ACKNOWLEDGING CULTURAL VALUES AND DIVERSITIES WHEN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE TO ADULT LEARNERS IN QATAR

by

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Abstracts

The study of a foreign language can never be seen in isolation, but forms part of the social and cultural setting in which it functions. Therefore, teaching English to multicultural groups of adults in Qatar, cannot be done effectively and efficiently, without taking the influence of cultural diversities and values, as well as the requirements of the adult learner, into account.

This research deals with how native English speaking lecturers at one specific language centre in Qatar acknowledge these cultural diversities and values and how they accommodate adult learners in the multicultural classroom environment, by means of a literature study and an empirical investigation. Qualitative data collection was done by open-ended questionnaires to lecturers and learners, focus group interviews with lecturers and learners, individual interviews with lecturers, classroom observations and keeping of field notes.

Findings revealed that lecturers are aware of the cultural diversities and values of learners who come into the classroom from different nationalities, and accommodated these learners without bias. These differences however, did not necessarily influence their teaching styles and lecturers remained focussed on teaching English as effectively as possible.

Key terms

Adult learners

Communicative approach in foreign language teaching

Communicative competence

Cross-cultural stumbling blocks

Culturally responsive teaching

Cultural values in language learning

Foreign language acquisition

Foreign language learning

Foreign language teaching

Gender differences in language teaching
Declaration

Student number: 0701-704-9

I hereby declare that Acknowledging cultural values and diversities when teaching English as a foreign language to adult learners in Qatar, represents my own work and that all the sources I have used, or quoted, have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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SIGNATURE

R ROUSSEAU (MRS)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BICS  – Basic interpersonal skills and cognitive academic language proficiency
CALP  – Cognitive academic language proficiency
CELTA – Certificate of English language teaching to adults
CLT   – Communicative language teaching
EFL   – English as a foreign language
ESL   – English as a second language
ESOL  – English for speakers of other languages, or English as second or other language
ICAO  – International Civil Aviation Organization
IELTS – International English language testing system
G.C.C. – Gulf Cooperation Council
IL    – Interlanguage
LAD   – Language acquisition device
L1    – First language
L2    – Second language
SEC   – Supreme Education Council
SLA   – Second language acquisition
SOL   – Speakers of other languages
TEFL  – Teaching English as a foreign language
TESOL – Teaching English to speakers of other languages
TOEFL – Test of English as a foreign language
UG    – Universal grammar
CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION

1.1 Introduction

English as a global language is increasingly becoming the medium of communication in education, business and entertainment in many different countries. According to Crystal (1997:79), 85% of all international organisations in the world use English as their official or working language. Graddol (2006:9) states that English has become the “international currency of science and technology”. He also claims that the improvement of national proficiency in English forms a key part of the educational strategy in most countries (Graddol 2006:70).

The use of English as an international academic language has in particular increased over the last two decades. Hewings, Lillis and Mayor (2007:227) explain that in many countries of the former British Empire (e.g. India, Singapore and some African countries) English has long been used as the medium of instruction in adult education. This trend is, however, not limited to former colonial territories, and currently many adult education courses are offered in English. Hewings, Lillis and Mayor (2007:227) explain that the reason for this increased use of English is that English is the most commonly learnt foreign language and that it therefore functions as a lingua franca for scholars of different language backgrounds. They further state that this is the reason why the official language of the European Association for Research in Learning and Instruction is English, even though it is not the mother tongue of most of its members. The increased use of English in adult education has lead to a growth in the demand for the training of adults in the use of English as a language of communication and learning, as well as a lingua franca in communities.

Proficiency in English as a communicative language in tertiary education is necessary for the future. As McBride and Palfrey (2007:16) note, “According to recent estimates (Bohm et.al, 2004), the number of students pursuing a university degree outside their home country will increase from about 2.1 million in 2003 to approximately 5.8 million
by 2020, with demand for places in English-speaking destination countries forecast to rise from about 1 million currently to about 2.6 million places in 2020.”

1.2 A brief overview of the role of English in adult education in Qatar

In Qatar, like in all other countries in the world, education is a vital requirement in the broader development of the nation. Since the accession to power in 1995 by the ruling Emir, His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, the educational policies and programs at the Ministry of Education took an upturn. Quality basic and adult education is regarded as an important mechanism to strengthen the economy of Qatar. The country has especially realised the importance of English in the society as well as the broader effect it has globally. There is therefore an increased emphasis on the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) in the country because it is seen as a vital mechanism to improve the communicative skills of adult Qataris, as well as the large population of foreigners (migrant workers) in order to function effectively in a globalised world (Chaddock 2008:130; Marhaba 2010:278).

With the importance of English, not only as the lingua franca, but also for educational purposes and as a means of communication for business purposes with other non-Arabic speaking countries, it is not surprising that English courses are widely available and that more and more people in Qatar are starting to learn English (Marhaba 2010:269). Teaching of English to adult learners in particular has experienced a dramatic growth in Qatar over the last ten years. At present, there are more than ten approved adult institutes providing EFL education to Qataris and foreigners of various other nationalities from around the world (Supreme Education Council Qatar 2010).

The Supreme Education Council (SEC), established by Emiri decree No. 37 in November 2002, directs the nation’s education policy. According to this decree it is the aim of the country to equip its citizens with the skills and knowledge to provide strong competitive growth in the global environment. Qatar is becoming an education-hub for the Middle East and beyond and there are various incentives to attract top calibre international institutions to the country (Marhaba 2010:269).

In keeping abreast of global demands for education in this country, the Qatar National Vision 2030 was approved by the Emir on 29 October 2008. This vision represents four
pillars; the first pillar, and the one of significance to this study, being – Human Development. According to this vision (Qatar 2008:13), the human development pillar’s outcome strives to achieve an educated society, built on, “A world class educational system that equips citizens to achieve their aspirations and to meet the needs of Qatar’s society, including:

- Educational curricula and training programs responding to the current and future needs of the labour market.
- High quality educational and training opportunities appropriate to each individual’s aspirations and ability.
- Accessible educational programs for life-long learning.”

It is clear that the development of educational curricula and training programmes that respond “to the current and future needs of the labour market” (Qatar 2008:13) as cited above, will have to ensure that Qatari citizens and the migrant labourers are competent speakers of English.

In addition, non-native English speaking learners from all nationalities, who reside in Qatar and would like to attend tertiary educational institutions either in Qatar or America and England, are required to meet certain pre-determined standards. Amongst others, learners have to obtain either a Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) certificate for an American curriculum or an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) certificate for a British curriculum (Marhaba 2010: 276). Apart from this, many companies expect employees to be proficient English language users. On the Qatar Airways website for possible employment with the company, it is for example a requirement for applicants to have an International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) English proficiency level 4 qualification, because the airline flies to more than 100 destinations over the world and therefore pilots, cabin and ground staff need a common communicative language.

Learning English as a second or foreign language has therefore become a goal of many adult learners in Qatar.

The latest census in Qatar was conducted during April 2010 (Qatar Population and Housing Census 2010) and showed a population increase of 128% since 2004. There are currently about 1.7 million people living in Qatar, of which approximately 25% are
Qatari citizens. The expatriate community constitutes more than 70% of the workforce, made up of skilled and unskilled labourers of varying ages from over 80 countries, but mostly from Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. There are also sizeable communities of Egyptians and other non-Gulf Arabs. These expatriates are all from different cultural, religious, gender, socio-economic and language backgrounds. Although Arabic is the official language of the country, English is the medium of communication between Arabic speaking Qatari citizens and expatriates from other countries who fulfil a very important role in the workplace. For many of the expatriates, English is their second or third language, and they need to improve their English skills.

The following quote from an article on the Internet (Qatar Visitor 2010) explains the language dilemma that a country with residents from so many different countries faces: “It is often easier for an English speaking expatriate to function in Qatar than for a native Qatari. Only the other day I watched an elderly Arabic man struggle to make himself understood in broken English to a Philippine nurse.” This emphasizes the significance of teaching English as a common communicative language, to alleviate language uncertainties in a multicultural society. However, according to Husna Al-Jadidi (2009:22) the fact that Arabic learners have linguistic and cultural backgrounds that are completely distinct from English, creates a barrier to the easy learning of that language. As explained in the following section, these different linguistic and cultural backgrounds of Arabic learners have initiated this research.

1.3 Defining English as a foreign language in the Qatar context

When discussing foreign language teaching and learning, it is important to distinguish between the learning of your mother tongue, or first language (L1) and an additional language (Klapper 2006:45). Your first language (L1) is the language you are born into and which is spoken by your parents and family. It is the earliest one learnt and the one acquired through life experiences. The second language (L2) is learned after a first language has been acquired and is typically learnt in a classroom from teachers. The crucial differences are that the first one is learnt unconsciously and being embedded from an early age, while the second one does not come naturally and is mostly acquired as the result of a conscious learning process (Richards, Platt & Platt 1992: 140,197).
According to Bourne (2007:190), the concept *English as a foreign language (EFL)* is traditionally used to describe a situation in which English is taught in a context where there is very little English used in the environment other than for international communication. *English as a second language (ESL)* on the other hand is used to refer to the learning of English in contexts where English is the dominant language of public life. In such a context, English is widely heard and spoken in the community and is often one of the official languages of the country. Freeman and Freeman (1998:4) explain that to teach English in an English-speaking country differs from teaching in a country where English is not the main language of the majority of people. In such a country the students do not hear English in the community and English is therefore regarded as a “foreign” language.

It is not always easy to differentiate between ESL and EFL (Bourne 2007:210) and there is a lot of confusion when trying to explain when a language is a second language, a foreign language or an additional language. In addition, the methods of teaching are very much the same. Griffiths (2008:3) state that a review of the literature “reveals a bewildering array of terms in the field of language development”. Terms such as English second language (ESL), English foreign language (EFL), Second language acquisition (SLA), English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), first language (L1) and second language (L2) are but a few of the terminologies associated with first, second and foreign language teaching – sometimes “to refer to much the same concept, other times their meanings appear to be quite different” (Griffiths 2008:4). Griffiths (2008:4) explains that these concepts are confusing, because the term *second language* or *L2* does not make provision for the many students who are already multilingual and may be in the process of learning a third or fourth language. Using options such as *additional language* or *additive language* is according to her not a solution, because it tends to make the language sound marginalised. Griffiths (2008:5) therefore prefers the use the term *speakers of other languages (SOL)* since it avoids the confusion between second and foreign language.

The confusion with terminology is evident in Qatar, especially as far as the distinction between second language and foreign language is concerned. Although Arabic is the official language in Qatar and all official documents, such as visa and resident permit applications, must be completed in Arabic (Language and religion in Qatar 2010), English is widely spoken. If the explanations provided by Bourne (2007:190) and Freeman and Freeman (1998:4) as discussed at the beginning of this section, are taken into
consideration, English should be regarded as a second language in Qatar. It is, however, not the case. In Qatar, it is regarded as a foreign language. Although, for the purpose of this study reference will be made to EFL, because English is regarded as a foreign language in Qatar, sources including references to ESL, SLA, SOL and ESOL and TESOL will also be consulted.

1.4 Motivation for and contribution of the study

I have lived in the Middle East for five years, of which two were spent in Bahrain and up till now, just over three years in Qatar, with teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) experience in both countries.

According to Apfelthaler, Hansen, Keuchel, Mueller, Neubauer, Ong and Tapachai (2007:16), international student flows have increased steadily over the past decades, with the result that lecture halls are increasingly becoming culturally diverse. This is also the case in adult English language classrooms in Qatar. During my language teaching practice in the two Middle Eastern countries, I have become increasingly aware of the challenges being faced by lecturers when teaching English to speakers of other languages, especially if the learners are from different cultural groups and have different cultural values. The fact that the lecturer can often not speak the learners’ mother tongue exacerbates the problem. Apart from challenges associated with language differences and cultural values and cultural differences between learners and peers and learners and lecturers, parents expect a successful outcome and learners continually require high-level input from lecturers, but are not always prepared to do the same in return. Yet, when writing a test, they will go to great lengths to achieve a high mark, in order to move quickly to the next level. For a great majority of learners, having the certificate to show the accomplishment, and not necessarily the ability, is of utmost importance. This made me aware of the fact that the purpose for studying English has an influence on learners’ performance, but I also realised that it could be a cultural value-related issue, because according to Ariza (2006:61) elders play a very important role in Middle Eastern cultural values and parents must always be obeyed. Education in Middle Eastern culture often reflects a paternalistic, authoritative culture in which students imitate the lecturer, memorise and do rote learning (Ariza 2006:61).
I am at present part-time employed at a language centre in Qatar. The teaching staff are all native English speakers and are from America, Australia, Canada, England, New Zealand and South Africa. The students are adult learners from the local Qatari population and the variety of expatriates living in the country. An American-style English curriculum is being followed at the language centre where I teach with regard to the books and spelling.

Learners studying at the centre are divided into either multicultural classes with mixed genders and nationalities, or classes with men/ladies only, depending on the situation. Adults differ significantly in their learning behaviour on a much broader scale than can be immediately perceived in a classroom. This has made me aware of the cross-cultural differences in teaching styles and the impact this multicultural situation has on the learning behaviour of the learners as well as the lecturers working in culturally mixed settings. I have also become increasingly aware of the challenges this poses to the lecturers and how important it is to understand and acknowledge adult learners’ cultural values and differences.

As I became aware of this issue, I started to read widely on the topic, but found that most of the research that has been done on the role of culture in foreign language teaching mostly deals with young learners, who have to learn not only the target language, but also the culture associated with the language being learnt (see for example Byram & Grundy 2003:1; Montgomery 2003:ix and Del Carmen Méndez Garcia & Sercu 2005:51). These and other scholars in addition explain that foreign language teachers “need an adequate socio-cultural knowledge of the target language community” (Sercu 2005:5) and discuss the recent movement in language teaching to “integrate ‘culture’ into the communicative curriculum” (Corbett 2003:2). The following two quotes summarise the gist of most of the research done on culture and foreign language teaching:

It is commonly accepted that learning a foreign language necessarily involves becoming familiar with the culture of the countries where that language is spoken” (Simpson 1997:116).

Bringing a foreign language to the classroom means connecting learners to a world that is culturally different from their own (Sercu 2005:1).
In addition most of the research deals with the teaching of a foreign language to ethnic and linguistic minority children in schools. As an English mother tongue speaker with experience of EFL teaching to adults in two Middle Eastern countries, my concern is, however, not with “connecting learners to a world that is culturally different from their own” (Sercu 2005:1) or to familiarise learners with the culture associated with the target language, but rather with the challenges that lecturers experience in acknowledging the adult learners’ diverse cultural values and beliefs when teaching a foreign language. Middle Eastern culture is very different from the Western culture and over the years I have realised how important it is that lecturers should take the learners’ culture into consideration when teaching English. According to Sercu (2005:1), employers increasingly seek employees who are not only fluent in more than one language but who are also interculturally competent. According to Sercu (2005:2), the objective of language learning is no longer only defined in terms of the acquisition of communicative competence in a foreign language, but also in terms of intercultural competence. Whereas Sercu refers to the importance of instilling intercultural competence in learners who are in the process of acquiring a foreign language, my argument in this dissertation is that EFL lecturers should particularly be inter-culturally competent in the sense that they should be familiar with the cultural values and beliefs of the learners they teach.

Husna Al-Jadidi (2009) touched on this topic in her thesis on the teaching of EFL to adults in Oman. The focus of her study was, however, more on the difference in teaching effectiveness between bilingual lecturers (who speak English as an additional language but share the learners’ mother tongue) and lecturers who are monolingual English first language speakers. The lack of research on the lecturer’s role in acknowledging adult learners’ cultural values and beliefs prompted me to do this research.

Saville-Troike (1996:367) explains that all aspects of culture are relevant to communication. The most important for those learning a second or foreign language are, however, according to her “... the social structure of its speech community and the values and attitudes held about language and ways of speaking”. I embarked on this research, because I am of the opinion that it is equally important for EFL lecturers to have a thorough knowledge of the social structure of the speech community and the values and attitudes held about language and ways of speaking (in other words the culture) of the learners that they teach.
It is hoped that the findings of this study can provide insight into the relation between cultural values, cultural diversities and foreign language teaching to adult learners, as well as its influence on the teaching practices of English Foreign Language (EFL) lecturers (whose culture mostly differs from those of the students they teach). The results of the study will hopefully contribute to more culturally responsive EFL teaching in Qatar. The study could also be used as groundwork for future research into the role of cultural values and diversities when teaching EFL to adults in other countries.

1.5 Background to the problem

1.5.1 The role of culture in language teaching and learning

The way in which Coombs (1985:244) describes culture clearly highlights the relationship between culture and language. According to him, culture is a comprehensive concept, which includes the following:

The society’s system of values, ideology, and social codes of behaviour; its productive technologies, and modes of consumption its religious dogmas, myths, and taboos, its social structure, political system, and decision-making processes. A society’s culture is expressed in many forms – in its literature, art, architecture, dress, food, and modes of entertainment – but its language and education are central to its identity and survival.

According to Brody (2003:7), it is impossible to deal with any second language without fully considering the culture. He explains that intercultural competence, a useful skill in today’s globalising world, can be developed through language education.

Because of the unique multicultural composition of the population in Qatar, lecturers at the language centre have to constantly acknowledge this phenomenon. They are teaching in an environment where the beliefs, attitudes, customs, behaviour and social habits of the learners vary considerably, not only between learners themselves, but also with regard to the lecturers and learners. When teaching English, lecturers should not only consider the culture associated with the target language, but also the culture of the learners they teach.
Kramsch (2004:1) explains that culture in language learning is not a fifth skill that should be taught alongside reading, writing, speaking and listening. Culture is always, right from the beginning, in the background, “... ready to unsettle the good language learners when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of their hard-worn communicative competence, challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them”. This is equally true of the EFL lecturer. For the EFL lecturer, the learners’ culture is always in the background and often “ready to unsettle good language lecturers when they expect it least”.

In a cross-cultural situation, problems can manifest during the exchange of ideas and information between the lecturers and learners from different cultural backgrounds. Lecturers and learners must be made aware of the difference in intercultural communication and interpersonal relations across cultures to achieve the ultimate aim in the learning process – in this case communicative competence in a foreign language. Experienced lecturers should be able to incorporate these elements when teaching (Hoopes & Pusch 2000:111).

It is thus clear that teaching in a multicultural context is very complex and nothing is given. The lecturer has to find a way to use the interaction of learners from different cultures as a learning base and at the same time always be flexible for the unsuspected surprise element (Hoopes & Pusch 2000:112). What is, however, of the utmost importance is that lecturers should understand the cultural values of their learners and teach in a culturally responsive way (Ariza 2006:12). According to Ariza (2006:60), it is particularly important to understand values of the Middle Eastern cultures because they are often misunderstood and negatively stereotyped by Westerners.

### 1.5.2 Cross-cultural stumbling blocks

Teaching English to speakers of other languages in Qatar is not unique to just this country and awareness of cross-cultural differences occurs in teaching in other places. According to Kuhn (1996), lecturers in America are also faced with similar difficulties, too. She mentions that the challenges do not always appear in the obvious, but sometimes in more subtle ways, like differences in communicative styles, in terms of presenting information and interacting with learners. She conducted, amongst others, her studies in the differences between German/American communicative conventions.
When the expectations of foreign learners from Japan, America and China were investigated, she notes that learners in all groups placed importance on qualities like “explain clearly” and “approachable”. Kuhn (1996) notes that learners differ in learning styles and requirements from lecturers, where Chinese learners placed importance on pronunciation, Americans valued creative and patient lecturers and the Japanese valued entertaining, impartial, open-minded and reliable lecturers.

The above share some similarities with the situation at the language centre, but differ in that it is not always a case of teaching English to a group of learners from one nationality, but sometimes multi-nationalities. The lecturers have to constantly acknowledge and be sensitive to the different needs, abilities, perceptions and cultures of the learners.

In Chapter 2 more information will be provided on those Middle Eastern cultural values and beliefs that could impact on the teaching of English as a foreign language to adult learners.

1.5.3 Language teaching to adult learners

Lecturers are constantly being challenged when teaching English to adult learners. Learners require that lecturers connect to every learner, while at the same time teaching the necessary skills and strategies for learners to learn the second language. A lot of controversy and criticism surround second language acquisition by adults learners. According to Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991:153), children generally achieve full competence in any language they are exposed to, while adults have to learn it and the outcome is not always successful. More information about the adult learner and language acquisition will be provided in Chapter 2.

1.6 The research problem, aims and objectives of the study

1.6.1 The problem statement

In view of the preceding discussion it is evident that the problem of this proposed investigation revolves around the following question: How should lecturers
acknowledge and accommodate cultural values and cultural diversities when teaching English as a foreign language to adult learners in Qatar?

1.6.2 Research sub-problem statement

As native English speakers, we lack answers to some basic questions about the learning of English as non-native speakers. To find answers to the above problem, it is necessary to establish the following:

- What is the prevailing theory on foreign language teaching?
- What is culture and what role do cultural values and cultural differences between lecturers and learners, as well as learners and their peers play in EFL teaching to adult learners?
- What are the characteristics of adult learners that should be taken into consideration when teaching EFL in a culturally responsive way?
- What are the challenges associated with regard to acknowledgement of cultural values and cultural diversities when teaching EFL to culturally diverse adult learners in Qatar?
- How do lecturers and learners experience the influence of cultural values and diversities in a multicultural EFL teaching situation?
- What are the best practices for teaching a culturally diverse group of adult learners?

1.6.3 Aims of the research

The principal aim of the research was to determine what influence cultural values and cultural diversity have on the teaching situation when teaching EFL to culturally diverse groups of adult learners and how lecturers should acknowledge and accommodate these differences.

1.6.4 The objectives of the research

It is hoped that the following objectives will be achieved by this research:
To provide a brief overview of the prevailing theory on foreign language teaching.

To investigate the role played by cultural differences between lecturers and learners, as well as learners and their peers in EFL teaching and learning.

To establish what characteristics of adult learners should be taken into consideration when teaching EFL in a culturally responsive way.

To identify the challenges which need to be overcome when teaching EFL to adult learners in Qatar.

To investigate the best practices for teaching EFL to culturally diverse adult learners.

To sharpen the attention of other lecturers and create an awareness of the differences they might encounter when teaching language acquisition to adult learners in a multicultural society.

This would be done from my own perspective, as well as fellow lecturers, and learner observations at the language centre.

1.7 Research approach

Qualitative methods of research were applied in this study, because the researcher wished to obtain systematic data collection by observation and recordings in as natural a setting as possible. By using these methods, participants’ experiences could be reported in their own words (Lewis-Beck, Bryman & Liao, 2004:891; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:321). According to Leedy (2005:94), qualitative research “is typically used to answer questions about the complex nature of phenomena, often with the purpose of describing and understanding the phenomena from the participant’s point of view.” The researcher aimed to study the complex situation with regard to the role of culture when teaching EFL to adult learners in Qatar and to gain an in depth understanding of this phenomenon from the participants’ point of view.

1.7.1 Research design

A case study design as a form of a qualitative research approach was used. This design makes it possible for researchers to study a specific phenomenon in depth. According
to Denscombe (2007:35), case studies focus on one (or just a few) instances of a particular phenomenon with a view to providing an in-depth account of events, relationships, experiences or processes occurring in that particular instance. This study focused on a few instances of the phenomenon of multicultural interaction in the classroom at one language centre, when teaching English as a foreign language to adult learners, with the view to provide in-depth accounts of the events experienced in the particular instance (Denscombe 2007:35; McMillan & Schumacher 2010:345).

1.7.2 Data collection methods

Qualitative researchers usually use a combination of data collection strategies to enhance the validity and reliability of the research (Kerfoot & Winburg 1997:61). In the case of case studies, data collection is extensive and varied and the researcher needs to gather whatever information is required to provide an in-depth understanding. Case studies mostly use a variety of methods to collect data (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:346). In this study the following methods were used:

1.7.2.1 Open-ended questionnaires

According to Delport (in De Vos, et al 2005:166), “The basic objective of a questionnaire is to obtain facts and opinions about a phenomenon from people who are informed on the particular issue.” Open-ended questionnaires (Appendix A) were initially hand delivered to ten fellow lecturers to be completed in their own time. This was done to get a more general feeling of other lecturers’ experience when teaching a diverse group of adult learners in a multi-cultural classroom.

Open-ended questionnaires (Appendix B) were also hand delivered to ten learners to be completed in their own time. This was done to get their opinions regarding English foreign language learning in a multi-cultural classroom environment, and to determine how they would prefer the English foreign language lecturer to accommodate their cultural values and diversities.
1.7.2.2 Focus group interviews

Denscombe (2007:178) notes that the researcher, as the facilitator, will explore attitudes, perceptions, feelings and ideas on a specific topic. This can be done by making use of focus group interviews. These interviews can last between one to two hours and by involving more people, more opinions can be aired. Focus group interviews were used to collect data as I was of the opinion that it would provide me with a better understanding of how the participating lecturers feel about their multicultural teaching environment and that they would be encouraged to share their perceptions, experiences, wishes and concerns (Greeff 2005:299-300).

The first focus group interviews, with seven lecturers, took place in the teachers’ room, where discussions could be held in a relaxed atmosphere. This interview lasted for just over two hours and the lecturers were from Australia, Canada, England, South Africa and New Zealand.

The second focus group interviews were with nine learners and it lasted for two hours. This was an all ladies class from six different nationalities, being from Pakistan, Poland, Qatar, Spain, Syria and Turkey. During this time, the learners had the opportunity to air their views as to how they feel their different nationalities, and cultural values were taken into account within the classroom situation.

1.7.2.3 Interviews

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2005:267), interviews enable research participants to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view. For Fraenkl and Wallen (2003:455) the main purpose of interviewing participants, is to establish what is on their minds, what they think, or how they feel about something. As the theme of this study centred around cultural values and beliefs, which are in essence about the way in which people interpret the world in which they live, interviews were regarded as the most appropriate method to collect data.

Although a lot of information was obtained by means of the focus group interviews, individual interviews were scheduled with three of the lecturers at the language centre, who did not form part of the focus group interviews. This was necessary because these
three participants were regarded as “information rich”, and I was positive that I would get valuable information from them. They were purposefully selected because of their experience with regard to teaching culturally diverse learners and length of teaching experience at the centre.

In-depth interviews (semi-structured one-to-one interviews), with three lecturers, were therefore used for the purpose of exploring their experiences with regard to cultural values and EFL teaching. An in-depth interview schedule was prepared beforehand to guide and focus the interview process. These interviews were recorded, as well as handwritten notes kept, to be transcribed during the final process of the research.

1.7.2.4 Observations

According to Strydom (in De Vos et al, 2005:281), “In participant observation the gathering of data boils down to the actual observation and the taking of field notes.” I observed five different classes to determine the kind of interaction between the lecturer and learner, as well as learners from different cultural groups with their peers. A checklist was used to structure these observations.

1.7.2.5 Field notes

The field notes contained a comprehensive account of the research process made by myself with regard to what actually happened and was said, as well as attitudes, perceptions, and feelings observed and that was done immediately after it happened, (Greeff 2005:298). I kept field notes throughout the duration of the study to keep me focussed.

1.7.3 Research site

The research was based at a language centre in Qatar, focussing on the adult learners. At the centre, the learners enrol at any one time for a three week English course and it ranges from introductory level (very basic with little vocabulary or communicative skills), to more advanced levels. The levels range from level 100, the introductory level,
to level 109, with level 10 being the highest one. To determine the entry level of
learners, they have to take a placement test comprising of a set of fifty (50) multiple-
choice questions, as well as writing a short essay about a known subject, like, My best
friend or My best holiday. These three week courses can be taken during the mornings,
or in the evenings. The evening classes will than span over six weeks, in order for
learners to study the same length of hours as the morning classes.

1.7.3.1 Selection of participants

Lecturers and learners at the language centre participated in the research. I could,
however, not access every member of the target population due to its large size. A
sample is a small group of subjects that have the main characteristics of the accessible
population (Imenda & Muyengwa 2000:18). Purposive sampling was used. Strydom (in
De Vos et al, 2005:202) notes that purposive sampling is based entirely on the
judgement of the researcher. For this reason, information rich participants, typically
characterising and representative of the population, were chosen.

Groups of learners from different levels – as discussed in the previous section - were
observed. The observation was valuable in that it provided insight into the multicultural
interactions of the lecturers and learners, and learners versus learners in the language
classroom learning environment.

A variety of classroom situations were included in the research, so as to get an overview
of the different dynamics at play in multicultural classrooms and to draw comparisons.
Five groups of learners, namely an all male class with just Arabic speaking learners, an
all male class with learners from different cultures, a female class with only Arabic
speaking learners, a female class with learners from different cultures and finally a class
with male and female learners formed part of the research. Valuable information with
regard to the interaction in the way different cultures, religions and genders integrate
and behave within the multi-cultural classroom, was obtained from these five classroom
observations.

Except for the Centre Director and three permanent lecturers, the rest of the teaching
staff were all freelance workers. The lecturers were all native English speakers and were
from America, Australia, Canada, England, New Zealand and South Africa. Seven
lecturers took part in the focus group interviews, and focus group interviews with learners were also held with a multi-cultural group of nine ladies. Three lecturers took part in the in-depth interviews.

1.7.3.2 Gaining access to participants

The researcher obtained permission from the Centre Director to conduct the research at the language centre. The teaching staff who had been identified and approached have also agreed and given written “informed consent” (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:339) to participate in the research.

1.7.4 Ethical considerations

Because some participants might find the research personally intrusive (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:334) and Lincoln (1990) great care was taken in planning how to handle the ethical dilemmas in interactive data collection.

Keeping the guidelines of McMillan and Schumacher (2006:334) in mind, care was taken to ensure:

- Competence and knowledge about the research being conducted.
- Informed consent from all participants to ensure their anonymity and confidentiality.
- Consent to audiotape interviews. Participants were aware that conversation would be recorded to be able to report more accurately.
- Privacy and empowerment. I negotiated with participants so that they understood the power that they had in the research process. This power and the mutual problem solving that results from it may be an exchange for the privacy lost by participating in a study.
- Caring and fairness. This formed part of the researcher’s thinking, actions and personal morality.
1.8 Limitations of the study

The study has certain limitations, because:

- The study was limited to one language centre in Qatar, and focussed on adult learners.
- Involvement in the research project was limited to the lecturers and learners at the specific English language centre.

Because this is a dissertation of limited scope, the collected information was, however, regarded as sufficient.

1.9 Chapter division

Chapter 1 provides the background to the investigation. It explains the global spread of English in recent decades and the role that English currently plays in Qatar. The role of culture when teaching English as foreign language to a culturally diverse group of adult learners is also introduced. The rationale of the research, as well as the aims, problem statement and research design are discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 2 is devoted to a review of related literature. Aspects that are discussed include current foreign language methodology, teaching a foreign language to adult learners (e.g. the role of age in EFL), culture and multicultural learning situations and the cultural value and beliefs that should be taken into consideration when teaching English as a foreign language to a multicultural group of adult learners.

Chapter 3 explains the research methodology. In this chapter, the decisions that determined the research design and choice of the research methods for the study, are discussed.

Chapter 4 collates the gathered data and subsequently provides the data analysis and interpretation.

In Chapter 5 the researcher comes to conclusions and makes certain recommendations. This chapter concludes with suggestions for further research.
1.10 Concept clarification

Certain terms may appear repeatedly in the research. This concept clarification serves as a mere introduction of terms, to be discussed in more detail in ensuing chapters.

**Abaya:** The black cloak worn in public by some Qatari women. Although the more mature ladies prefer the traditional style abaya, the younger generations seem to prefer the more tailored styles.

**Adult learner:** Lieb (1991), refers to Malcolm Knowles, who described the adult learner as being autonomous and self-directed and teachers should be aware that the adult learner has special needs and requirements. They come into the learning situation with an accumulation of life experience and knowledge. They are goal-orientated and practical, focussing on the aspects of the lesson most useful to them in their work. Adult learners are normally motivated, but, because of life responsibilities, have “barriers against participating in learning” (Lieb 1991).

**Cultural diversity:** Cultural diversity is a peaceful coexistence of multiple cultures or societies in an organization (e.g. workplace or university) (Richards, Platt & Platt 1992:93).

**Expatriate:** An expatriate is a person living outside his/her own country (Collins 2005:97; Richards, Platt & Platt 2000:546).

**Face veil:** The black face covering worn in public by some Qatari women. Some ladies prefer to wear a complete covering over their faces when in public, while some wear a covering with their eyes exposed, and others with just the head and hair cover, but with their faces completely open.

**Multicultural:** *Multi* refers to many, or more than two and *cultural* to pertaining to culture or pertaining to a particular civilization or culture (Kirkpatrick 1981: 182/502). Multicultural in this context refers to dealing with more than one culture at the same time within the classroom situation.
CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL CONTEXT AND LITERATURE REVIEW ON ADULT LEARNING, FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND CULTURE

2.1 Introduction

This research is based on acknowledging cultural diversities when teaching English as a foreign language to adult learners in a multicultural society. In order to do so, it is necessary to provide a theoretical framework. The literature that follows focuses on the characteristics of adult learners that should be taken into consideration when teaching adults and the way in which adults learn a second or foreign language. It further explores current foreign language learning and teaching methodology, communicative competence as the purpose of foreign language teaching, sensitivities towards culture and multicultural learning situations, and the influence that cultural issues such as religion, gender and the socio-economic context could have on foreign language teaching in the classroom.

2.2 The adult learner

2.2.1 Adulthood

Adulthood includes the lifetime period of the adult, with all its many facets, including education. According to Rogers and Horrocks (2010:44-45) it is not easy to define adulthood, because it is not only a biological state, but also a social construct: “... adulthood, like childhood, is for many people a social construct. While in part both of these concepts have a biological basis (physical growth and psychological development), the implications of these changes, how they are understood, and the social reactions to them are cultural.”
Rogers and Horrocks (2010:45-46) claim that, in every culture, there is a series of expectations about those who claim and who are recognised to be adults, though these will vary, depending on a specific culture. According to them there are three traits that are characteristic of adulthood in most societies. The first characteristic is maturity, which includes the development of talents to a level of achievement, relatively fixed traits and interests and established patterns of behaviour and continuous development towards even greater maturity. Perspective is the second characteristic. Adults are expected to behave with a greater sense of perspective than children and this perspective should lead to sounder judgements about themselves and others. Adults are expected to draw upon their accumulated life experience to show a balanced approach to life and society. The third characteristic identified by Rogers and Horrocks (2010:47) is autonomy. This characteristic is associated with responsibility - responsibility for their own deeds and development, but in many cases also for others as well. Rogers and Horrocks (2010:47) admit that “autonomy” is a very Western view of adulthood and that many other cultures see adulthood in terms of family continuity, socially prescribed roles, the acceptance of hierarchical relationships as supreme and compliance with authority. This is especially the case with adult women in the Middle Eastern culture.

2.2.2 Adulthood and teaching

Malcom Knowles was the first to claim that adults learn distinctively different from children. He developed the concept “andragogy” into a theory of adult education. Knowles (1950:6) alerted adult educators to change their orientation from “educating adults” to “helping them learn”. According to Knowles (1998:3), andragogy is a core set of adult learning practices that has to be kept into mind by the lecturer, and them being:

- The learner’s need to know.
- Self-concept of the learner.
- Prior experience of the learner.
- Readiness to learn.
- Orientation to learning.
- Motivation to learn.
Merriam, Cafarella and Baumgartner (2007:104) note that although many have been sceptical over Knowles’ assumptions, studies of brain development can be used to support his beliefs, such as self-concept and experience, citing “the best-known theory of adult learning”, is Knowles’ andragogy.

According to Rogers (2007:6) the emphasis on learning is the most important principle of teaching adults: “This is the first essential principle of teaching adults successfully and it’s a paradox. Teaching is about learning. Therefore your task as a lecturer of adults is to become a designer of learning.

Rogers and Horrocks (2010:49) state that, in order to accommodate adulthood, adult education programmes should seek to:

- promote personal growth, the identification and full exploitation of each individual’s talents,
- assist with the development of a sense of perspective, and to
- develop confidence, practice responsibility and decision-making.

Rogers and Horrocks (2010:79) identified seven general characteristics of adult learners that will affect the way in which they are taught. These are:

- The learners define themselves as adults.
- They are in the middle of a process of growth, not at the start of a process.
- They bring with them a package of experience, knowledge and values.
- They come to the education with aspirations and attentions.
- They bring expectations about the learning process.
- They have competing interests.
- They already have their own patterns of learning.

At the centre where I teach, most of these characteristics of adult learners can be distinguished. The adult learners have varying needs to acquire English language proficiency. A great majority of Qatari students are sent by their companies. After achieving the necessary qualification, they will then be promoted, and this serves as an encouragement and motivation to study.
The younger adults mostly come with high aspirations and expectations, as they require a language proficiency certificate before they will be accepted at any university in Qatar. Then there is another group of adult learners, some from Europe or South America who are perhaps highly qualified in their respective fields of architecture, engineering or pharmaceutics, and therefore bring with them a wealth of experience, knowledge and values, but they need English as a communicative tool to be able to work with colleagues from other nationalities. Very few will (although it does happen) do a course just because they are on a long summer vacation from a university abroad, and see this as doing something useful with their available time.

Lecturers at the centre should keep the characteristics of adult learners in mind when teaching English as a foreign language. They should, however, also be aware of foreign language learning and in particular how adults learn a foreign language.

According to Jarvis (2004:67), the intended outcomes of adult education are to equip them with, or upgrade their skills in a specific field, in this instance, for the adult learner to gain the necessary English proficiency to function more effectively in a culturally and ethnically diverse society. Jarvis (2004:82) proposes that all learning begins with experience and that new experiences need to be experimented with, evaluated, reflected upon and reasoned about for the most effective change to happen.

Jarvis (2007) believes that real learning happens when you engage one or all five human sensations of sound, sight, smell, taste and touch. Using this theory could give us insight of how learning occurs and of how to best accomplish learning, assuming the following:

- Adult lifelong experiences can be used as a foundation to build on learning.
- An adults’ self-concept of independence empowers learners.
- The development of adults’ social roles enhances their motivation to learn.

Using these concepts could help the lecturers at the centre to prepare educational materials that fit directly into adult learning. Lecturers could explore the experiences of the adult learner and use that as a basis to build future learning, while at the same time employing their senses to enhance learning, by repeating words, letting learners repeat words and getting them to practice writing the words in their books and on the white board.
2.3 Learning a foreign language

2.3.1 The role of the mother tongue in foreign language acquisition

A short distinction between the learning of a first language or mother tongue and a second or foreign language is necessary. Chomsky claimed that children learn their mother tongue in an effortless way, because of an innate built-in Language Acquisition Device, (LAD) which is an inherited biological capacity for language learning that enables children to discover and internalise rules from language they are exposed to. This LAD allows young children to acquire the full range of grammatical structures of their first language through immersion and without being taught (Klapper 2006:47). According to Cook (2003:30), Chomsky further postulated the theory of “Universal Grammar” (UG) which constitutes a set of innate linguistic principles, which all languages follow. Klapper (2006:54) describes the link between language acquisition, LAD and UG as follows: “Language acquisition is a process of hypothesis-testing in which the learner uses the LAD to match the grammar of L1 against the principles of UG.”

Adults learning an additional language, however, do not start their learning of the target language with a blank slate. They already have knowledge of language structures, rules and symbols which support second or foreign language development (Van der Walt, Evans & Kilfoil 2009:8). According to Van der Walt, Evans and Kilfoil (2009:8), it is often debated whether Chomsky’s notion of Universal Grammar facilitates the learning of other languages or whether people use their first language as the basis, adapting the rules as they progress with the learning of the new language. Fact is, there are cognitive processes related to language learning that adults learning a new language will draw upon. Cummins (2000) referred to this as “Common Underlying Proficiency”. This means that when adult learners have to learn a new language they can draw on the knowledge they already have of their first language, to make meaning. Although it is difficult to give a precise age for a ‘critical period’ for language learning, there definitely exists one (Klapper 2006:56). According to Klapper (2006:56) the capacity to achieve full competence in a foreign language gradually declines throughout childhood and does not exist anymore by the age of 16. (For pronunciation the critical age is closer to six or
seven years). However, adults enter the learning environment with more experience, motivation and knowledge of existing language structures, which compensates for this. Adults therefore also possess the ability to learn an additional language and are not disadvantaged by their age (Ariza 2006:87; Richards, Platt & Platt 1992:197).

According to Pitt (2005:5), there are universal characteristics in second language acquisition (SLA) of children and adults. Understanding the acquisition process involves taking the cognitive processes, the learning context and social relations, as well as how the language actually operates in the social practice, into account. Pitt (2005:9) notes that, while young learners are developing their cognitive processes alongside their linguistic abilities, adults have more worldly knowledge and experiences to facilitate learning. For a learner to acquire a new language, there needs to be a conscious process of “noticing” and this will happen when the learner is ready for it. Noticing refers to the process whereby the learner consciously notices the gap that exists between the first language and the additional one being learnt or acquired. This process is easier for adults than for children.

Mikolic (2007) notes that studies that have been conducted on Slovene/Italian bilingualism over fifty years, concluded that a high level of communicative competence in one language entails a high level communicative competence in the other language. Interestingly, the younger the age group, the higher the level of competence in both when compared to the older group. In this case, it could be due to the fact of the languages being used at school level. Age, however, does not influence language use. The study concluded that language use is not as much affected by the level of communicative competence, but rather by the number of opportunities to use it.

2.3.2 Language errors and interlanguage in foreign language acquisition

“Errors are a natural, inevitable and indeed essential part of the acquisition process (Klapper 2006:48).” According to Klapper (2006:50), numerous studies have confirmed the regularity and systematicity of learner error in second and foreign language acquisition. Language learners often use the structures of their first language and apply that incorrectly to the second language. Pitt (2005:5) refers to the language produced by learners as they learn, as “interlanguage” (IL). Initially, learner errors were seen as a
result of poor learning or bad habits, because learning was a process of repetition, imitation and memorization. Interlanguage shows that learners are actively on a journey to acquire knowledge from one language to another and the errors are part of this journey.

Some adult learners often display a shyness to speak in the classroom, for various reasons. Sometimes they simply don’t understand what is expected of them, or because of a fear of embarrassment, while others will openly seek out as many opportunities as possible to practise newly learnt skills and vocabulary, irrespective of the mistakes made.

**2.3.3 Krashen's theory of second language acquisition versus second language learning**

Krashen (1982) was the first to distinguish between second language acquisition and second language learning, and based his theory on five main hypotheses:

- The acquisition-learning hypothesis.
- The monitor hypothesis.
- The natural order hypothesis.
- The input hypothesis.
- The affective filter hypothesis.

According to Krashen (1982), **acquisition-learning** is the most fundamental. Crawford and Krashen (2007:16-17) note that acquisition is a subconscious process, similar to the one children undergo when they learn their first language and it requires meaningful interaction in the target language in a natural way. Learning is more “knowing about” the target language. Learning a language in contrast to acquiring a language refers to language teaching in a formal classroom situation. The learning process involves the conscious learning of language structure and rules and vocabulary, similar to what the adult learners at the centre are undergoing. The **monitor hypothesis** explains the relation between acquisition and learning and the effect the one has on the other. The monitor acts in a planning, editing and correcting function when learning a second language. Before the adult learner utters a word or sentence, he or she scans it for
errors and uses the learnt system to make corrections. According to this hypothesis, such self-monitoring and self-correction are the only functions of conscious language learning. The natural order suggests that acquisition and structure follow a natural order, but Krashen (1982) rejects the necessity for grammatical sequence when language learning is the objective. The input hypothesis suggests that acquisition is more important than learning. According to Krashen (1982), the final hypothesis, the affective filter, plays a variable facilitative role. These variables include: motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. All of the variables can play a significant role in language acquisition. Gass and Selinker (2001:201) also refer to the affective filter, part of Krashen’s Monitor Model, which acts as a “filter” either permitting or preventing input that is necessary for language acquisition. Included in the affective filter, are factors such as motivation, attitude, self-confidence and anxiety. Because adults do have the affective filter, it therefore implies that adults have the ability to consciously acquire languages. Lecturers should be mindful to take the different cultures of the adult learners into consideration in order to soften the affective filter. Krashen (1982) notes that there are two prime issues preventing the lowering of the affective filter. The first is not allowing for the silent period (expecting the learners to speak before receiving adequate comprehensible input for their individual needs). The second is to correcting their errors too early in the learning process.

According to Krashen (1985:100), when learning a second language, learners need to be exposed to language that is meaningful to them in order to learn. He calls it “comprehensible input”. The knowledge learnt in one language, provides the context that makes them hear and read in a second language more meaningfully and the more “comprehensible input” in the target language they receive, the better their understanding. McKay and Schaetzel (2008) also touch on this, when they note that during the interaction between lecturer and learner, or learner versus learner, they work together to achieve a common goal, being to gain proficiency in the target language. Crawford and Krashen (2007:19) also note that, sometimes acquisition occurs from listening and reading alone, without the learners saying any English words in their first couple of weeks of learning. They refer to this as the “silent period”. During this time learners acquire language through comprehensible “input”, without “output” (Crawford & Krashen 2007:19).
The input needs to be at the right level of difficulty for learning to occur. In second or foreign language acquisition, a distinction could be made between input and intake. If the language which a learner hears is not too fast, the intake could be input that is actually helpful for learning. Crawford and Krashen (2007:18) also note that, when children get a good education, they acquire both knowledge and literacy and these components in turn support second language development. According to the input theory (Crawford & Krashen 2007:19), adults already have a knowledge of the world and the situation to support the new language structures to be acquired.

Merrill Swain (Swain & Lapkin, 1995:371) argues that, in order for learners to acquire a new language, they also need the act of speaking – “output”. This interaction helps learners to pay attention to the role of grammar during the learning process. The information that a person receives (input), can result in a change in behaviour and eventually language will emerge naturally (output), without being taught directly.

Griffiths (2008:35) notes, some studies indicate that although younger learners could be more successful at language learning in the long run, adults may initially learn more quickly. This could be since adult learners are utilizing the patterns of their first language for immediate communicative purposes. According to Griffiths (2008:40), mature learners, because of experience, could have a larger repertoire of language learning strategies which they choose to apply when necessary. And adult learners are expected to exercise better meta-cognitive control over their learning, by means of time management, and monitoring and evaluating their own progress (Griffiths 2008:40).

Numerous variables influence the length of time required to acquire a second language. Griffiths (2008:38) refers to Loup, Boustagui, El Tigi and Moselle (1994) who studied the case of Julie, an English lady, who at the age of 21 married an Egyptian and moved from England to Cairo. She had to learn Arabic to converse with other Arabic speaking family members and teaching staff at the school where she was employed as an English teacher. After six months, she was communicating well and after two and a half years, she could pass as a native speaker.

At the language centre, lecturers are continually aware that learners should be encouraged to speak English in the classroom to the lecturer, as well as fellow learners. Some learners are naturally shy and the adult learners sometimes use this as an excuse not to answer questions. Griffiths (2008:39) refers to Burling (1981) who notes that an
adult is aware of his own limitations and “is likely to give up and conclude that he has
lost the capacity to learn a language.”

Although Krashen’s theory has been criticised (see for example McLaughlin 1987:20-24)
because it has been found that although learning and acquisition are not the same, the
two processes are interwoven; this theory is still useful for this dissertation as the focus
is on the conscious teaching of a foreign language. The distinction between acquisition
and learning is furthermore regarded as a useful distinction because “… research in SLA
has shown that formal instruction in general serves to speed up the language acquisition
process and enables learners ultimately to attain higher levels of proficiency.”

2.3.4 The role of socialization in foreign language learning

Pitt (2005:9) notes, “More recently, some researchers have highlighted the social nature
of additional language learning, and suggests that we should talk about socialization
rather than acquisition, because learners need to learn about the social and cultural
conventions of language use as well as the structures and vocabulary. This emphasis has
come from studies of minority language workers’ language use in naturally occurring
situations in the target culture.” Minority language workers will then develop the
majority language out of necessity to be used daily, for example, in the workplace, or in
order to seek employment. This serves to encourage learners to be able to
communicate more fluently, but not always accurately. This necessity to acquire a new
language, also serves as a great motivator for adult learners.

At the language centre, second language socialization frequently occurs in a less
favourable situation for some learners, because they are suddenly confronted with a
multicultural society that is completely foreign to them. As an adult learner, they have
to socialize during class or break time with other learners, who are also struggling to
communicate effectively in English. For many second language learners, their secondary
socialization is a process of intercultural language socialization and they might display a
resistance to adapt. Adult learners experience this secondary socialization more or less
when their primary socialization in their original cultures have been completed
(Kanagy:1999).
2.4 Foreign language teaching

In 1971 Hymes (1971) introduced the concept of “communicative competence” (see section 2.4.2). He emphasised the learner’s need to use the target language for particular purposes, situations and settings. Grammar was seen as only one aspect of communicative competence alongside other rhetorical and socio-cultural aspects. This leads to the development of a communicative language approach to the teaching of second and foreign languages (Klapper 2006:109).

Klapper (2006:16) refers to Gebbard et al (1990) who states that, there is no convincing evidence from research on second language instruction that there is any universally applicable ideal or best way to teach a second or foreign language. It is probably this notion that second and foreign language teaching cannot rely on one single method to ensure success, which led to the increasing popularity of the communicative approach to additional foreign language teaching.

2.4.1 The communicative approach to foreign language teaching

Communicative language teaching (CLT) is best considered as an approach, rather than a method and incorporates grammar translation, audio-lingual methods, communicative language teaching and the natural approach (Richards & Rodgers 1986:64). Methods are held to be teaching systems with prescribed techniques and practices, and approaches are a representation of language teaching philosophies that can be interpreted and applied in a variety of ways within the classroom.

Richards and Rodgers (1986:71) identify the distinct characteristics of communicative language teaching as:

- Language is a system for the expression of meaning. The primary function of language is for interaction and communication.
- The structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses.
- The primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features, but categories of functional and communicative meaning as exemplified in discourse.
This approach calls for a shift of ideas in language teaching towards becoming more learner-centred. Lessons are planned in such a way that they maximise the opportunity to engage all the learners in interactive activities, in other words, to focus on and enhance their listening, speaking, reading and writings skills.

Communicative language teaching uses real-life situations that necessitate communication. This approach could be said to be the product of educators and linguists who have become dissatisfied and felt that learners need to be learning in a more realistic environment. Lecturers teaching English as a foreign language using this approach, are most likely to ensure that ample time be awarded within the classroom for students to communicate with the lecturer, as well as with fellow class members in as natural a setting as possible. Lecturers in communicative classrooms usually find themselves talking less and listening more and becoming facilitators of their learners’ learning (Larsen-Freeman 1986:192).

The intention of the communicative approach, is thus to equip learners with the skills and relevant information to use the target language, in this case English, in a realistic way. Littlewood (1981:95) clarifies, “The underlying message, then, is that foreign language teaching must be concerned with reality.” This reality must reflect on communication as it takes place outside the classroom, as well as learners’ abilities to use the language inside and outside the classroom. Language lecturers have an enormous responsibility to regularly reflect on the teaching situation to ensure that this is achieved.

The Department of Education (2008:10) listed a number of classroom implications when making use of communicative language teaching. As indicated in the subsequent discussion, each of these aspects listed by the Department of Education also has certain implications for the teaching of English to adults who come from different cultural backgrounds. These implications are:

- “Language skills should be taught in an integrated way as this is how language is used in real life. Lecturers should initially speak slower, for learners to follow more correctly and then proceed by speaking at a natural pace.”
- “Learners should be given ample opportunities to use language in class: to listen and speak and to read or view and write language. This means maximising
opportunities for learners to practise oral language skills using group or pair activities and to practise reading through a range of individual activities. Lecturers should employ this strategy as often as possible, to allow learners to practice their English.”

- “Learners should use language in situations that require them to interact and communicate real feelings, ideas and information for real purposes. This can include activities where there is an information gap; different groups of learners have different information that they need to share to achieve a common goal. In the culturally diverse classroom, the lecturer should encourage the learners to communicate to others from different nationalities, in order to learn from other cultures.”

- “Texts used as the basis for learning activities, such as current newspaper or magazine articles, advertisements, pamphlets, stories, radio programmes, should be authentic. Texts from a range of different genres and modes, such as oral, written or multimedia, should be used and can be linked through themes. The lecturers should however ensure that all additional material being used in the classroom, display sensitivity and respect for different cultures.”

- “Language errors are regarded as part of the language learning process. The focus is on effectively communicating meaning rather than on using the correct form of the language. Lecturers should not be too hasty to correct mistakes, but allow learners to practice speaking fluently, rather than correctly.”

- “Language structures should be taught in context. While assessing learners’ writing, a lecturer may realise that they have difficulty in using a tense correctly. The lecturer can then focus the learners’ attention on the correct use of the tense in a text and then provide opportunities for practice using the tense in different, authentic writing activities. Appropriate reading material could also be used to enforce newly learnt grammar to help learners write more accurately.”

- “The fear of making mistakes inhibits language learning. Learners should be relaxed and enjoy what they do. Lecturers could remind learners often that it is normal to make mistakes in the classroom, while help is at hand to correct them.”

Every endeavour is being made by all the lecturers at the language centre to provide learners with enough opportunities to practice their communicative skills. Learners
are encouraged to communicate, despite the limitations in their language knowledge. It is not always possible to provide learners with equal time to practice, as the ones who are more fluent tend to take up more time, than the others who are not as fluent, or more reserved. During classroom activities however, learners can participate in a cooperative, rather than individualistic approach to learning. The lecturer now becomes the facilitator and learners from various backgrounds and nationalities have to become comfortable with listening to their peers while doing group or pair work.

2.4.2 Communicative competence

The notion of communicative competence, which was coined by Hymes in the 1960s, can broadly be defined as what a speaker needs to know to communicate effectively and appropriately in a particular speech community (Saville-Troike 1996:362). Communicative competence includes

Knowledge and expectation of who may or may not speak in certain settings, when to remain silent, whom one may speak to, how one may talk to persons of different status and roles, what nonverbal behaviours are appropriate in various contexts, what the routines for turn taking are in conversations, how to ask for and give information, how to request, how to offer or decline assistance or cooperation, how to give commands, how to enforce discipline, and the like – in short, everything involving the use of language and other communicative dimensions in particular social settings (Saville-Troike 1996:363).

Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2006:16) propose a framework for communicative competence that consists of discourse, linguistic, pragmatic, intercultural and strategic competence. According to them discourse competence forms the centre of communicative competence because the rest of the competences (i.e. linguistic, pragmatic, intercultural and strategic) serve to build discourse competence which in turn, shapes each of the other competences. Intercultural communicative competence is in particular important for this study. It is described as “the ability to mediate between one’s own culture and others” (Buttjes, as cited in Dlaska 2000:24). Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2006:17) explain that intercultural competence involves both cultural and non-verbal communicative factors. The former is concerned with socio-cultural knowledge of the target language community, knowledge of dialects and cross-
cultural awareness, whereas the latter refers to non-verbal signals such as body language, use of space, touching or silence. It is obvious that this competence reflects knowledge of cultural aspects and, therefore, it could have been named cultural competence. However, the term intercultural has been employed instead in order to create the effect of symbolizing that learning an L2 interrelates knowledge of your own culture and the target culture.

Eisenchlas and Trevaskes (2007:181) explain that intercultural knowledge should lead to a learning process which enables individuals or groups to communicate their values, attitudes and aspirations better in intergroup situations, and to appreciate more the values, attitudes and aspirations of others. Cross-cultural awareness covers life and institutions, beliefs and values, everyday feelings and attitudes that can be conveyed by language and paralinguistic features, such as dress, facial expression, gestures and movement. Language lecturers should create opportunities to achieve this awareness in the classroom, but should themselves also be aware of their learners’ cultural values and beliefs. It is however not always possible to reach this goal in a multicultural group where cultural intolerances might exist.

As has been stated previously, in this research the premise is that lecturers in particular should have the necessary cultural and intercultural communicative competence to be able to observe cultural differences amongst learners and to accommodate these appropriately when teaching a language in a multicultural situation. When teaching English to Middle Eastern learners, lecturers should for example be aware of the fact that in the Arabic alphabet, there is no equivalent for the letter ‘p’ and as a result, students struggle to distinguish between ‘job’ and ‘jop’. The Arabic alphabet is a complex, cursive-based system fashioned from other Semitic languages (Ariza 2006:62). It differs from the Western alphabet in that words are written from right to left and as such it is very difficult to teach EFL to Arab speaking learners. They struggle to form some letters and for this reason would instinctively make an ‘o’ (and other letters) clockwise, instead of anticlockwise.

At the language centre I have become aware that speakers of Japanese, Chinese, Korean and Thai, have difficulty in distinguishing ‘r’ and ‘l’. Spanish speakers have the tendency to swap a ‘b’ and ‘v’ and will say, I am driving in my ‘bery big ban’. Although learners are able to grasp the grammar and learn to speak the language, they might have a marked accent when speaking English.
The importance of acknowledging cultural differences when teaching a language necessitates a closer look at culture and what it entails.

2.5 Culture

2.5.1 Defining culture

In 1986 Hofstede conducted research in 50 countries on Cultural Differences in Teaching and Learning. He used 116 000+ respondents in the Fields: Business, Intercultural communication & Education and defines culture as: “Collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category from another.”

According to him, the family, the school, the job and the community are four fundamental institutions, present in some way in virtually all human societies. Each of the four has its pair of unequal but complementary basic roles (except the family, which has two role pairs – being Parent vs. Child and Man vs. Woman). In different societies, these archetypal roles are played in different ways. Role patterns in the four types of institutions interact, so that, for example, patterns of parent/child interaction in a society are carried over into teacher/student and boss/subordinate relationships (Hofstede 1986:302). For the purpose of this study, the lecturer/learner role, as well as learner/peer interaction need to be considered.

Not only are these role patterns the products of a society’s culture, they are also the device par excellence by which culture itself is transferred from one generation to the next, according to the remarkable stability of certain culture patterns even in the face of sweeping environmental changes (cf, Inkeles, 1977). Although this is a very old reference, it is still relevant in today’s society.

2.5.2 Hofstede’s five dimensions of culture

Hofstede (1980) defines five different dimensions of culture, namely:
• Power distance. This refers to the power distribution within a society and the extent to which it is accepted. A high power distance culture prefers strong leaders and has a high regard for authority. A low power distance culture favours responsibility and autonomy.

• Uncertainty avoidance. This refers to the degree to which individuals require clear boundaries and set structures. A high uncertainty culture allows individuals to cope better with risk and innovations; a low uncertainty culture prefers standardisation and job security.

• Individualism versus collectivism. The degree to which individuals base their actions on self-interest versus the interest of the group.

• Masculinity versus femininity. In a masculine culture, status is derived from wages and position, whereas a feminine culture favours human relations and a quality of life.

• Long versus short-term orientation. This refers to the degree to which a society does or does not value long-term commitments and respect for tradition. Long-term traditions and commitments hamper institutional change.

In the subsequent discussion these five dimensions will be applied to Middle Eastern cultural values.

2.5.3 Middle Eastern cultural values

Although there will be individual differences, as in any group of people, a number of distinctive characteristics are noted throughout Middle Eastern cultures (Ariza 2006:61). The most notable characteristics of Middle Eastern cultural values are that “(S)society dictates appropriate behaviour; family, friends, religion and the environment prevail upon the individuals to behave according to social norms as opposed to individual beliefs” (Ariza 2006:61).

Many Middle Eastern countries have been ruled for generations by monarchies, who enjoyed the respect of a great majority of the people. A high power distance culture (Hofstede’s first dimension), with high regard for the authority of the ruler, exists in Qatar.
In the following section the most important cultural values that determine behaviour in Qatar, are discussed. These values will also be explored in this study.

2.6 The role of religion in Qatar

Qatar is an Islamic state and religion is an integral and very much a pivotal part of everyday life and therefore has a great influence on education. It sees education firstly as making man a right thinker and secondly it enables man to receive information from the external world (Koran 39: 9).

Sheikh Hamad, as Qatar’s current Emir, has introduced many changes, including a certain amount of freedom of the press and of religion. Al-Jazeera, a broadcasting company that is viewed as the freest in the Arab world, was established in 1997. Its broadcasts are often critical of other governments in the area, but not of Qatar. In March 2009, a Catholic church opened in Doha; while there were various places of Christian worship previously, this was the first building in centuries to be erected as a Christian church in the country. Significantly, it does not display the cross on any of its outer walls. Plans are being made for a Greek Orthodox church, an Anglican church, a Coptic church, and a church for Christian traditions from India, which will also include a space for nondenominational worship.

According to Lefebure (2008:22), “not all Qataris are pleased with this open approach to Christianity.” And when Christian Bibles were imported for use at the Theological Department of the Georgetown University’s Qatar branch, the Bibles were held up at customs for six weeks until the Ministry of Education was able to confirm that they were intended for educational purposes at the university.

2.6.1 Islam and its view on education

Islamic education is uniquely different from other types of educational theory and practice, largely because of the all-encompassing influence of the Holy Koran. The Koran serves as a comprehensive blueprint for both the individual and society and is the primary source of knowledge. The Koran states that, “Islam has, from its inception, placed a high premium on education and has enjoyed a long and rich intellectual
tradition” (Koran 58:11). Knowledge (‘ilm) occupies a significant position within Islam, as evidenced by the more than 800 references to it in Islam’s most revered book. The importance of education is repeatedly emphasized in the Koran with frequent injunctions such as “God will exalt those of you who believe and those who have knowledge to high degrees” (Koran 58:11), “Oh my Lord! Increase my knowledge” (Koran 20:114) and “As God has taught him, so let him write” (Koran 2:282). Such verses provide a forceful stimulus for the Islamic community to strive for education and learning.

For purposes of this study, the local religion always serves as a constant reminder to lecturers of other beliefs that they have to guard against criticisms and prejudices. Lecturers have to be aware at all times not to enter into a discussion with any learner, or learner versus learner, about religion and belief, as this will be severely frowned upon and might have legal implications. It is thus clear that there is a low uncertainty culture in Qatar as boundaries are set by religion and everybody is expected to adhere to these.

2.6.1.2 Gender differences

In the classroom, lecturers have to be constantly aware of and acknowledge the segregation between men and women. Muslim women are not allowed to make eye-contact with men, a manifestation of Hofstede’s masculinity versus femininity, where men are regarded as having a higher status than women. In a multicultural classroom situation, this can be problematic. It is not always clear who the ladies are talking to or what they are saying, especially if they wear a full face veil.

The Western ladies, being more individualistic however, do not mind and would quite openly engage in a conversation with men, Qatari or expatriate, during pair work and group work, and experience this as a normal learning environment. Lecturers must however, obtain permission from the Muslim women, who are more collectivistic and regard the interests of the group, before assigning them for pair work with a fellow male learner and these ladies reserve the right of refusal. Ladies could normally be persuaded to cooperate, sometimes with some reluctance and hesitation, but they realise it is in the best interest of language learning.
2.6.1.3 Gender roles in Islam

The Koran states, "Men are the maintainers and protectors of women, because Allah hath made the one to excel the other, and because they spent of their property (for the support of women)" (Koran 004.034). In Islam, relations between the genders are governed by the principle of complementary roles, which defines different rights and obligations for men and women. According to Islamic tradition, a woman’s primary role is to act as wife and mother and that of the man to provide for and financially support his family.

Although women can vote and drive in Qatar, their activities are inhibited by social and family restrictions. For instance, social customs dictate that local women wear black cloaks (abayas) and head coverings in public, and most social gatherings are segregated by gender. The low uncertainty culture prefers this standardisation. It also relates to Hofstede’s dimension of collectivism rather than individualism and the superior role of men (masculinity). Although Qatar is considered moderate by Persian Gulf standards, and appears to be moving toward a democratic system of government, it still has an autocratic regime (Mangan 2002:4).

2.6.1.4 Socio-economic issues in a new society

Young adults, Qatari and expatriates, who have obtained the necessary English proficiency levels to attend a university in Qatar, or in other western countries, now find themselves having to cope in their ‘adopted’ societies. Qatari learners, who are studying at universities outside the country, find themselves being alienated from familiar situations in a new multi-cultural society. They do not always have the facilities to fulfil their custom of regular prayers and have to adapt to the new situation. Likewise, foreign students who study at universities in Qatar are also aware of the differences in culture and customs. Under certain circumstances, long-term traditions could hinder advancement in education.

In discussing the differences in social positions of lecturers and learners in society, Hofstede (1986:303) states that the interaction between lecturers and learners are different from other social institutions. The social hierarchy plays a significant part in the interaction between lecturers and learners within the classroom and this can be
exceedingly difficult for a lecturer, or a learner, from one nation’s system to function well in that of another.

2.7 Challenges when teaching English as a foreign language to culturally diverse adult learners

Masemann (2003:116) describes culture as all aspects of life, including the mental, social, linguistic and physical forms of culture and maintains, “A fundamental characteristic of culture is that it expresses the value system(s) of a particular society or group.” Ariza (2006:17) refers to Banks (2001) who uses the metaphor of an iceberg to describe culture. The part of the iceberg that is visible is just a fraction of the iceberg. This fraction depicts surface culture which includes visible aspects such as clothing, food and music. The rest of the iceberg reflects deep cultural aspects such as values, gender roles and religious beliefs.

The adult learners who attend English language classes at the centre, come from various backgrounds and have diverse cultural values. Because of the unique composition of the population in Qatar, lecturers at the language centre have to constantly acknowledge this phenomenon. They are teaching in an environment where the beliefs, attitudes, customs, behaviour and social habits of the learners vary considerably, not only between learners themselves, but also with regard to the lecturers and learners.

2.7.1 Different native languages

In the cross-cultural learning situations, lecturers and learners speak different native languages. Because lecturers have more power in the teaching environment, they have to adapt and be sensitive to the learner’s ability to learn the language (Cook 2003:3). A big problem is, however, that lecturers in a multicultural learning situation mostly do not understand the learners’ native language and cannot make use of code-switching to explain difficult concepts.
2.7.2 Culturally responsive teaching

According to Kalin and Berry (1994:301), learners tend to make “we-they” distinctions, with a positive connotation to “we’ and a negative one to “they”. It includes the tendency to judge others by the standards of their own group, and many people believe that their own homelands are the best places in the world (Kalin & Berry 1994:302). This ethnocentricity is reflected in their outlook on the rest of the world and can have a profound influence on their behaviour in a multicultural classroom. All aspects of their own culture, such as language, behaviours, beliefs and values, may be incongruent with the other learners in the class. More often than not, the only commonality is their desire to learn English.

Ariza (2006:12) notes that, “If you are a teacher in a U.S. mainstream classroom, you will see many of your cultural beliefs challenged on a daily basis.” In Qatar, this is also the case. Being punctual is not a priority, so lecturers can expect learners to be late for class. Family matters also take precedence and cause serious frustration within the classroom, for lecturers and learners from other cultures alike. If a learner is required to assist a family member in whatever way, classroom lessons would be left to attend to the person in need.

Because cultural patterns are so deeply rooted within an individual, the lecturer has to be constantly aware of this, as this will guide the teaching as well as the learning. Ariza (2006:12-13), suggests the following recommendations for teaching, emanating from Brown University’s Education Alliance for Culturally Responsive Teaching. These recommendations could prove to be valuable to new, as well as seasoned lecturers. Some are:

- Get to know and research the backgrounds of students with regard to their languages, values, behaviours, beliefs, holiday traditions, customs and foods. *In a multi-cultural classroom, this could be an enriching experience for lecturers and learners to get to know the customs of other nationalities.*

- Attend local cultural events and ask relevant questions to students about their practices. *Qatar’s National Day is celebrated on 18 December every year and is a highlight for Qatari’s. Lecturers could encourage learners from other nationalities to attend these celebrations.*
Relate teaching scenarios, questions and problem solving to real life interests and issues pertaining to the students. Learners like to talk about their families or own respective countries.

Provide ample feedback and coax students into conversations, regardless of English proficiency. Find out about learners hobbies and use that as a point of reference to get them to talk more fluently.

Integrate multicultural viewpoints and histories regularly into the curriculum. Learners appreciate an attitude of sensitivity and respect towards differences.

Learn about diverse learning and teaching styles and culturally appropriate classroom behaviour. Not all topics can openly be discussed in a multicultural classroom and lecturers should always be cautious.

Continuously aim to increase academic, as well as oral language proficiency. Besides the required presentations learners have to do to enable them to progress to the next level, create ample opportunities for them to have a conversation in the classroom with learners from other nationalities.

Be aware of your own ethnocentricity and be empathetic, open, flexible and show a caring attitude towards students’ wellbeing. Lecturers should not be bias towards one particular group of learners and treat them all equally.

2.7.3 Cultural miscommunication in the classroom

Lecturers are often unaware how deeply rooted their own values are, until they are challenged because of their discordance with learners’ values and expectations. These differences make it difficult for lecturers and learners to function and for learning to occur in a multicultural situation. Ariza (2006:18-20) notes that, “Teachers can better understand their students from other cultures if they have knowledge of the underlying significance of nonverbal communication.” It is also important for lecturers to understand that learners from other cultures interpret verbal and non-verbal communications differently and should pay attention to “kinesic, proxemics, paralinguistic, and haptics traits.”

Kinesic refers in this sense to touching. For Asian learners, the head houses the soul and should therefore not be touched. In the Arab culture they use the right hand for eating, the left hand is the unclean one, and should not be offered to
others. Likewise, it is considered rude to show the bottom of one’s feet towards others in the Thai and Arab cultures.

- Proxemics can be described as a person’s personal body space (Richards, Platt & Platt 1992:299). Because some cultures maintain a closer physical proximity, they might want to sit close to the lecturer and feel rejected if the latter backs off. Younger female learners regularly exercise this trait in the classroom. To some Asian males, it is quite common to hold hands when walking in public areas and lecturers might find the open affectionate display unacceptable, unless they are aware of the normalcy of this behaviour.

- Paralinguistics refers to non-vocal expressions, such as head or eye movement, (Richards, Platt & Platt 1992:262), but can also be vocalized using “laughing, crying, speech rate, pitch, and volume” (Ariza 2006:22). In English-speaking countries, nodding the head up and down, shows agreement. In the Indian culture, they have different meanings for various head-nodding, which could involve a study all on its own. Lecturers therefore have to be aware of this and ensure that they get a definite vocal answer from an Indian learner when they agree, or disagree, as nodding the head up and down might not mean “yes”.

- Haptics deals with touching behaviour in different societies (Ariza 2006:22). It is acceptable for Western lecturers to greet learners by hand. This practice is not common in the Arab culture, especially for male learners to greet a female lecturer. Only after some time of familiarization, would a male learner hold out his hand to greet his female lecturer with a very limp handshake. Ariza (2006:22) notes that, “A handshake of a Spaniard might be seen as more aggressive or overfriendly if two hands are used, and the Spaniard might feel that the American handshake is limp or merely functional in comparison.”

Lecturers from a Western cultural background, should not just assume that all nationalities have the same customs and way of doing everyday activities. Most Western lecturers would want to greet new learners by hand, but some learners could be uncomfortable with that. They should take the time to familiarize themselves with these and other differences, as well as how to accommodate different nationalities in one classroom, before starting to teach at the language centre, especially if they are new to the Middle East and the way of life in Qatar. Even after being at the centre for some time now, I am still experiencing these differences and find it to be a continual learning process.
2.7.4 Participation structures in the classroom

Interaction and participation in the classroom, called “participation structures” (Ariza 2006:23) may vary amongst learners from different countries and cultures. At the language centre, male Arab learners might try and impress others by always putting up his hand first. This could be to protect their image and show dominance or superiority. Some Asian learners are initially more reserved and will only answer questions when addressed directly. Ariza (2006:23) refers to Tannen (1990b) who recon “Greek, Russian, Italian, Spanish, South American, Arab, and African cultures are considered conversationally ‘high involvement’ and ‘low considerateness’ because they talk and interrupt more and are not bothered by people who interrupt them.” These learners would at times also try to engage others in a lively debate about politics and religion, at which point the lecturer has to very diplomatically halt the discussion and focus on classroom activities.

Ariza (2006:23) refers to the anthropologist Edward Hall (1976, 1977) who coined the concept phrases “high context’ and “low context” when explaining how individuals from different cultures communicate. He mentions that, for example, in Japan, where the majority are Japanese, there is no need for an individual to explain matters in great detail, or verbally, as members of the society are familiar with the cultural values and beliefs. This internal communication is called “high context”. In a “low context” culture, it is just the opposite and information is abundant and continuous. English language lecturers have to be well prepared and aware of this to avoid misunderstandings in the classroom. When giving an assignment to a class, it could be far more beneficial for a lecturer to repeat the requirement to ensure that learners fully understand what is expected of them.

2.7.5 Accommodating the Arab culture in the classroom

Although teaching English at the language centre is normally to a multicultural group of learners, it might be that one class will just be all Arabic speakers from different countries. As mentioned before, the family involvement, even in the teaching situation,
should always be considered by the lecturer. Ariza (2006:62) notes that Adeed and Smith (1997), recommend that the family take the lead when issues concerning school, behaviour and academic performance are approached. Families, because of an inability to communicate in English, might not always feel comfortable doing so and at the centre, it is helpful to use an Arab speaking office employee to act as mediator or interpreter.

Lecturers should familiarize themselves with all learners’ religions and cultures to promote understanding and tolerance in the classroom. This will help to demystify the culture and as such, avoid prejudice and discrimination. The following pointers will be helpful to teachers in understanding their Muslim students (Ariza 2006:63-65):

- Clothing and modesty. Although covering the head is a religious practice that reflects modesty, not all females cover their entire faces as well. This practice should be respected and because of this, lecturers are also required to dress modestly, for example, no clothing with open shoulders and nothing showing the knees.
- Touch and socialization. In Western schools it is common for girls and boys to play together and interact on the playground. Islamic law prefers segregation by gender. Some women feel very uncomfortable when they are singled out in an all male class and might request to be moved or return to the centre at a later stage when an all female class teaching their level is available. Lecturers have to be aware that a lady might not want to do pair work with a male learner, before getting mutual consent.
- Religious obligations. Muslims pray five times a day and the midday and mid-afternoon prayers might be during class hours. For this reason, there are separate prayer facilities at the centre for males and females. Learners from other cultures find this very disruptive at times and the lecturers once again have to instil tolerance. In the holy month of Ramadan, Muslims do not eat, drink or smoke during daylight hours. Lecturers have to be aware that during this time, learners might be extremely tired and lethargic, because of lack of sleep and sustenance, but learners have to be encouraged to continue studying, without disruption to learners of other beliefs. Western lecturers have to respect this and not eat and drink during the breaks where they can be seen.
• Dietary considerations. Only halal food prepared according to Islamic law, is permitted. This should be kept in mind during class parties or other social events.

• Conflicting school practices. Everyday rituals such as birthday or Halloween parties, might be troublesome to Muslim learners. They do not really celebrate birthdays and quite a few students might not even know their date of birth. In some families, however, they do celebrate birthdays for younger children, but lecturers have to be constantly aware not to make a big fuss, as would normally be the practice in a Western society. They do however have a festival in the middle of Ramadan, called ‘garanguo’. This shows similarities with Western practices, where children dressed in traditional clothing would walk in the streets and receive sweets or small gifts of money from older people.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the theoretical exposition of teaching English to adult learners in a multicultural environment in Qatar. The internationalization of English and the globalization of the world’s economy have become so complex, that learning English may become the communicative tool to bridge the gap. This research builds on existing research about issues pertaining to language acquisition of the adult learner, taking the influence cultural diversities into account.

In the next chapter, the research design and methodology will be discussed.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODOLOGY AND METHOD

3.1  Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate how cultural diversities can be acknowledged when teaching English to adult learners in a multicultural situation, in Qatar. Chapter One provided the necessary background to the study and Chapter Two reviewed the literature on the three main issues that this study focussed on, namely adult learners, foreign language teaching to adults and the role that cultural diversities and values play when teaching a foreign language in a multicultural situation.

In this chapter the researcher focussed on the research design, methodologies and research process that were followed in the empirical investigation. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2005:73) the purpose of research determines the design and methodology of the research, while Fouche and Delport (2010:75) explain that the various designs or strategies used by qualitative researchers will differ, depending on the study’s purpose, the nature of the research question and the skills and resources available to the researcher. The research problem, aim and objectives, as stated in Chapter One, therefore determined the design and methodology that were selected for this study. Great care was taken throughout the study to ensure trustworthiness of the data and adherence to ethical principles.

3.2  Research approach

Fouche and Delport (2011:63), Leedy and Ormrod (2005:94-95) and Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2005:7, 18-20;37) distinguish between quantitative and qualitative research. Quantitative research aims “to measure the social world objectively, to test hypotheses and to predict and control human behaviour” (Fouche &Delport 2005:73). In contrast, qualitative research involves a more holistic approach and aims mainly “to understand social life and the meaning that people attach to everyday life” (Fouche & Delport 2005:74). For this study, a qualitative approach was followed in order to obtain insight
into the role that cultural diversity plays when teaching and learning a foreign language to adult learners, and to establish how these diversities should best be taken into consideration when teaching a foreign language. A closer look at the difference between the two approaches, will shed more light on the reasons for choosing the qualitative approach (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:21;23).

The qualitative approach often uses in-depth involvement with the phenomena studied, using tools such as participant observation and interviews, whereas the quantitative approach often distances itself from the phenomena studied, using questionnaires or controlled laboratory experiments as tools.

Quantitative researchers often use models that simplify the phenomena studied into several variables, while assuming that other variables are constant (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:94). Fouche and Delport (2005:73) refer to Mouton and Marais (1999), who note that the quantitative approach is more highly formalised and explicitly controlled, its range is more exactly defined and it is relatively close to the physical sciences.

Qualitative data’s ability to describe a phenomenon is an important characteristic of this approach. Lincoln and Guba (1985:120), state that, if you want people to understand better than they otherwise might, provide them information in the form in which they usually experience it. The following characteristics of qualitative research, as cited by Bogdan and Biklen (1992:29-32) also convinced me that this approach would be the best to achieve the aims of this research as set out in section 1.6.3 in the first chapter:

- Qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument.
- Qualitative research is descriptive.
- Qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products.
- “Meaning” is of essential concern to the qualitative approach.

The researcher therefore preferred the qualitative approach to the quantitative approach, because the research problem required information gathered in as natural a setting as possible, and as realistically as possible.

McMillan and Schumacher (2006:315) describe qualitative research as a naturalistic inquiry and the collection strategies of non-interfering data, to discover the natural flow
of events and processes and their interpretation by participants. Research always requires the gathering of information and the analysis and interpretation of this information. Information can be obtained through data collection strategies such as observations, interviews and open-ended questionnaires. The research is further guided through the formulation of a research problem by establishing research questions (Fouche & Delport 2002:79). The main research question would thus be, “How should cultural values and diversities be acknowledged when teaching English as a foreign language to adult learners in Qatar?”

The qualitative nature of the research, a common approach in educational research about processes of teaching and learning, classroom relationships and how students learn, demanded more broadly-framed objectives. This is in line with what Bogdan and Taylor (1975:26-27) write:

> What distinguishes participant observation and all qualitative methods from other methodologies is that the participant observer’s questions are framed in general terms . . . . to enter a setting with a set of specific hypothesis is to impose preconceptions and perhaps misconceptions on the setting.

This project focused on how lecturers teach English as a foreign language to adults in a multicultural classroom, and more specifically on the acknowledgement of cultural diversities and values in such a setting. The methodology is complex, as it is partly based in the tradition of research into second/foreign language learning by adults and partly in the traditions of research into multicultural classroom settings, taking many facets of diversities into account.

Research methodology refers to the research process involved, as well as the tools and procedures to be employed in the investigation. Richards, Platt and Platt (1992:229) describe it as, “the procedures used in carrying out an investigation, including the methods used to collect and analyze data.” The approach followed, therefore combines several sources of qualitative data. Kervin, Herrington and Okely (2005:3) state that “our worlds are independent, messy, unique and therefore the qualitative researcher aims to uncover this complexity rather that to uncover a ‘knowable truth’.” This study aims to understand the cultural diversities when teaching English to adult learners in a multicultural classroom situation, and therefore qualitative methods were employed.
3.3 Research design

Fouche and De Vos (2002:137) define a research design as a plan or blueprint of how data is collected to investigate the research question. It is a detailed plan focussing on the end product. To achieve this, the researcher needed to identify the kind of study being planned, the kind of results aimed at and the required evidence to address the research question adequately.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:23), qualitative research designs focus on the gathering of data on naturally occurring phenomena. These data are mostly in the form of words and a variety of methods are used to explore and search, in order to achieve a deep understanding.

In this study, a case study as a form of qualitative research (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:135, 144; McMillan & Schumacher 2010:24; Fouche & Schurink 2010:320-323), was followed. According to Creswell (1998:61), a case study can be regarded as an exploration or in-depth analysis of a single or multiple case, over a period of time. Bogdan and Biklen (1992:62) refer to Merriam (1988) who describes a case study as a detailed examination of one setting, or a single subject, a single depository of documents, or one particular event. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:24) explain that a case study may focus on one entity (within-site study) or several entities (multi-site study). They refer to Stake (1995) who asserts that a case can be selected because of its uniqueness or that it can be used to illustrate an issue.

According to Stake (2005:443), a case study is defined by an “interest in the individual case, not by the methods of inquiry used.” Richards, Platt and Platt (1992:47), describe a case study as “the intensive study of an aspect of behaviour, either at one period in time or over a long period of time.” Creswell (1998:61) states that a case study design can be regarded as exploring or an in-depth analysis of a “bounded system” or a single or multiple case over limited, or a period of time. This can refer to a process, activity, event, programme, individual or group of people being involved over a period of time. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2005:181) depict a case study as a single instance of a bounded system, such as a child, a clique, a class, a school or a community.

McMillan and Schumacher (2006:26) describe an ethnographic research design as “a description and interpretation of a cultural or social group or system.” According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:345), “Some authors may actually classify case study
as a type of ethnographic study. Although case study research shares many of the
c characteristics of ethnography, we believe it is best studied as a separate type of
qualitative research.” Ethnography of communication dictates that language is not
studied in isolation, but within a social and/or cultural setting, to determine how people
in a particular group or community communicate with each other, and how their social
interaction affect the type of language they use, (Richards, Platt & Platt 1992:129).
According to Fouche (2002:274), “This strategy of inquiry is characterised by
observation (participant observation) and description of the behaviour of a small
number of cases. Data analysis is mainly interpretive, involving descriptions of the
phenomena.”

A case study was chosen because it provides the opportunity to collect detailed
information, which may not be observed using other techniques, and is usually based on
the assumption that the information gathered on a particular group, individual or
community will also be true of others (Richards, Platt & Platt 1992:47).

3.4 Methods of data collection

Data collections for this study commenced towards the latter half of 2010 and
continued well into the first three months of 2011. McMillan and Schumacher
(2006:130), note that the researcher chooses from a wide range of techniques and
approaches for collecting data from the subjects. According to Leedy and Ormrod
(2005:144) methods of data collection used in a qualitative case study design, includes
inter alia observations and interviews.

The data for this study arose from five different sources:

- Open-ended questionnaires.
- Focus group interviews.
- Follow-up individual interviews.
- Classroom observations.
- Field notes were being kept up to date with regards to my own feelings and of
what was observed.
3.4.1 Open-ended questionnaires as an instrument of data gathering

Open-ended questionnaires were completed by fellow lecturers to get a general feeling as to how they experience teaching adult learners in a diverse, multicultural environment. The questionnaires that were prepared (see Appendix A), were hand-delivered to participants, to be completed in their own time. The participants were all lecturers, and were randomly selected. Of the ten questionnaires handed out, only seven were returned. These were the lecturers who then became the seven participants in the focus group interviews. Cohen and Manion (2001:245) describe the questionnaire as a widely used and useful technique for obtaining the same information from subjects in a relatively economical way.

Delport (2002:176) notes that, researchers should be mindful of basic principles when formulating the questions for a questionnaire. Keeping this in mind, the following principles were employed to adhere to good characteristics of the questionnaire:

- Sentences were kept brief, clear and in understandable language.
- Every question contained only one thought.
- Every question was relevant to the purpose of the questionnaire.
- The researcher tried not to reflect bias.

Questionnaires were prepared and delivered by hand, as advised by Delport (2002:174) and then completed by seven participants. The purpose of this questionnaire was to generate data on the participants’ qualifications, as well as their perceptions about teaching English in a multicultural environment. Taking the time constraints of participants into account, twenty open-ended questions appeared in the questionnaire. The use of the questionnaire was also useful to check that important elements of the concept were identified and that participants had a space to add elements they considered to be important, and which have not been addressed by the questionnaire itself, (Friedl, De Vos & Fouche 2002:440).

Open-ended questionnaires (see Appendix B) were also handed to ten students, to get their perspectives and feelings on being taught English in a multicultural classroom. Of the ten handed out, only five completed questionnaires were returned.
3.4.2 Focus group interviews

Denscombe (2007:178) notes that here, the researcher acts as the facilitator. Meetings can be held for one and a half to two hours, “to explore attitudes and perceptions, feelings and ideas on a specific topic.” According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006:360), the group typically consists of 8 to 12 persons, but for more complex topics, smaller groups of 5 to 7 are recommended, and focus groups build on a group process.

Greeff (in De Vos et al, 2005:312) notes that the use of focus groups has advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages:

- More people can be involved and therefore, more opinions can be voiced by means of focus groups.
- Ideas and topics, which are unlikely to arise from individual interviews, can be generated.
- A range of issues which are relevant to the research topic can quickly be generated.

Disadvantages:

- Some participants might feel threatened to speak out openly within the group.
- Large amounts of data are generated.
- A skilled facilitator is needed to obtain good quality data and to stay focussed on the topic.

Two focus group interviews were conducted. The first focus group interviews were with seven fellow lecturers, and took place in the staffroom and was done at a convenient time, to suit all participants. The participants each had the opportunity to voice an opinion, and other members of the group could elaborate or comment on it. This proved to be very fruitful, as participants were stimulated by one another’s perceptions and ideas. A predesigned set of questions was used to guide the focus group interviews. Follow-up questions were asked where necessary. As the facilitator, the researcher posed initial and periodic questions, to encourage participants to share feelings and opinions freely and openly. The following questions were asked:
What are the challenges associated with cultural values and diversities when teaching English?

How do you and the learners experience the influence of cultural values and diversities, as well as social differences in a multicultural classroom?

What do you feel are the best practices for teaching a culturally diverse group of adult learners?

How does the separation of genders, or different nationalities affect your teaching of adult learners?

How do you accommodate learners from different religious beliefs in the classroom?

How do you think lecturers and learners could be prepared to handle a multicultural classroom?

The focus group interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed.

The second focus group interviews were done with a multicultural class of nine ladies, with students from Pakistan, Poland, Qatar, Spain, Syria and Turkey. The questions asked of these participants, were:

- Why are you studying English?
- What was the motivation for your request to be in an all female class?
- How would you feel about learning English in a multicultural classroom?
- What, in your opinion, can be done to accommodate learners in a multicultural classroom situation?
- How would you like to be treated by the lecturers in a culturally diverse language classroom?
- How would you like to be treated by fellow learners in a culturally diverse language classroom?
- What else do you feel could be done to make the multicultural classroom situation more acceptable for all learners?
- What additional information would you like to bring to my attention?

Tape-recordings with the learners were kept at a minimum, as the participants felt restricted by having their voices recorded. Not all of the learners received prior approval from family members to do so, or family members did not want to give permission for the interviews to be tape-recorded. Most of what was said was, however
written down verbatim. The notes made during the focus group interview were read back to participants after the interview to ascertain that participants were well understood and not misquoted. They had the opportunity to add information that they felt were not included in the notes (see Appendix F).

3.4.3 Interviews

Interviews were conducted with three participants, who did not form part of the focus group interviews, and semi-structured questions were posed, allowing the interviewer great latitude in asking broad questions in whatever order seemed appropriate, (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:204).

The first participant is a South African lady, between the ages of 25 to 30. She has lived and worked in Qatar as a TEFL teacher for five years and is studying a law degree part-time. She has since returned to South Africa, because of family commitments, but can still respond by e-mail to clarify issues that may arise.

The second participant is also a South African lady, between the ages of 25 to 30. She has a BA degree and has more than three years teaching experience at a local English school in Qatar, and also more than two years experience as a TEFL teacher at the centre.

The third is a Canadian male 35 years of age. He has a BA English and Linguistics, a B Ed and a MA International Studies and is also teaching at a local university. As a university lecturer, he deals with learners from various cultural backgrounds and nationalities on a daily basis. He is the only Muslim participant, who converted to Islam in his early twenties.

These three participants, the two South African ladies and one gentleman from Canada, whom I felt were very experienced and whom I regarded as “information rich” participants, were interviewed. This was done in order for me to determine whether there were similarities or differences between their perceptions and those of the participants of the focus group interviews. The following questions were posed:

- What role do you feel cultural values and cultural differences between lecturers and learners, as well as learners and their peers play when teaching English as a foreign language to adult learners?
• What, in your opinion, are the challenges associated with regard to acknowledging cultural values and cultural diversities when teaching English in a multicultural classroom?
• How do you experience the influence of cultural values and diversities in the multicultural classroom situation?
• What do you feel are the best practices for teaching a culturally diverse group of adult learners?
• Is there anything else, regarding the teaching of culturally diverse adult learners, that you would like to bring to my attention?

The last question was posed to elicit clarity and a broader understanding of the participants’ feelings, experiences and additional thoughts. To further explore these ideas, questions such as “Please explain more clearly what you mean by that?” and “Can you give me an example?”, were used.

Recordings were made of the one-to-one interviews with the three teachers and were later transcribed.

3.4.4 Observations

Strydom (2002:280) defines the concept of participant observation as “a qualitative research procedure that studies the natural and everyday set-up in a particular community or situation.” McMillan and Schumacher (2006:346) note that “participant observation is really a combination of particular data collection strategies: limited participation, field observation, interviewing, and artefact collection.” In using participant observation, the researcher can gather information about people’s feelings, thoughts and beliefs, expressed by their actions (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:347).

There are various approaches to observational research. Gall and Borg (1993:203), distinguish between a more structured (systematic) observation and less-structured (ethnographic or unstructured) observation. For this study, less-structured observations were used, as the aim was to explore the social meanings, which form the base of behaviour in natural settings.
My own design checklist, based partly on my own understanding of andragogy and partly on the research questions, was used. Additional notes, based on interesting events that happened during the observations, complemented this checklist. The following were included in the checklist:

- Provides some background to the lesson that shows awareness of learners’ cultural diversities.
- Shows awareness/sensitivity for cultural diversity when using examples.
- Draws learners’ attention to differences between culture portrayed in the textbook and their own culture.
- Uses culturally inclusive and appropriate communication.
- Encourages discussions on cultural differences between learners.
- Shows an awareness of specific problems caused by different cultural backgrounds of learners when learning English.
- Acknowledging cultural diversities when letting learners work in pairs.
- Acknowledging cultural diversities when doing group work activities.

I conducted five classroom observations. The first class was just Qatari men, and the lecturer was Canadian. The second class was an all male class, from different nationalities. In this instance, the lecturer was from England. The third one was a classroom with sixteen learners, male and female, but from eight different nationalities, and the lecturer was South African. The fourth observation was in a classroom with eighteen Qatari ladies, with a lecturer from England. The fifth and final one was an all ladies multicultural class, and the lecturer was South African.

The observations helped to raise my awareness of the issues that needed further exploration. This in particular helped to shift the focus from language acquisition to a broader focus on the diversities in a multicultural classroom and how lecturers managed to accommodate them. This also allowed me the opportunity to get a perspective on how learners from different cultural backgrounds and nationalities interact within the multicultural classroom.

Finally, from these sets of data, I captured the key features of each class observed, and notes were kept, using the observation checklist.
3.4.4.1 Role of the researcher

Strydom (2003:280) notes that as a “total observer”, the advantages to the researcher are to remain more objective. It was decided to observe five classrooms, to get a more realistic idea of the challenges and the diversities of different classes. During all observations, I tried not to be intrusive within the classroom and maintained silence, while taking my notes. A day-to-day report on the real observations done, was maintained (Strydom 2003:281). I also remained ever mindful not to let my own preconceived ideas and perceptions get in the way of the research.

3.4.5 Field notes

According to Strydom (2011:335), the gathering of data in participant observation includes the actual observation and the taking of field notes. Strydom (ibid) refers to Druckman (2005) who referred very appropriately to this process as “taking note while taking notes”. I kept detailed notes of my own teaching experiences, as well as my research activities and the research process for the duration of the research. In this way, the complex issues that were the subject of the research, could be explored. These notes were always done immediately after the focus group interviews and observations, or just after my own lessons and while data was still fresh in the memory. It allowed me to write down emotions, preconceptions, expectations and prejudices to be further developed in the final product (Greeff 2003:298). This is in line with Field and Morse (1994:79-82 as referred to by Greeff 2003:298), who note that the researcher should write down some critical points as soon as possible to minimise loss of data.

Punch (as referred to by De Vos et al, 2002:275) notes that it is expected of the qualitative fieldworker to become totally immersed in the life of the group, community or organisation in order to learn about people’s social habits and thoughts and what binds them together, a process that was time consuming, required deep personal involvement and commitment, as the researcher has truly come to realise.

3.5 Target population and sampling

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006:119), the group of subjects or participants from whom the data are collected, is referred to as the sample. And as
stated by McMillan and Schumacher (1997:393), in a case study design, the data analysis focuses on one phenomenon, as selected by the researcher, to get an in-depth understanding, regardless of the sites, participants or documents to be studied. A sample is therefore a selection of the population that it is drawn from.

According to Le Compte and Preissle (1993:56), selecting samples involves defining who and how many participants there will be, and when, where and under which circumstances they will be studied. This might involve selecting a smaller subset from the original population, or to reduce the size of the group to be studied. Convenience sampling, non-probability sampling, where the odds are not known, or purposeful sampling techniques can be used. McMillan and Schumacher (2006:125) refer to convenience sampling, or available sampling, as a group of subjects being selected on the bases of being available or suitable to the circumstances and may often provide the only possibility for research. Denscombe (2007:29) notes that, “One justification for non-probability sampling techniques stems from the idea that the research process is one of ‘discovery’ rather than the testing of hypotheses.”

Strydom (2005:196) refers to Kerlinger (1986:110) who states “that random sampling is that method of drawing a portion – or sample – of a population so that each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected.” Random sampling was used for the open-ended questionnaires handed out to ten lecturers and ten learners.

Purposeful sampling, described by Strydom (2003:202), as composed of elements that contain the most characteristic, representative or typical attributes of the population, was used for this research and participants were selected using the following criteria:

- Only participants who were qualified to teach English as a foreign language were selected for the individual interviews. Two participants were from South Africa and one from Canada. These participants qualified for “purposeful sampling” described by Cohen and Manion (1980:77), where the researcher handpicked the cases to be included on the basis of a judgment of their typicality. According to Schumacher and McMillan (2006:126), purposeful sampling can be described as “the search for information-rich key participants”.

- All participants for the individual interviews were selected because they all had more than two years experience of teaching English in a multicultural situation. Both the South African lecturers have been with the centre for more than two
years, one is studying part-time for a law degree and the other one has teaching experience at a local English school as well. The Canadian participant, although only teaching at the centre for just more than a year, was selected because of being bilingual in English and Arabic, and therefore considered well suited to comply with the study. He also lectures Social Science at a local university, and would as such be exposed to other multicultural situations, as well.

- The multicultural ladies class, as a focus group, was selected because they were from a variety of countries and different religious backgrounds. The two ladies from Poland and Spain, respectively, were Christian and the other seven ladies, although from different nationalities, were all Muslims. Five of the Muslim ladies would, for example regularly asked to be excused during classroom hours, to observe their prayer time.

- The five classroom observations were selected because of their difference in culture, gender and diversity. This provided me with the opportunity to observe the interaction between lecturers and learners from different cultural backgrounds and nationalities.

### 3.6 Gaining access to the research site and ethics

The centre director has given his permission for the research to be conducted at the language centre. He has been very helpful and supportive, and provided me with valuable personal input throughout the study.

All participants willingly gave permission to participate in the study.

As the researcher, I was ever mindful of evaluating my own conduct to adhere to ethical principles being internalised in the personality of the researcher, to such an extent where it becomes part of a lifestyle (Strydom 2003:57).

#### 3.6.1 Ethical concerns

Ethical concerns are important during research, as the researcher has to protect the anonymity and privacy of participants. From the outset of the data gathering process, participants were ensured that all information provided by them, would be kept strictly
Researchers, however, do have a responsibility to ensure that ethical concerns are adhered to. This is in line with Baker, (1988:76 as referred to by Strydom 2003:68-69), who notes that “The right of social scientists to study whatever they deem to be of scientific interest is fundamental in a free society”, but this right also implies the responsibility to ensure that the relevant investigation meets the necessary ethical requirements. Participants were ensured of the confidentiality of the data and that they were allowed at any time to withdraw from the study.

The following ethical issues, as proposed by McMillan and Schumacher (2006:334-335) were taken into account for this research and served as a guide:

- **Informed consent.**
  The intended use of the data was described to participants to get informed consent.

- **Confidentiality and anonymity.**
  Participants were given assurances of confidentiality and anonymity and that their names will not be made known. Thus the features and setting were typically disguised to appear similar to several possible places.

- **Privacy.**
  Participants understood the power they have in the research process.

- **Caring and fairness.**
  A sense of caring and fairness was part of the researcher’s thinking, to avoid participants feeling humiliated.

### 3.7 Data analysis

Data analysis, as described by De Vos (in De Vos et al, 2003:333), is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. They mention that it is mostly messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative and fascinating. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006:364), qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns among these categories.
I first read through the answers in the questionnaires a couple of times and then followed that up by listening over and over to the tape recordings of the interviews. After gathering and collating the data and transcribing it verbatim, this volume of information at first, seemed somewhat overwhelming. I found it very helpful to read through the data a couple of times. Once that was done, I focused on the open-ended questionnaires, the three individual interviews, the focus group interviews, the observation checklist and notes taken while observing, as well as my field notes, before beginning with the actual analysis. This was done in order to establish possible patterns, similarities and evolving ideas (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:366). It was also kept in mind not to just summarize one study after another, without demonstrating a connection or transition between issues and findings (Creswell 1994:153).

3.7.1 Data collected

The data sets that I assembled, consisted of:

- Transcriptions of the focus group interviews with seven lecturers, and detailed notes with a learner group of nine ladies from six different nationalities were kept.
- Three transcribed lecturer interviews.
- Seven completed questionnaires of lecturers.
- Five completed questionnaires of learners.
- Five observation sheets, together with my own handwritten notes for classroom observations.
- Field notes kept during the entire research period.

3.7.2 Data analysis process

The analysis of the data was planned to get a better understanding of how cultural values and diversities should be acknowledged when teaching English as a foreign language in a multicultural situation to adult learners in Qatar. To be able to achieve this, I used a framework for analysis based on the research aims and questions.
For the focus group interviews, as well as the lecturer interviews, I looked for themes and subthemes.

For the classroom observation data, I began by writing a short description of the typical features, methods and techniques used, for each of the five lecturers observed, as well as their interaction with learners and learners and their peers. I then coded and analyzed the observed data by looking for themes in the same way as for the open-ended questionnaires, the focus group interviews and individual interviews. This enabled me to combine these five sheets of data for my analysis and interpretation.

The focus group interviews were coded (FGT01) for the lecturers and (FGS02) for the learners. The interviews with the individual lecturers were coded (IV01 to IV03). The classroom observations were coded (CR01 to CR05). I further used different coloured highlighters to look for patterns, ideas and similarities.

The completed open-ended questionnaires for lecturers and learners were scrutinized to assist the data analysis process.

These five sets of data were scrutinized again and again to give me a better understanding of the content and to identify key themes. The data was coded according to the themes and categories, meaning a representation of similar topics, were identified, based on the responses of the themes (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:367-373).

This turned out to be quite a lengthy and time consuming exercise of sorting through the data.

### 3.8 Validity and trustworthiness of data

Validity is that researchers measure what they want to and observe what they want to. Lincoln and Guba (1985:316) state that, “Since there can be validity without reliability, a demonstration of the former (validity) is sufficient to establish the latter (reliability).” An examination of trustworthiness is crucial to ensure reliability. Seale (1999:266) states that the “trustworthiness of a research report lies at the heart of issues conventionally discussed as validity and reliability.”
A number of actions were taken in order to ensure validity and trustworthiness of data. Participants were also free to delete any information that they were not completely comfortable with. I also made use of member checking, that is, to send a draft of the data analysis to the participants to ascertain that their information had been represented accurately.

McMillan and Schumacher (2006:324-326) state that, “Qualitative researchers typically use as many strategies as possible to ensure design validity.” A number of research methods were used to ensure validity, and some of them were:

- **Prolonged field work.**
  Participant observations and focus group interviews were conducted in natural settings within the classroom.

- **Multi-method strategies.**
  Several data collection techniques, as described above, were employed to collect data.

- **Participant language and verbatim accounts.**
  The researcher used the literal language of participants.

- **Low-inference descriptors.**
  Descriptions are almost literally as those used and understood by participants.

I tried to select trustworthy evidence for pattern seeking by qualitatively assessing requested versus unrequested data, and remained aware of selection trustworthy data by guarding against my own assumptions and influence on the social situation (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:374). Triangulation, a cross-validation among data sources, data collection strategies, time periods, and theoretical schemes were employed to see whether the same patterns kept recurring (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:374).

### 3.9 Summary

In this chapter, the research design and methodology were described. It gave an in-depth explanation of data collection techniques and sampling used by the researcher.

The following chapter presents the data analysis, results and discussion of the investigation.
CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examined the results from the data collected in the open-ended questionnaires, focus group interviews, individual interviews and observations. Participants’ perceptions were presented in narrative form. Of the ten questionnaires handed out to lecturers, seven completed ones were returned. Ten questionnaires were also handed out to learners and five completed ones were returned. Two focus group interviews were conducted. The first focus group interview was with seven lecturers and the second focus group interview with nine lady learners from different nationalities. The three participants for the individual interviews were lecturers who did not form part of the first focus group interviews. Observations were done in five classes as specified in section 3.4.4. Special attention was paid to the way these participants acknowledged cultural values and differences while teaching adult learners in a multicultural situation, as well as the learners’ views on how they felt their different nationalities and cultural values were taken into account while studying English.

Data analysis, according to McMillan and Schumacher (2006:364), is an inductive systematic process of coding, categorizing and interpreting data for providing explanations of a single phenomenon of interest, and finding a meaning in all the gathered data. Categories and patterns emerge from the data, rather than being imposed on them prior to the collection. Maykut and Morehouse (1994:121) refer to it as, “The process of qualitative data analysis is fundamentally a non-mathematical analytical procedure that involves examining the meaning of people’s words and actions.” To simplify the analysis process, it was divided into specific steps, namely: preparation of the data, inductive category coding, refining of the categories and the results of the data analysis.

Where research participants’ verbal responses were cited, it should be noted that their language has not been edited. The responses were used verbatim to portray the views of the participants as accurately as possible.
4.2 Data gathering analysis and presentation

- Open-ended questionnaires

The open-ended questionnaires, completed by seven lecturers and five learners, served as a starting point to get a general feeling of their respective experiences. Firstly, the open-ended questionnaires to lecturers, were to get their perspectives on how they experience teaching adult learners in a diverse multicultural classroom. Secondly, the open-ended questionnaires were completed by learners to get their perspectives on how adult learners perceived and felt about being taught English in a multicultural environment.

- Focus group interviews

For the focus group interviews and individual interviews, each participant was given a code to protect their anonymity, and that served as reference for the rest of the study.

The focus group interviews were coded FGT, for the lecturers and FGS, for the learners. For the lecturers, the participants were then coded FGT01 to FGT07 and the learner participants were coded FGS01 to FGS09.

The first focus group interview, (FGT) that was held with three male and four female lecturers from Australia, Canada, England, South Africa and New Zealand, lasted for just over two hours. This was conducted in the staff room, in a very relaxed atmosphere, where they all felt at ease to participate freely in the discussions on their feelings about teaching English as a foreign language to multicultural groups of adult learners.

The second focus group interview, (FGS) with a multicultural ladies class of nine, included learners from Pakistan, Poland, Qatar, Spain, Syria and Turkey and lasted two hours. The purpose of the focus group interview was to collect additional data to determine how they, as learners, felt their cultural differences were taken into account by lecturers, as well as their requirements with regard to treatment and tolerance of cultural diversities.
● Individual interviews

Each participant, who took part in the individual interviews, was given a code to protect their anonymity, and that served as reference for the rest of the study. The first participant was coded IV01, followed by IV02 and IV03.

All the data collected was prepared for analysis by listening to the audio tapes of the focus group and individual interviews twice before transcribing the data verbatim. As explained earlier, the focus group interview that was held with the learners, could not be tape recorded, because some of the learners’ parents were not prepared to give permission for their voices to be recorded. Detailed notes were, however kept during the interview to ensure that a true reflection of their responses had been captured. These notes were treated in the same way as the transcriptions of the interviews. These notes were read back to the participants after the interview to ascertain that they were well understood and they had the opportunity to add or remove information they felt uncomfortable with. It has to be understood, that even though these ladies are adult learners, they are constrained by getting permission from family members with higher authority (see section 2.5.2 and section 2.6.1.3).

● Classroom observations

The notes kept while observing the classrooms, were coded (CR01 to CR05) and an observation checklist was followed. The checklist was based on the research questions and partly on my own understanding of the requirements, drawn from my experience of teaching English as a foreign language.

The checklist also enabled me to note how the different lecturers used the resources made available to them by the centre and how they handled, integrated and accommodated learners with different cultural values and from diverse backgrounds within the classroom situation.

The lecturers were aware when they would be observed, but they all assured me my presence did not influence their teaching styles and that they taught in exactly the same way they would have taught, had I not been there.

For a sample of my completed checklist, see Appendix C. The following were included in the checklist:
- Takes adult learner characteristics into consideration by making provision for learners to share their own experiences with regard to cultural diversities with the lecturer and other learners.
- Shows awareness of/sensitivity to cultural diversities when using examples.
- Draws learners’ attention to differences between their own culture and the culture portrayed in the text book.
- Uses culturally inclusive and appropriate communication.
- Encourages discussions in English on cultural differences between learners.
- Shows an awareness of specific problems caused by different cultural backgrounds of learners when learning English.
- Acknowledging cultural diversities when letting learners do pair work and group work.

• Field notes
These notes were always written down immediately after the focus group interviews, individual interviews, classroom observations, as well as my own classes, while still fresh in my memory. These notes contained my own emotions, preconceptions, expectations and prejudices.

Finally, from these sets of data, I captured the key features of each class observed.

4.3 Research findings

4.3.1 Research findings related to open-ended questionnaires completed by lecturers

Of the ten questionnaires that were sent to lecturers, only seven were returned. Each questionnaire consisted of 20 open-ended questions (see Appendix A).

The responses about their educational background and experience of EFL teaching received from the participants (questions 1, 2 and 3), revealed that the majority of the lecturers were qualified to teach at an adult education institution and that they had been at the centre for periods ranging from just over one year to five years. Of these lecturers, four had TEFL certificates plus a post-graduate qualification, two had CELTA...
certificates (one with an additional managerial qualification and one with a BA degree in Human Resources) and one a TESL certification. These teaching qualifications allowed them to teach adult learners in a multicultural environment, and the centre had a strict policy to only employ qualified lecturers. Because most participants who completed the questionnaires had qualifications pertaining to the teaching of EFL or ESL, one could assume that they would be aware of the role of culture in language teaching and of the importance of being culturally sensitive when teaching a language to a multicultural group of learners.

When asked about the challenges associated with the teaching of English at the centre (question 4), the participants mostly indicated that cultural and religious difference (between themselves and the learners and amongst the learners themselves) within the classroom could be challenging and always had to be taken into consideration, as some learners could be very sensitive about certain issues. Because of the religious beliefs of the Muslim learners, they do not eat pork. When discussing different nationalities and the food they eat, they mostly showed a strong dislike in the word *hamburger*, until it was explained that the lecturer referred to any burger (beef or chicken) and no pork, as such, was involved. The following quote from one of the participants summarises the views expressed by most of them: “Certain topics are taboo, and one needs to think out group scenarios and culturally appropriate teacher/student interactions, with regard to physical contact, as well as male/female interaction when doing pair work very carefully.”

Muslim women do not make eye-contact with men, so when they were doing pair work, the lecturer had to observe carefully to ascertain that they were in fact communicating to practise English. One of the participants responded: “You have to take their culture and religion into consideration, because they are very sensitive.” Participants also mentioned that learners new to the Middle East, were not always aware that the Muslim learners observed five prayer times per day, and if that should fall during a class, they would just get up and leave to attend prayers. Ladies were required to dress modestly. This behaviour of Muslim learners needed to be explained to learners from other (Western) countries.

Research participants were also requested to indicate how they and their learners experienced the influence of cultural values and diversities in a multicultural EFL teaching situation (question 5). They indicated that in order not to offend any learner,
they tried to be mindful of the diversities and therefore tend to generalise, and focus on making classes interesting, rather than being too specific. One of the participants explained as follows: “cultural values are critical in any classroom. They determine how a course should be taught in innumerable ways”. A Muslim woman is for example not allowed to be alone in the company of a man if it is not a close family member, such as her father or her brother. As can be seen from the following quotation, lecturers who did not share the same culture, were well aware of this and tried to take it into consideration when teaching: “You can’t talk about ‘dating’ when discussing issues like engagement and marriage, because that does not happen in their culture the same way we are used to. Yet, they will be exposed to it if they want to study in a Western country and will find it very difficult to protect and observe their own cultural values.” From the above it was clear that participants were aware of cultural diversity and values and tried to accommodate them as far as possible, but that they also kept in mind that learners should be made aware of the cultural values of other nations.

Participants also had to indicate what they regarded as the best practices for teaching English to adult learners in a multicultural classroom (question 6). Some of them indicated that it is important to “keep an open mind,” or “listen to the students” - whereas others felt “doing lots of pair work and group work” - was essential. They indicated that they did pair work and group work to get learners from different cultures and backgrounds to work together. Some learners openly welcomed this, as they saw it as an opportunity to learn from other cultures, whereas others were not keen, but did it reluctantly, if requested to do so. The following two quotations from the answers in the open-ended questionnaires depict some of the points of view on this: “Lots of group and pair work are the most helpful for me as students get to work together and are more accepting of each other. By changing the groups and pairs, students meet everyone and learn to work together, be more accepting of each other’s differences and that helps gel the class together. A big problem in the Gulf is that different cultures tend to sit together. You, as a teacher, need to encourage and motivate students to interact.” While another felt “Using examples and discussions the students feel comfortable sharing. Try to steer clear from sensitive topics.” Another participant who also felt that sensitive topics should be avoided, because learners felt offended, explained as follows: “Even using the word ‘guinea pig’ can have students up in arms, until you explain it has nothing to do with a ‘pig’, but it is a small animal, sometimes used as a pet.”
The abovementioned illustrated the complex interplay of various cultural factors in the teaching of EFL to a group of learners whose cultures differ from those of the lecturers as well as those of their peers.

When asked to respond on the way in which cultural differences and values related to how religion, gender and family relations were accommodated when teaching EFL (questions 8, 9, 11, 12, 14 and 16), the participants mostly indicated that they had no specific gender preferences when teaching English to adult learners. Some specific lecturers had gender preferences when teaching adult learners, but others had no preference. Some indicated that, “ladies are more motivated to learn”, and another responded that, “females can be demanding.”

All but one participant, indicated that they were aware of the fact that local Qatari and other Arab learners define their education, beliefs and culture on their religion and that they as lecturers had to be continually aware of these factors and should accommodate learners in this regard. Lecturers are for example obliged to let learners go for prayer time, even if these times would fall within the classroom time. As one responded: “Western students soon get accustomed to this and use that time for a quick smoke break or to practice their English with me and others in the class.” Only one of the participants felt that one should not let cultural differences dictate what happens in the classroom, as the purpose is to teach English: “I am aware of the differences, but I am here to teach English and don’t let anything else influence me or the situation in the class with learners from different cultures.”

The role of the family also forms an important part of Arab culture (refer to Hofstede’s (1980) high power distance culture in section 2.5.2, and Ariza (2006:61) in section 2.5.3). As one participant replied: “Family plays a very important part in Arab culture and as such, will play a part as to how they will interact with other students, male or female, respect displayed towards you as a teacher and discipline in class. You can tell which students have a supportive family and who has to fend for themselves.” Having siblings in the same class could also be problematic, “as they tend to stick together and not interact with others.” Another responded, “I’ve had a mother/son and father/son combination in the class. This was a difficult situation, as the one would always look to the other for either the answer, or for approval.” Arabic learners would often request to leave a class early to just ‘go and sit’ with a family member who was in hospital or in
need of conversation with another family member. Lecturers indicated that they accepted this as part of their learners’ cultural values.

From the discussion above it was clear that most respondents accommodated different cultural values when teaching EFL to adult learners by allowing them to attend religious ceremonies or to assist family members in need.

When asked to respond to the differences of teaching adults versus young learners (question 10) most of the participants replied that they took participants’ experience into consideration. One of the participants responded: “With young learners you are teaching skills, discipline and a foreign language. Adults can be educated, and very intelligent, but are unable to communicate using English. It’s very important to remember this when teaching adults.” This comment corresponded with the literature review (refer to section 2.2.2 where Malcolm Knowles’ concept of ‘andragogy’ that the adult has a ‘readiness’ to learn, was discussed) and confirmed the importance of taking adult learner characteristics into consideration when teaching a foreign language to adult learners.

The participants replied more or less the same with regard to experiences of different cultures during testing (assessment) situations, as well as the influence of social status in the classroom (questions 13 and 15). The responses were for example: “Students I’ve seen in this region and Latin America, tend to be more open to ‘helping’ others. I try to minimize this through spacing, etc” and “Arabic students don’t understand the concept of cheating. They think they are ‘helping’ each other.” This clearly shows the participants’ awareness of cultural values as well as strategies (e.g. spacing when writing a test) to accommodate these values without humiliating learners.

With regard to social status as a cultural variable, some of the responses from participants included: “Students find social differences interesting and informative and enjoy exchanging information”; “This is less likely to affect the academic environment” and “Within the Arab culture, social status is very important, so one has to be careful not to allow bullying or discrimination”. Learners sometimes use the ‘helping’ technique as a survival tool within the classroom, in order not to be embarrassed or bullied by others. It was thus clear that although social status influences teaching a multicultural group of learners in some cases, it was not always the case.
When asked to respond about how to integrate learners in a multicultural classroom, as well as what could be done to better prepare lecturers to teach English in a multicultural situation, (questions 17, 18, 19 and 20) the participants mainly indicated that understanding different cultures, in general, would be helpful. As one replied: “Just being a space where different cultures mix, people are getting to know one another. I don’t think we need to plan cultural integration.” Another responded: “Providing an info pack or introduction letter explaining the rules of the class, what they can expect during the session and any other important information. This will ensure that students know what to expect and be better prepared for a multicultural class.” This indicated that lecturers were aware of the cultural differences and that it was a natural result of teaching English in a multicultural environment.

4.3.2 Research findings related to open-ended questionnaires completed by learners

Of the ten questionnaires that were sent to learners, only five completed ones were returned. Each questionnaire consisted of 8 open-ended questions (see Appendix B).

The responses received from the learners on questions 1, 2 and 3, revealed that the majority of them were studying English for self-improvement in order to get promotion at work, or to be able to obtain university entrance in Qatar. Only two learner participants already had post-graduate qualifications. This confirmed the discussion in section 2.2.1 that the adult learner comes into the classroom with certain expectations and experience and lecturers should take this into account.

When asked whether they preferred a single-sex class to a multicultural mixed-sex class, (question 4) some of the participants (presumably Muslim females) indicated that they preferred to be in a class with females only, because they were very shy and not comfortable around the company of males who were not family members. One indicated that, “Although I am very shy, I will have to get used to it before going to a local university.” Another indicated: “In my culture we do not openly talk to men who are not a family member.” Only one participant indicated that the composition of a class does not really matter – he/she just wanted to become a competent user of English. These comments indicated that culture definitely plays an important role in the learning experiences of learners. It could be assumed that Muslim ladies who were grouped with men (whom they were not familiar with) from their own or other cultures
would be inhibited in a language classroom, especially if the communicative approach was followed, where interaction with other learners is regarded as an important teaching strategy (refer to section 2.4.1 where the communicative approach was discussed).

When asked to respond on how they would like to be treated by lecturers and fellow learners within a multicultural classroom, (questions 5, 6 and 7), they all responded that they would like to be treated with respect by all parties concerned. One participant replied: “We want to be treated with respect, but allow me time to say how I feel and what is different for me.” This showed that lecturers and learners had to be mindful that there were differences between the different cultures and nationalities and that they could use this as an opportunity to learn from each other. Learners also required more time for general conversation, to learn from others, as can be seen from the following response that was received from one of the participants: “I understand we have to get through the work, but we enjoy general conversation, because we learn a lot from others and their cultures. When we talk more, we can learn a lot from other people, I have already learnt so much about people in other countries.” One participant felt that the lecturer had a responsibility to prevent learners from using their own respective language to communicate to others in the class: “The teacher must stop other students from speaking Arabic in class. We want to learn from the other students and their cultures. I want to improve my speaking, and so we have to talk more English.” This confirmed the importance of group work for learners to interact and learn about other cultures and nationalities. It also implied that the lecturer should adhere to communicative language teaching principles (see section 2.4.1) which requires that students should be given ample opportunity in the classroom to communicate in the target language. It also indicated that lecturers should ensure that learners get the opportunity to interact with learners from other cultures and to choose themes that would give learners the opportunity to learn about their peers’ cultural values and beliefs.

4.3.3 Research findings related to the focus group interview conducted with lecturers

The following findings were obtained from the focus group interviews conducted with the lecturers:
When asked what they felt were the challenges associated with cultural values and diversities when teaching English, the participants mentioned a number of issues. They indicated that some topics could be challenging to teach and explain. They also mentioned that the interaction between men and women in the classroom could be regarded as a big challenge. Awareness of religious and cultural differences were mentioned as a challenge by many respondents. According to the respondents, one should always be aware that, “There are so many challenges. You have to take their culture and religion into consideration, because they are very sensitive” and “One should seriously think about culturally appropriate grouping. Get the approval of a lady before you put her in a group with men.” Another responded: “Do you have any idea how challenging it is to try and teach in a classroom with sixteen men and one lady, especially if they are all Qatari. She feels alienated.” One responded with: “Students sometimes fail to act and understand that their effort determines their progress.”

The abovementioned indicated that it was not always easy to accommodate cultural differences and that the selection of topics for discussion, the gender relationships and religious aspects and the differing levels of learners’ motivation to learn a foreign language were the main challenges that lecturers had to face and overcome.

When asked to respond how they and the learners experienced the influence of cultural values and diversities, as well as social differences in a multicultural classroom, the majority replied that it can be problematic at times, but they tried to skip culturally irrelevant material and made lessons interesting, rather than focussing on differences.

When asked to explain what was meant by ‘skip culturally irrelevant material’, one responded: “One has to think carefully when choosing certain examples as an explanation. In the local culture, they do not celebrate birthdays. Some students might not even know when their birthdays are. Quite a few are simply not interested in something like Valentine’s Day, but do see all the stuff in the shop windows. But then again, they do like to spoil their mothers on Mother’s Day. She is a very special person to them.” One responded: “To me it is fascinating. Some students are keen to learn from other cultures, some are not interested in others at all.” This once again highlighted the fact that adult learners have different learning preferences (refer to section 2.2.2). It, however, also showed how challenging it could be for a lecturer to teach EFL to a multicultural group of adult learners.
When responding to what they felt were the best practices for teaching a culturally diverse group of adult learners, an overwhelming majority answered that they employed group and pair work to get students to interact and work together. They also regarded respect for learners’ existing knowledge and experience as very important. One replied: “Respecting them, (the students), and their knowledge and experience. Valuing what students bring to the class, and listening to them.” Another replied: “Everybody should feel their views are being respected.” Only one replied: “Put that aside and focus on teaching English.” This indicated that most of the lecturers who participated in the research were aware of the needs of the adult learner and took that into account when teaching English.

Participants reacted differently on the question how the separation of genders, or different nationalities affected their teaching of adult learners. (One should keep in mind that depending on their preferences, learners at the centre are divided either into male-only, female-only, mixed gender or mixed gender and nationality classes). Four of them indicated that they had no gender preference and that they treated all learners (male or female) in exactly the same way. One replied: “I enjoy working with both genders and nationalities, Non-Arab students are sometimes more motivated.” Another replied: “Girls are very motivated, but a pleasant group of males can be very rewarding.” This showed that gender did not really influence lecturers’ teaching styles and that the grouping of male-only or female-only classes did not affect lecturers at all.

Participants had more or less the same response as to how they accommodated learners from different religious beliefs within the classroom. The majority of participants realised that these were very sensitive issues, as religion and social status do play crucial roles in the local culture. The responses varied from:

(FGT01) “It plays a crucial role, it influences the way they act and even view education.”

(FGT03) “I don’t bring up religion all that much, but I am open to discussing it when students are interested. I haven’t had a situation where this has damaged the class dynamic. However, I try to spend more time with excluded groups.”

(FGT05) “Religion should not play a role, but it does and then I will talk about it as openly as possible.”

(FGT06) “I always try to be sensitive and steer away from it.”
One respondent replied: “I do not tolerate any religious discussion.”

The above gave an indication of the role that religion, as an important cultural characteristic of Muslim learners, played when teaching EFL. It emphasised the importance of always taking religion into consideration.

There are numerous social differences within the Qatari society, and when asked about it, participants had more or less the same response to how these differences influenced the classroom situation and how they accommodated learners from different social differences within the classroom.

(FGT01) “Within the Arab culture, social status is very important, so one has to be careful not to allow bullying.”

(FGT04) “Students can at times be ‘bullied’ by others because of social status.”

(FGT06) “Students who feel they are actually better, or have more knowledge of English, tend to overpower or dominate conversations.”

(FGT07) “Social status influences the classroom with group activities and pair work. I think this is very apparent in the G.C.C.”

When asked to respond to how they thought lecturers and learners could be prepared to handle a multicultural classroom, the majority indicated that lecturers and learners needed to be tolerant, open to interacting with others, and accept differences in others as part of life.

(FGT02) “They (lecturers and learners) need to be tolerant.”

(FGT03) “Be open to interacting with others. It can be such an enriching experience.”

(FGT04) “Ah, you know, teachers and learners should be open to the views of others. In this way we can all learn from each other.”

(FGT05) “Accept differences in others as part of life.”

(FGT06) “Oh yes, we should all try to learn from others.”

(FGT07) “I think the learners cope well in the current enrolment make-up.”

One lecturer felt that new teaching staff should get proper training before being allowed to teach in a multicultural environment. FGT01 replied: “I think teachers new to the
centre should be given an induction course, observation class and do a trial class. The centre could provide an introductory pack, explaining the rules of the class.”

4.3.4 Research findings related to the focus group interview conducted with the learners

The participants overwhelmingly indicated that they were studying English for self-improvement to be able to get promotion at work, or to attend a local university, or to be able to find employment in Qatar. Only one replied that, “At my age, it is to do something for myself. My mother is very proud of me.” This indicated some similarities with the questionnaires completed by learners and also confirmed that the adult learner comes to the classroom with different experiences and expectations, that serve as a motivator for learning.

The relationships between genders, especially within the multicultural classroom, is very complex (refer to section 2.6.1.2). When asked to respond to the reasons for requesting to be in an all female class, as to a co-educational class, three responded that that was the only class available at the time and it was not a request. The others replied that they were not comfortable in the company of men, who were not family members. One respondent replied: “I am very shy. Because of this, and also because of my culture, I never speak directly to my father. I always talk to him through my brother. But, after a few sessions at the centre, and mixing with ladies from other cultures, it is now fine for me. It feels like I can now speak to anybody.” This corresponded with the responses obtained from learner participants who had answered the open-ended questionnaire.

When asked how they would like to be treated by lecturers and fellow learners in a culturally diverse classroom, the majority found the exposure fascinating and openly displayed a keenness to learn more from and about other cultures. They also indicated that they would like others to learn more about their respective cultures. This could be done by making use of group and pair work and allowing enough time for discussions and presentations.

(FGS02) replied: “Teachers should allow me time to say how I feel and what is different for me. With more time to talk, we can learn more about other cultures. The other students must accept that I am different. In my country, we are allowed to dress very
differently and we don’t have to cover our shoulders. I know they struggle to understand my pronunciation of words, I also sometimes struggle with theirs.”

(FGS04) said: “Teachers must respect that we are different. Sometimes I have activities and want to leave early. For me, it is good to listen to presentations about other countries. I learn such a lot and hope they enjoyed mine about Aleppo. I am here to learn and better myself. I want enough time to do that. I am not interested in anything else.”

(FGS09) replied: “The teacher must allow me time to go for prayers during class. In our country, we do not have a lot of opportunities to speak to people from other countries. I like to listen to their stories. In this class we respect each other. We also want to learn more from other students. In break we sit together and talk.”

From the above it was clear that learners would like to learn more about other cultures and that lecturers should therefore not shy away from choosing cultural issues as a topic for discussion in the EFL classroom.

When asked to respond to how they thought lecturers and learners could be better prepared to handle a multicultural classroom, the majority indicated that they would like to have more conversation time, where they could express their views and listen to the interesting views of people from other cultures. The following were some of the responses that were received:

(FGS01) “Allow us more time to talk to each other.”

(FGS04) “This is my first experience of being in a class with ladies from other countries, but I think we need more time to talk to each other.”

(FGS07) “We need time to ask questions to students from other countries.”

(FGS08) “You know teacher, we don’t really know much about other cultures. I have learnt a lot in this class.”

(FGS09) “Students can also read more about other countries on the internet. My children are at university and they also help me a lot.”

Learners would also prefer not to have too many changes of lecturers, as they tend to get used to a particular lecturer. The above once again confirmed that learners would
like to learn more about other people’s cultures, but were also sticklers to what they were used to and did not like too many changes.

4.3.5 Research findings related to the individual interviews with three lecturers at the centre

Teaching a culturally diverse group of adult learners could be very challenging for lecturers and learners alike and both parties had to be constantly aware that there were differences, but they could be accommodated within the classroom if everybody adapted to the situation. The participants answered as follows to the question, “What, in your opinion, are the challenges associated with regard to acknowledging cultural values and cultural diversities when teaching English in a multicultural classroom?”

(IV01) “The interaction between men and women, being aware of religious and cultural differences, getting students enthusiastic about learning. I remember, there was a time when I had a classroom with eight different nationalities. Not easy. The South Americans stuck together, the Qatari ladies were in one corner and the men all on one side of the classroom. To get a group like that to integrate and work together is very challenging, to say the least.”

(IV02) “Some might not experience this as a challenge, but we have to take their culture and religion into consideration, because they are very sensitive. Allow students the time to go for their prayers and occupy the others with general English conversation. They really enjoy that.”

(IV03) “Some students can at times be bully other students because of social status. And, I do not tolerate any religious discussion, a very challenging issue. That can easily lead to heated debates, which in itself, if guided correctly, and they use English all the time, could also serve a purpose, I suppose.”

It was clear that it was not easy to accommodate learners from different cultural backgrounds in a multicultural EFL classroom.

The adult learner comes to the classroom with his or her expectations. They require a certain flexibility and sensitivity from the lecturer to deal with a multicultural class. While taking the local religion into account, and showing the necessary respect for it, the focus should be on teaching English.
The learners come to the language centre to learn English and then find themselves in a situation where they have to deal with lecturers and learners who might be very different from what they are used to, being from different cultures, beliefs and backgrounds. When participants were asked: “What role do you feel cultural values and cultural differences between lecturers and learners, as well as learners and their peers play when teaching English as a foreign language to adult learners?” They answered as follows:

(IV01) “I find it fascinating learning about different cultures and places. Some students are not interested in others at all, some are. It can be problematic at times if they don’t want to work together, also be aware that students from different nationalities have different perspectives.”

(IV02) “If teachers sit in on a few different classes and observe, before they start to teach, they could gather information from different teachers. Teachers constantly have to be aware to treat everybody with respect. First try and persuade them to work together. Also explain to them that they are all in the same classroom, with one objective, and that is to learn English. Some students are not even interested in learning about others and their cultures, some are.”

(IV03) “I am very conscious of being sensitive to everybody. Some students just don’t like any physical contact - that is when interacting with the teacher. It is all different when they socialize with their friends.”

When participants were asked, what they felt were the best practices for teaching a culturally diverse group of adult learners, they replied as follows:

(IV01) “I do a lot of group and pair work and find it very helpful. When students from different cultures and backgrounds get to work together, they become more accepting of each other. By changing the groups and pairs, students meet everyone and learn to work together, be more accepting of each other’s differences and that gets them working together. A big problem in this part of the world is that different cultures tend to sit together. Teachers need to encourage and motivate students to communicate to others. Siblings often stick together and they must be encouraged to work with other students. The one major benefit (of siblings in the same class) is having someone to practice with at home, with the same information and knowledge. Siblings, especially younger ones, often fight or argue in class and need to be refocused or monitored.”
carefully. There is also a tendency to help and a weaker sibling might only copy work and not learn for themselves. This is something to be careful of.”

(IV02) “Sometimes it feels like I am drilling information into students. But repetition helps a lot. Rote learning also helps. If they struggle with pronunciation, it helps them to say the word over and over. And of course, pair work and group work.”

(IV03) “I have no problem and normally only had classes at the higher levels, where the students were able to follow instructions. In very rare cases would I use a few Arabic words to get the instructions across. I do not spoon-feed students. But I am always prepared to help and repeat work where necessary. With pair work and group work I am always very careful how I group learners.”

From the above responses it could be concluded that different lecturers had different approaches to teaching English. Integrated pair and group work to get learners from different cultures to work together, as well as repetition were employed by lecturers to get the message across. Lecturers had to be respectful toward students, be mindful that they were adults and came into the learning environment with their own knowledge and experience, but just unable to communicate fluently in English. These learners should be allowed enough time to talk and practice their English, as well as their newly learnt reading and writing skills under the supervision of the lecturer.

Participants had the following responses when asked if they had any gender preferences when teaching English to adult learners.

(IV01) “When classes are separate, it is easier. When classes are made to mix, group work and confidence of students can be affected. Students are not always keen on group discussion or even class discussion, which is a key part of learning a foreign language. I enjoy working with both genders and all nationalities.”

(IV02) “Yes, I enjoy teaching males more than females, because the latter are more self-conscious and demanding.”

(IV03) “Men are not always motivated to study, but girls are. To get them motivated, can be a real challenge. A pleasant group of males can be very rewarding, though. Students who feel they are actually better, or have more knowledge of English, sometimes want to dominate and teachers have to guard against that.”
From the above responses, it could be concluded that these lecturers more or less shared the same views as the lecturers in the focus group interviews. One indicated no specific preference, one preferred teaching men and the last one was indifferent to gender preference. This showed that gender preferences did not have any influence on lecturers’ teaching styles.

Lastly participants were asked if there was anything else, regarding the teaching of culturally diverse adult learners that you would like to bring to my attention. Only one participant replied:

(IV01) “Teaching a foreign language is very different from normal teaching and I think, as a teacher, one must always try to be flexible and open-minded, as each class is different. We must adapt to the needs of the student. This is especially important for people new to the Gulf, who may not be aware of the cultural and religious factors at play in the country. The centre could provide an info pack or introduction letter to students, explaining the rules of the class, what is expected of them during the session and any other important information. This way, students know what to expect and are prepared for a multicultural and mixed gender class.”

4.3.6 Research findings related to the observation of lesson presentations to five groups of multicultural adult learners

The criteria used for observing the five classes, were explained in section 4.2.

From my observation, it became evident that four out of five lecturers took the characteristics of the adult learner into consideration, by making provision for learners to share their own experiences with regard to cultural diversities with the lecturer and other learners. One lecturer (CR02) in an all male class of mixed nationalities, however hardly touched on this and focussed more on teaching a specific grammar point.

All the lecturers in the classes observed, showed awareness of, or sensitivity towards cultural diversities when using examples (i.e. being careful not to use examples that might offend some learners). All the lecturers gave a clear and comprehensible outline of the objectives of the lesson and provided background to the lesson, keeping in mind that learners are from different cultural backgrounds. All of them also used culturally
inclusive and appropriate communication, by not using discriminatory language that
demeans or devalues any group of adult learners.

Although prescribed textbooks were used in class, lecturers drew learners’ attention to
differences between their own culture and those portrayed in the textbooks. One
lecturer (CR02) used additional material, but that was done with sensitivity, ensuring
that it was culturally appropriate and not offensive to any learner and would add value
to the prescribed lesson of the particular day.

Lecturers were aware of specific problems caused by different cultural backgrounds of
learners when learning English, by explaining, for example, differences in the way people
greet each other in countries like America, Greece, Japan and Qatar. They all used
culturally inclusive and appropriate communication. (CR03) and (CR05) encouraged
discussions in English on cultural differences between learners, for example, by asking
them to tell others what is different in their respective countries about wedding
ceremonies and naming a baby.

They all applied effective activities to maintain interest and foster learning. When doing
pair work and group work activities, lecturers acknowledged cultural diversities. Four
lecturers (CR01, CR02, CR03 and CR05) moved learners around when doing pair work, in
order for them to communicate with different people and not just the learner next to
them, whom they might feel comfortable with. In three of the classes, (CR01, CR03 and
CR05) lecturers integrated learners from different nationalities when doing group work.
Lecturers emphasized to learners that it was to promote learning English and they
should all experience it as an additional opportunity to practise newly learnt language
skills, and not as some form of punishment.

All the lecturers provided individual assistance where needed and continually motivated
and encouraged learners to want to learn English, as well as getting to know and
communicate to learners from culturally diverse backgrounds. This was done all the
time with keeping English language learning in mind.

These classroom observations proved to be very successful. The lecturers displayed an
integration of different learning activities and continually motivated and encouraged
learners to want to learn English. Prescribed textbooks were used, and where additional
material supplemented the lesson, it was done with the necessary sensitivity of the
different cultures and without offending any learner. All the lecturers displayed an
awareness of cultural differences amongst the adult learners, but let that play a secondary to teaching English.

4.3.7 Research findings based on field notes that were kept throughout the research process

From the field notes that I kept throughout my research, the following complements the findings based on the open-ended questionnaires, the focus group interviews, individual interviews and the classroom observations.

The learners came to the language centre to learn English and then had to deal with lecturers and learners who might be very different from what they were used to, being from different cultures, beliefs and backgrounds. A general awareness of the different cultures and how they interact with the lecturer and fellow learners should always be taken into account. For some it is fascinating to learn about other cultures. Others felt they were at the centre to learn English, and could simply not be bothered with people from different nationalities.

Teaching a culturally diverse group of adult learners can be very challenging for lecturers and learners alike and both parties have to be constantly aware that there are differences, but they could be accommodated within the classroom if everybody adopted an attitude of sensitivity.

Some adult learners preferred to be in a classroom with students of the same gender, others openly enjoyed the new experience of being in a classroom with different cultures and genders, and were curious to learn from them. Even if they then did end up in a same-gender classroom, they might still be confronted with students from other cultures, beliefs and backgrounds. At present, the centre is doing a lot to accommodate the preferences of individual learners. Lecturers are very aware that there are certain obstacles when teaching a culturally diverse group of adult learners.

Lecturers have to be constantly aware of the specific needs of learners when they are teaching English to a diverse group of adult learners in a multicultural classroom. The first aim was to teach English to the learners, but that was not always achievable, without taking the diversities and different cultural values of the learners into account.
Integrated group work and pair work was being used by a lot of the participants, in order to get students from different cultures to work together and learn from each other.

Lecturers had to be respectful towards learners, be mindful that they were adults and came into the learning environment with their own knowledge and experience, but just unable to communicate fluently in English. They should therefore be allowed enough time to talk and practise their English, as well as their newly learnt reading and writing skills under the supervision of the lecturer.

4.4 Consolidation: Themes and subthemes that emerged from the findings

Four main themes, related to the problem formulated in section 1.6.1 emerged from the data, namely (1) how cultural values and differences between lecturers and learners and learners and peers influence teaching strategies; (2) challenges associated with teaching EFL to culturally diverse learners; (3) the best practices for teaching EFL to a culturally diverse group of adult learners; and (4) how adult learner characteristics influenced teaching in a multicultural situation. From these four themes, a number of subthemes, as depicted in Table 4.1 could be identified:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
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| How cultural values and differences between lecturers and learners and learners and peers influence teaching strategies | • How examples were chosen  
• Using group and pair work  
• Creating communicative situations  
• Using text books |
| Challenges associated with teaching EFL to culturally diverse adult learners | • Understanding differences  
• Acknowledging differences  
• Sharing experiences with regard to cultural differences in class  
• Avoiding bias |
| The best practices for teaching EFL to a culturally diverse group of adult learners | • Knowing learners’ cultural backgrounds |
| The role of adult learner characteristics | - Learners’ motivation to learn a foreign language  
- Learners would like to learn about other cultures |

| - Integrating multicultural viewpoints in the lesson presentations  
- Allowing for regular discussions of cultural differences  
- Ensuring culturally responsive and appropriate classroom behaviour  
- Showing respect for learners’ culture |

### 4.4.1 The influence of cultural values and differences between lecturers and learners and learners and peers on teaching strategies

The lecturers who took part in the research mainly indicated that cultural values and differences between lecturers and learners, and learners and peers, had an influence on the way in which they teach. The open-ended questionnaires, focus group interviews, individual interviews and classroom observations revealed that although lecturers did make a lot of use of the communicative approach (which is currently the accepted approach for teaching a foreign language), they also relied a lot on rote learning, repetition and reinforcement of concepts. It however became clear that, when choosing examples they made sure that the examples did not offend a certain group of learners and that the examples were either value neutral or used in such a way that learners’ different cultural backgrounds were accommodated.

The communicative approach demands that ample opportunity for **pair and group work** be created in order to give students a chance to use the target language in a communicative situation. Although lecturers were very aware, and mindful of the situation, pair and group work activities however, were done without too much
consideration for cultural differences among learners. More was done on teaching English and letting learners from different cultural backgrounds and nationalities, as well as genders, integrate on a regular basis to promote learning. This proved to be problematic at times, as some learners made it clear that they find it difficult to communicate with learners from other cultural groups, because of shyness, or a lack of understanding of a particular pronunciation. Other learners, especially the learners from Western nationalities, openly enjoyed learning from other cultures, and welcomed situations where they could learn more from other cultures.

4.4.2 Challenges associated with teaching EFL to culturally diverse adult learners

From the above it was clear that there were various challenges associated with teaching English to a group of culturally diverse adult learners. This was especially relevant in Qatar, where the local religion forms such an integral part of every sphere of society.

The lecturers who participated in the research, indicated that they were very aware of this and tried to accommodate learners from different beliefs and backgrounds, within the classroom. Learners who, because of their belief, pray five times a day, were allowed time to do so, should this co-inside with classroom activities. During this time, most lecturers would involve remaining learners from other cultures and beliefs, in conversational activities to practice newly learnt English language skills.

Adult learners in turn, indicated that they would like to be treated fairly and with respect by lecturers and other learners. Learners also required to be treated with flexibility and sensitivity, and without bias from lecturers.

4.4.3 The best practices for teaching culturally diverse adult learners

It could therefore be concluded that the adult learners have different needs and requirements to obtain English language proficiency. Lecturers should be aware and acknowledge these differences when teaching adult learners.

In order for the adult learners to practise newly learnt language skills, lecturers should allow ample time within the classroom for learners from different cultures and nationalities to integrate and communicate, to facilitate learning.
Different lecturers employed different techniques to teach English. Some lecturers indicated that they did take the time to listen to what the adult learner had to say, how they felt and what he or she expected from the lecturer.

Although some lecturers had a gender preference when teaching adult learners, they did not let that influence their teaching styles and all the time remained focussed on teaching English.

4.4.4 The role of adult learner characteristics

From the above, it could be concluded that the adult learner enters the learning environment with existing knowledge, experience in a particular field of expertise, but sometimes with unrealistic expectations. Most adult learners were motivated to learn because they can anticipate the outcome, be that a promotion at work, finding employment in Qatar, or being accepted to study at a local university.

Although some adult learners found it interesting to learn about different cultures from other learners, some were just not interested at all and preferred to focus their attention on becoming more English language proficient.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter dealt with the data analysis and interpretation of findings of the research. The data gathering analysis and presentation of data collected from open-ended questionnaires to lecturers and learners, two focus group interviews (one with lecturers and one with learners), individual interviews with three lecturers, five classroom observations and field notes kept while doing the research, formed part of this.

The general opinion gathered from the responses of the participants revealed that most were aware of the cultural differences when teaching a multicultural group of adult learners.

In the final chapter, a summary of the key patterns which emerged from the findings will be discussed.
CHAPTER 5

OVERVIEW, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the investigation. The study is summarised, major findings from the study are highlighted and recommendations are made. The just more than three years experience of teaching English to multicultural groups of adult learners in Qatar, shaped my abilities and attitudes towards this research. I became interested in how other lecturers, from different backgrounds and nationalities, would experience and acknowledge this, too.

5.2 Overview of the investigation

An overview of the cultural values and diversities, as being acknowledged by myself and other lecturers when teaching English as a foreign language to adult learners in Qatar, were used as a point of reference for the study.

Chapter 1 of this study dealt with orientation and background to the study. This entailed a short explanation of the role of English, taught as a foreign language in Qatar, as well as the role of culture in language teaching and learning. The main focus of this study was on the acquisition of English as a second or foreign language by adult learners, and acknowledging the different cultural values and diversities when this is done in a multicultural environment.

This chapter also presented the statement of the research problem, the motivation for and contribution of the study, as well as the aims and objectives of the study. The aims and objectives revolved around looking at the prevailing theory of second language teaching, acknowledging influences of cultural values and diversities on lecturers and adult learners, and the best practices for teaching a culturally diverse group of adult learners. The study took the form of a case study and it was explained that the case study entails an in-depth analysis of a phenomenon in a particular setting. The methods
used, were mentioned and briefly discussed. The chapter concluded with the chapter division and concept clarification.

Chapter 2 focused on a review of the relevant literature. Aspects discussed included current foreign language methodology, teaching a foreign language to adult learners (e.g. the role of age in EFL), culture and multicultural learning situations and the cultural value and beliefs that should be taken into consideration when teaching English as a foreign language to a multicultural group of adult learners.

The adult learner enters the classroom with his or her own preconceived knowledge, experience and expectations and has varying needs to acquire English language proficiency. These needs could be a promotion at work, and therefore to be more fluent in English, finding employment in Qatar, or obtaining the necessary certificate to attend any university in Qatar.

The discussions in this chapter also covered the role of mother tongue in foreign language acquisition, taking Krashen’s theory of second language acquisition versus second language learning into account. According to Krashen, acquisition of a second language is a subconscious process, and learners need to be exposed to language that is meaningful to them, in order to learn. The communicative approach to foreign language teaching, a widely accepted method, seemed to be the most effective. In this way, lessons are planned to maximise opportunities for learners to be exposed to real-life situations and in a more realistic environment to facilitate learning.

Teaching English to adult learners in Qatar cannot be done without taking culture, and especially the Middle Eastern culture into account. This poses many challenges to lecturers and adult learners alike and they all have to acknowledge the differences and uniqueness of the situation when being taught in a multicultural classroom. The chapter also included a discussion of Hofstede’s well-known five dimensions of culture. These five dimensions were applied to Middle Eastern cultural values. The role of religion, gender differences and socio-economic status was discussed. The chapter was concluded with a discussion of cultural misconceptions that could influence the teaching of English as a foreign language to a multicultural group of adult learners.

Chapter 3 explained the research methodology of the case study, as conducted at an English language centre in Qatar. The decisions that determined the research design and choice of the research methods for the study were discussed. The research
participants were identified and described. A qualitative approach was conducted for this investigation.

Data was obtained by first using hand-delivered open-ended questionnaires. Of the ten hand-delivered questionnaires to fellow lecturers, only seven completed ones were returned. Questionnaires were also delivered to ten learners, and five completed ones were returned. Two focus group interviews were held, firstly with seven lecturers and secondly with nine ladies, all adult learners. These were followed by three individual interviews with lecturers, who did not form part of the focus group interview. These three information rich participants were selected because of their experience of teaching English to adult learners in a multicultural environment. These participants were two ladies from South Africa and a gentleman from Canada.

Five classroom observations, as described in section 3.4.4, were conducted. The five classroom observations were firstly with just Qatari men, then an all male class from different nationalities, then a classroom with male and female students from different nationalities, after that a classroom with Qatari ladies, and lastly an all ladies multicultural class. The focus of these classroom observations was to determine how lecturers acknowledge the cultural differences of learners while teaching English, and how learners interact with peers from different cultural backgrounds while receiving English language instruction. Field notes, regarding my own feelings and perceptions, as well as what was actually observed, were kept throughout the process.

The responses of the data collected, were presented in their original format.

Chapter 4 collated the gathered data and subsequently provided the data analysis and interpretation of the findings. The data obtained from seven open-ended completed questionnaires from lecturers and five completed questionnaires from learners, one focus group interviews with lecturers, one focus group interviews with learners, three individual interviews with lecturers qualified to teach English as a foreign language to adult learners, five classroom observations and my own field notes, provided the basis for the findings and suggestions for further study.

In Chapter 5 an overview and conclusions that can be drawn from the research, limitations of the study, and certain recommendations, with regard to teaching English to adult learners in a multicultural classroom situation, were made.

This chapter will conclude with suggestions for further research.
5.3 Limitations of the study

The contribution of this study was to determine what influence cultural values and cultural diversities have on the teaching situation when teaching EFL to culturally diverse groups of adult learners in Qatar and how lecturers should acknowledge and accommodate those differences. While the study achieved these aims, the applicability and generalisation of the findings to other contexts are limited by the fact the research took place at one specific English language centre in this country. Other factors such as the commitment of the centre director and fellow lecturers at the centre where the research was conducted, might also differ from other language centres in Qatar, or language centres in other countries where English is taught as a foreign language to adult learners. The applicability of the findings to other contexts should therefore be treated with caution.

5.4 Conclusions of the study

5.4.1 Conclusions drawn from the literature study

- Adult learners come to the EFL class with a wealth of experience, values and prior knowledge in their respective fields, but also with certain expectations. Within the context of this study these expectations typically included to be able to acquire the necessary language skills to communicate more effectively in English.

- Adults have already developed a sense of responsibility for their own deeds, and are motivated to learn. Because they have already gained a lot of experience in their respective fields, lecturers should tap into these experiences and utilise them when teaching adult learners.

- The prevailing theory for teaching English as a foreign language is the communicative approach. Communicative language teaching is an approach to language teaching and there is no single prescribed method that should be used. Communication is the nucleus of foreign language teaching. Using the
communicative approach to language teaching, allowing learners enough time to communicate with the lecturer and fellow learners in a more realistic and “true to life” environment, would assist learning. The implications of this approach for teaching is therefore to create situations in class in which learners are motivated to communicate with one another, with the lecturer and eventually with the wider community. Creating communicative situations in the classroom, could be a challenging task for lecturers, as cultural differences often inhibit learners and prevent them from communicating effectively with other learners in class.

- Family, friends, religion and the social environment play vital roles within the Middle Eastern cultures and therefore will influence the language learning of the adult learner within a diverse multicultural classroom. The influence of these factors do not only affect the learners from Middle Eastern cultures, but also influences the adult learners from other cultural backgrounds, who find themselves in a classroom situation with learners with different cultural values and from different cultural backgrounds. Lecturers need a constant awareness of culturally responsive teaching, to accommodate learners from different cultural backgrounds in the classroom (refer to section 2.7.2). This study focussed on how different cultures should be integrated within the culturally diverse classroom during language teaching – in other words, how lecturers should teach in a culturally responsive way while acknowledging these cultural differences of adult learners in the classroom when teaching English as a foreign language. Lecturers should take the time to familiarize themselves with the customs of learners from other cultures to avoid miscommunication (refer to section 2.7.3), and not assume that all nationalities have the same customs as Westerners when performing seemingly everyday activities.

5.4.2 Conclusions drawn from the case study

The conclusion drawn from the case study are directly related to the aim of the study which was indicated as follows: “The principal aim of the research was to determine what influence cultural values and cultural diversity have on the teaching situation when teaching EFL to culturally diverse groups of adult learners and how lecturers should acknowledge and accommodate those differences” (refer to section 1.6.3).
• The adult learner

The case study confirmed the findings in the literature study, namely that adult learners enter the classroom with a wealth of existing knowledge, experience and expectations. The case study, however, revealed that these expectations are not always realistic, because, as indicated in the open-ended questionnaires (refer to section 4.3.1), “Adults can be educated, and very intelligent, but are unable to communicate using English. It’s very important to remember this when teaching adults.” When they enter the classroom for the first time, they are mostly highly qualified in their respective fields, but they are unable to communicate their thoughts properly in fluent English. The adult learner also has his or her own expectations of how they want to be treated by the lecturer, as well as fellow learners, within a multicultural classroom. They want to be treated with respect, others to take their cultural differences into account, and be allowed enough time to have conversations in English, with the lecturers, as well as fellow learners. Adult learners are more motivated to learn, because they can anticipate the outcome being it a promotion at work, employment in Qatar or acceptance at a local university.

• The adult learner and EFL teaching

Teaching English to a group of adult learners in a diverse, multicultural classroom can be challenging for lecturers if learners’ different cultural values and nationalities are not taken into account. What seems to be a challenge to some teachers, others take in their stride.

Adult learners do require flexibility and sensitivity from the lecturer to deal with a multicultural class and want to be treated fairly and with respect. Some adult learners openly welcome the exposure to learners with different cultural values and from different backgrounds and expressed a keenness to learn from them and get to know their customs, while other students are not interested at all and prefer to focus on studying English. The multicultural classroom situation also poses a problem especially to local Qatari ladies, as they are unaccustomed to interacting with men who are not immediate family members. Some ladies do however realise that they will have to get used to a multicultural learning situation if they require promotion at work, or want to study at a university in Qatar or abroad, where learners will be in classes with mixed genders.
Teaching practices
From the responses of participants, it is evident that different lecturers have different approaches to teaching English. Lecturers are however, constantly aware of cultural differences within the classroom and do accommodate these differences. The majority of lecturers regularly employed group and pair work, as well as repetition, especially of newly learnt words and concepts, to get the message across. Sensitivity towards the cultural differences has to be taken into account when getting learners from different cultural backgrounds to work together, as well as the subjects chosen for oral discussions in the classroom. Pair work and group work are employed to get learners from different cultures to work together, interact and learn from each other, and not only associate with people from the same culture or gender. Lecturers who are aware of these cultural differences, displayed the necessary sensitivity not to embarrass any learner in the classroom, but would rather encourage them to use this opportunity to practice newly learnt skills, such as new vocabulary, pronunciation, or reading and writing skills.

Cultural values
Although the local religion is such an integral part of everyday life in Qatar, and should be respected by others not of the same belief, the focus should be on teaching English. Adult learners are generally open to learn new things from other cultures, but that only happens after some time in the classroom. Some learners are initially, unaware of the different circumstances, such as prayer time, male/female interaction, or dress code. Their initial desire is to learn English and seemingly, the rest will follow. When prayer time for the Muslim learners falls within classroom time, lecturers are obliged to excuse them to attend that, while at the same time, occupying learners from other nationalities in the classroom with additional conversational activities. Learners from other nationalities, especially learners new to the country, are not aware of the male/female interaction and that local Qatar women are not comfortable doing pair work with men who are not family members. Western lady learners also quickly get used to the dress code and realise that they have to dress more modestly when attending an English class with learners from other nationalities. Learning English in a multicultural environment can never be seen in isolation
and learners from different nationalities have to accept this, while at the same time learning to respect the customs of another culture.

While some adult learners embrace learning from and about other cultures that differ from their own, some adult learners will not openly interact with learners from other nationalities, unless specifically asked to do so and tend to associate with people from the same culture or nationality. This will have an effect to the efficiency of using the communicative approach to language teaching. Lecturers do acknowledge this situation within the classroom and constantly focus learners’ attention to accepting others from different cultural backgrounds, while learning English at the same time.

- Segregation of genders
Some adult learners, especially local Qatari ladies, prefer to be in a ladies-only classroom, because they are naturally uncomfortable talking to men who are not immediate family members. Learners from Western countries normally have no preferences and will function efficiently in any circumstance, because they are used to integrating with other genders on a regular basis. Some lecturers indicated that they do have a gender preference, whereas others have no preference. As far as the lecturers are concerned, the gender of learners has no influence on their teaching styles when teaching English as a foreign language to adult learners. They do, however, take cultural values with regard to gender relationships into consideration when doing group and pair work.

- The multicultural classroom
At the centre, lecturers are continually ‘confronted’ with adult learners from multicultural backgrounds. Lecturers, as well as adult learners, especially the ones who are not always aware of the situation when they enrol for an English class, have become accustomed to a multicultural classroom, with learners with different cultural values and backgrounds. Lecturers, as well as the adult learners very quickly become aware of this situation, and although some find it fascinating to learn more about other cultures, others brush it aside or choose to ignore it. While the majority of lecturers and learners feel that they acknowledge the cultural differences and embrace it, because they would like to learn more from the situation, some feel that it is a centre for learning English, and that is what they aim to achieve, while keeping these differences in mind.
Lecturers in the multicultural classroom

Lecturers at the centre are all qualified to teach English as a foreign language. The lecturers, who have been at the centre for some time and with some experience of the multicultural classroom situation, are very aware that there are certain obstacles when teaching a culturally diverse group of adults. New lecturers, although qualified to teach English as a foreign language to adult learners, especially the ones who are brand new to the country and start teaching at the centre within a few weeks of arriving, struggle with this concept.

Challenges when teaching EFL to adult learners

Lecturers do acknowledge the challenges associated when teaching English as a foreign language to adult learners from different cultural backgrounds and with different cultural values. The lecturers are aware that family, friends, the local religion and the social environment play a significant role within the classroom situation and adult learners should also be made aware of this and use the opportunity to learn more from others and their cultures.

5.5 Recommendations

5.5.1 Recommendations with regard to teaching adult learners

As far as teaching practices are concerned, the following recommendations are made:

- During pair and group work, lecturers should be sensitive to cultural differences when getting learners from different cultures and genders to work together.

- Although prescribed textbooks are used, lecturers should be sensitive to the fact that the culture depicted in the textbook may differ from the learners’ culture.

- Lecturers should draw learners’ attention to these differences, while at the same time encourage them to learn from one another, as well as improving their English language skills.

- Lecturers should try and avoid certain taboo topics for oral presentations if it becomes clear that learners are uncomfortable with them, and include
appropriate culturally related topics, to allow learners from different cultures to
learn from each other.

- To avoid embarrassing any adult learner, especially ones from a Middle Eastern
country, simply because they do not understand what is expected of them,
lecturers should employ another learner, who is more fluent in the local
language, as well as English, to communicate the message.

With regard to acknowledging cultural differences and different cultural values:

- Lecturers should display flexibility and sensitivity towards different cultures,
without excluding any learners.

- Lecturers and learners should respect fellow lecturers and learners and observe
their cultural differences, like dressing modestly and using culturally inclusive
communication.

- Lecturers should realise that the values currently associated with their
respective home countries, might be totally different from Qatar, and as such
might influence the way they teach a culturally diverse group of adult learners.

When addressing challenges with regard to teaching EFL to learners with cultural
diversities and different cultural values, the following recommendations are made:

- Lecturers should be aware of and acknowledge cultural diversities and different
cultural values between themselves and learners, as well as learners and their peers, when teaching English as a foreign language to adult learners.

- Lecturers should be aware that family, friends, the local religion and social
environment play a significant role when teaching English to adult learners.

- Lecturers should be aware that some adult learners are very motivated to learn,
but others will ‘help a friend’ (cheat) while taking a test in order to obtain a
certificate of English language proficiency, without obtaining the necessary
fluency.
Although it has become clear from the study that most lecturers are aware of the cultural differences between them and adult learners, some lecturers new to the centre are not always aware of the situation. In order to make the transition easier for new lecturers, the following recommendations are made:

- New lecturers should be given an introductory booklet, handed out before they start teaching, on how to deal with adult learners from different cultures and backgrounds.
- New lecturers should observe at least two classes before they start teaching themselves.
- New lecturers should teach at least one lesson, under supervision, before being allowed to teach, in order to get accustomed to teaching adult learners with different cultural values and backgrounds.

With regard to new learners, the following recommendations are made, in order for them to cope with the learning environment at the centre:

- Learners should receive an introductory booklet, preferably in their first language, or a language they are familiar with, explaining what is expected of them regarding classroom behaviour, dealing with students from different cultures and general attitude and behaviour when on the premises of the centre.

With regard to best practices for teaching EFL to culturally diverse learners, the following recommendations are made:

- Lecturers should use the communicative approach to language teaching to be most effective and for learning to occur, by using the target language in a realistic communicative way for activities, by allowing learners to make mistakes and by using visual stimulation.
• Lecturers should acknowledge that adult learners want to achieve a level of communicative competence to communicate more efficiently and fluently in English.

• Lecturers should teach in a culturally responsive way, acknowledging different cultural values and cultural diversities of the adult learner.

5.5.2 Recommendations for future research

• Since this research deals with only one English language centre in Qatar, it is recommended that a similar study be done at other centres within this and other countries where EFL is taught to learners whose culture and cultural values differ from those of the lecturer and other learners.

• The focus of this study was on acknowledging the cultural values and diversities when teaching a group of adult learners in Qatar. Further study could be done on the influence that the lecturers’ cultural values have on his or her teaching practices and whether learners experience lecturers from different cultures differently. The question that needs to be investigated is whether learners would prefer EFL lecturers from their own culture or from a different culture.

5.6 Conclusion

This research investigated the cultural values and diversities to be acknowledged when teaching English as a foreign language to a group of adult learners. The adult learner has unique needs. He or she approaches the situation with existing knowledge and experience in a particular field, and also with certain expectations about language learning. When studying English in Qatar, this can never be done without taking cultural values and the role of family, friends, the local religion and the social environment into account.

The study provided some insight for lecturers to be able to empower people from different nationalities to learn English. It is hoped that in the future, other lecturers from native English speaking countries, will benefit from the insights portrayed in this study.


Marhaba. 2010. Qatar.


The Holy Koran.


APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Questionnaire for lecturers

Dear Staff member,

I am presently doing research to complete my Masters Degree in Adult Education. The research has to do with acknowledging multicultural diversities when teaching English to adult learners in Qatar.

It would be appreciated if you could complete this questionnaire as honestly as possible. You do not need to identify yourself – so no need to give your name. Feel free to write on the back of the paper if you need to. The completed form could be left in my tray.

Thank you so much for taking the time and effort to complete it.

Regards,

Riana

Questions

1. What professional qualification, allowing you to teach English as a foreign language, do you have?  
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2. Academic qualification (E.g., BA, B Ed).
........................................................................................................................................................

3. How many years teaching experience do you have at the centre?  
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4. What do you think are the challenges associated with cultural values and diversities when teaching at the centre?  
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5. How do you and the learners experience the influence of cultural values and diversities in a multicultural English Foreign language teaching situation?

6. What in your opinion are the best practices for teaching a culturally diverse group of adult learners?

7. How do you as a lecturer integrate a culturally diverse group of learners?

8. How does the preferred separation of genders affect your teaching, if at all?

9. Do you have a gender or nationality preference when teaching adult learners and why?

10. What do you feel are the differences between teaching adults and young learners?

11. How do you accommodate learners with different religious beliefs in your class?

12. What role do you feel religion plays in the classroom situation, if at all?

13. What is your experience of learners from different cultures’ behaviour during the testing situation?

14. How do you experience the interaction between siblings or parent and adult learner in the same classroom?

15. What is your experience of social differences amongst learners?

16. In your opinion, what role does the family play in the learner’s learning environment?
17. What role do you think the centre should play in integrating different cultures in the classroom?
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18. How do you think new lecturers at the centre could be better prepared for teaching English in a multicultural situation?
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19. How could learners be prepared to handle the multicultural classroom?
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20. Is there anything else that you feel you would like to bring to my attention?
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APPENDIX B

Questionnaires for learners

Dear Learner,

I am presently doing research to complete my Master Degree in Adult Education. The research has to do with acknowledging multicultural diversities when teaching English to adult learners in Qatar.

It would be appreciated if you could complete this questionnaire as honestly as possible. You do not need to identify yourself – so no need to give your name. Feel free to write on the back of the paper if you need to. The completed form could be left with your lecturer at the end of the class.

Thank you so much for taking the time and effort to complete it.

Regards,

Riana

Questions

1. What professional qualifications do you have?

2. How long have you been studying at the centre?

3. What level are you studying at the moment?

4. How do you feel about learning English in a multicultural class?

5. Do you feel that lecturers are doing enough to accommodate a multicultural class, and how is it being done?
6. How would you like lecturers to handle a multicultural class?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

7. What else, in your opinion can be done to make the situation more acceptable for all learners?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

8. What additional information about the above mentioned questions would you like to bring to my attention?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX C

CHECKLIST FOR CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

As a lecturer, was the following being adhered to:

- Takes adult learner characteristics into consideration by making provision for learners to share their own experiences with regard to cultural diversities with the lecturer and other learners.
- Shows awareness of/sensitivity to cultural diversities when using examples.
- Draws learners’ attention to differences between their own culture and the culture portrayed in the text book.
- Uses culturally inclusive and appropriate communication.
- Encourages discussions in English on cultural differences between learners.
- Shows an awareness of specific problems caused by different cultural backgrounds of learners when learning English.
- Acknowledging cultural diversities when letting learners do pair work.
- Acknowledging cultural diversities when letting learners do group work.
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION FOR LECTURERS

In this transcription, abbreviation letters used are explained.

Q stands for question
A stands for answer
P stands for probing

Interviewee number one

Q: What qualification do you have to teach English as a foreign language and how long have you been teaching at the centre?

A: I have a TEFL certificate and have been at the centre for just over five years, with working experience elsewhere in the country as well.

Q: What, in your opinion, are the challenges associated with regard to acknowledging cultural values and cultural diversities when teaching English in a multicultural classroom?

A: You have to understand that, during my time in this country, I have gained a lot of experience in teaching English as a foreign language, and have come to realize there are a few things that will always be just that little bit more challenging. The interaction between men and women, being aware of religious and cultural differences, getting learners enthusiastic about learning. I remember, there was a time when I had a classroom with eight different nationalities. Not easy. The South Americans stuck together, the Qatari ladies were in one corner and the men all on one side of the classroom. To get a group like that to integrate and work together is very challenging, to say the least.
P: Anything else you would like to add about challenges with regard to the adult as a learner?

A: Ah, yes. I do realize that adults have different needs. I’ve had students in my class who are highly qualified, like engineers and biologists, and who have come from corporate positions in their countries to work here. But, they could not speak English and was initially very embarrassed about this. To accommodate them, without making too much of a fuss and letting them feel part of the class, can be challenging.

Q: What role do you feel cultural values and cultural differences between lecturers and learners, as well as learners and their peers play when teaching English as a foreign language to adult learners?

A: I find it fascinating learning about different cultures and places. Some students are not interested in others at all, some are. It can be problematic at times if they don’t want to work together, also be aware that students from different nationalities have different perspectives. Me being from a Western culture, we have a certain way of doing certain things and how we behave. Within the Arab culture, social status is very important and so one has to be careful not to allow bullying or discrimination. Family is the most important part of Arab culture and as such, they define a student’s work ethic, how they deal with other students, opposite sex, their respect for you as a teacher and discipline in class. It is easy to tell which students have a supportive family and which ones have no support at home or whose family doesn’t care.

P: Do you have any gender preferences when teaching English to adult learners?

A: When classes are separate, it is easier. When classes are made to mix, group work and confidence of students can be affected. Students are not keen for group discussion or even class discussion, which is a key part of learning a foreign language. I enjoy working with both genders and all nationalities. Students from other nationalities are sometimes more motivated than the local students.

P: Can you tell me more about learners who are motivated to study?

A: Yes. The one for whom studying, or the outcome there of, has some implication, will be more motivated and keen to learn. Like, if they don’t pass, they will not be promoted at work, or might not be employed by a company, they are the ones more motivated to study.
Q: How do you experience the influence of cultural values and diversities in the multicultural classroom situation?

A: Local Qatari and other Arab students define their education, beliefs and culture on their religion, so it is an important factor in the Gulf, which one must bear in mind at all times. All interactions, including those between men and women, adults and younger learners and students of different cultures, are defined by religion. So it plays a crucial role at the language Centre.

Q: How do you accommodate learners with different religious beliefs in your class?

A: I try not to highlight it, but if it comes up, I try to talk about it and be open and honest about beliefs. Arab students like to “help” each other (during a test) and don’t see it as wrong. One must be careful and very aware. When it is prayer time for the Muslim students, I normally use that time and occupy the remaining ones in some conversational activity.

Q: What do you feel are the best practices for teaching a culturally diverse group of adult learners?

A: I do a lot of group and pair work and find it very helpful. When students from different cultures and backgrounds get to work together, they become more accepting of each other. By changing the groups and pairs, students meet everyone and learn to work together, be more accepting of each other’s differences and that gets them working together. A big problem in this part of the world is that different cultures tend to sit together. Teachers need to encourage and motivate students to communicate to others. Siblings often stick together and they must be encouraged to work with other students. The one major benefit (of siblings in the same class) is having someone to practice with at home, with the same information and knowledge. Siblings, especially younger ones, often fight or argue in class and need to be refocused or monitored carefully. There is also a tendency to help and a weaker sibling might only copy work and not learn for themselves. This is something to be careful of.

P: How do you as a lecturer integrate a culturally diverse group of learners?

A: I use as much group and pair work as possible, switching pairs, so they meet everyone and learn to work together. I am completely intolerant of racial, religious or any other bias held by students, or any discrimination occurring in class. And believe
me, they soon find out that in my class they all have to interact and work together. I do explain to them that in this way they will all learn to communicate with others.

P: Do you use any additional material, other than the textbooks in class?

A: Yes, I do from time to time.

P: Can you explain more about the additional material that you use?

A: Sure. I am always very mindful to use material that are ‘culturally’ sensitive and will not offend students from different backgrounds. I find the reading books in the staffroom particularly helpful, and use those, because they have been ‘approved’ to use in the classroom. Even when I use newspaper articles, I make sure they are ‘ok’.

P: Can you explain about the topics you use for the oral presentations?

A: For that I normally use the lesson we have just covered, to guide me. For example, if we have done comparatives and superlatives, they have to include phrases like, ‘I am taller than my brother’, or ‘the best place for me is the desert’. You know how they enjoy talking about their families. Well, then they can do that or talk about the best holiday destination, or why local students enjoy going to the desert so much.

Q: Is there anything else, regarding the teaching of culturally diverse adult learners that you would like to bring to my attention?

A: Teaching a foreign language is very different from normal teaching and I think, as a teacher, one must always try to be flexible and open-minded, as each class is different. We must adapt to the needs of the student. This is especially important for people new to the Gulf, who may not be aware of the cultural and religious factors at play in the country. The centre could provide an info pack or introduction letter to students, explaining the rules of the class, what is expected of them during the session and any other important information. This way, students know what to expect and are prepared for a multicultural and mixed gender class.
APPENDIX E

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION FOR LECTURERS

In this transcription, abbreviation letters used are explained.

Q stands for question
A stands for answer
P stands for probing

Q: What, in your opinion, are the challenges associated with regard to acknowledging cultural values and cultural diversities when teaching English in a multicultural classroom?

A:

(FGT01) “Just plain acknowledging that it does exist. It always plays a role.”

(FGT02) “There are so many challenges. You have to take their culture and religion into consideration, because they are very sensitive. Remember that the family is very important, and, and, and, this list can carry on (eyes rolling).”

(FGT03) “One should seriously think about culturally appropriate grouping. Get the approval of a Qatari lady before you put her in a group with men. The Western ladies seem to be ok with that and see it as a normal part of learning.”

(FGT04) “Yes, I’m very aware of it. But, I’m here to teach and don’t let that influence me too much.”

(FGT05) “Students sometimes fail to act and understand that their efforts determine their progress. But you know, they often like to ‘help’ a friend. Getting the certificate of accomplishment is very important to some, not the actual proficiency.”

(FGT06) “In the beginning these cultural differences used to affect me more. Now I’m much more familiar with the situation, though, still mindful of it. But, I can brush it aside and teach.”
“Do you have any idea how challenging it is to try and teach in a classroom with sixteen men and one lady, especially if they are all Qatari. She normally does not want to sit next to anybody and end up sitting just about on your lap.”

P: Could you explain more about the classroom with sixteen men and one lady?

A:

“Sure. You know, she feels alienated. She is not really ‘free’ to interact with the men and I can’t always be her partner when we do pair work, because then I can’t listen to everybody.”

“Yes, I’ve had cases similar to that, but sometimes with different nationalities, as well. Very challenging.”

Q: What role do you feel cultural values and cultural differences between lecturers and learners, as well as learners and their peers play when teaching English as a foreign language to adult learners?

A:

“It plays an extremely important part, but sometimes learners want to know more about other cultures, sometimes not.”

“One has to think carefully when choosing certain examples as an explanation. In the local culture, they do not celebrate birthdays. Some students might not even know when their birthdays are. Quite a few are simply not interested in something like Valentine’s Day, but do see all the stuff in the shop windows. But then again, they do like to spoil their mothers on Mother’s Day. She is a very special person to them.”

“Avoid sensitive subjects and be careful when you group learners.”

“Oh, this can be extremely problematic if you can’t get them to work together.”

“Whether we like to know it or not, we, the teachers, should always be aware that cultural values and cultural differences play a critical role in any classroom.”
“I’m very conscious of being sensitive to everybody.”

“I prefer making lessons interesting, rather than getting into trouble.”

P: Can you explain more about ‘getting into trouble’?

A:

Yeah, by not taking the different cultures in the class into consideration.

Q: What do you feel are the best practices for teaching a culturally diverse group of adult learners?

A:

Lots of group and pair work, this really helps their communicative skills.

Avoid sensitive topics and do lots of group and pair work.

Respecting them, (the students), and their knowledge and experience. Valuing what students bring to the class, and listening to them.

They have to talk a lot to learn from others. I use group and pair work a lot. This way they interact with everybody and not just the person next to them.

Learners must have enough time to communicate newly learnt English. We, the lecturers, must allow them, and provide every opportunity for them to do so. And, everybody should feel their views are being respected.

Get them to talk as much as possible, easier said than done, I know. If it doesn’t work, put that aside and focus on teaching English.

Just keep an open mind. Get them interested in communicating with you and other learners in the class, and group work and pair work, naturally.

P: Do you ever make use of additional material?

A:
“Sometimes, but it is not always easy to find appropriate stuff.”

“I let them read local English newspapers, but one’s got to be so careful. Even their spelling is not always up to it.”

“I do tend to use the readers from the cupboard.”

“Uh, so do I.”

“Yes, I find the readers useful. They have got culturally sensitive stories and at different levels of difficulty for students to read and understand.”

Q: Do you have any gender or nationality preferences when teaching English to adult learners?

A:

“No preference, I’m comfortable with any.”

“Not in particular.”

“No.”

“I enjoy working with both genders and nationalities, Non-Arab students are sometimes more motivated.”

“Separate classes can make it more comfortable and students tend to perform better. But it’s a headache from a managerial point of view.”

“Girls are very motivated, but a pleasant group of males can be fantastic.”

“Gender does not affect my teaching.”

P: How do you accommodate learners with different religious beliefs in your class?

A:

“It plays a crucial role, it influences the way they act and pay attention to their education. When the Muslims have prayer time during class, the others have nothing to do, unless I occupy them with conversational stuff.”
“It’s not really a case of ‘accommodating’. It is such a part of life over here. But, unless it comes up in conversation, I just have to deal with it, or steer away from it as quickly as possible.”

“I don’t bring up religion all that much, but I am open to discussing it when students are interested. I haven’t had a situation where this has damaged the class dynamic. However, I try to spend more time with excluded groups.”

“I do not tolerate any religious discussion.”

“Religion should not play a role, but it does and then I will talk about it as openly as possible. Look, you know as well as I that it shouldn’t play a role, but it does, because it is embedded in the culture and students from other nationalities have to be tolerant and accepting.”

“I always try to be sensitive and steer away from it.”

“I’m mindful of the issue, but the basis of the class is to teach English.”

P: Do you feel that social status play any role within the classroom?

A:

“Within the Arab culture, social status is very important, so one has to be careful not to allow bullying.”

“Students can at times be ‘bullied’ by others because of social status.”

“Students who feel they are actually better, or have more knowledge of English, tend to overpower or dominate conversations. Or when you have siblings in the same class, the one might try and outsmart the other one, because they can be very competitive, also.”

“Yes, and in the case of siblings, the one might not be as strong and just copy work from the other one. Social status influences the classroom with group activities and pair work. I think this is very apparent in the G.C.C.”
Q: How do you think lecturers and learners could be prepared to handle a multicultural classroom?

A:

(FGT01) “I think teachers new to the centre should be given an induction course, observation class and do a trial class. The centre could provide an introductory pack, explaining the rules of the class.”

(FGT02) “They (lecturers and learners) need to be tolerant. And yes, I think new teachers and the students should get this info pack. But then it must be explained what will be expected of them, like dress code, etcetera.”

(FGT03) “Be open to interacting with others. It can be such an enriching experience. I would have benefited a lot from getting some ‘coaching’ before I actually started teaching.”

(FGT04) “Ah, you know, teachers and learners should be open to the views of others. In this way we can all learn from each other.”

(FGT05) “We are not all the same. We have to accept people from other cultures might act and behave differently. Accept differences in others as part of life.”

(FGT06) “Oh yes, we should all try to learn from others. Giving new teachers and students some information as to what to expect, will be a good idea.”

(FGT07) “I think the learners cope well in the current enrolment make-up.”

Q: Is there anything else, regarding the teaching of culturally diverse adult learners that you would like to bring to my attention?

A:

(FGT01) “Uh, yes. I think the impact of the local religion can never be downplayed. It’s such an important part of everyday life and of the society at large.”

(FGT02) “Remain sensitive. We are dealing with adults, you know.”

(FGT03) “Hmm, if you show respect, they will respect you.”
(FGT04) “We should all be open to the views of others.”

(FGT05) “We are all so very different, and yet the same. We all like to be accepted for the person we are. It’s the same with adult learners.”

(FGT06) “Yes, keep remembering we are teaching English to adults and keep them talking.”

(FGT07) “I’ll repeat, just keep an open mind of the situation.”
Q: Why are you studying English?

A:

(FGS01) “To get a job in this country.”

(FGS02) “I am a qualified architect and arrived in this country two months ago. I would like to get a job, while my husband is working here, but my English is not good enough.”

(FGS03) “To go to university.”

(FGS04) “At my age, it is to do something for myself. My mother is very proud of me.”

(FGS05) “I have nothing else to do. I am a retired math teacher and is doing this for myself. My children can speak English very well, and also my husband. Now I would also like to speak better English.”

(FGS06) “To get promotion at work. My manager said that I must work hard and study English. It will be good for me.”

(FGS07) “To go to university.”

(FGS08) “For work.”

(FGS09) “I need it for work.”
Q: What was the motivation for your request to be in an all female class?

A:

(FGS01) “That was the only class available.”

(FGS02) “I did not ask for it. That was the only class available for my level.”

(FGS03) “I am very shy. Because of this, and also because of my culture, I never speak directly to my father. I always talk to him through my brother. But, after a few sessions at the centre, and mixing with ladies from other cultures, it is now fine for me. It feels like I can now speak to anybody.”

(FGS04) “I prefer to be in a class with ladies. We get on better.”

(FGS05) “I would have been ok with anything.”

(FGS06) “I am too shy.”

(FGS07) “I suppose I will get used to it at university.”

(FGS08) “I am uncomfortable around men. I’m ok with my brothers.”

(FGS09) “I prefer a class with ladies. It is just better for me. I am not too comfortable around men I don’t know.”

Q: How would you feel about learning English in a multicultural classroom?

A:

(FGS01) “It is quite fine for me now, but we are only ladies.”

(FGS02) “I will be ok with that. I’m Spanish. We are used to many things.”

(FGS03) “After a few session at the centre it is now fine for me.”

(FGS04) “Only if some the others can be with me.”

(FGS05) “It would not bother me.”

(FGS06) “I would not be happy if there are men. But we are in one now, and it is good.”
“It will be the same at university. We will be in a mixed class. I must get used to it.”

“It is interesting to hear what others think and how they live.”

“We can learn a lot from others.”

Q: What, in your opinion, can be done to accommodate learners in a multicultural classroom situation?

A:

“The teachers are all very good and always give me time off to leave early on Sundays to go to church. The same when the other ladies have prayer time. Then we talk to the teacher. That is always very good for me.”

“Teachers should allow me time to say how I feel and what is different for me. With more time to talk, we can learn more about other cultures. I am in this class to learn English, because I would like to get a job and that is the most important thing for me right now. This has been a very good experience for me, because in the classroom, we are all treated the same. It does not matter where we come from and the teacher is very good with all of us. When it is time for some ladies to go for prayer time, the teacher uses that time to talk to us and I get the chance to speak and learn more English. That is what I am here for. Another lady asked the teacher to leave early to go to her church, and that was ok.”

“We want to talk more. We can learn a lot from other people. I have already learnt so much about people in other countries.”

“For me, it is good to listen to presentations about other countries. I learn such a lot and hope they enjoyed mine about Aleppo.”

“During general conversation time, we like to hear what an how others live.”

“It is very interesting, but I am not too worried about other cultures.”

“It will be the same at university. This prepares me for that.”

“I have learnt a lot. It is very interesting.”
“In our country, we do not have a lot of opportunities to speak to people from other countries. I like to listen to their stories.”

**Q:** How would you like to be treated by the lecturers in a culturally diverse language classroom?

**A:**

“I have been at the centre for six weeks now, and it is no problem. They are all very respectful.”

“Teachers should allow me time to say how I feel and what is different for me. With more time to talk, we can learn more about other cultures. I know they struggle to understand my pronunciation of words, I also sometimes struggle with theirs.”

“With respect. Teachers must be prepared to give a lesson and not waste my times. I am here to learn.”

“Teachers must respect that we are different. Sometimes I have activities and want to leave early. I am here to learn and better myself. I want enough time to do that. I am not interested in anything else.”

“This is my first experience. I was a teacher for thirty one years and is now retired. So now I just sit back to listen and learn.”

“I want to be allowed enough time for prayers.”

“I am here to learn, not to worry too much about others.”

“Teachers must not be too strict if I am not on time. Sometimes I am tired and sleep after work and come late for class.”

“The teacher must allow me time to go for prayers during class. In our country, we do not have a lot of opportunities to speak to people from other countries. I like to listen to their stories. In this class we respect each other. We also want to learn more from other students. In break we sit together and talk.”
Q: How would you like to be treated by fellow learners in a culturally diverse language classroom?

A:

(FGS01) “We are all students. Listen to my point of view.”

(FGS02) “The other students must accept that I am different. In my country, we are allowed to dress very differently and we don’t have to cover our shoulders. Well, they did not know that in Spain it is ok for ladies to go on the beach with bikinis, and some even go topless. That is ok for us. For them it is not. We laughed a lot about this, but they now understand that not all people do and think the same.”

(FGS03) “Respect me for who I am. Do not treat me badly because I am younger.”

(FGS04) “Like I said before, I am here to learn English and better myself, and have enough time to do that. I am not too interested in the rest.”

(FGS05) “This is strange for me. After years of teaching, it is not easy for me to learn. Others must understand if I ask for more explanations. In my country, we learn the grammar, and I am good with that, but when it comes to talking, it is not so good.”

(FGS06) “In this class the students are very respectful.”

(FGS07) “We all get on well. We like to learn.”

(FGS08) “You know, sometimes I am very tired and cannot concentrate. Then I have to ask for more explanations. They must understand that I work and study.”

(FGS09) “In this class we respect each other. Because, like I said, we also want to learn more from other students, we like to sit together and talk.”

Q: What else do you feel could be done to make the multicultural classroom situation more acceptable for all learners?

A:

(FGS01) “Allow us more time to talk to each other.”
(FGS02) “Explain to new students what to expect. It was very confusing for me in the beginning. It’s better now”

(FGS03) “I understand we have to get through work, but we enjoy general conversation, because we learn a lot from others.”

(FGS04) “This is my first experience of being in a class with ladies from other countries, but I think we need more time to talk to each other.”

(FGS05) “This is my first time in another country. I think it is fascinating.”

(FGS06) “Allow us more time to talk to other students.”

(FGS07) “We need time to ask questions to students from other countries.”

(FGS08) “You know teacher, we don’t really know much about other cultures. I have learnt a lot in this class.”

(FGS09) “Students can also read more about other countries on the internet. My children are at university and they also help me a lot.”

Q: What additional information would you like to bring to my attention?

A:

(FGS01) “We need to talk more. I am happy. We are learning a lot, but at times it just feels like the language is a bit crazy and I really have to work hard to understand everything. It helps if the teacher speaks slowly.”

(FGS02) “It would have been very good if I had more information before the time what to expect.”

P: What kind of information do you mean?

A:

(FGS02) “It would be a good idea, I think, if we could get information when we register to tell us what we have to do, how we have to dress and how we have to behave. Then we would not be embarrassed.”
Q: So could you tell me what additional information you would like to bring to my attention?

A:

(FGS03) “Not much. Learning English is a lot of hard work.”

(FGS04) “Students must not speak too much Arabic in class.”

(FGS05) “What else can I do to improve my speaking?”

(FGS06) “We need to talk more.”

(FGS07) “Nothing.”

(FGS08) “I want to talk to the manager. I want to keep the same teacher.”

(FGS09) “I don’t like change, so I don’t want too many different teachers.”