their motivation to learn the language due to the impact that people's beliefs usually have on their actions and choices in life.

### **2. 2. 2. Emotions and attitudes**

The learners' emotions associated with the English language, learning English, and the English-speaking community have an impact on their willingness to learn the language. Four of the participants (Firas, Hana, Hadeel, and Maher) expressed strong positive emotions towards English. One of the most powerful expressions of emotions came from Hadeel who expressed her 'love' of English several times saying on one occasion "I feel wonderful when I use English" (Interview 1, 17 min). The researcher noticed that Hadeel's intonation was raised whenever she spoke about her feelings towards the English language or the importance of English in her life. Hadeel even used English with her Arabic-speaking sister and friends, "I use English in every second of my life" (written response 2). Hana also conveyed her strong positive emotions associated with English when she said, "English is all the world for me" (Interview 2, 21 min). For Hadeel and Hana, English means more than a language for communication or for obtaining a good job. English for them is a positive part of every second of their lives. This suggests their love of this language.

The feeling of love towards English is usually accompanied by joy and excitement to learn and use the language. The participants who reported their love of English also indicated that they enjoyed learning and speaking English in different contexts. For instance, Hana reported her feelings when she spoke English, "I feel happy when I speak English with people. I feel excited when I speak inside the



classroom and enthusiastic” (Interview1, 18 min). Maher provided another example of this feeling when he stated, “I enjoy learning English. Yeah, English makes you happy, by some words there are too many words that you can tell ... and ... some ... it is fun to talk English. I enjoy talking English” (Interview 1, 12 min.). Such feelings of excitement and happiness are likely to exert a powerful positive influence on the participants’ language learning.

Another positive emotion related to learning English is learners’ pride in their English proficiency level. The participants reported feeling proud of their ability to use English in public. For instance, Hadeel indicated (interview 2) that she felt proud whenever she used English in front of others. The feeling of pride was also observed among other participants who spoke about feeling proud because they know English better than others do. Firas, for instance, when asked about his feelings when he spoke English outside the classroom said - “I feel proud and people will focus on me. I feel happy like people look at me and say: Oh, he is speaking English. They can’t speak like this, they will be jealous” (Interview 1, 24 min). Hadeel also expressed her pride whenever she used new words in English:

Everyone will look at you ... wow ... and you feel yourself nice you are using new words ... and you say ah ... now all my friends think my English is good, it is becoming better ... some people tell me; are you showing up? I say: yeah, I am showing you my high education and you can feel jealous of me (Interview 1, 22 min).

This suggests that Hadeel relates knowing English to a better level of education, prestigious social ranking, and perhaps better chances in life. She and Firas believe that people will be jealous of them because they can speak English. This feeling of happiness and pride when using English seems to be a recurrent theme throughout the data collected from these two participants. These positive feelings indicate that the participants have positive attitudes towards the English language and learning it and that they believe their English language proficiency enhances how they view themselves and others view them. Such feelings are also likely to contribute positively to the participants’ motivation to learn the language.

On the other hand, some negative emotions were occasionally reported by some participants. These feelings were related to dissatisfaction in the learning environment, and fear of embarrassment in public. Feelings of dissatisfaction emerged

when Firas, Hadeel, Hana, and Maher independently reported their dissatisfaction with some elements in their current learning environments. These participants reported that they were not happy that some students in their classes did not attend the classes regularly yet they had the same opportunity to succeed in the final exams. For instance, Firas reported that he disliked the fact that some participants only showed up in the final exams but still achieved the same good grades as other students who had attended every class. These four participants were not influenced by this negative emotion regarding their learning environment in the first semester. However, during the second semester, they reported skipping English classes because they felt that attending classes was not necessary to pass the exams. Firas explained this when he said, “if they can pass the exam without attending we can do this too, why not?” (Interview 2, 21 min). The participants’ motivation to attend classes and learn English appears to have been negatively influenced by their perception of their classmates’ behavior.

The second instance of the participants expressing negative emotions and attitudes occurred when some participants expressed dissatisfaction with their new English instructor at the beginning of the second semester. Basem, Firas, Hadeel, and Yasser were not satisfied with their new English instructor. When the participants were asked whether this feeling of dissatisfaction influenced their love of English and willingness to learn it, all four participants responded that it did not. On the contrary, they indicated that this feeling was only minor and related to specific situations in their learning environment.

One additional negative feeling seemed to slightly influence some learners’ motivation to speak English in public. This feeling concerned their fear of embarrassment in public. Ahmad, Firas, and Yasser reported that they preferred to use English inside the classroom setting because they feared the embarrassment they might encounter if they made mistakes when speaking English in public. The fear of embarrassment is closely related to the participants’ self-confidence in using English, which is discussed in the next section (section 2.2.3).

Clearly, the emotions the participants associate with learning and using English influence the way in which they perceive English and have an impact on their motivation to learn and speak it in different settings.

### **2. 2. 3. Learners' self-confidence**

Another personal influence that seemed to have an impact on the learners' motivation to learn English is the learners' self-confidence in using English inside or outside the classroom. While Basem, Firas, Hadeel, Hana, and Maher expressed a high level of self-confidence in their English proficiency level, Ahmad and Yasser appeared to have concerns when using English as a means of communication. Ahmad confessed "I fear a little of making mistakes in the classroom. This is why I don't volunteer a lot because I am still in the beginning. I am afraid of being embarrassed in front of my colleagues and my teacher" (Interview 2, 13 min). Similarly, Yasser indicated his reluctance to speak inside the classroom, "if I know the answer I definitely get excited and I want to answer, but if I don't know the answer I stay silent" (Interview 1, 27 min). This indicates that Yasser, like Ahmad, is not willing to risk embarrassment in front of his friends and colleagues.

On the other hand, the other participants in the study indicated a high level of self-confidence with regard to their level of English proficiency. Hana for instance, believes that she is about 90% successful in learning the English language. She stated "I am the best girl in the class. The teacher loves me very much" (Interview 3, 20 min). Hadeel and Maher believe that no one can be perfect in any language but they also think that the level of their English proficiency is very good. Self-confidence is one of the factors that highly influence language learners' motivation (Shoab & Dörnyei, 2005). When learners are confident they are more likely to be ready to use the language, learn from their mistakes, and invest more time and effort to improve their English language.

### **2. 2. 4. Learners' investment**

In addition to beliefs, emotions and self-confidence, the final motivational influence that emerged from the data was the learners' investment of time and effort in learning English. The participants were asked about the time that they would like to invest in learning English after they finish their English courses in the college. The participants' responses varied between, on the one hand, investing a lot of time like the "whole life" (Hana, interview 3, 23 min) in order to be able to master the English language, and, on the other, being satisfied with the level of English that they would have upon completing their English courses in the college. In other words, the

participants' goals and commitment to investing in English ranged from wanting to master the language to simply being able to communicate.

The participants who expressed their love of English earlier all reported that they were willing to learn English for a long time. For instance, Hana indicated that she might learn another language but she will "still like English better" (Interview 3, 25 min). In addition, Hadeel said she would never stop learning English because "you can't be perfect in English. No one can be perfect in a language. This is why I will continue learning and learning, because I love English" (Interview 2, 18min).

While these participants' willingness to invest in learning English stems from their emotions towards English, Basem's willingness stems from a different factor. Basem's unique situation led him to conclude that he might be using English all his life long with his wife as well as other people such as friends and work colleagues, "I like English. It is O.K. that I use it with my family. This maybe will make me better in English. Maybe in the future I will become like the people in American or Britain. It is something that I enjoy, why not?" (Interview 3, 31 min). Although Basem did not express strong feelings towards English, his degree of investment is related to his personal circumstances and his need of English in his life. Such examples indicate that these learners expressed a deep relationship with the English language and an appreciation for learning it and using it in informal settings that occur outside the formal context of classroom learning in addition to the ongoing process of in-class learning.

On the other hand, this high degree of investment did not exist in the accounts of the other participants. Ahmad and Yasser indicated that they were only learning English for pragmatic reasons. Neither of them spoke English with their friends or family members. Ahmad and Yasser indicated that they would stop learning English when they felt that they had reached a point where they could communicate with others using English. This indicates the pragmatic approach adopted by these two participants who are both learning English for specific practical reasons, namely to get a degree and to obtain a better job.

It seems that the participants who expressed strong positive emotions towards speaking and learning English expressed a higher degree of investment of their time and effort in learning the language to a high level. On the other hand, the participants

who were learning English for practical reasons expressed a more limited degree of investment in learning English.

### **2. 3. Contextual influences on the participants' learning of English**

The contextual learning influences that emerged throughout the data analysis varied between the formal English learning setting in the classroom and the informal language learning that might occur in contexts related to communication at work, with friends, and with family members. In addition to these two contexts, the learners' preferences regarding the context in which they would like to learn English might also influence their learning process. Participants' contributions in relation to the influences they were aware of in both settings and their preferences for learning in particular settings are reported on here.

#### **2. 3. 1. Formal learning setting**

Regarding the formal learning context, several factors seemed to play a role in the learners' motivation. These influences were summarized in section (2. 1) above and include the influences of the teacher, the learning group and the sense of English as a challenge. All the learners who participated in the study emphasized the importance of the teacher's role in motivating the learners in any language classroom. Some learners were influenced by their English teachers in their early stages of learning English and some of these learners even confessed that they used to hate English before they met their devoted English teachers. In their current learning setting in the college, the participants indicated that they liked their English instructors in the first semester of the study. However, in the second round of interviews (which took place just after the commencement of the second semester) some participants, including Basem, Firas, Hadeel, and Yasser, indicated their dissatisfaction with their new English instructor. For instance, Yasser described the English course in the second semester as boring and when the researcher asked him about the reason he commented:

Sometimes, you know, regardless of the name of the professor, some professors get to the point directly and they continue talking and talking and talking. Some people get bored of this. Other professors make the lecture nice. For example, they talk to you 30 minutes or 20

minutes then they give you a break 1-2 minutes, like, they ask a student or ... you know it depends on the professor. It makes the lecture better depending on the style of the professor. (Interview 2, 6 min)

This opinion is shared by Hadeel who explained during the second interview that her current English instructor is not as amusing as the instructor that used to teach her in the previous semester, “She is O.K, you know, but she is not as good as Miss. ... she used to make us laugh, her class was fun” (Interview 2, 10 min). The researcher had the feeling that the learners were a little less motivated to learn English at the beginning of the second semester. When she asked the students about their expectations of the new English course, none of them indicated their interest in the new English course. Some of them (Basem, Firas, Hadeel, Maher, and Yasser) even informed the researcher that they had started spending their class-time in the cafeteria and then went to the class in the last 30 minutes to “catch up” (Hadeel, Interview 2, 20 min) on what they missed. The researcher asked them whether they did that in the rest of their under-graduate courses and they responded that they did not. When the researcher asked them whether this resulted in them missing some important information, Hadeel responded “no, I am not missing anything. I finish my work and then go out of the class. It is boring. I can’t stay there all the time” (Interview 2, 25 min). It seems that these learners lost interest in learning English in the second course because of the new English instructor. They seemed dissatisfied with the way she handled the course; this made them unwilling to attend the classes, and they became uninterested in learning English with her.

Another factor in the formal learning setting that influenced the participants’ learning was the learning group with whom the learners were taking their English courses. In the first round of interviews, the researcher asked the participants about their satisfaction with their learning group. Some of the participants in the study, Firas and Hadeel in particular, expressed their dissatisfaction with some members in their learning group. Hadeel indicated that “There are some people that I don’t like in the classroom because they have too much confidence. They say, like, you don’t have enough experience. It makes me feel very angry. I just leave the class when they say something like that to me” (Interview 1, 34 min). Hadeel seemed to be deeply influenced by the people who were “over-confident of themselves” (Interview 2, 34 min), as she described them. This seemed to influence Hadeel’s learning of English

because she left the class when she got angry because of these people. Firas expressed the same feeling of dissatisfaction with the same group of learners. However, he indicated that this fact did not influence him a lot:

There are some people who I don't like in the class. They have over-confidence. They motivate themselves only pride and all and they don't accept their mistakes. This makes me feel upset. I don't like it. I feel uncomfortable when they are there, but I will manage (interview 1, 37 min).

Although Firas's feeling about these people in the learning group is the same as Hadeel's, he seems to be able to overcome this obstacle and 'manage' this problem. Therefore, the issues that the participants have with their learning group might influence their motivation to learn English. Some learners might be influenced more than others, but regardless of the degree of influence, learners' motivation is affected by the different issues and feelings related to the learning group and the formal setting in which they learn the language.

When the participants were asked to reflect on their learning experience in their formal learning setting, they reported that their English classes were easy but not very amusing. For instance, Maher and Hadeel reported in the second interview that they felt bored during the English classes. This might be related to their reaction to their English instructor in the second semester. Nevertheless, not all the participants reported such beliefs about their formal learning setting. Ahmad, Basem, Hana, and Yasser reported that their English classes were "O.K."

### **2. 3. 2. Informal learning setting**

The unique characteristic of language learning as a process is manifested in learners' ability to learn the language in informal settings (such as using English for their daily communication with people in the work environment or other social settings) as well as in formal contexts. All seven participants indicated the importance of the informal learning setting in improving their English proficiency. However, not all of them reported extensive use of English in their social interactions. As reported earlier (see section 1. 2), some participants reported that they used English on a daily basis with their colleagues, friends, family members and in shopping malls (Hadeel, Hana, and Basem for instance). They also emphasized the importance of informal

learning contexts in general because they believed that such contexts allowed them to practice the target language in a more authentic and realistic social interaction.

On the other hand, other participants reported that they did not speak English outside the classroom unless they needed to (Ahmad and Yasser). The fear of embarrassment prevented Ahmad and Yasser from speaking English in public. Therefore, it seems that the participants who valued and made use of informal settings surrounding them for using English had better chances of improving their English proficiency level and were more motivated to use English in public. The fear of embarrassment in the case of Ahmad and Yasser was principally associated with informal settings where they felt that they might be judged for their mistakes in English. Consequently they were less motivated to use English in public because the informal setting represented a possibility of failure in public for them. This indicates the importance of learners' attitudes to the informal setting in influencing their willingness to exploit informal language learning opportunities.

### **2. 3. 3. Preferred learning setting**

The language learners' ability to make use of different learning settings, formal or informal, to learn the language is associated with their preferences in relation to the learning contexts. In this study, the participants were asked to report on the context in which they preferred learning English. The participants were asked whether they preferred to learn English in a formal learning context such as their classrooms in the college or in an informal learning context such as speaking English with friends, family members, colleagues, or in different social contexts such as when interacting in a shopping mall.

Four of the participants, namely Basem, Hadeel, Hana, and Maher, indicated that they feel proud when they speak English in their communities whether at work, with friends, or their families. Basem, for instance, reported, "I prefer to use English outside the classroom because we can learn better from real life communication. For example, in the work, I can learn the words I need for my work with my colleagues but in the classroom we don't study these words" (Interview 2, 11 min). Moreover, Maher indicated the importance of practicing English outside the classroom as a means of learning:



The English that we need. For example, I can learn more words in my work than I learn here in one year. Here they teach us only some words but if I speak English in my work I will hear a new word and use it with the people in my work so I will learn more English than in my classes (Interview 2, 19 min).

These participants appeared to understand the importance of informal settings for language learning and seemed to feel confident about using English in public.

Nevertheless, other participants reported different reactions to the face-threatening issue of making mistakes during their communication in English in an informal context. Ahmad and Yasser were worried about using English in public because they were afraid of losing face. For instance, Yasser was worried about the embarrassment that he might encounter if he made a mistake while using English outside the classroom, “I prefer to speak English inside the classroom because I know the people inside the class. So, if I make any mistake sure they will help me and correct my words, but when I speak outside the classroom nobody will correct my language if I was in a shopping mall or anywhere” (Interview 2, 14 min). Yasser’s words suggest his fear of being embarrassed in public, but at the same time, he doubts that an informal context would provide a successful learning environment due to the potential lack of feedback. According to Yasser, communication in real life opportunities will not provide him with a learning experience in the target language. The fear of embarrassment when making a mistake seemed to be an issue for some participants in the study. Indeed the use of English in informal settings is often accompanied by learners’ concerns about correctness and self-consciousness concerning the possibility of making mistakes.

Learners’ preferences regarding their language learning context play an important role in motivating them to learn more in particular situations. Maher, for instance wrote, “I prefer use English inside and outside the classroom because it is good to use English every time and everywhere. I feel that I’m improving my English in every second” (Written response 3). However, those participants who disagreed with Maher preferred to learn the language inside the classroom to avoid public embarrassment.

The motivational influences discussed in this section summarize the most important factors that the participants’ reported as influencing their learning process

and their motivation to learn or use English in their daily lives. Such influences have an impact on all the learners who participated in this study. However, as clearly indicated, each individual learner reacted uniquely to these influences. Therefore, individuals' unique reactions towards these motivational influences create different outcomes in their learning experience.

### **3) L2 Motivational Self manifested in the learners' selves**

In the third round of interviews, the researcher attempted to explicitly investigate the development of elements incorporated in Dörnyei's L2 motivational self-system (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009, 2011) in the participants' contributions to the study. Dörnyei believes that in order for language learners to be motivated they need to develop a L2 self-system during the process of their language learning. The L2 self-system is important because it links the self with action, mediating and controlling behavior. He divides this system into the L2 ideal self, the L2 Ought-to self and the learning experience. Given that the participants' learning experience was investigated in section (1. 2), in this section the researcher reports evidence from the data of the presence of the L2 ideal self and the L2 ought-to self among the participants in the study.

#### **3. 1. The L2 Ideal Self**

The first element in Dörnyei's L2 motivational self system that was investigated was the participants' L2 ideal self. This involved exploring how the participants believed they might use English in the future (see Appendix C). It was believed that their responses to these questions would reflect any image of their future selves that they held and would reveal what role (if any) English played in that conceptualization. Most of the participants responded with a clear vision of the future jobs that they hoped to obtain and in which they would need English as a means of communication.

One vivid image of the L2 future self was reported by Basem who indicated that he is willing to move to a better company where he will be a manager "or I will at least stay in my company but I become a manager because I will get a better degree

and I will know more English. A manager needs to speak English good because he will deal with many people from everywhere. When my English is better I can get a better job and become a manager” (Interview 3, 20 min). This suggests that English is an essential element in Basem’s ideal future self because promotion and success are intertwined with progress in his English; he visualizes himself as a manager who speaks good English and perceives learning English as a condition for a good future.

Other participants also explained the images they had about their future jobs. Firas had his own dreams about his future job, “I still don’t know, but I will become a manager or a teacher. I like to teach management. When my English is 100% I can become a teacher of management in English” (Interview 3, 22 min). It appears that English for Firas is a prerequisite for achieving his future self. He cannot obtain his dream job in the future unless he excels in English. Moreover, Hadeel expected to have a manager’s position in her father’s company and visualized herself speaking English to her employees, “I will use nice words with them in English, I will not shout on them or so but I will speak nice English of course. My English will be perfect” (Interview 3, 27 min). Hadeel visualized herself in the future speaking “nice English” at work as part of her future L2 ideal self.

Although most of the participants’ future selves included having a better job opportunity, Hana’s vision of her future included travelling to different countries and speaking English in her travels, “I will visit Germany, Sweden, and maybe other countries in Europe. I will use English to speak with people there because how can people understand me if I am not good in English” (Interview 3, 31 min). Unlike other participants, Hana’s future self was not related to her future job. Instead, she dreamt of using English as she roamed the world. Hana too, therefore, provided evidence of a vividly imagined ideal L2 self, in which English played an enabling role.

While most participants seemed to have a clear vision of their future use of English, others like Ahmad and Yasser seemed indecisive about the way they might use English in their future careers. Ahmad visualized himself working in “the IT office in this institution or maybe another better place, but I think I will be in the IT office because I am planning to have my degree in IT” (Interview 3, 13 min). Ahmad does not currently use English frequently in his current job. When the researcher asked him whether he would need English in his future job he responded that he

might not need English because he will be working in the IT department. He reported that his need to use English would be limited to the minimum level of basic communicational needs. This suggests he lacked a clear vision of English in his future. He knew that he would have a degree in IT but said, “I will not use English much because I will work on my computer” (Interview 3, 26 min). Yasser also indicated that he was only interested in English as a means of getting his degree. He indicated that his current job required him to speak English but in his future job, he would not need English to communicate with others in the same way he needs it now. He had a vision about his future career but saw English as playing only a minor role in that future.

In addition to the clear vision some participants had of themselves using English in their future, their deliberate decision to use English even when they do not need it suggests evidence of the existence of their L2 ideal selves. For instance, Hadeel and Hana reported that they used English to communicate with their Arabic-speaking sisters and friends. When asked about their reasons they indicated that they enjoyed speaking English and they spoke it because they liked the language. This indicates that they were driven by inner forces related to their relationship to English rather than forces related to social norms and expectations. Similarly, Maher reported that he likes using English with his friends. He explained that he admired the way in which words in English were more “meaningful” than words in other languages. This example also provides evidence of Maher’s relationship to English and his motivation to learn and use the language.

Regarding the skills that the participants expected to use in the future, most of the participants in the study indicated that they were likely to speak, read, and write in English in the future. This indicates that the learners have visualized themselves using English in the future and were able to identify the contexts in which they might need English whether in their future jobs or in their daily communications with different people in different relationships. Basem indicated that he would definitely be using English with his wife and children because he wants them to improve their English language. Firas also indicated one unique aspect of his use of English saying, “in the future I will use speaking, writing, and correcting mistakes, but I am not good in listening” (Interview 3, 35 min). When the researcher asked Firas, why correcting mistakes, he responded, “because I will be a teacher and I will correct the students’

mistakes” (Interview 3, 35 min). Firas’s words suggest that he has a clear vision of his future and the way in which he will use English language in this future. This suggests that these learners’ notion of their L2 ideal selves fuels their motivation and leads them to exert more effort in their language learning.

The reported data suggests that three of the participants (Basem, Firas, and Hadeel) had more developed L2 ideal selves than the other participants. These three learners reported clear visions of themselves learning and using English in their future and a strong relationship with English that positively influenced their motivation to learn the language. Their inner motivation to learn English not only stems from their need to use English but rather from their choice to use English and include it in their future careers and social interactions. A less well-developed manifestation of the L2 ideal self is represented in Maher and Hana’s L2 ideal selves. Although Hana loves and enjoys speaking English, she does not seem to have a clear vision about her future self. Moreover, Maher has a vivid image of his future including English, but his motivation to learn and use the language is partly influenced by social expectations such as the expectations of a manager to use English. The remaining two participants (Ahmad and Yasser) appear to be interested in learning and using English for reasons related to their social environment. Both seem to be learning English only to improve their job status. This suggests that they lack a clear L2 ideal self.

### **3. 2. The L2 ought-to self**

Whereas the notion of the L2 ideal self is related to learners’ ability to visualize themselves using the target language in desired ways in the future, the L2 ought-to self represents motives associated with social expectations. When the language learners’ motivation is driven by their need to communicate in the surrounding society or because, for instance, their parents require them to learn it, these motives are then related to the L2 ought-to self. The study findings indicate that the notion of the L2 ought-to self is also salient among the participants. Since the L2 ought-to self is related to social expectations, the participants’ awareness of the role of English in their lives and the importance of learning English in their social community represents evidence of the existence of their L2 ought-to selves. All seven participants reported beliefs about the importance of English as a condition for success in professional work and communication in different social contexts (section

1.1). This indicates the importance of the L2-ought-to self among these learners as a motivational influence. For instance, Basem, Firas, Hadeel, Hana, Maher, and Yasser all indicated the importance of learning English because it is considered a condition for having a better job opportunity. Basem expressed this fact when he commented, “the market now needs English” (Interview 1, 7 min).

The participants also indicated their awareness of the importance of English as a means of communication in society. Some of them (like Hana, Hadeel, and Maher) considered speaking English a condition for life, “In the world, everyone speaks English and I think everyone should know English, how to speak English. Your knowledge will be more and in this world you should know English otherwise you are nothing” (Hana, Interview 1, 7 min). For these participants, English seems to constitute a major part of their lives because they greatly believe in the importance of this “international language” (Maher, Interview 1, 14 min). Such beliefs are likely to prompt them to behave in ways that help them achieve their visions of their L2 ideal selves.

The value of English in the participants’ lives is associated with the need for English in both formal and informal contexts. The participants indicated the need for English in their work environments, their formal studying context, and their social communication. Variation was observed however in the extent to which participants actually used English with some using it with friends and family members (Basem, Hadeel, and Hana) and others only using English at work or in the college. Nevertheless, they all indicated the significant need to learn and speak English in the social setting of the UAE. This provides evidence for the participants’ L2 ought-to selves.

Another factor that is related to the participants’ L2 ought-to self is associated with the reasons for which they learn English. All the participants were enrolled in the English course to obtain a degree and improve their job status (except Hana who was not employed). Therefore, an essential part of their learner motivation was dominated by the need to pass their exams to get the degree and by the job market expectations. For instance, Basem reported that “the market now needs English” (Interview 1, 7 min). Ahmad and Yasser also reported that they were learning English because they needed it for their degree. Moreover, all the participants reported the importance of

English in communicating with others in the UAE. Therefore, their motivation to learn English is partly driven by their need for the language and the social expectations of language use in social interaction and everyday communication. These examples provide evidence of the existence of the L2 ought-to self among all the participants.

### **3. 3. Imagery and the L2 self**

Reflecting on the participants' ability to visualize themselves in the future using English recalls Dörnyei and Ushioda's (2011) reference to imagery as an important factor in the L2 self-system. Dörnyei believes that language learners' ability to visualize themselves in the future using the target language will help them build the L2 self-system. The difference in the images these learners build in their minds about their future helps distinguish the L2 ideal self and the L2 ought to motivational self.

All seven participants had their own visions about their future jobs and the opportunities that they might have after they learned English. Basem, Hadeel, and Maher visualized themselves as successful managers who could use English freely and successfully. Firas also seemed to have a clear future vision of himself either in the teaching profession or in management. He even saw himself correcting his students' mistakes (Interview 3). The participants who had clearer visions about their futures including English also demonstrated willingness to invest time and effort to learn and use English. Therefore, the images the participants had about their future selves are likely to help them build their L2 motivational selves and, potentially, achieve their goals.

The participants' ability to clearly visualize their future jobs and the way they will need English and continue learning it in the future indicates that imagery constitutes a major factor in building up the motivational system of language learners. The clarity of the images these learners have of their future selves might represent one of the forces that help them achieve their goals in the future.

### **4) The dynamic aspect of motivation**

The final theme that emerged from the data analysis is that of the dynamism of motivation. During the 16 week period of data collection, some changes in the participants' motivation towards learning English were observed. The learners'

motivation was influenced by several factors that led some of the participants to reflect on their attitudes towards certain events in the learning process. The main changes were noted in the participants' attitudes towards some members of their learning group, their reactions towards their new English instructor, and their feelings about learning English.

Some participants reported changes in their reactions towards the absence of some of their colleagues from class. During the first round of interviews, four participants (Basem, Firas, Hadeel, and Maher) indicated that some of their colleagues did not attend the classes regularly. When the researcher probed about their emotions regarding this fact, the four participants expressed indifference. Maher even indicated that he felt "sorry for them because they are wasting their money and then they don't come to the classes. It is their loss" (Interview 1, 31 min). However, this feeling of indifference changed during the study. In the second interview (that took place after the beginning of the second semester), the researcher asked the participants about their feelings towards those absent students. The dominant feeling that was expressed by the four participants (Basem, Firas, Hadeel, and Maher) was anger. This time the participants felt angry because they obtained the same grades as those students who had not attended the classes the previous semester. Another development was noticed during the final round of interviews when the same four participants declared that they had decided not to help the absent students in the final exams. Firas stated, "We decided not to help those students because it is not fair that we attend all the time and they only come at the end, we help them cheat in the exams, and then they have good grades" (Interview 3, 28 min). It seems that these participants decided to take an action against those students. While the rest of the participants did not consider this a major issue, Basem, Firas, Hadeel, and Maher experienced changes in their emotions that finally led them to take a group decision to stop helping their classmates.

Another change in the learners' motivation was depicted in their reaction to their new English instructor. The participants reported that they were not satisfied with their English instructor in the second semester. They indicated that the classes became boring and they did not even sense the need to attend the classes because they "did not miss any important information" (Hadeel, Interview 2, 26 min). This suggests that their reactions to their new English instructor had a major influence on their motivation to attend their English classes and learn English in the college.



Language learners' feelings about language during the learning process greatly influence their motivation to learn more and to invest more effort and time in learning the language. Fluctuations in the participants' feelings were depicted by asking learners to map their feelings onto a graph in the last round of interviews (see Appendix H). Analysis of the data that emerged from the graphs in which the participants indicated their feeling during the time of the study revealed the existence of three patterns: consistent emotions during the study, increase in the participants' positive emotions, and finally decrease in the participants' positive emotions. The first category includes participants, such as Hadeel and Maher, who experienced consistent emotions during the study. They both started their first semester happy and excited and continued reporting positive feelings, indicating satisfaction at the end of the study (see Appendix H). Although they had negative emotions about the other students who did not attend regularly, this did not translate into a change in their overall emotions about learning English.

The second pattern that emerged regarding the feelings of the participants during the study was an increase in the participants' positive emotions from the start of the first semester till the end of the study. Ahmad and Hana indicated such a change in their feelings on their graphs. While Hana indicated a slight change from being happy at the beginning of the first semester to becoming satisfied, excited, and proud in the second semester, Ahmad's changes seemed more significant because he started the first semester confused and ended the study excited about learning English.

The third pattern is represented by a decrease in positive emotions towards learning English. This decline in positive emotions was identified in the case of Basem and Yasser. Basem started the first semester enthusiastic and excited to learn English. However, by the end of the study he reported feeling tired and sad. When the researcher enquired about the reason, he indicated that he felt so due to anxiety about working for the midterm exams (the participants' midterm exams coincided with the end of the study). Although Yasser was confused at the start of the first semester, he felt happy and satisfied at the end of the first semester. However, by the end of the study he reported feeling confused again (see Appendix H). When asked, he indicated that his feelings were due to the pressure of midterm exams.

The participants who were more motivated to learn English reported fewer negative feelings such as being tired, bored, or stressed. For instance, Hana, Hadeel, and Maher did not identify any negative feelings at any of the four different points. Ahmad, on the other hand, explained that he was confused at the beginning of the first semester and tired at the end of the same semester. However, his feelings became more positive in the second semester. Basem reported some negative feelings during the second semester such as feeling tired and stressed because of the exams that he was completing at the time of the interview. These changes in the participants' feelings led to changes in their motivation to learn English. As Basem indicated, "We don't have time to learn English now. I have my exams and many things" (Interview 3, 45 min).

The fluctuations that the participants reported in their emotions towards learning English seemed to influence their motivation to learn the language. When learners are excited about their English learning, they invest more time and effort to learn and practice English. Positive feelings are associated with a higher degree of learner motivation. This was expressed by the 'positive' participants who expressed their willingness to invest more time in learning English. Although, due to the limitations of this study, the duration of data collection was not long, the findings provide some evidence of the dynamic aspect of motivation with the participants identifying events that might have changed the extent to which they were ready to exert more time and effort learning English. This appears to provide support for the inevitability of fluctuations in motivation for language learning over time.

### **Summary**

In conclusion, data from the participants indicate that English occupied a major role in their lives depending on the types of interaction they used English for, the types of English language skills, and the frequency with which they used English in their communication. The participants mainly used English in three types of interaction: professional interaction in their college and work places, social interaction that included using English in social media and speaking to their friends and family members, and the daily commercial interactions that took place in public places such as malls and petrol stations. Speaking and writing in English were dominant in the

learners' interactions with others. Analysis of the data also indicated that the frequency of their English use varied from using English on a daily basis to using it only a few minutes during a week.

Data analysis suggests that motivational influences on the participants' learning included both their previous learning experiences (positive and negative); noteworthy amongst these were the impact of the teacher, and personal influences including their beliefs, emotions, self-confidence and their 'investment' in learning English in terms of effort and time. The most important belief was related to the importance of English in social communication and for work development. The participants reported both positive and negative emotions. The positive emotions included love, excitement, and pride at being able to speak English, whereas the negative emotions included dissatisfaction with some aspects of the learning environment, and the fear of embarrassment when speaking English in public. The participants' self-confidence was also found to be an influential element in their motivation. Finally, the degree to which the participants were willing to invest time and effort in learning the language was an indicator of their motivation to learn the language in the future.

Evidence of aspects of the L2 motivational self-system was found in the participants' contributions to the study. The L2 ought-to self seems to be a salient element in the participants' motivation to learn English based on their awareness of the importance of and need for English in the UAE context. The L2 ought-to self is likely to play an important role in motivating behavior such as spending time and effort on learning. Similarly, the L2 ideal self was found to be present in some participants' images of their future jobs and lives which incorporated the use of English.

Finally, the learners' motivation was found to be dynamic, as exemplified by the emotional fluctuations that the participants reported during the study. These changes influenced the participants' motivation and willingness to learn English at different times and, therefore, provided evidence of the dynamic aspect of learner motivation.



## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications**

### **Overview**

The findings reported in the previous chapter were generated as a result of analyzing the data collected in response to the two research questions:

1. What role does the English language occupy in the lives of seven Arab learners enrolled in an undergraduate English language course?
2. What are the motivational influences on Arab learners' English language learning in an undergraduate English course?

This chapter highlights four themes which emerged from reflecting on those findings. These include the diversity of the motivational influences on the learners, the uniqueness of both the learners and their motivation, the dynamic nature of their motivation, and the complexity of the construct of motivation. Each of these themes will be discussed in the chapter.

### **1) Major themes in the study**

In this section, reflections on the detailed findings under each of the four themes are presented.

#### **1. 1. The diversity of English roles and motivational influences**

Despite similarities in the participants' characteristics and the context in which they were learning and using English, the study data reveals a surprising amount of diversity in the role that English played in their lives and the motivational influences that impacted their learning.

##### **1. 1. 1. Diversity of the role of English in the participants' lives**

English played a different role in different participants' lives. Whereas for some participants English was a significant part of most of their daily interactions, for others, English occupied a much more limited role. In practice, this meant that some participants used English every day as a means of communication with family members and friends, while for others the language was confined to interactions with strangers and formal study-focused goals and activities. Furthermore, a relationship was observed between the role English played in individual participants' lives and the

extent to which they were motivated to use and actually used English. Not surprisingly, those who needed and used English more in their lives demonstrated greater motivation and investment in learning the language. The different roles played by English in different participants' lives indicate diversity in the role of English in the present study.

It is note-worthy that the role of English in the study participants' lives is different from the role of English that is represented in a number of previous studies. The fact that the nature of the community in the UAE obliges people to use English as a lingua franca in their communication is very different from other contexts in which language learning motivation has been studied. For instance, in their classic study, Gardner and Lambert (1959) investigated the motivation of young English-speaking learners in Canada trying to learn French so they could integrate within a bilingual society with French-speaking Canadians. However, in the UAE, English is used as a lingua franca among the different nationalities residing in the UAE and is not associated with one particular national or cultural group, but is a tool that anyone can employ in order to meet their communicative or professional needs. This affects the associations that people have for the language and their relationship to it. The context of this study is also different from other significant studies of motivation (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2002; Dörnyei, Csizér, & Németh, 2006) which involved research in the EFL context of Hungarians learning English. In the Hungary-based studies, English was a course that was studied in schools, but the language played no role as a means of daily communication.

However, the findings of the present study in relation to the role and use of English in the learners' society are in line with Dörnyei and Clément (2001)'s findings that the macro-context was one of the main dimensions that influenced learner motivation in language learning. In the UAE context, learners' motivation for learning English cannot be separated from consideration of the role the language plays in the life of the country. The same contextual dimension was also mentioned by Ushioda (2001) when she indicated that external pressure imposed on learners to learn the target language played an essential role in their motivation.

### **1. 1. 2. Diversity of personal influences**

Diversity was also observed in the personal influences found to impact the learners' motivation to learn and use English. Whereas these influences were mainly related to the participants' previous learning experiences, other personal and contextual influences were observed in the factors which played the biggest part in individual participants' motivation for learning English.

One influence which seemed to be uniformly significant in the participants' learning was their previous English learning experiences. Participants who reported positive prior English learning experiences seemed more motivated to learn English in their current courses as well as in any available courses in the future. On the other hand, those participants who did not report (remember) any specific positive memories about learning English in school appeared to be less motivated to learn English in the present as well as in the future. Moreover, Hazem, who was available at the beginning of the study but dropped out after the end of the first semester, reported negative experiences with one of his English teachers. This participant (Hazem) not only dropped out of the study but also dropped out of the college. This suggests that his motivation may have been affected by these unpleasant experiences so that he found less reason to invest in the course than other learners in the study. Thus, there seems to be a strong correlation between the learners' past learning experiences of English and the degree of their motivation.

Findings concerning the correlation between the learners' past learning experiences and their current motivation coincide with the findings of other studies of motivation (Shoaib & Dörnyei, 2005; Ushioda, 2001). In their study, Shoaib and Dörnyei (2005) related the participants' motivational dimensions to their past learning experiences and found that the learners' previous learning experiences had a major influence on their motivation to learn the language. Similarly, Ushioda (2001) indicated that the undergraduate learners' *positive learning history* played a major role in their motivation to learn the language. Although each researcher referred to the learners' previous experiences in different ways, they all agreed that the learners' previous learning experiences have an impact on their motivation to learn the language in their current context.

The diversity of personal influences on learners' motivation was also represented in the participants' beliefs, emotions, and self-confidence. Although the participants believed that English played a major role in their lives, not all of them indicated that they expected to use English in their future. Therefore, the participants' differed in the way they perceived their future use of English according to their expectations. Most learners in the study had positive beliefs and feelings towards learning English. On the other hand, some negative feelings were also expressed by some learners. These negative feelings were embodied in the learners' dissatisfaction with some elements in their learning environment and their fear of embarrassment when using English in public. The variety of emotions and beliefs that these learners experienced influenced their motivation to learn and use English. These emotions and beliefs indicate the diversity of the factors that impacted the participants' motivation to learn and use the language.

The participants also varied in their willingness to invest time and effort in learning the language. Highly motivated participants such as Hadeel and Hana were willing to invest as much time as was required in order to learn English because of their fondness for the English language. On the other hand, people like Ahmad and Yasser were willing to learn English only until they obtained their degree and a promotion in their jobs. Thus, learners' degree of investment differed according to their beliefs about the role of and need for English in communication, positive and negative feelings associated with learning and using English, and attitudes towards English. Differences in the learners' investment in learning the language coincide with differences in the other personal factors that interact in the learners' selves, constituting a major aspect of learner motivation.

These findings are consistent with the findings of many previous studies that considered learners' beliefs and emotions essential factors in influencing learners' motivation. For instance, Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) identified learners' beliefs about L2 learning, self-confidence, fear of failure, and anxiety as factors that influence learner motivation. Other studies (Dörnyei & Clément, 2001; Shoaib & Dörnyei, 2005; & Ushioda, 2001) also indicated the relationship between personal factors such as the learners' beliefs, emotions and self-confidence and their motivation to learn the language. Moreover, the concept of learner investment was also classified as a major influence on learner motivation in the study of Dörnyei and Clément (2001) and in the



work of Norton and Toohey (2011) who indicated that the construct of investment complemented the construct of learner motivation in language learning.

### **1. 1. 3. Diversity of contextual influences**

Diversity was also a characteristic that was noticed in relation to learners' beliefs about contextual influences. Different contextual factors associated with using and learning English appeared to influence learners' motivation to learn English. While some learners indicated the importance of the informal context in their learning, others expressed their fear of using English during their social interactions. The first group of learners believed that their community provided them with a rich learning environment in which they could speak and practice English. However, the second group thought that the informal learning setting was not as beneficial as their formal learning context because they did not have to speak English frequently. Different contexts seem to influence different learners in various manners. Some learners are prompted by their professional and social environment to learn and use English more, whereas other learners are afraid of embarrassment when using English in public (e.g. Ahmad and Yasser). These contrasting opinions indicate that the contextual influences and the learners' learning preferences interact in dynamic and unique ways. The same context can be perceived as an opportunity by one learner and a challenge by the other. The participants who need and use English in their work (including Basem, Hadeel and Maher) indicated that they preferred learning English in settings beyond the classroom. On the other hand, the participants who did not necessarily need English at work reported their fear of embarrassment in public. It seems that the learners' preferences regarding learning contexts influence their motivation to speak English. What is also clear is that when learners are not satisfied with their learning context they will exert less effort to attend classes to learn the language.

These findings are consistent with several studies that indicated a strong interrelation between contextual factors and learners' motivation. Numerous studies (see Dörnyei & Clément, 2001; Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998; Shoaib & Dörnyei, 2005; Ushioda, 2001; & Ushioda 2011b) found a significant relationship between the contextual factors related to the learners' setting and their motivation to learn the

language. The learners' learning experiences seem to be highly influenced by the context in which they prefer to learn and use English and their perceptions of the context.

#### **1. 1. 4. Diversity in the participants' L2 self**

The findings also revealed some evidence of a construct that has gained importance in recent motivational research, namely the L2 motivational self-system (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009, 2011). Some learners who were strongly motivated (e.g. Hadeel, Hana, Maher, and Basem) exhibited elements of their L2 ideal self. These learners reported strong positive feelings towards English and expressed ideas which revealed that an ability to use English was part of the way they viewed themselves in the future. This suggested that their learning of English resulted not only from their need to learn it, but also from a desire to be a certain kind of a person with certain kinds of abilities in the future. This finding is consistent with the findings of other studies in which the participants were found to exhibit an L2 ideal self (Taguchi, Magid, & Papi, 2009). Although all participants exhibited a clear representation of the L2 ought-to self, those who exhibited an L2 ideal self were more motivated to learn English and to invest more effort and time to learn the language. This seems to be consistent with Dörnyei's (2005; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009, 2011) theory of the L2 motivational self-system whereby the participants with a well-developed L2 ideal self were more willing to exert more effort to learn the language. The same correlation between the ideal L2 self and *the intended learning effort* was found in Ryan's (2009) study in which he tested the concept of the ideal L2 self among Japanese learners of English.

Moreover, the strongly motivated participants reported vivid images of their future selves and the ways in which they would use English in their imagined futures. The participants' images were represented in their self-portraits and the descriptions they provided about their future jobs. The participants who had clear visions about their future in which English was included were considered to have more developed L2 ideal selves. This finding is consistent with the results of several studies (Al Shehri, 2009; Dörnyei & Chan, 2013; & You & Chan, 2015) that found a correlation between the learners' ability to imagine the target language as part of their view of themselves in their future and their L2 ideal self.

The L2 ought-to self also seems to represent a salient part of the learners' sense of themselves as English learners. All seven learners exhibited an awareness of the value and need to learn English. Therefore, they were all driven to learn English by external forces that represented their undeniable need to know English to improve their job opportunities, education degrees, and different types of compulsory social interaction. The existence of the L2 ought-to self in all participants' selves was expected due to the cultural characteristics of UAE society. In this regard, the participants were clearly driven by a need imposed on them by their social context. In some cases, this was the major imperative for learning English; in others, additional personal influences such as appreciation and enjoyment of the language also played a role. The diversity in the participants' representations of their L2 ideal and ought-to selves is another dimension of diversity uncovered in this exploration of the learners' motivation.

The four factors discussed in this section all indicate diversity in the elements that played a significant role in the participants' motivation to learn and use English in different ways in their lives. This diversity stems not only from the number of factors that have a major role in learner motivation. It is also related to the individual uniqueness among learners that drives each of them to react differently to various motivational influences. The uniqueness of learners is discussed in the next section.

## **1. 2. The uniqueness of learners in relation to their motivation**

The unique character of the participants is a significant theme that emerged throughout the study. It is related to different issues such as the reported role of English in the participants' lives, the participants' reaction to a number of motivational influences, and different elements of the L2 motivational self.

Although the nature of the community in the UAE obliges residents to communicate using English as a lingua franca, each participant reported on the value, need and use of English in a different manner. English plays a major role in each of the participants' lives because it represents the only way they can communicate with non-Arabic speakers as the participants indicated. Nevertheless, each participant had a different story to tell. Some of them (Hadeel, Hana, and Maher) expressed their appreciation of English as more than a language to be used for communication. Other

participants (e.g. Ahmad and Yasser) however, only considered the necessity of learning English as a means of communication in their daily social interactions. While some participants expressed their interest in learning and using English for their whole lives, others reported that they would only learn and use English when they need it. Therefore, the purpose of learning English varied among these participants from learning English for fun, obtaining a better job opportunity, engaging in social communication, or at the most basic level, participating in daily interactions in malls, supermarkets, or other locations.

The uniqueness of the factors determining the learners' motivation was also manifested in the participants' different individual uses of English in their lives. While all the participants indicated their awareness of the importance of English in the linguistic setting of the UAE, not all of them used English regularly. Some of the participants (mainly Ahmad and Yasser) did not use English frequently because most of their friends were Arabic speakers. However, other participants (e.g. Hadeel and Hana) used English in their daily interactions even with their (Arabic-speaking) family members because they like it. Although Basem used English with his family as well, his motives were different since he needed to speak English because his wife could not speak Arabic. These examples indicate that the participants varied in terms of their uses of English as well as in the value they assigned English in their lives. These individual differences influenced the learners' motivation to learn and use English in different ways. It was noted that the participants who valued English more manifested higher degrees of motivation to learn the language. Similarly, the participants who valued and used English less during their social and daily interactions eventually demonstrated less motivation to learn the language. This might be due to the fact that they did not feel the urge to use English on a daily basis. The frequency of practicing English among the participants seemed also to be correlated to the learners' motivation to learn English. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the more the learners need and use English in their daily communication the more they are willing to make an effort to learn it and improve the level of their English proficiency. All these variations amongst the participants' use of and they value they associate with English stem from their different contexts and their individual reactions to the different factors influencing them.

The concept of uniqueness was also related to the learners' diverse reactions to different influences on their motivation. Different motivational influences prompted different reactions from each of the participants. The motivational influences that were found to impact the learners most related to their previous learning experiences and personal and contextual influences.

It seems that the learners reacted differently to these feelings. While some learners (Basem, Firas, Hadeel, and Hana) were negatively influenced by the erratic participation in class of some of their classmates, others seemed indifferent and did not let this influence their motivation. Nevertheless, some learners like Ahmad and Yasser, surrendered to these feelings and became demotivated about learning and using English in public. Others, however, (Firas in particular) were able to overcome their fear of making mistakes and keep their learner motivation high. Firas considered this fear as part of the process of learning and was determined not to let his fear influence his self-confidence. Thus, it seems that the negative feelings that accompanied English learning for some of these learners prompted different reactions at different times. The learners' reactions to their emotional influences of their motivation indicate the individual quality of motivation as related to personal factors.

The final example of the uniqueness of the learners is manifested in the participants' various representations of their L2 motivational selves. Although all the participants showed evidence of the L2 ought-to self, some of them seemed to have clearer conceptions of their L2 ought-to selves than others. For instance, Ahmad and Yasser clearly expressed that they learned English only for practical reasons that were imposed on them by the nature of the UAE society. On the other hand, although Basem indicated his practical reasons for learning English and his need to use English with his non-Arab wife, he also showed evidence of an L2 ideal self when he described a clear image of his future in which he uses English. These evident dissimilarities amongst the learners in their representations of their L2 motivational selves indicate the uniqueness of the motivation expressed by the learners. The same context seemed to indicate individual uniqueness in the development of their L2 motivational selves.

These findings are consistent with the findings in Ushioda's (2001) study in which she discussed the individual differences among Irish university language

learners who reacted individually to different motivational influences. Ushioda found that each learner's motivation was influenced by their self-concepts, beliefs, and unique experiences of learning the language (Ushioda 2001).

### **1. 3. The Dynamicity of learner motivation**

Another major theme which emerges from reflection on the study findings is the dynamic nature of learner motivation. The findings suggest that the participants' motivation to learn English passed through different changes over the duration of the study. The emotional fluctuations that the participants experienced during the study together with their reactions to the new English instructor suggested that these factors influenced their motivation. As a result, the degree of motivation expressed by the learners fluctuated at different times. The learners were more motivated both to learn English and to participate in the study at the beginning of the first week period of the study. By the end of the study, some of the participants, including Basem, Firas, and Yasser reported feeling tired, dissatisfied, and bored. This indicates that the level of their motivation to learn English had decreased since the beginning of the study. In particular, the change of English instructor had a significant impact on the participants' motivation because most of them described the new English course as too easy and boring. Subsequently, they were not consistent in attending their English classes. Another factor that might have added to these participants' dissatisfaction is their learning group. The participants indicated that some students did not attend the classes regularly yet were given equal opportunity to pass the exams as those who had attended because they were able to cheat during the exams. The study participants' dissatisfaction with this reality seems to have influenced their motivation to learn and to attend the classes. Although the duration of data collection was limited to sixteen weeks, the researcher observed fluctuations in the learners' motivation. Although these fluctuations were observed in relation to the participants' emotions, in fact some of these changes could be traced back to the changes in the learning setting. This suggests that dynamic nature of motivation is also related to the contextual factors that influence the participants' English learning and use.

The changes in the learners' motivation to learn English are evidence for the dynamic nature of motivation as proposed by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) and are consistent with the findings of other studies (Busse & Walter, 2013) that indicate

changes in learners' motivation over time. The dynamic nature of motivation highlights the relationship between learners' motivation and the multiple personal and contextual factors that might influence learners in different ways at many different times.

The dynamic aspect of motivation can be viewed as inevitable due to the nature of learning as a process and the constant interaction of personal and social variables which impact on it. These three complex elements (the construct of motivation, the complexity of individual learners' orientation to learning, and the ongoing learning process) are interrelated in a manner that allows each of them to greatly influence the other elements. This interrelation amongst the various elements that play a role in learner motivation constitute the complexity of the construct of motivation.

#### **1. 4. The complexity of the construct of motivation**

Each element of the previously mentioned characteristics of motivation (namely diversity, uniqueness, and dynamicity) constitute a complex variable in itself. The complexity of learners' motivation stems from the complexity embodied in each of these elements of learner motivation as well as from the complexity of the interrelationship amongst them.

For instance, the diversity amongst the motivational influences entails different impacts on the learners' motivation. The past learning experiences of the learners seem to shape their beliefs, attitudes, emotions towards English, and the way in which they view English. Learners' personal orientations to learning English also impact their learning preferences and vice versa. These motivational influences interact in a way that binds them together in a kind of dynamic system. This is not a surprising finding given the complexity of both the construct of motivation and the nature of human beings (the learners).

In addition, the diversity, uniqueness and dynamicity of learners' motivation combine to constitute a complex system that emerges from the different factors that influence individual learners in relation to their inner personal motives as well as the contextual influences that impact the way they learn and use English in their lives. The interrelationship amongst these key factors constitutes a comprehensive, complicated L2 motivational self-system which controls the intensity of learners'

drive to learn the language. The constitution of an L2 motivational self-system entails a continuous ability to change. The dynamic aspect of motivation is mostly related to the ability of the different components of this complex system to change and evolve as they are influenced by various factors over time. This indicates the need to view learners' motivation as a complex dynamic system which is greatly influenced by various personal and contextual factors playing different major roles in the learners' perception of the need to learn English, actual use of English, and success in learning English.

## **2) Implications of the study**

The findings of the study indicate the importance of viewing learner motivation in relation to multiple influences that impact learners' willingness to invest time and effort in using and learning the language. The implications of this study are discussed here in relation to two influential participants in the language learning process: the learners and the teachers.

### **2. 1. Implications related to language learners**

Several implications with regard to learners should be taken into consideration. These learner implications are related to change in learner motivation, the necessity of managing learners' emotions, the availability of different contexts in which learners can learn and use English, and the significance of the learners' awareness of the importance of their motivation and of strategies that might help them overcome difficulties in motivation.

Although change is sometimes difficult, it seems to be the rule with regard to motivation and the ongoing learning process. The findings indicate that the learners experienced changes on many different levels throughout the duration of the study. These changes were related to their beliefs, emotions, and attitudes towards English. These changes influenced the learners' motivation to learn and use English. Therefore, learners need to be aware of the dynamic nature of motivation when undertaking language study in different situations.



Since motivation is closely related to the learners' constantly changing emotions and attitudes, the learners need to equip themselves with tools to manage these emotions. An example of this was presented by Firas who was able to overcome his embarrassment of making mistakes in public and change it into a positive motivation. Ahmad, on the other hand, was unable to manage his embarrassment and became discouraged from using English in public because of this fear. Hence, acquainting learners with appropriate strategies that might help them overcome the obstacles in their learning process and encourage them to defy their negative feelings is essential in building confident learners.

Finally, access to a range of different contexts for learning and using English is part of the social context of the UAE. Learners should be encouraged to make use of this context. Moreover, decision makers need to take these opportunities into consideration and make use of them in helping learners become involved in more authentic, practical use of English. The need to use English in meaningful communication in order to enhance proficiency in the language can be made clear to learners to motivate them to exploit informal learning opportunities. The availability of a diverse and rich context like the one in the UAE could be used to motivate learners to use English more in their social interactions and thus expand the formal learning setting to include diverse settings in the learners' lives.

## **2. 2. Implications for language teachers**

The findings of the study also call for raising teachers' awareness of the different levels and degrees of motivation their learners display. English language teachers should also be aware of the uniqueness of each learner and their reactions to the different influences that combine to impact their motivation to learn the language on different levels. The individuality of learners and their unique reactions to each of the motivational influences combined with the different learning settings and the factors that impact their language learning have enormous influences on the learners' motivation. Therefore, teachers need to monitor the different factors that affect their learners and react sensitively to their impacts.

Teachers also need to be aware of the complexity and dynamicity of the learners as individuals as well as the L2 motivational self-system. Once language teachers are able to understand the concept of the L2 motivational system, they may

become more capable of finding ways of supporting individual learners based on their unique situations and motivational influences.

Such an approach demands time and training for teachers. Therefore, it is not only the responsibility of the teacher to attend to the learners' motivations. Teachers need the support of their institutions to provide the time and training needed to investigate each learner's problems and identify the influences and the obstacles that need to be addressed. Improved teacher support systems would allow teachers to better support their learners and their efforts to motivate language learners and make the learning process more productive.

This discussion has indicated the significance of the study's findings in contributing a richer understanding of language learners' motivation in the ongoing learning process. Language learning motivation is influenced by a variety of diverse, individual, dynamic influences that are related to the learners including the context in which learning the language takes place. The interrelationship amongst these influences constitutes the complex dynamic motivational system that might be referred to as the L2 motivational self-system.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

### **Overview**

This chapter concludes the study by presenting an overview of the major findings of the study, the limitations of the study, and suggestions for further research.

#### **1) Overview of the findings**

The study findings highlighted four major themes in relation to the role of English in the participants' lives and the motivational influences that impact their learning of English. These themes relate to the diversity of the motivational influences that affect the learning process, the uniqueness of the learners, the dynamicity of learner motivation, and the complexity of the construct of learner motivation.

The diversity of the motivational influences that affect learners during learning and using English is related to the various factors that play essential roles in learning a language. These factors include, but are not limited to, the different roles of English in the participants' lives, the different personal orientations which the learners hold towards English, and the various contextual factors that influence their language learning in different learning settings. The diversity of the influences that affect learners' motivation indicates the complexity of the construct of learner motivation and suggests the need to better understand those influences.

The second theme is related to the nature of learners. Acknowledging the uniqueness of learners is essential if we are to understand the different ways in which learners react to different motivational influences in different contexts. By attending to the uniqueness of the learners, teachers and researchers can better understand their responses in relation to their unique characters, emotions, backgrounds, and learning settings. Acknowledging the uniqueness of learners' motivation is an essential element in understanding learners' behaviors and reactions towards different elements in the ongoing learning process and accommodating them in teaching settings.

The dynamicity of learner motivation is another factor that has a significant impact on learners throughout the process of learning a language. This dynamicity implies that change in learners' emotions, attitudes, and beliefs will lead to a change in their motivation to learn and use the language. The dynamic nature of learner motivation could be the result of changes within the learners or changes related to the

learning setting. Therefore, the dynamic nature of motivation is affected by both the individual learners as dynamic persons, and the motivational influences as dynamic factors.

The dynamic nature of motivation interacts with the diverse motivational influences on the learner and the uniqueness of the learners' reactions to these influences to create the complex motivational self-system. This system consists of various, separate, yet interrelated elements that interact to build up a comprehensive, coherent and unique L2 self-system. Each one of these elements influences the other elements in the overall motivational system.

The diverse, unique, dynamic, and complex L2 motivational self-system plays a major role in influencing language learners and the way they learn and use the language. Therefore, it is essential to raise the awareness of English teachers and English learners about the significant role that the L2 self-system plays so as to motivate learners to invest time and effort in learning and using English and to help them understand the fluctuations which occur in their relationship to that learning process.

## **2) Methodological reflections**

The qualitative research methodology that was adopted to collect data in this study required the researcher to interpret the learners' words in the interviews, the written responses, and their self-portraits. This approach has provided the researcher with better insight into the unique nature of each of the participants. This understanding contributed to the overall understanding of the factors influencing their motivation to learn and use the language. Each of the participants represents a unique case of a language learner that cannot and need not be generalized. For instance, the fact that Basem is married to a nonnative speaker of Arabic highlighted for him the need to learn and use English in his daily life. This is a unique situation that is not usually found among learners, yet it is an influential factor that is associated with the value of English in Basem's life. If a survey had been used to collect data for this study, the researcher might not have obtained this insight into this aspect of Basem's situation. Moreover, the memories which some participants reported about their previous English teachers might have not been collected using quantitative research tools. The unique incidents and the unique feelings that these participants reported

and expressed when remembering their past learning experiences enriched this study with invaluable data that cannot be collected or measured using other research methods. The aim of this study was to “search for the richest possible data” (Holliday, 2010, p. 98) and not to generalize the findings because “qualitative research looks at instances of behavior rather than broad tendencies that it cannot prove” (Holliday, 2010, p. 101).

Although subjectivity is an issue that is usually associated with qualitative research methods, the quality of good qualitative research can be achieved by adhering to three principles: *transparency* in reporting the research process, ensuring that the researcher faithfully reports the patterns that emerge from the data, and that she makes *appropriate claims* which do not involve generalization of the results (Holliday, 2010). In this study, the researcher aimed to observe all three principles as she analyzed and interpreted the data.

The strength of qualitative research lies in the richness and depth of the data that cannot be achieved by quantitative methods of research as well as in the ability to explore the unique, inner realms of individual learners.

### **3) Limitations of the study**

Although the researcher made every effort to avoid any limitations in the study, two limitations were observed due to the nature and context of the study. These limitations relate to the limited number of participants, and the duration of the study.

One obvious limitation of the study is the limited number of participants. Only seven learners completed the whole study. There is no claim that this small number is representative of a larger group of learners. In a study such as this, the goal is to describe the particular and in doing so to generate insights (Nunan and Bailey, 2009) about the instance, rather than the group. In fact, the aim behind adopting the qualitative approach in this study was not to generalize the results of the study but rather to investigate the particular circumstances and characteristics of a small number of learners.

The study set out to explore the uniqueness of the learners in relation to learning English in general and to the motivational influences that might impact their English learning in particular. Investigating learner motivation through reflecting on

the learners' unique emotions, experiences, and opinions provides teachers and researchers with an insightful understanding of the situated nature of learner motivation as opposed to associating a numerical measurement with an individual learner's motivation. The purpose of adopting a qualitative methodological approach to researching motivation is "to analyze and explore aspects of motivation that are not easily accommodated within the dominant research paradigm. In essence, a qualitative approach is underpinned by a fundamentally different concept of motivation itself" (Ushioda, 2001, p. 96). Therefore, this methodological approach helps obtain a better understanding of each learners' situation and motivational self in order to focus attention on individual differences among learners.

The second limitation is related to the duration of the study. One of the main themes discussed in the study is related to the dynamicity of learner motivation. However, the study lasted only for 32 weeks, which was not long enough to depict significant motivational changes among the participants. Although some changes in the participants' emotions and beliefs were noticed during the study, these were only simple indications of the dynamic nature of motivation that was discussed earlier. Nevertheless, the modest changes that were viewed in the participants' motivation might represent an incentive for investigating the dynamic nature of learner motivation in future research. Suggestions for further research to explore other dimensions of learner motivation are discussed in the next section.

#### **4) Suggestions for further research**

While the study highlighted different aspects of learner motivation in relation to a variety of influences, further research can be conducted to highlight other aspects and dimensions of motivation that this study failed to uncover.

Further research can be directed towards comparing the motivational influences that were found in this study to motivational influences that impact other learners in other learning settings. This might suggest interesting contrasts and expand our understanding of the possible range of motivational influences that might exist in a particular learning setting. Further research can also be conducted with larger numbers of learners in different contexts and over a longer duration.

Another direction which further research could take is to explore the different reactions of learners towards the various motivational influences that they might

encounter during a longer duration of time. Investigating this issue might represent a means of exploring the dynamic nature of motivation that was partly discussed in this study. Once the dynamicity of learner motivation has been better documented, researchers can try to explore its influence on learners' investment in the learning process.

Another dimension that further research might consider is exploring the different aspects of participants' L2 motivational selves. In this study, evidence of the participants' L2 ideal self and L2 ought-to self was presented. However, further research is required to indicate the elements that relate motivational influences to these complex aspects of learner motivation. There is still a need for more information and clearer evidence for the L2 ideal self and the L2 ought-to self in wider samples of Arab learners' motivational self-systems.

A final direction that further research might take is to investigate the awareness of English learners and English teachers of the importance of the motivational influences in the language learning process and the relation between different elements in language learning and learner motivation. By exploring the relationship between different elements of learning and learner motivation, researchers, teachers, and learners may come to know how motivation might influence the various elements in language learning and vice versa. Such research might provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complex, dynamic and individualized system of learner motivation in general and the learners' L2 self-system in particular. It might also provide learners and teachers with the opportunity to intervene when negative elements threaten their ongoing learning process.

In conclusion, this study investigated a significant aspect of the language learning process that has proved influential in impacting learners' experience. The importance that the construct of language learner motivation has gained throughout the previous decades of research was reflected in the various influential factors observed within the study. The study has provided evidence for the diversity of motivational influences on seven Arab learners of English. It has also documented aspects of the uniqueness of these learners' reactions towards the various motivational influences. Moreover, the study has reported evidence of the dynamicity and complexity of the participants' motivation. The interrelationships amongst these

different facets of learner motivation were revealed in aspects of participants' L2 ideal and ought-to selves. English teachers and learners might benefit from understanding and attending to the different aspects of this complex and dynamic L2 motivational self-system in order to be able to help their students remain motivated to learn the language when needed.



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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A: First Interview Guidelines**

#### **Interview Guideline 1**

##### **A) - Personal Information:**

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Nationality:

Education/High school/ Curriculum:

Work: employed or not/does your work involve communicating using English?

How long have you been in the college?

What English courses have you studied in this college?

Did you sit for TOEFL/IELTS Exams?

Which language do you prefer to be interviewed in?



## **B) – Motivation Orientation/Reasons for learning English**

1. What do you remember from your **Past Experiences** in learning English? Pleasant/unpleasant? Explain.
2. What are **YOUR Reasons** for learning English?  
Academic dimensions/social dimensions/ job development/identifying with the target community/travel orientation
3. Do you speak **English outside the classroom**? **Whom with**? How comfortable are you to speak English?
4. **How important** do you believe it is to learn English?

## **C) – Attitudes towards learning English:**

1. How do you **feel** about learning English **in general** (like/dislike/neutral)? Can you explain the **reason**?
2. What do you like about learning English/ **what aspect of learning** do you **enjoy** most/ what aspect of learning English do you **hate** or **dislike** most?
3. What do you think is the impact of learning English on your **Arabic language**? Positive/negative/no direct effect? Why do you believe so?
4. **How successful** do you believe you will be in learning English?
5. How do you feel when you need to speak **English Outside the classroom**? Anxious/excited? Why?

## **D) - Attitudes towards L2 Community:**

1. Would you like to **travel** to English countries? When? Why?

2. Do you have any **English-speaking friends**? Are you interested in **knowing** about people from **English-speaking backgrounds and their cultures**?

**E) - Learning environment influence**

1. How **convenient** do you believe your **classroom**/the **timing** of your classes/**teacher/college** is?
2. How do you **feel** when you need to **speak English IN the classroom**?
3. Which of these words would you use to describe learning English in this course **hard/easy/boring/unnecessary/important/useful/amusing**? Why do you think it is so?
4. How much are you **enjoying THIS** course /with this particular **group**?
5. What makes you feel **stressed** or **anxious** during your learning? Why?
6. What makes you **enjoy** learning English more?
7. What **Suggestions** do you have to **improve** the way you are learning English? Strategies, time, teacher, classes?
8. What would you like to **change** in your learning environment? Why?
9. What would you like to write about in your **journals**? Indicate any specific issues you would like to discuss

## Appendix B: Second Interview Guidelines

### Interview Guideline 2

Name:

language:

#### Last Semester:

- 1- How was your **experience** in learning English **last semester**?
- 2- What aspects did you **like** most in your learning experience **last semester**?
- 3- What did you **dislike** most in your learning experience **last semester**?
- 4- How **successful** was your English learning experience **last semester**?
- 5- How much do you think your English has **improved**? How do you know?
- 6- Did **last semester** have any **influence** on your life? How? What was the influence?

#### Current Semester:

- 7- How do you **feel** about English **This semester**?
- 8- How do you like your **learning environment this semester**?
- 9- Which of these words would you use to describe learning English in this course **hard/easy/boring/unnecessary/ important/useful/amusing**? Why do you think it is so?
- 10- What are you **enjoying** most in this course?
- 11- How **important** is **this English course**?
- 12- What role does English play in your life now? (Big, small part ...etc.)
- 13- What do you **like/dislike** about your learning **group**?
- 14- How much do you **use** English **outside** the classroom these days? **When?**  
**Where? Whom with? How long?** How do you **feel** about it?
- 15- How will this course help you? (e.g. in your life/ work/ studies/ travel?)

#### 16- Questions about the self-portrait:

- 1- Talk to me about it. Who are these people?

2- Is there anything you would like to add? Would you like to draw a new one?

## Appendix C: Third Interview Guidelines

### Interview Guideline

Name:

1- How do you feel about learning English now (the classroom/ teacher/ learning group)? How have your feelings developed since the beginning of the academic year? In what way? Why?

2- How much do you participate in the class? How do you think participation in the class influences your learning of English?

3- How satisfied are you with your English classes (teacher/ group/ material/activities) now? Why? What would you like to change?

4- How much time are you willing to spend learning English (now, future, in class, outside the classroom)? Why?

5- What would make you want to learn English more?

6- What/who do you think has helped you to learn English so far? What/who do you think will help you in the future? How?

7- What do you think most influences your learning of English now? In the future?

8- When will you be satisfied with your English level?

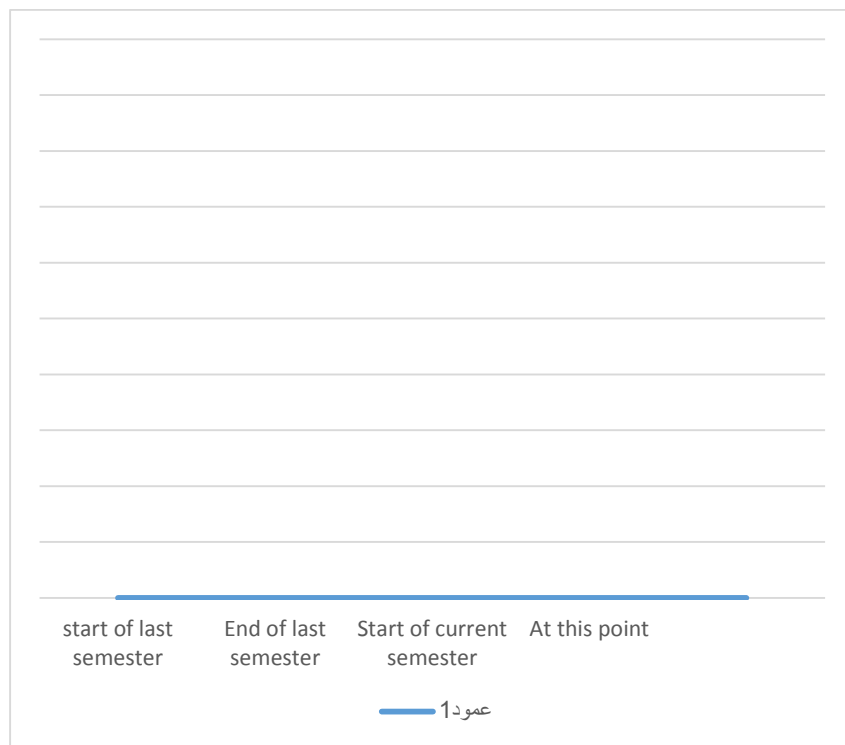
9- How and where do you see yourself using English in the future?

10- What aspects (skills) of English do you think you will use in the future? Why?

11- What do you think you will do when you (master) English in the future (learn more English/learn another language/ learn something else/ no more learning...)?

12- Can you indicate on the graph your feelings regarding English learning during this year?

Example



## **Appendix D: Sample Interview Transcript**

Sample Transcript of the first Interview 1 with Basem: (52mins.)

**R:** what is your name?

**B:** Basem (pseudonym)

**R:** How old are you?

**B:** 30 years old

**R:** Where are you from?

**B:** From the UAE, from Sharjah.

**R:** Where did you study in high school? Did you study Arabic curriculum or American or English curriculum?

**B:** No, it was Arabic curriculum, in those years we started learning English late, I guess in grade 4, so..., Thank God it is ok.

**R:** How many hours of English did you study weekly?

**B:** mmm, I can't tell you exactly how many, let's say from 4 to 5 hours weekly.

**R:** o.k. Are you working now?

**B:** yes, I work in a petrol company

**R:** Nice. So, do you need English at work?

**B:** Yes, I actually, I work as a distribution assistant so all the emails and contact with people is in English except some emails from the HR which is concerned only with locals, these come in Arabic.

**R:** and how long have you been studying in this college?

**B:** Now this is my first semester.

**R:** This means this is your first English course?

**B:** yes

**R:** have you submitted a TOEFL or IELTS test?

**B:** Yes, thank God, I passed

**R:** May I ask about your score?

**B:** 533

**R:** good, it is a good score. What do you remember from your past experience in learning English? Was it good or bad? Did you like learning English in school?

**B:** Actually from beginning I like this language, yeah, and when I was in primary stage, I prefer this language because it was like something like challenge for me, actually you know from KG1 till four grade we didn't have this language and we started from four grade for that I like the language and I was ..how I say that... (I was from the best top students in the class (in Arabic)

**R:** So you enjoyed your English classes?

**B:** Yeah, I enjoyed English

**R:** Why do you think you enjoyed it?

**B:** As I said, this is was like a challenge for me and from that time I was thinking to develop myself in this language... yeah.. for that not I can't say I was weak in other subjects but I was strong, or let's say good in or let's say 80% I was good in this subject.

**R:** what do think the reason is? Only because you considered it as a challenge, or are there any other reasons?

**B:** The teacher was good, yeah,

**R:** what else?

**B:** Also they explain very well yeah, I actually finished my high school in Sharjah.

**R:** And since then you haven't studied English anywhere?

**B:** no

**R:** only at school?

**B:** yeah



**R:** can I ask you this question? How much do you believe you are good at English?

**B:** if it is from 1 to 10 I think it is five, I can't say more.

**R:** five?

**B:** yeah, maybe, you can see.

**R:** How about your grades now in the college?

**B:** I don't know I am not sure but In English I am good but in Mathematics ...

**R:** no, I am asking about English

**B:** I am good in English

**R:** Now why are learning English here in this college?

**B:** because I need the degree. Yeah

**R:** why?

**B:** First to ... first to improve my English, second for my work, because now I have high school and as per my manager statement he said: Basem, if you want to reach for high grade you have to earn the degree. Yeah, without degree you can't reach anywhere you will be stuck here and this is will be your grade and that's it. For that you have to try and you have to try it in less than four years and after that I will help you to get the high grade. And he told me try to take it in English better

**R:** why do you think he told you so?

**B:** because the market now needs English.

**R:** So, what do you expect from improving your English? Why? What would that help you in?

**B:** too many things, even with communicating with people, because now let's say if I want to travel somewhere I can't use my mother language my Arabic language, yeah, because I have to talk with English yeah, this is the way to communicate with others both inside and outside the country.

**R:** where else do you speak English outside the classroom?

**B:** mm...I am trying to talk with my wife also

**R:** With your wife? She is Emirati?

**B:** No, no she is not Emirati.

**R:** where is she from?

**B:** She is European, She is from Romania, I have two sons from her

**R:** so do you need to speak English with her?

**B:** With her I talk only English. I can't talk with her Arabic.

**R:** so, the first one that you speak English with is your wife,

**B:** yeah,

**R:** who else?

**B:** At work I speak English with my colleagues, because I have colleagues, Indians and so.

**R:** how about you wife's relatives?

**B:** Yes

**R:** how about with your kids?

**B:** This is the problem now they have a little bit problem with me and with my wife because I am trying to talk with them Arabic to teach them Arabic and ... and they are getting English easier than Arabic. But I need to talk Arabic with them

**R:** so you speak Arabic with them?

**B:** Yes

**R:** Ok. But how comfortable do you feel when you speak English?

**B:** Comfortable, yeah, ...like 60 or 70% you know it depends on the people lets say like you and me now I feel comfortable because you understand me and I also understand you in this case but if you are talking with somebody his English is weak let's say in this case I don't feel comfortable in this case I can't communicate with him for that I don't feel comfortable

**R:** How important do you believe it is to learn English?

**B:** In this time it is important really?

**R:** How? Why is it important?

**B:** As I told you, now, this is let's say the second language in the world.

**R:** Is it the second?

**B:** I don't know .Let's say as any nationality we are you should have ... you should know English because it is your second language

**R:** but you are living here so why is it important here?

**B:** in my opinion, I don't know what to say, but ...

**R:** why do you need it here?

**B:** Let's say in my opinion this is the way to communicate with all, let's say with Indians with Arabs with European with whoever you can communicate with this language this is your way let's say. Because you can't talk in Arabic with all of them and let's say now I am in (company name) tomorrow I will be in another company because everybody from .... everybody in this life is searching for the best, before I was in the military ... after I was in the police and now I am in (company) who know in the future where I will be.

**R:** right keep it up. So, do you feel more comfortable using English with the people whose Arabic language is not that good?

**B:** yeah, because I told you let's say his Arabic is weak and even let's say his English is weak, in this case better than maybe he will understand something from you yeah

**R:** How do you feel about learning English in general?

**B:** I like it, yeah

**R:** can you tell me the reason why? Why do you like it?

**B:** mmm.....

**R:** For example I like English itself, speaking English and how verbs and subjects are going how about you? What do you feel about language and why do you feel that way?

**B:** I don't know but from beginning I told when I was a child from that time I like this language I don't know why even like I don't know but (Alhamdulillah) my listening is good, my writing is good, but the problem with the grammar, my problem was with the grammar. Yeah, but after married (Alhamdulillah) Now it is ok. When you are good at something you like it. When you are doing something well you like it which is normal.

**R:** true.

**B:** but when you don't like it you find you make it difficult you feel it difficult, and yeah the tension I don't like this I don't know this and you put in your mind that I can't do it but when you do something well in this case you like you try to develop yourself in this yeah.

**R:** yes, that's right. So, what skills of English do you like?

**B:** I like reading, writing and speaking

**R:** So you don't like listening

**B:** no also listening because all of them because maybe I will get something from you. I told I am not so much in the grammar, for that, now I am learning from you in this time believe me I am listening to you I am getting English some points some grammar yeah

**R:** How about vocabulary, words do you like learning them?

**B:** yeah also vocabulary but the problem with grammar let's say if I want to say some words like as I said (good students) I don't know this in English but if I heard that from you I get that is it I learn it.

**R:** so what is most aspect in English learning that you don't like?

**B:** I didn't like TOEFL

**R:** why not?

**B:** because I don't know what is the problem with this yeah... I don't know that problem was with time or with my language at that time I don't know yeah maybe with the time for that I did not like the TOEFL exam

**R:** now do you think that your English affects your Arabic language?

**B:** no

**R:** not at all?

**B:** not at all

**R:** you think your Arabic is fine?

**B:** No if you hear my Arabic you can't say this guy is good in English. 90 or 80% of the local feel difficult to talk English or to learn English.

**R:** how successful are you in your language learning?

**B:** mmm ... what can I say?

**R:** do you feel that one day you will be able to learn the language 100%?

**B:** yeah I hope really to reach to that stage that I can learn English perfect that I can talk with anyone like a British citizen or whatever ...

**R:** How do you feel when you need to speak English outside the classroom?  
Stressed, excited, worried

**B:** excited but not worried or stressed of course. It is fine with me

**R:** So, do you like English-speaking countries?

**B:** yeah I like actually I don't like to travel only to Europe

**R:** you only like to travel to Europe

**B:** yeah I don't like to travel to Asia. And last time I went to UK

**R:** and the US, or other countries,

**B:** no, no not yet but (Inshallah) next time I am not sure but we will make a package for five or six countries

**R:** how long did you stay in UK?

**B:** 15 days I think

**R:** when was that?

**B:** I don't remember actually a few months back.

**R:** nice, so you like those countries, do you know people who are native speakers of English?

**B:** yeah I know British and American people

**R:** are you interested in knowing more people?

**B:** Yeah of course

**R:** Are you interested about knowing their culture?

**B:** not that much only 20% let's say not that much.

**R:** Now let's come to your English classes. How do you feel about your classes?

**B:** It is ok

**R:** everything is ok

**B:** Yeah

**R:** how about your textbook?

**B:** Actually I did not get my book?

**R:** till now?

**B:** yeah

**R:** how long have you been in this course?

**B:** now we completed two months I think

**R:** so nobody has their books

**B:** nobody from my class. I think nobody from the college. But it doesn't matter

**R:** why it doesn't matter

**B:** because they are giving us the slides and worksheets that's enough for us.

**R:** how many hours do you spend studying English?

**B:** at home, no I am not studying at home only before the exams

**R:** why not?

**B:** because what are they teaching us in English, how to write a paragraph, how to talk, how to write some essays, it's easy for me

**R:** ok. but how do you feel when you need to speak English in the classroom?

**B:** I am good, I am fine yeah I like to share I like to answer I like to .... to how do you say that to share ....yeah participate

**R:** which of these words would describe learning English in this course? Hard or easy?

**B:** for me it is easy but for others I don't know it is ok because they are using the normal words not the complicated that how they use in masters let's say or doctoral no they are using simple words. Maybe the way for teaching masters is different from bachelors

**R:** ok. Do you think it is boring or interesting?

**B:** no. no it is interesting

**R:** necessary or unnecessary?

**B:** no necessary. To be honest in this time it is necessary you should learn English

**R:** and his course?

**B:** this course yeah but you know now it is easy but when you will start the bachelor's subjects I think it will be difficult.

**R:** so it is useful and fun? Why do you think?

**B:** maybe I will need it in the future. In the future courses

**R:** how much are you enjoying this course?

**B:** Actually I am enjoying 100% yeah I can't wait to finish my work to come here

**R:** really?

**B:** yeah. Mrs. M. used to teach me but then they divided us in two groups so Mrs. V is my teacher now but also she is good

**R:** this means you enjoyed Mrs. M classes more?

**B:** mmm Mrs. M, how I say she is not serious like Mrs. V. she is how I say I can't find the words like .... She is teaching us but not like from teacher to students like friends but Mrs. V she is good also but she is little bit serious

**R:** she is serious , Ok how about the students in your class? How do you feel about them?

**B:** they all are fine.

**R:** do you feel they are good in class, can help you in class

**B:** Not all of them some of them are really helping me to learn also some of them just disturb us that's it

**R:** how do they disturb you?

**B:** they don't the class seriously

**R:** ok. So what makes you stressed or worried when you learn English?

**B:** I think to find the word, yeah because I know how to make the sentence

**R:** how about grammar?

**B:** yeah also, grammar vocabulary the same all if I want to say a sentence like to explain to you something but I am afraid I can't find the correct word that's it.

**R:** Do you have any suggestion that you might improve the course through?

**B:** my suggestion to let students to talk English between them to put rule when you enter this college it is not allowed to Arabic only English really this will help us because when I was in UK maybe from morning till evening I never heard one Arabic word and that made my language more strong yeah. You can't learn English or any



language from university or school you have to go there you have to talk with the people you have to stay with them otherwise no because lets' say I am talking with you English from five to nine let's say four or five hours, I will go out I will start to talk Arabic then, because some people use English only here.

**R:** This is good. How about anything else? Any more suggestions

**B:** with English nothing

**R:** what would you like to change?

**B:** nothing, everything is fine no need to change anything. In the college, I can't say but in the class it is fine because they are teaching good, they are trying to how you say that to distribute the idea to deliver the idea to you. Yeah that's it maybe they should give us more assignments maybe every week. Because you have to think is this degree will help me in the future or no.

**R:** so you want more assignments?

**B:** yes

**R:** there is one final thing that I want you to do. I need you to draw a picture about your self. Here is an example for you. ....

**Appendix E: Written Prompts**

**Written Prompt1:**

Please answer the following questions.

1- When you think of English you think you think of what: (you may choose more than one answer):

|               |             |
|---------------|-------------|
| Family        | work        |
| Duty          | study       |
| Tired         | exams       |
| Stress        | opportunity |
| Embarrassment | friends     |
| Travel        | fun         |
|               |             |

Any things you might want to add:

.....

.....

.....

.....

2- Say why you selected the previous answers:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**Written Prompt 2:**

**Please answer the following questions in detail:**

- 1- When and where did you use English last week (e.g. shopping Malls, Cinema, supermarket ...etc.)?
- 2- How long did you spend using English last week (e.g. 5 minutes, 30 minutes, 2 hours ... etc.)?

**Written Prompt 3:**

**Please answer the following questions in detail:**

- 1- Which do you prefer, using English inside or outside the classroom?
- 2- Why do you think so/
- 3- How do you feel when you are using English?

**Written Prompt 4:**

**Please answer the following questions in detail:**

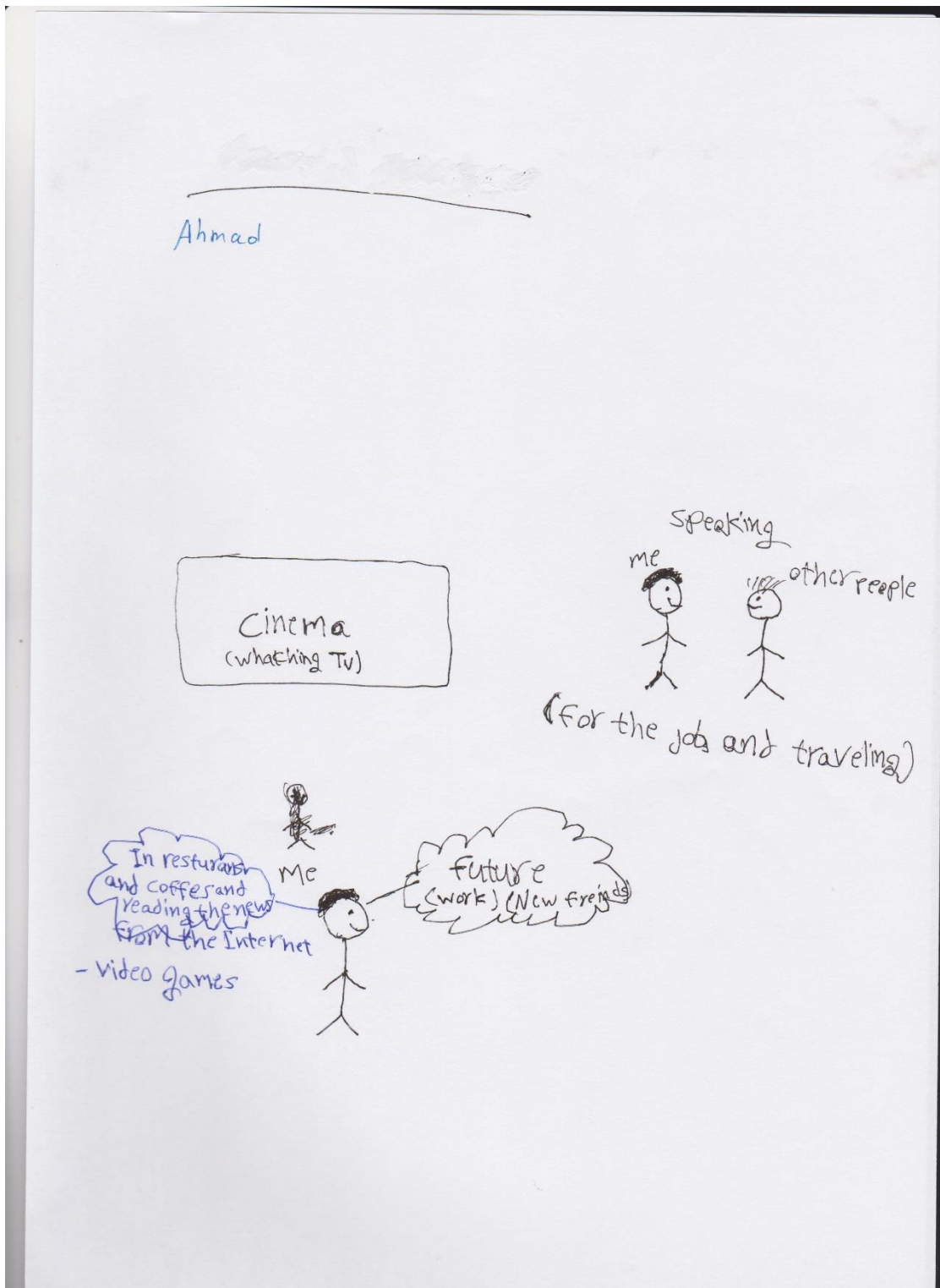
- 1- How do you think learning English in these courses at the college will help you in the future?
- 2- Where do you see yourself in the future? Will you need English in your future? Can you explain how?
- 3- What aspects of English do you think you will use most in the future (e.g. speaking, listening, reading, writing, vocabulary ...etc.)? Why?

## Appendix F: Thematic Map

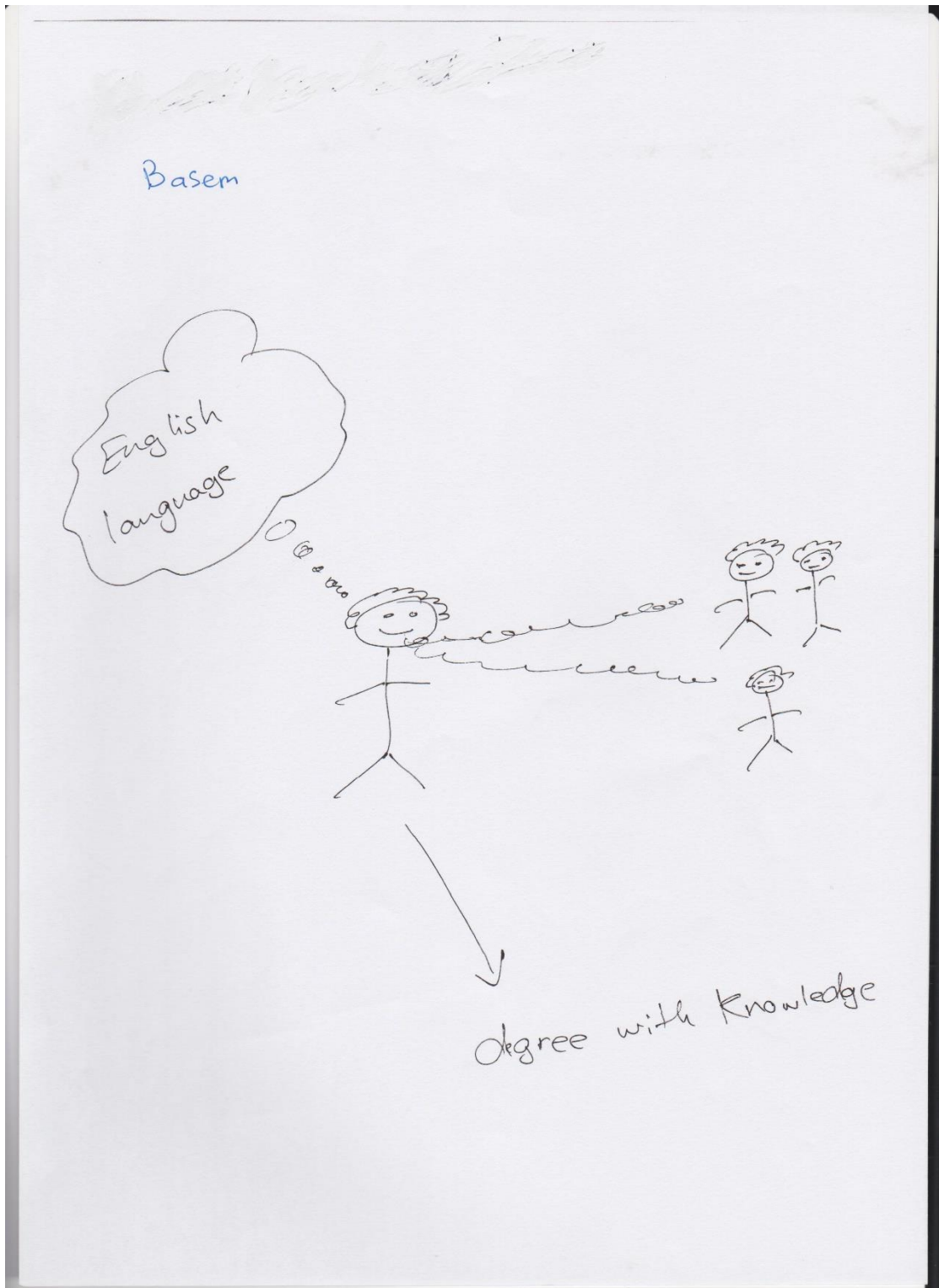
|                                | Ahmad  | Basem                  | Firas                              | Hadeel                             | Hana                   | Maher                            | Yasser                        |
|--------------------------------|--|------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Beliefs</b>                 | Int.1  | Int. 1                 | Int. 1                             | Int. 1<br>response 2               | Int. 1                 | Int. 1                           | Int. 1                        |
| <b>Feelings</b>                | response 3 -                                 | Int. 1<br>response 3   | Int. 1<br>response 1<br>response 3 | Int. 1<br>response 2<br>response 3 | Int. 1<br>response3-   | Int. 1<br>response 3-            | response3-                    |
| <b>Attitudes</b>               | Int. 1                                       |                        | Int. 1                             | Int. 1                             | Int. 1                 | Int. 1                           |                               |
| <b>Self-confidence</b>         | Int. 1<br>Int. 2                             | Int. 1<br>Int. 2       | Int. 2                             | Int. 2                             | Int. 1<br>Int. 2       | Int. 2                           | Int. 1                        |
| <b>Opportunity</b>             | response 1                                   |                        |                                    |                                    | response 1             | response 1                       | response 1                    |
| <b>Past experiences</b>        |  | Int. 1                 | Int. 1                             | Int. 1                             | Int. 1                 | Int. 1                           |                               |
| <b>Challenge</b>               |  | Int. 1<br>Int. 2       |                                    |                                    |                        |                                  |                               |
| <b>Influence of teacher</b>    |  |                        | Int. 2                             | Int. 2                             |                        | Int. 2                           |                               |
| <b>Ought-to self (need)</b>    | Int. 2<br>Int. 3<br>response 3<br>response 4 | Int. 2                 | Int. 2                             | Int. 2                             | Int. 2<br>response 3   | Int. 2                           | Int.2<br>Int. 3<br>response 4 |
| <b>Ideal self</b>              |  | Int. 2<br>Int.3        | Int. 3                             | Int. 2<br>Int. 3                   | Int. 3                 | Int. 2<br>Int. 3                 |                               |
| <b>Change of feelings</b>      | Int. 3<br>(graph)                            | Int. 3<br>(graph)      | Int. 3<br>(graph)                  | Int. 3 (graph)                     | Int. 3<br>(graph)      | Int. 3<br>(graph)                | Int. 3<br>(graph)             |
| <b>Motivational changes</b>    | Int. 3                                       | Int. 2<br>Int. 3       | Int. 2<br>Int. 3                   | Int. 2<br>Int. 3                   | Int. 3                 | Int. 2<br>Int. 3                 | Int. 3                        |
| <b>Language use</b>            | response 2<br>Portrait                       | response 2<br>Portrait | response 2<br>Portrait             | response 2<br>Portrait             | response 2<br>Portrait | response 2<br>Portrait           | response 2<br>Portrait        |
| <b>Learning preferences</b>    | response 3<br>Int. 2                         | response 3<br>Int. 2   | Int. 2                             | response 3<br>Int. 2               | response 3<br>Int. 2   | response 3<br>Int. 2             | response 3<br>Int. 2          |
| <b>Role of English</b>         | Int. 1<br>portrait                           | Int. 1<br>portrait     | Int. 1<br>portrait                 | Int. 1<br>response 2<br>portrait   | response 1<br>portrait | Int. 1<br>response 2<br>portrait | Int. 1<br>portrait            |
| <b>Informal learning</b>       | response 3<br>Int. 2                         | response 3<br>Int. 2   | Int. 2                             | Int. 2                             | response 3<br>Int. 2   | Int. 2                           | Int. 2                        |
| <b>Formal learning setting</b> | Int. 2                                       | Int. 2                 | Int. 2                             | Int. 2                             | Int. 2<br>response 3   | Int. 2<br>response 3             | Int. 2<br>response 3          |

## Appendix G: Participants' Self-Portraits

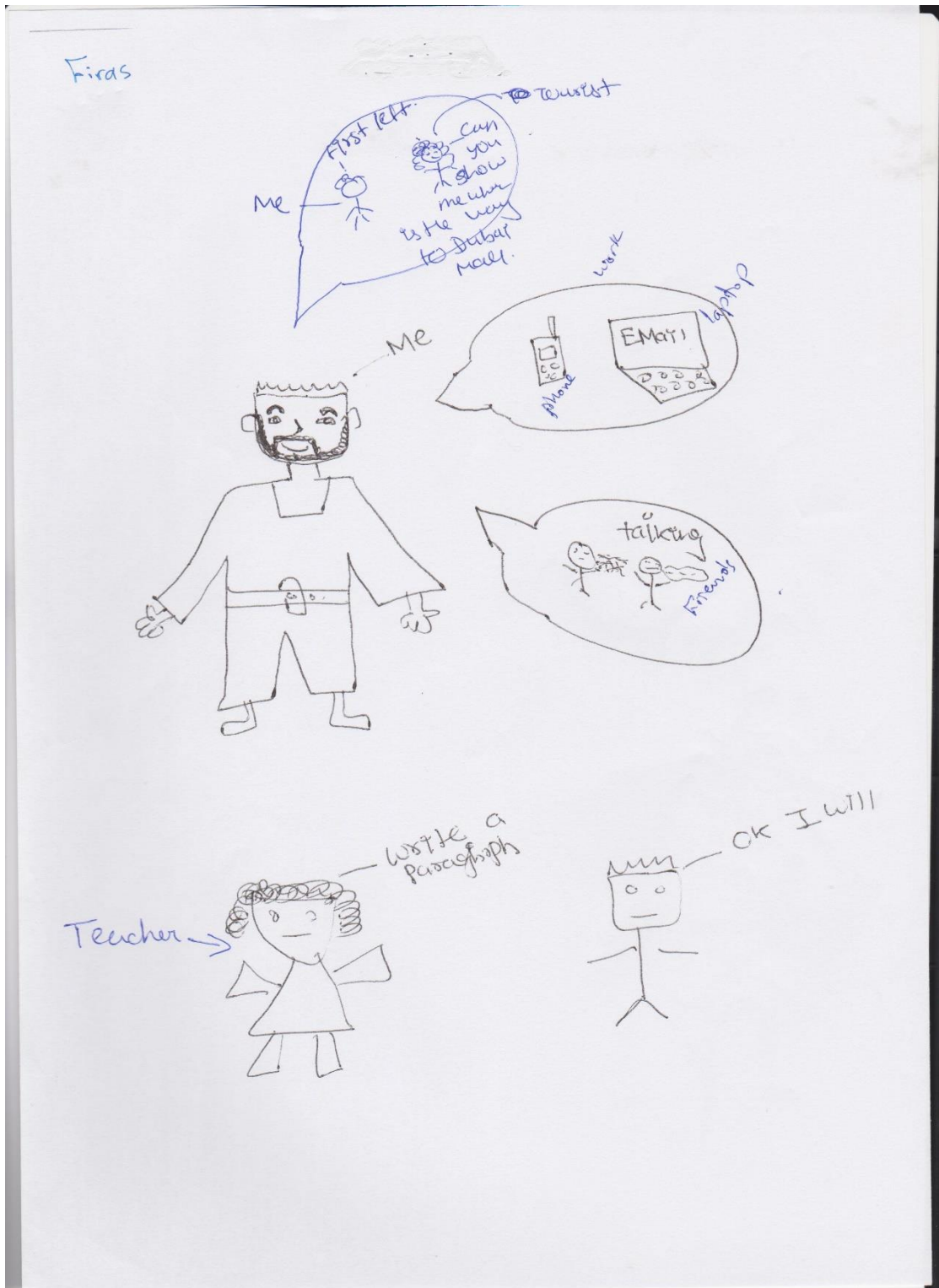
### 1- Ahmed's self-portrait - Interview 1 (week 3)



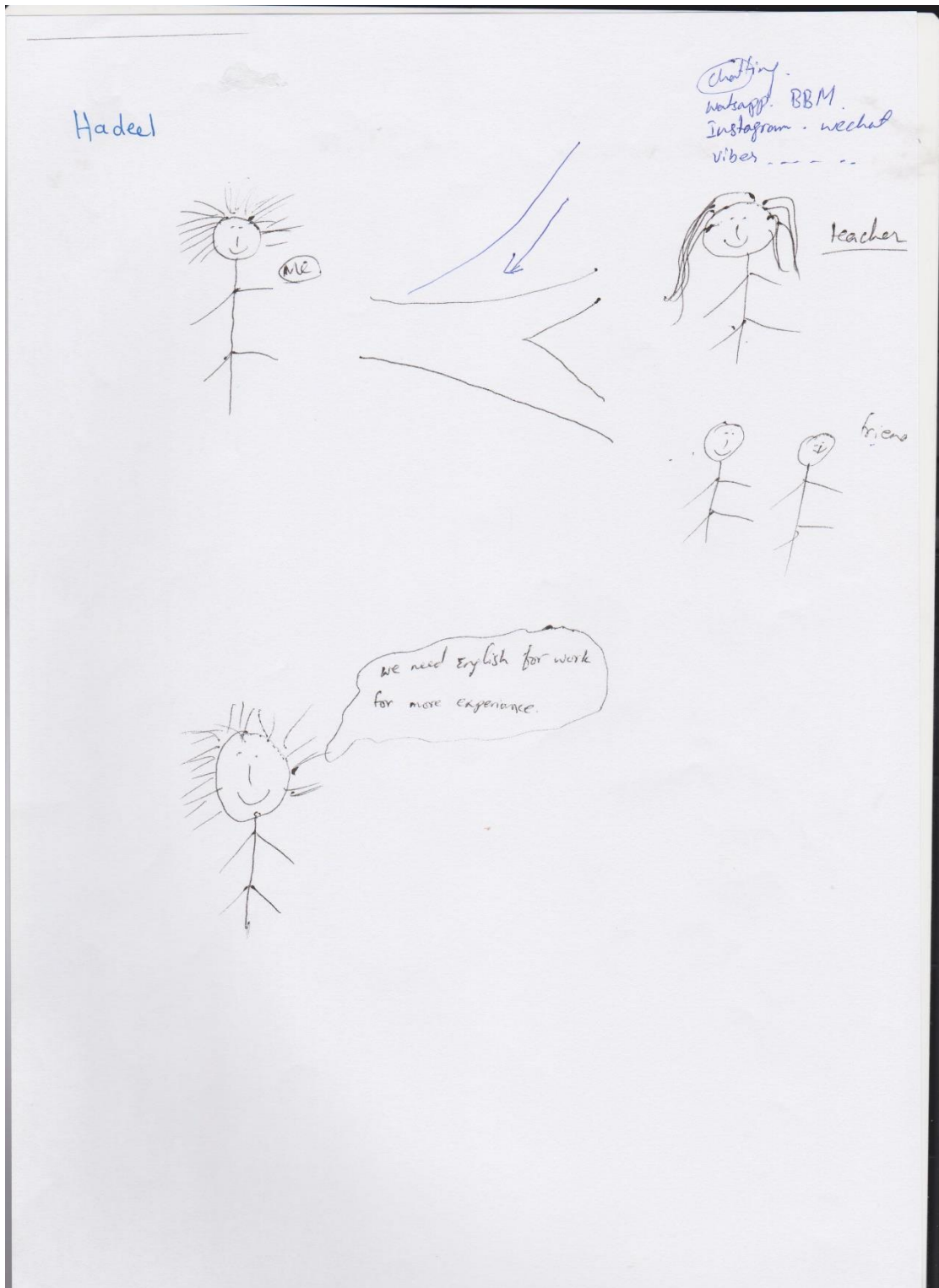
2- Basem's self-portrait - Interview 1 (week 3)



3- Firas's self-portrait – Interview 1 (week 3)



#### 4- Hadeel's self-portraits – Interview 1 (week 3)

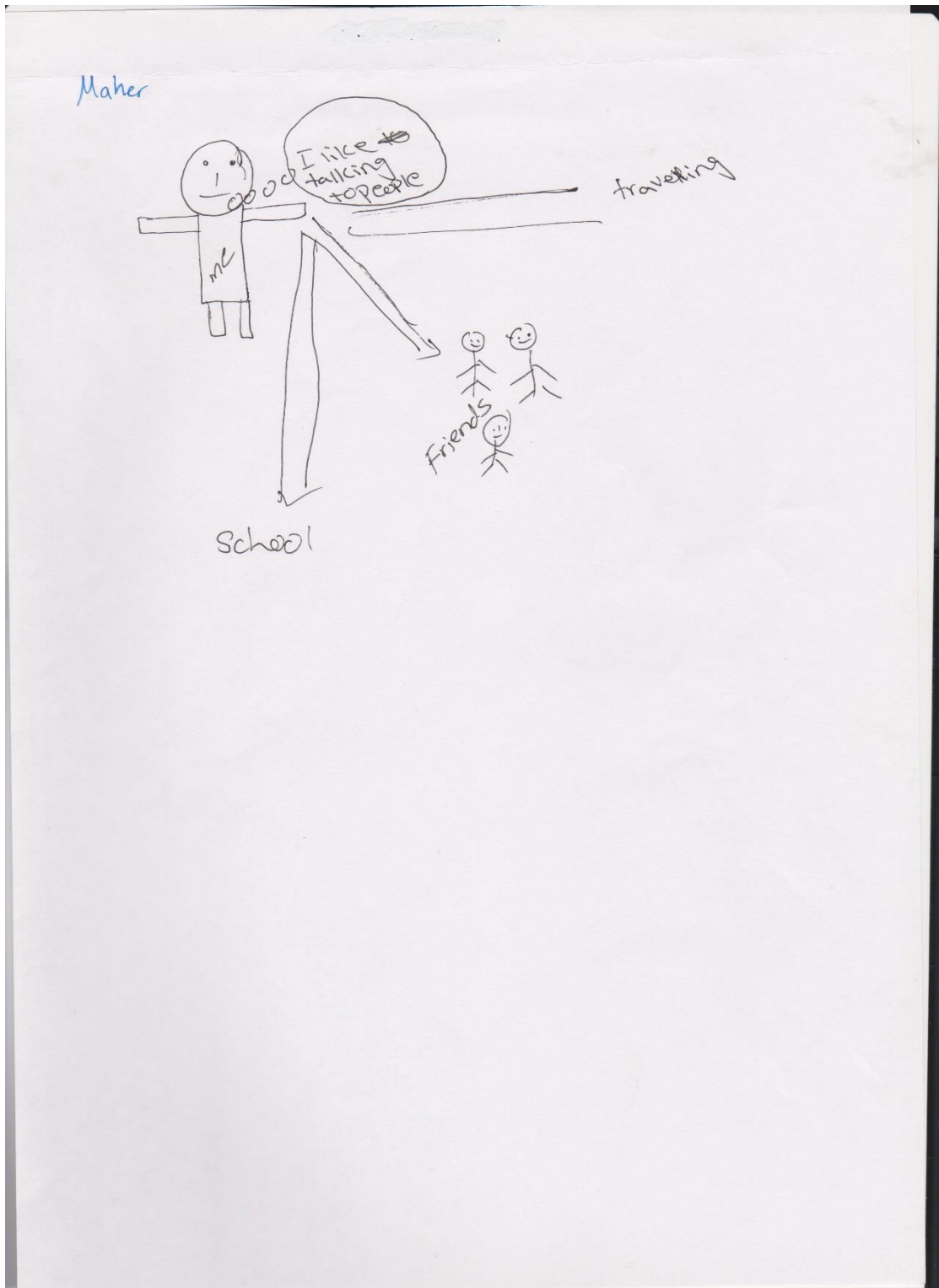




5- Hana's self-portrait – Interview 1 (week 3)

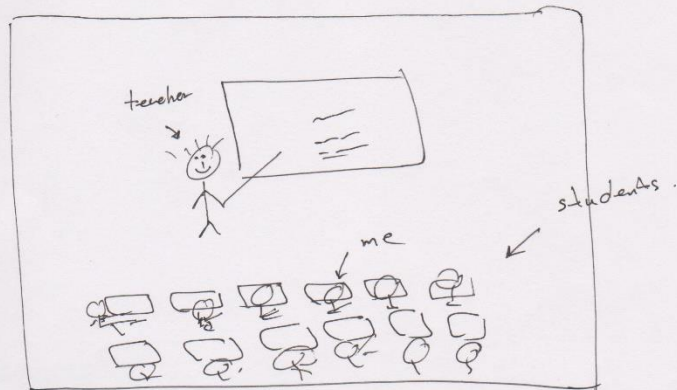


6- Maher's self-portrait – Interview 1 (week 3)

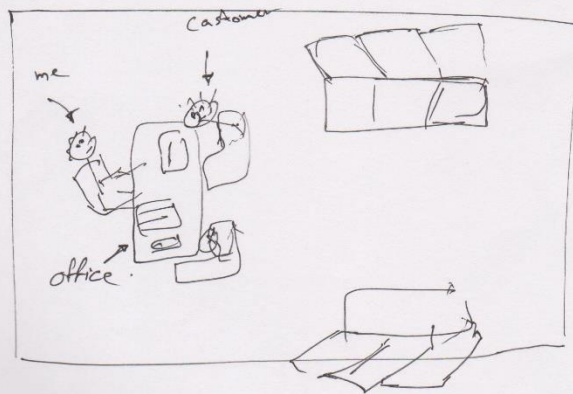


7- Yasser's self-portrait – Interview 1 (week 3)

Yasser



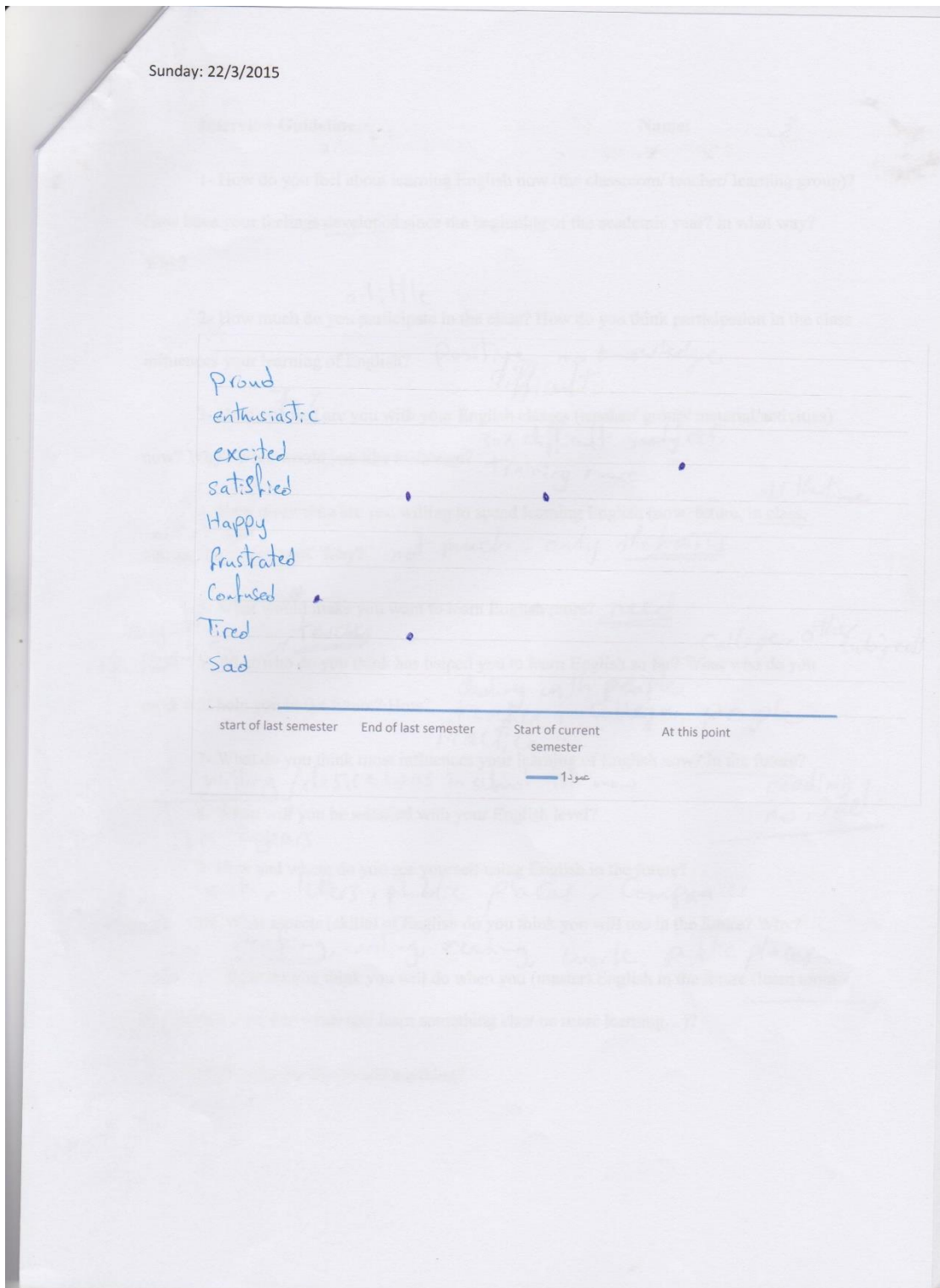
I Learn english From school .



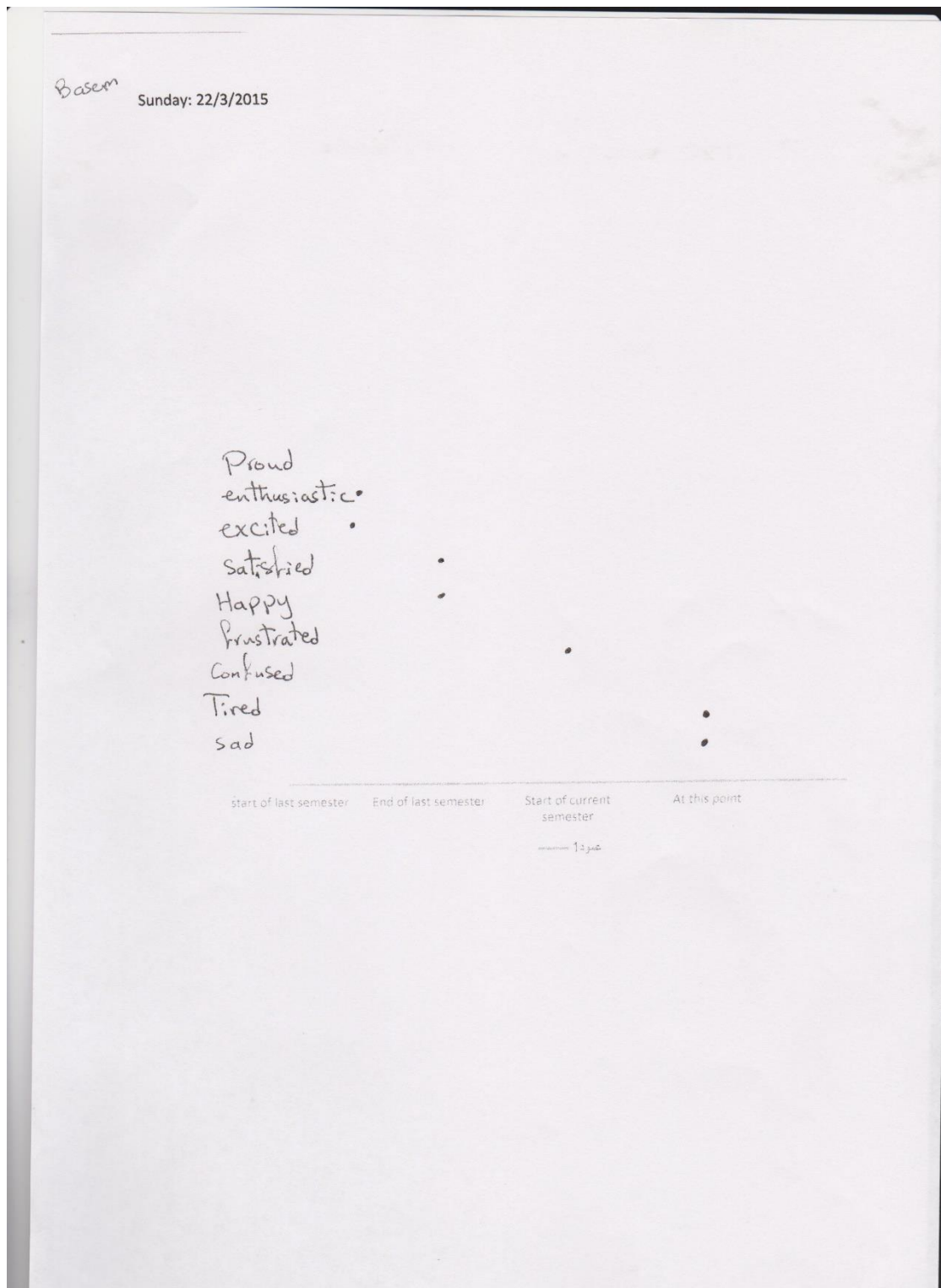
I need english In my job

## Appendix H: Participants' Feelings Graphs

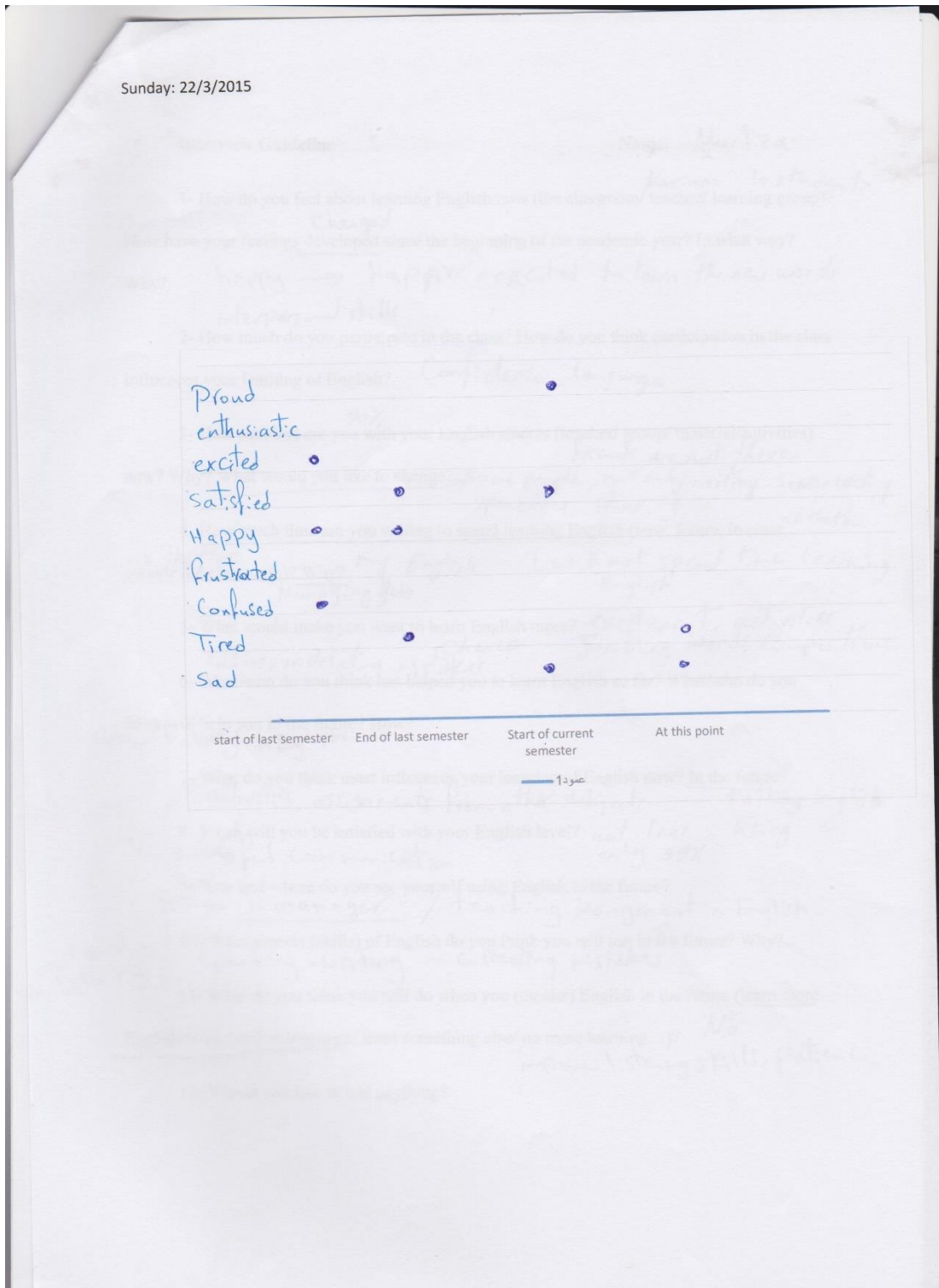
### 1- Ahmad's feelings graph – Interview 3 (week 16)



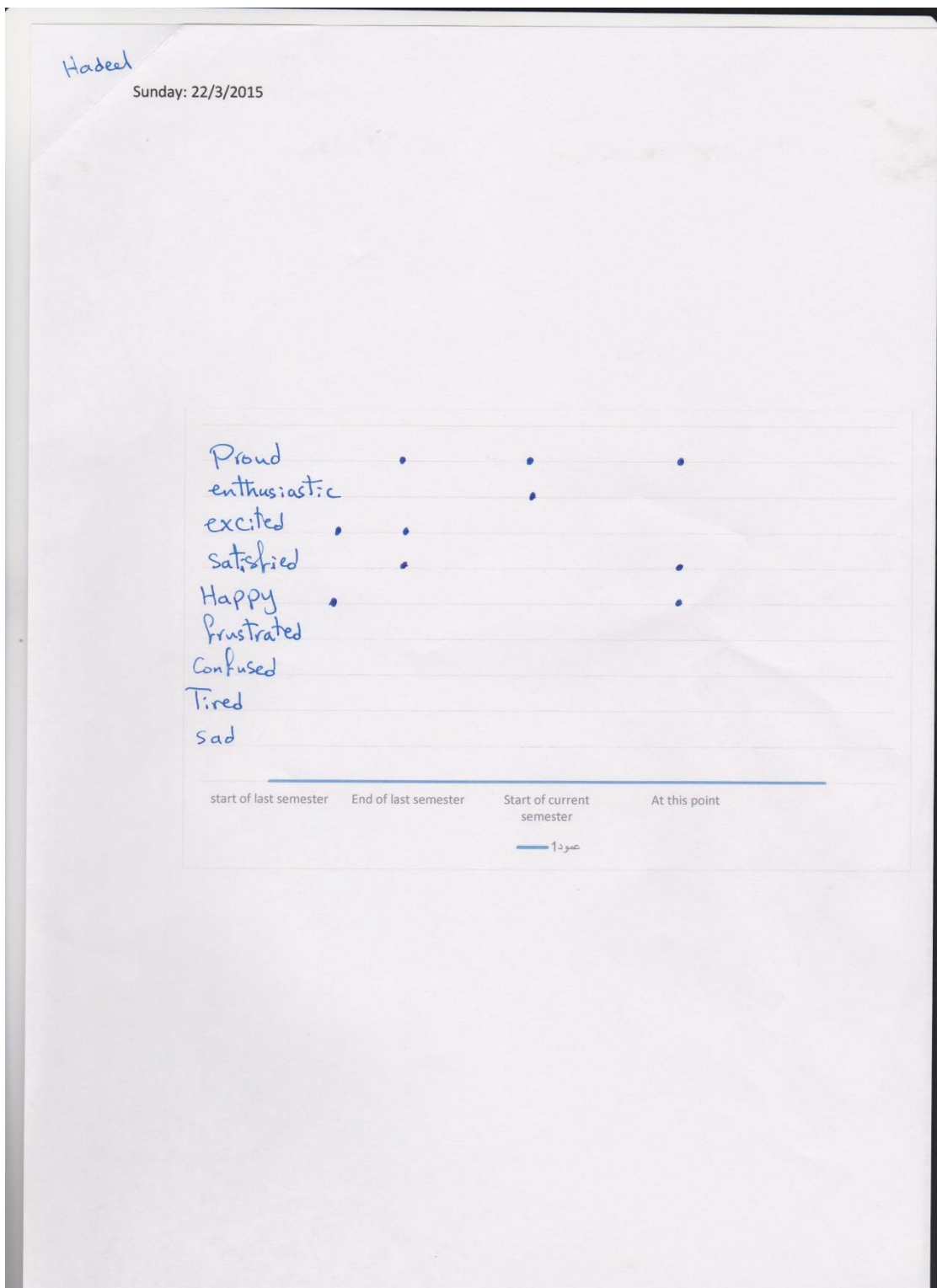
## 2- Basem's feelings graph – Interview 3(week 16)



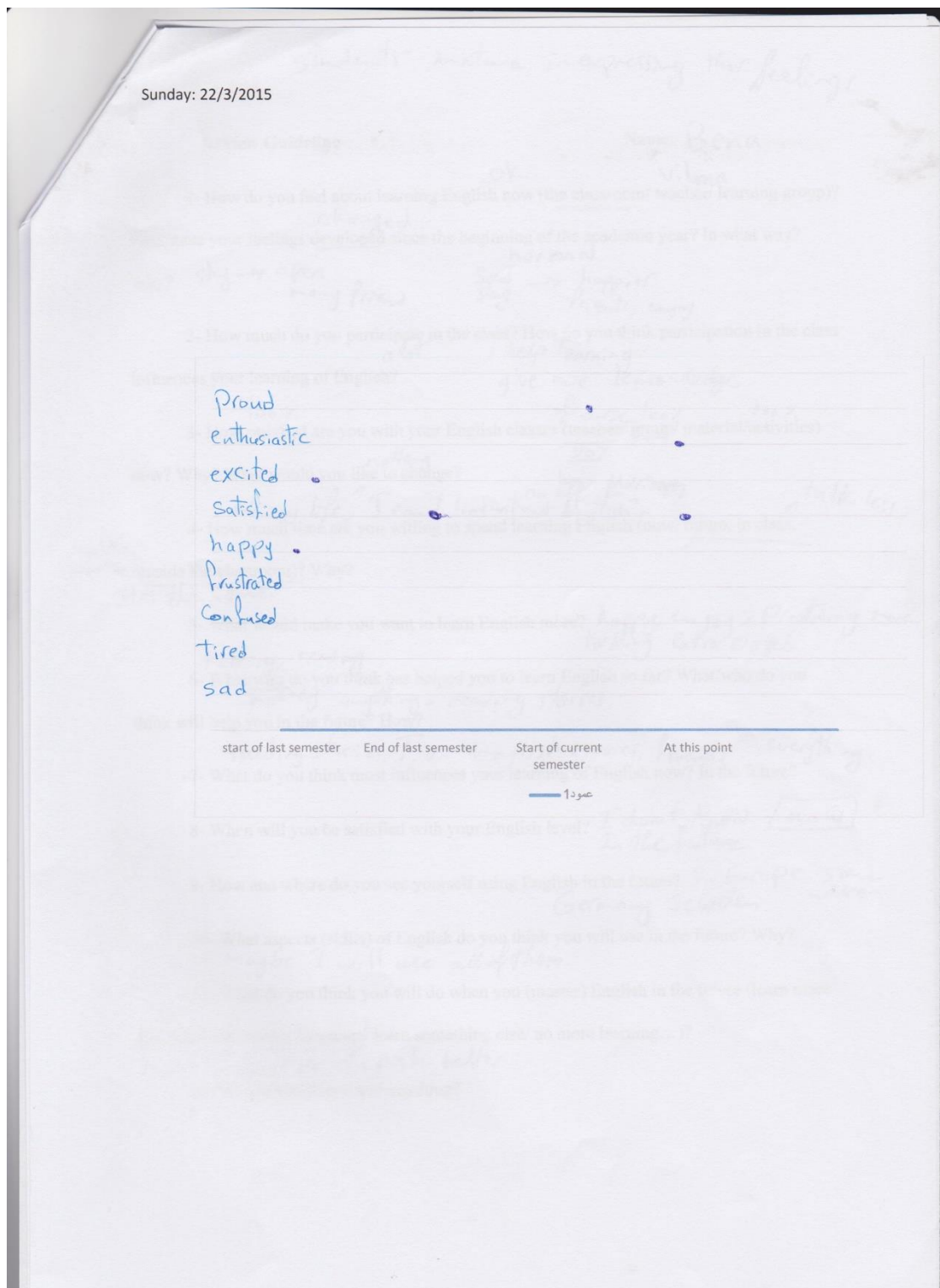
### 3- Firas's feelings graph – Interview 3 (week 16)



#### 4- Hadeel's feelings graph – Interview 3 (week 16)

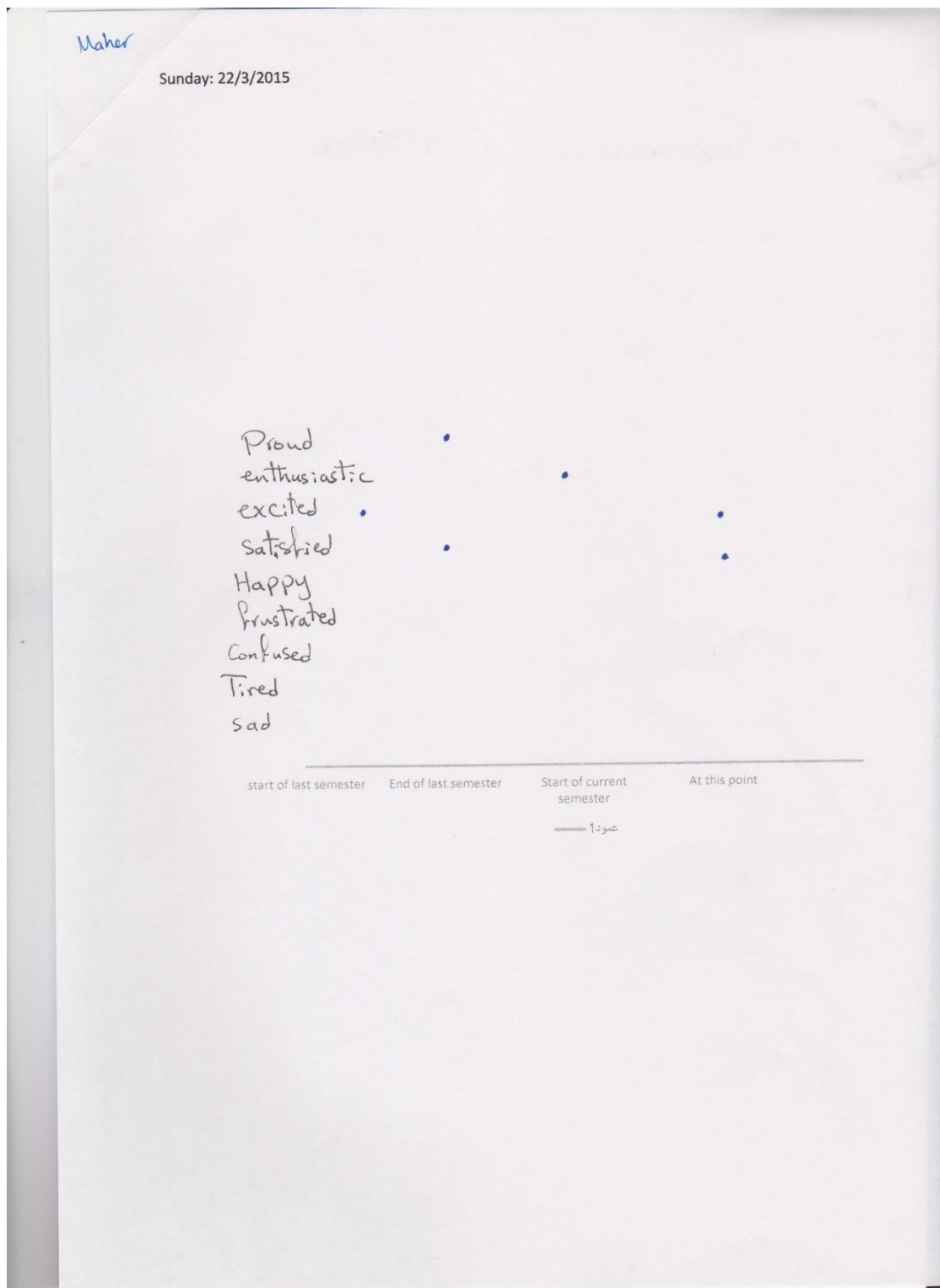


## 5- Hana's feelings graph – Interview 3 (week 16)

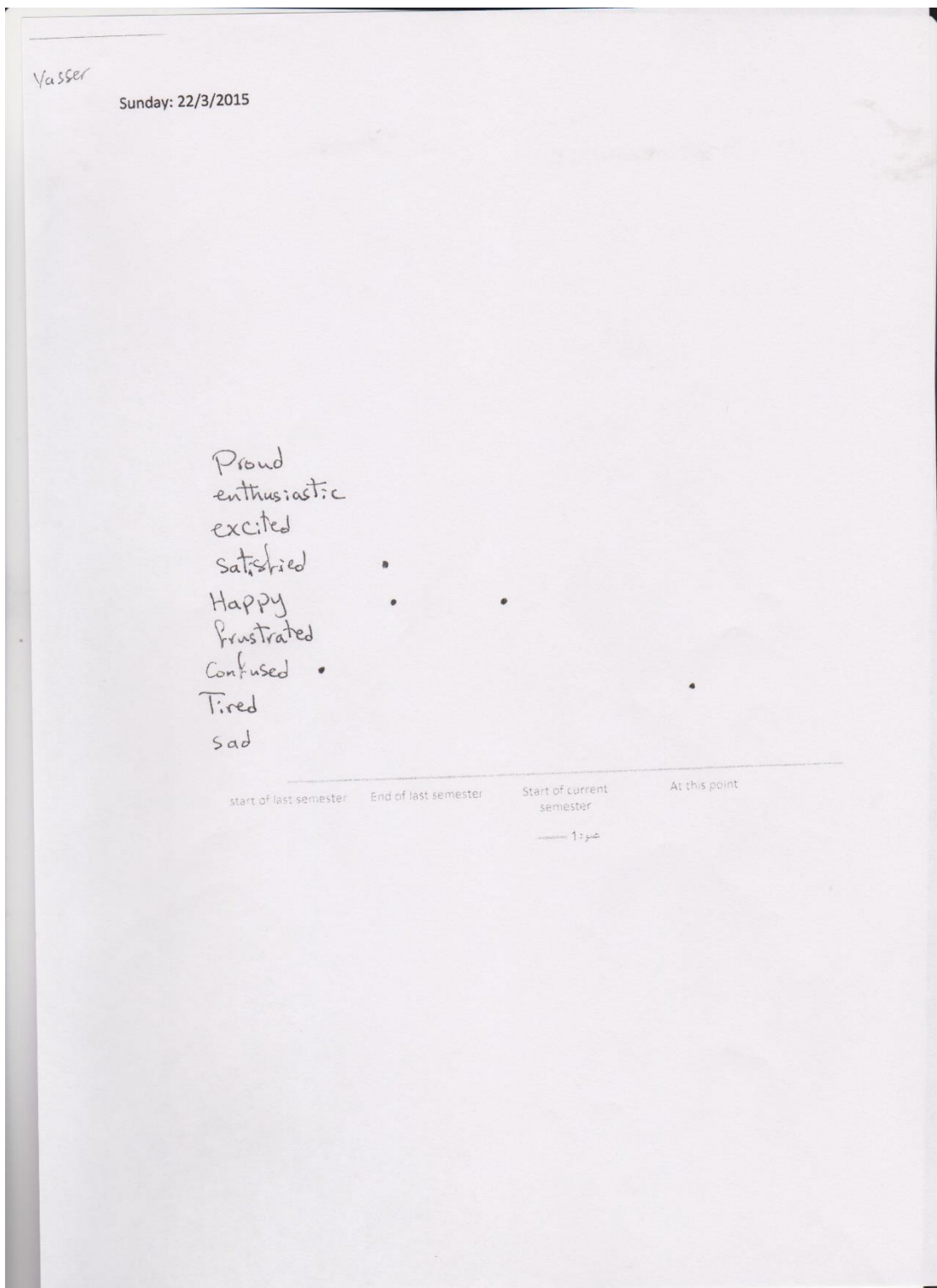




## 6- Maher's feeling graph – Interview 3 (week 16)



## 7- Yasser's feeling graph – Interview 3 (week 16)



## **Vita**

Nour Al Okla was born in 1978 in Damascus, Syria. She graduated from Damascus University with a Bachelor of Arts in English Language and Literature in 2000. She then obtained a Post-Graduate Diploma in English Literary Studies from Damascus University in 2001. In 2004, she obtained her second Post-Graduate Diploma in Methodology of Teaching English from Damascus University.

Ms. Al Okla has an extensive experience of teaching English in various educational institutions. She taught English in public high schools and different educational institutes in Damascus, Syria between 2001 and 2007.

Prior to joining the MA TESOL Program at AUS, Ms. Al Okla taught English in one of the colleges located in Dubai, UAE. She was the coordinator of the foundation program in the college and her responsibilities included preparing and conducting placement tests in the college and preparing the students to take the TOEFL Exam. She joined the MA TESOL program in 2012 and began working on her thesis in 2014.