Saudi Students’ Perspectives on Increasing their Meta-linguistic Awareness in the Differences between Arabic and English Word Order Using Explicit Form-focused Instruction

Sarah Hamed Bashir Ibrahim
Mount Saint Vincent University

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Department of Education in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts

November 2015

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Abstract

This study aims to highlight the importance of increasing student meta-linguistic awareness of the differences between Arabic and English word order, and the importance of integrating form-focused instruction within a communicative instructional setting. Even though research from Innate theorists has undervalued the negative impact the first language has on acquiring the target language, and the utility of giving students form-focused instructions (Krashen, 2009), there has been mounting evidence of first language interference (Nicoladis, 2006; Alshayban, 2014). Research has also shown the positive effects of increasing students’ meta-linguistic awareness of first and target language differences on learning the target language (Ammar, Lightbown, & Spada, 2010).

The current study investigated students’ awareness of the basic differences between Arabic and English word orders, and identified their perspectives of receiving form-focused instructions. To accomplish this, a case study approach (Duff, 2008) was taken with five Saudi English students where two interviews were given, one before a set of communicative instructional sessions and one afterwards. Four of the students participated in both interviews, whereas the fifth participated only in the second interview, as she was late joining the study. Between these two interviews, instructions on the differences between Arabic and English word orders were integrated within a 10-hour set of communicative instructional sessions. Based on the interview findings, the students displayed some gaps in their meta-linguistic awareness regarding the differences between Arabic and English word orders. They also expressed that the instructions were useful for constructing sentences and self-correcting their own mistakes. The study has implications for the strategic use of form-focused instruction in teaching Arabic-
speaking students with the goal of increasing their meta-linguistic awareness of linguistic differences.
Acknowledgments

All praise and gratitude is due to Allah for helping, guiding, and providing me with all the support I needed to accomplish this work. Then, thankfulness is expressed to the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia for sponsoring my studies.

Firstly, I thank the most precious people in my life, my parents, who never stopped believing in me when most people did. I am grateful for Mom, who planted the dream and was present all the time with her love and advice.

I am grateful for the special person in my life, my beloved husband Haroon Alfallatah, and I admit that behind my success, there is a supportive man, who provided never-ending help from the cup of coffee he makes for me every morning, to his precious encouraging words that often times fixed my cloudy mood.

I thank Allah for my precious, special Abbody, my little baby boy Abdurrahman, whose smile is worth the world and who challenged my work and showed me that I could do more than I thought I was able to.

I also thank my brother Basheer for helping and supporting me at the most critical stage, studying language. Without his support, I could have failed even before I started.

Most importantly, I am grateful for my wonderful supervisor, Dr. Christine Doe, for everything. Many thanks for her for being very supportive, for making her time and experience available for me, for encouraging me and believing in me. I learnt a lot from being around her, and would like to thank Dr. Fred French for recommending her to me.

I also would like to thank the members of my thesis committee: Dr. Hong Wang, for her precious time and feedback from which I benefited a lot, and Dr. Wajih Abderrahman, for the help and feedback he provided and for the knowledge I based my study on.

I thank my friends, Arwa Al-tamimi for her helpful suggestions and highlights, Maha Al-johani for her proofreading my proposal draft, and Haifa Al-yahya for reviewing my data transcriptions and analysis.

I thank my son’s nurses Giane, Elizabeth, Destinee, and Ashley for helping with editing my paper, and thank you to everybody else who provided help.

To you all, I am lucky to have you, and I thank Allah for making you part of my experience.
Dedication

I dedicate this work to my wonderful family: my parents, my husband, my siblings, and my son, for all the time they spent waiting for the dream to come true.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

Learning English in Saudi Arabia gained more importance after 2001 (Elyas & Picard, 2010). Consequently there has been an increase in the number of students who travel to study abroad. Previously, being able to speak more than one language, watch movies without having to read the Arabic subtitles, and listen to English music with an understanding of the lyrics were seen as leisure activities for a lot of people. Until the beginning of the current decade, starting in 2003 when the Saudi educational system adopted a reformed curriculum (Elyas & Picard, 2010), English books were designed to measure students' achievements in specific tasks for the purpose of passing final exams, instead of being concerned with majoring communicative and academic skills. As Alharbi (2008) reported, a number of studies indicated that traditional methods (memorization, lecturing, and repetitive drills) were the main tools to reach these objectives. As a result, students in Grade 12 had low English proficiency levels, which were limited to completing simple exercises such as being able to change tenses, copying the right answer to clause questions from the reading passage, and memorizing pieces of writing given in class in order to copy them later in the test (Elyas & Picard, 2010; Syed, 2003). Consequently, a student who had been exposed to the language for six years graduated with an ability to recall compositions but with no understanding of how to structure sentences, which meant they were unable to create simple pieces of writing (Elyas & Picard, 2010).

It is important to first highlight the distinction between language learning and second language acquisition, for the two terms have been used interchangeably in some ESL research works. Researchers who support the innate theory, as is explained in Chapter 2, have differentiated between two processes undergone by adults in regard to gaining new languages:
acquisition and learning. According to the innate theorist, second language acquisition, which resembles children’s first language acquisition, is usually subconscious and occurs through communicating using the target language. In contrast, second language learning refers to the conscious learning that involves knowing about the language and knowing the grammatical rules of the language (Krashen, 2009). Some theorists believe that when acquiring the target language, adults tend to rely on the meta-linguistic abilities they have developed within the first language because they can no longer use the innate acquisition abilities they used with the first language as children (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

Considering Krashen’s (2009) perspective of language acquisition, it is believed that this process most commonly occurs in circumstances where the language is spoken as a first or second language. However, in Saudi Arabia, despite the importance English has gained, it is considered a foreign language (Saqlain, Al-Qarni, & Ghadi, 2013), because unlike in India for example, English is not the language used in education and in the governmental sector. In public schools, Saudi students receive two English classes per week in Grades six, and four English classes per week starting from Grade seven till Grade 12 (Saqlain et al., 2013). This presents limited opportunities for Saudi students to acquire English through communication. Yet, considering that “second language” and “foreign language” are being used interchangeably in the literature, resulting in possible confusion, the term “target language” will be used by the researcher in this paper when referring to teaching/learning English in Saudi Arabia.

In the last ten years, significant changes have occurred in the Saudi educational system, particularly in English teaching. The need to improve the English learning system became a necessity due to, first, the need to match international economic developments (Elyas & Picard, 2010), and second, the increase in opportunities for Saudi students to study abroad. According to
the Ministry of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia, 275,905 students were granted scholarships between 2011-2012, compared to 1,997 students who were granted scholarships between 2003-2004 (Ministry of Higher Education, 2013). Thus, the importance of learning English as a language of studying and communication has increased for Saudi students (Aljurf, 2005). Therefore, due to the inadequate educational opportunities in Saudi Arabia, the current generation of Saudi students believes that one of the best ways of achieving their educational goals is to learn English (Aljurf, 2005) and to grasp the first opportunity to get a better education in one of the leading countries.

Along with the above-mentioned awareness among the students themselves, a curriculum reform has occurred within the last decade. Textbooks were changed, teacher-centered methods replaced with more communicative approaches, and classrooms equipped with technology devices, and the new English teaching style is more dependent on the communicative language teaching approach (Elyas & Picard, 2010; Saqlain et al., 2013). Grammar has always been included in Saudi English curricula, yet instead of teaching grammar deductively, i.e., giving the rules upfront before introducing the examples and practice exercises, it started to be taught more implicitly and communicatively through conversations mimicking real-life situations.

The previously mentioned changes did not make the expected shift in students’ competence in English because a lot of Saudi students are still unable to use the knowledge they receive in daily-life communication. Comparatively, the new curricula appear to be a vast improvement over the old curricula, but they are still unable to meet the expected goals (AlSagheer, 2010). It is unfortunate that a lot of Saudi students, after so many years of studying English, do not believe in their language abilities. They are unable to pass language proficiency tests with adequate scores, and they demonstrate weak performance in the productive skills,
writing and speaking (Alshuaifan, 2009). There is an obvious gap between the amount of vocabulary students know and their ability to use this knowledge to function in real life. Different studies (Al-Bogami, 1995; Al-Hazemi, 1993; Alsaif, 2011) from the last 30 years investigated Saudi students' acquired vocabulary upon graduating from high school. According to Alsaif and Milton (2012), when Saudi students were tested they finished Grade 12 with an average vocabulary of 890 of the most frequent 5,000 English words. However, the typical Saudi student is unable to use these words in creating basic sentences. They are unable to write correct statements or carry on simple dialogues.

During fall 2011 and winter 2012, I tutored at a Wall Street English school in Saudi Arabia. Wall Street schools depend on a self-education policy which allows the students to educate themselves according to a specific curriculum, figure out their weaknesses, and work on them with the help of the personal tutors in the school. Working freely on my students’ weak areas, I was able to evaluate my personal pedagogical approach of strengthening my students’ meta-linguistic awareness of the differences between Arabic and English word order. That goal was set to be achieved through intensive sessions, which included explicit form-focused instruction about Arabic/English word order differences through communicative contexts. As a result, I noticed less confusion in my students’ understanding of English sentence structure, more confidence in their sentence production, and a strengthened ability to catch and correct their errors. That emphasized the belief that part of the reason behind the students' poor English abilities, despite the vocabulary they have, is their lack of awareness of the differences between Arabic and English word order. In Alshuaifan’s (2009) investigation, the majority of University of Hail (Saudi Arabia) faculty members and teachers with at least five years’ experience agreed that teachers’ awareness of the linguistic aspects of their students’ first and target languages is
important for teaching English as a foreign language. They highlighted its importance for understanding the stages and characteristics of language acquisition and for increasing students’ awareness of the areas of differences between their first and target languages.

It seems important at this point to distinguish between students’ mistakes and errors as two different types of wrong utterances produced by second language learners. According to Meehan (2013), one way is to classify students’ wrong utterances as errors which are a result of lack of knowledge or understanding, or as mistakes which can be tracked and corrected by the student. This paper focuses mainly on Saudi students’ errors as reflections of their lack of understanding of the features of English.

**Rationale**

Neither the old nor the new curricula have paid much attention to providing more explicit guidance to increase students’ awareness of the differences between Arabic and English word order, as this is considered contrary to the communicative approach. According to Alshuaifan (2009), English educators in Saudi Arabia tend to support the communicative approach, with a belief in a natural way of second language acquisition through communicative classroom environments, books, and real-life interactions. Krashen (2009) is one of the leading scholars of this approach.

In spite of studies from the last few decades showing the influence of first language structures on competence in acquiring the second language (Han & Selinker, 1999; Odlin, 1989; Schachter, 1974; White, 1998; White, 1991; Zobl, 1980, 1985), Innate theorists’ applications of the communicative approach underestimate the effects of first languages on the acquisition of other languages. Therefore, they avoid explicit form-focused instruction in introducing L2 structures. Recently, a number of studies (e.g., Ammar et al., 2010; Lightbown & Spada, 2000)
have proven that students' awareness of the differences between their first and target languages plays an important role in their acquisition of the aspects of the target language. Other studies have indicated that providing explicit instructions within a communicative approach results in better language competence than teaching the learners the structures of the target language implicitly (Kupferberg, 1999; Kupferberg & Olshtain, 1996).

While the above-mentioned studies demonstrate the importance for language acquisition/learning of increasing students’ awareness of the differences between first and target language, increasing students’ awareness of English word order in contrast to Arabic word order has always been undervalued in the Saudi English curriculum as a basic foundation for English teaching.

**Arabic linguistic system.** Arabic is one of the sematic family of languages (Fehri, 2012). When speaking about Arabic linguistic systems, it is important to highlight the two different forms of the Arabic language and then discuss the shared word order aspects of both forms and how they differ from English.

**Modern Standard Arabic versus Colloquial Arabic.** The Arabic language has two main forms: Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Colloquial Arabic. Despite the variety Colloquial Arabic has in various regions, MSA is an official diglossia in all 22 Arabic countries (Albirini, 2014), which covers the Middle East and the northern coast of Africa (Alshayban, 2012). MSA represents the higher diglossia of the language (Schomaker, 2014), and is usually used in formal education, formal business transactions and documentation, administration, Quranic schools, and printed media (Albirini, 2014). In addition to MSA, Arab nations speak a wide variety of Colloquial Arabic which is usually the lower diglossias in the different regions (Schomaker, 2014). Colloquial Arabic is usually the first diglossia to be acquired by children from their
parents, whereas MSA is believed to be acquired at a later stage through formal instructional settings (Albirini, 2014). In addition to the differences in their functions, MSA and Colloquial Arabic have some differences on the phonological, lexical, morphological, and syntactic levels. According to Albirini (2014), the two diglossias share some similar linguistic aspects (e.g., they have similar agreement rules), yet they have some differences in the negation system and modality and aspectual markers, and some vocabulary and sounds exist in Colloquial Arabic but not in MSA, and vice versa.

Providing an overview of linguistic aspects shared by MSA and Colloquial Arabic word order helps readers understand the importance of increasing Arabic English learners’ awareness of the differences between Arabic and English word orders, and how the Arabic linguistic system can interfere with their English learning. It is believed that Colloquial Arabic somewhat interferes with the acquisition of MSA (Albirini, 2014), and most likely interferes with the acquisition of English. However, most of the literature on Arabic interference with learning English has addressed the interference of MSA in learning English, and this was the target of the communicative sessions’ instructions in the current study.

**Arabic sentence word order.** The basic sentence word order in Arabic is verb-subject-object (VSO) (Al-Shaikhli & Shalabi, 2011; Finegan, 2012). Like most languages that begin with a verb (termed verb-initial languages), the modifier precedes the modified phrase (Finegan, 2012). That means the verb precedes the object (أكل أحمد التفاح، Ate Ahmad the apple), the possessed precedes the possessor (أخذت كتاب أخي، I took book my brother), the preposition precedes the noun phrase (ذهبت إلى المطار، I went to the airport), and the head noun precedes the relative clause (كلمت الشخص الذي وجد محفظتي، I called the person who found my wallet) (Finegan, 2012).
In addition to that, Arabic has an inflectional morphological system. The inflections in Arabic distinguish not only the sentence tense and word status, but also the word function in the sentence, whether the noun phrase is a subject, an object or a prepositional noun phrase; e.g., ( البيت Albayto) is the subject, ( البيت Albayta) is the object, and ( البيت Albayti) is the prepositional noun phrase. The case-ending at the end of words reflects different short vowel sounds. Thus, Arabic has a free word order, which means the sentence could follow any of the linguistic word orders (VSO, SVO, OVS, or VOS). Arabic does not rely on the sentence structure to express its meanings.

Furthermore, the majority of linguists believe that Arabic allows two types of sentences: nominal or verbal sentences (Abdeerahman, 2015; Khuli, 2007). Verbal sentences consist of the verb followed by the subject, and nominal sentences consist of the subject followed by a predicate (Ryding, 2005). The predicate in a nominal sentence could be a noun/noun phrase that modifies the subject (أخي طبيب - My brother is a doctor), an adjective (أخي مجد – My brother is hard worker), a prepositional phrase (أخي في المنزل – My brother is at home), a smaller nominal sentence, or a smaller verbal sentence. In Arabic, not all types of nominal sentences require verbs (Abdeerahman, 2015; Khuli, 2007). In fact, most declarative nominal sentences do not require a verb. Consequently, missing the copula (the verb to be) in such sentences is a common error for Arabic learners, according to Henkes (1974), Ibrahim, Aydelott, and Kassabgy (2000), Abu-Jarad (2008), and Alshayban (2014). Furthermore, Arabic allows not only moving the subject but also omitting it, and its meaning and role in the sentence will remain, and this is referred to as a hidden subject.
It is important for ESL teachers of Arab students to consider these differences between Arabic and English word order to be able to help students with their adoption of the new linguistic system.

**The communicative sessions design.** The sessions included task-based activities in which "learners engage in different tasks (oral and written) requiring them to solve problems and/or negotiate meaning in order to achieve a particular purpose or goal" (Spada, 2006, p. 281). The sessions applied a balanced communicative approach (focused on meaning and structure) in helping the students produce correct forms of English sentences. The sessions lasted for a total of 10 hours and were designed to increase students' awareness of the differences between Arabic and English word orders through explicit form-focused instruction and corrective feedback which was given when needed. The explicit form-focused instruction given in the sessions focused on the following features of the English word order as compared to the Arabic word order. Please see Appendix (A & B) for the daily sessions plan.

1. Introduction about speech
2. Parts of speech, and sentences versus phrases
3. Noun phrases and verb phrases
4. The position and function of subjects, verbs, objects, adjectives, and adverbs
5. Basic sentence structures in English

The sessions were run by the researcher, who is an Arab ESL teacher with five years' experience in teaching English to Arab students.

Studies by Swain and Lapkin (2002) and Turnbull (2001) pointed out advantages for a restricted use of the students' native language in communicative classrooms in helping the students achieve their linguistic goals. Along with these findings, it is believed that the
communicative approach does not require a complete avoidance of the use of students' native language (Sapda, 2007). Therefore, in these sessions, a restricted use of Arabic in class was allowed by the teacher to allow illustration of the abstract syntactic area on the differences between Arabic and English word order.

The Current study

Most of the studies in the areas of language interference and explicit instruction and their effect on language acquisition were designed for the purpose of measuring through student achievement the validity of particular hypotheses. Therefore, most of them took a quantitative approach in order to support or abandon the hypothesis in which the researcher was interested.

However, the current study was conducted to shed light on what students have to say about the impact of increasing their meta-linguistic awareness of the differences between Arabic and English word orders on their English sentence production and self-correction, and about the utility of using explicit form-focused instruction for this purpose. Thus, a qualitative case-study approach was taken to appraise from the students' perspective the effectiveness of using explicit form-focused instruction within the communicative approach, which for Legard, Keegan, and Ward (2011) was one of the key functions of using qualitative methodology. In addition, according to Legard et al. (2011), a qualitative methodology is appropriately used when investigating complex issues where there is a need to understand the interaction of different conceptual factors. Thus, qualitative methodology provided a closer look into the interaction between the different variables that impact and construct each participant’s meta-linguistic awareness in Arabic and English word order.
Purpose of the study

The goal of this study was to question students’ perspectives on how enhancing their meta-linguistic awareness of Arabic-English word order differences has influenced their language learning. Prior to exploring the students’ perspectives, the researcher investigated the students’ meta-linguistic awareness of the differences between Arabic and English word order through different types of knowledge and opinion questions. Recognizing the constructed nature of students’ perspectives, the researcher approached this study from a constructive position (Denzin & Lincoln, 2001). Qualitative strategies were used to determine, first, the existence of students’ meta-linguistic awareness of the differences between Arabic and English word order, followed by (where necessary) making students aware of these areas through 10-hour set of communicative sessions, which in turn made possible the investigation of the effectiveness of the explicit form-focused instruction they received during the sessions. For the above reasons, a qualitative approach was used to conduct this study.

This study, therefore, investigates students' perspectives on using explicit instruction in increasing their meta-linguistic awareness of: (a) the linguistic differences between Arabic and English word orders; and (b) how the use of explicit form-focused instruction to increase the awareness of these differences impacts students’ ability to produce sentences and self-correct their errors. To achieve this goal, it was important to first investigate the students' meta-linguistic awareness of word order differences prior to receiving explicit form-focused instruction.

Research questions. The study addresses the following research questions:

1. To what extent are Saudi students aware of the differences between Arabic and English sentence word orders?
2. After receiving explicit form-focused instruction within 10-hour set of communicative sessions,

What are students' perspectives on:

(a) The impact of increasing their meta-linguistic awareness of the differences between Arabic and English word order on their sentence production and self-correction abilities?

(b) The utility of using explicit form-focused instruction for increasing their meta-linguistic awareness?
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This study focuses on the effectiveness of giving Saudi students explicit form-focused instruction in order to increase their meta-linguistic awareness of the differences between Arabic and English in aspects related to the word orders of the two languages. According to Ellis (2005), meta-linguistic awareness is the ability to focus on linguistic forms and to switch focus between form and meaning. Students who have linguistic meta-awareness are able to categorize words in parts of speech, switch focus between form, function, and meaning, and explain why the word has a particular function (Jessner, 2013). For Jessner (2006), metalinguistic awareness has been linked to the cognitive advantages created by having more than one language. This explains the reason why it has been a point of interest for second language acquisition scholars (Jessner, 2013).

However, second language acquisition theorists have different opinions about the nature of language learning and the variables that play crucial roles in it. Considering that it is not possible here to discuss all the theories on second language acquisition, this literature review focuses on two major second language acquisition theories: the innate theory and the behavioral theory. These two theories play important roles with regard to the following variables of the current study: form-focused instruction, communicative approach, and first language interference. As the innate theory provides hypotheses in support of the communicative approach and discounts the utility of explicit and form-focused instruction in second language teaching, the behavioral theory establishes a foundation for the linguistic transfer hypothesis, which provides evidence on first language interference.

In addition, student meta-linguistic awareness of the differences between first language and second language word orders is an important variable in this study as well. Thus, this review
covers the literature of five main areas related to the current study: the innate theory of second language acquisition, the behavioral theory of second language acquisition, first language interference, form-focused instruction, and student meta-linguistic awareness.

**The Innate Theory of Second Language Acquisition**

The innate theory, which was established as a reaction to the behavioral theory, believes in a natural way of acquiring a second language, similar to first language acquisition. Innate theorists have developed five main hypotheses with regard to how a second language is acquired: the acquisition-learning distinction hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the input hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis (Krashen, 2009).

Briefly, the acquisition-learning hypothesis differentiates between learning and acquisition as two separate processes adults might undergo to develop competence in a second language. This hypothesis claims that acquisition is the process responsible for fluency development, which for innate theorists is the most important goal of gaining a second language. According to this hypothesis, second language acquisition happens in the same way that children acquire their mother tongues; it takes time and does not need any correction or explicit form-focused instruction. Adults can never acquire native-like language skills in their second language, but they can reach good levels depending on the time they are given before they decide by themselves to produce the second language.

Then, the natural order hypothesis points to the similarities in the orders that both children as first language acquirers, and children and adults as second languages acquirers, follow in mastering some linguistic aspects earlier than others (Krashen, 2009).

The monitor hypothesis states that the differences between learning and acquisition make acquisition responsible for language fluency, while learning helps the learner monitor their
utterances for errors acquired while acquiring the language. This hypothesis suggests that monitoring one’s utterances is hard to apply unless the speaker has enough time to monitor the language before producing it, and focuses not only on the meaning but also on the form and the correct rules, which is referred to as “a monitor over-user speaker”.

Then, the input hypothesis states that language acquisition occurs by having a piece of new knowledge added to the existing learner knowledge (i+1), which for innate theorists cannot be provided by extensive grammar classes. Just like the role that baby-talk plays in helping children acquire their first language, foreigner-talk plays a similar role in helping acquirers add new pieces they need to their knowledge.

Finally, the affective filter hypothesis points to the relationship between variables such as motivation, self-confidence and anxiety, and second language acquisition. Usually, but not always, the higher the motivation and self-confidence, the more success the learner has in acquiring the second language. However, anxiety places some pressure on the learners, and thus low anxiety is more conducive to success in second language acquisition.

Considering the previously mentioned hypotheses, innate theorists thus call for a communicative approach, which results in their complete avoidance of “traditional” form-focused teaching and of explicit instruction or feedback on student errors. Despite the students’ age or the instruction they receive on the second language, students acquire their second language just as they have acquired their mother tongues. When students have the desire to learn the language, and have low anxiety, they monitor their own language use and fix their mistakes, which leads to effective acquisition of the second language (Krashen, 2009). Explicit form-focused instruction, from Krashen's point of view, does not serve to facilitate the language
acquisition process; it instead provides learners with extra unnecessary knowledge about language that will never help in real-life usage.

However, language scholars have argued against the innate theorists’ views, supporting Dekeyser (2003), who claimed that practice makes the knowledge gained from explicit instruction automatic – it becomes part of the learners' natural use, so they no longer think of it as explicit knowledge. Ellis (1994) also claimed that explicit instruction plays a role in focusing learners’ attention on the linguistic features of the implicit knowledge they are exposed to in natural situations. This facilitates their language acquisition and helps their self-correction. Both positions emphasize the effectiveness of giving explicit instruction in guiding the language acquisition process.

The Behavioral Theory of Second Language Acquisition

In the first half of the 20th century, the behavioral theory introduced the hypothesis of language transfer, which is earlier than other language acquisition theories. According to this theory, first language (L1), which is seen as a set of habits acquired by a human being, was the factor that played the most crucial role in the acquisition of a second language as a new set of habits (Lado, 1957). The transfer of first language habits to the second language could be facilitating when it results in correct statements in the second language. However, L1 transfer could also result in wrong statements in the second language, which is termed language interference or negative transfer.

The contrastive analysis hypothesis. This was built from behavioural theory, and suggests that making contrastive studies on the features of both first and target languages helps in predicting the mistakes learners usually make. Differences between languages are areas of difficulty, and similarities do not need much learning because they signify simplifying areas in
acquiring the target language (Lado, 1957). This hypothesis was challenged by a number of studies (Duskova, 1984; Zobl, 1980; Kellerman, 1987), which found that the errors the hypothesis predicted are not always made by the learners, and some errors are due to features in the target language, very similar to the ones made by children while acquiring their first language. Moreover, differences between languages are more complex than simply being classified into similarities signifying ease and differences signifying difficulty, as there are aspects in some languages that do not exist in others. Besides, difficulty is not always tied to differences. The simplified version of the contrastive analysis hypothesis paid more attention to analysing students’ mistakes. This new focus made the hypothesis more applicable and acceptable by linguistic scholars than the original contrastive analysis hypothesis.

**First Language Interference**

The ideas opposing the original contrastive analysis hypothesis did not abandon the idea of the effect of first language on the acquisition of the second, but pointed to the fact that this effect is no more than one factor that has an impact in addition to other factors like a learner’s age and attitude. As a result, a lot of research on the interference of first language in the acquisition of the second one has been done since the behavioral school of thought first introduced the idea.

Most of the studies in the field of language interference focused on the lexical area and showed that there is a clear impact by the first language on the acquisition of the second language (Bloem & La Heij, 2003; Colomé, 2001; Costa & Caramazza, 1999; Costa, Roelstrats, & Hartsuiker, 2006; Morsella & Miozzo, 2002). Unfortunately, syntactic interference between the first and target language has received comparatively less attention from linguists than lexical interference.
De Bot (1992) presented his model, the bilingual adaptation of level, and suggested that the syntax of the first language should not affect the processing of the second language syntax because each language has its own formulators responsible for grammar encoding. On the other hand, Ullman (2001), in his theoretical model, and Hartsuiker, Pickering, and Veltkamp (2004), in another model, supported the theory of syntactic influence. Ullman (2001), in his procedural/declarative model of bilingualism, suggested that grammatical processing in the second language relies partly on the same declarative system that the grammatical processing relies on in the first language, which leads to interference between the two languages, while Hartsuiker et al. (2004) believed that for second language learners, similar areas of grammar within both languages are shared, no matter how linguistically distant those languages are from each other. Both models lead to the existence of syntactic interference between the first and the target languages.

Most of the experimental studies on the syntactic influences of first languages on the acquisition of other languages support Ullman’s (2001) and Hartsuiker et al.’s (2004) models. The main area, which was studied in the argument about first language syntactic interference, is agreement production as a sign of negative transfer between the first and the target languages. Hartsuiker, Kolk, and Huinck (1999), Hartsuiker, Kolk and Huiskamp (1999), Hartsuiker and Barkhuysen (2006), Vigliocco, Butterworth, and Semenza (1995), Vigliocco, Butterworth, and Garrett (1996), and Vigliocco, Hartsuiker, Jarema, and Kolk (1996) conducted a number of studies that shed light on a type of language transfer related to the subject-verb numerous disagreement in languages like Spanish, Italian, Dutch, and French. Hartsuiker, Kolk, and Huinck (1999) conducted a three-experiment study comparing a group of Dutch participants who were diagnosed with Broca's aphasia with a group of healthy Dutch participants on the
grammatical production of subject-verb agreement. The study revealed that the healthy Dutch speakers (who did not suffer from Broca's aphasia) produced more subject-verb numerical agreement errors when the head noun in the fragment was a distributive singular and the local noun, i.e., the noun in the prepositional phrase that follows the head noun, was plural (e.g., the label on the bottles) than they produced when both the head noun and local noun were singular.

Hartsuiker and Barkhuysen (2006) found the same results when trying to investigate the role of the working memory in sentence formulation. They found that agreement errors occurred frequently with participants who have a limited memory span (low ability to maintain an extrinsic memory load). They also found that it happened more frequently when the head noun and the local noun did not match in the syntactic status (i.e., when the head noun is distributive singular and the local noun is plural). Researchers in the studies mentioned in the previous paragraph interpreted that the reasons behind the agreement errors is a different semantic understanding of numerical references in the learners’ first and target languages.

Van Hell and Mensies (2004) and Nicol and Greth (2003) conducted studies that pointed to the influence of the learner’s first languages (Dutch/Spanish) on their second language (English) when expressing numbers. These studies indicated that the syntactic knowledge the learner has with their first language affects the production of second language syntax. Other studies (Hohenstein, Eisenberg, and Naigles, 2006; Nicoladis, 2006) focused on the syntactic constructions of the second language and how it is affected by the constructions of the first language. Hohenstein, Eisenberg, and Naigles (2006) found that Spanish speakers tend to use the bare verb without manner modifiers when expressing manners in English, which is the way it is expressed in their first language. For instance they would say, she is exiting the room running, instead of saying, she is running out of the room. Nicoladis (2006) found that French learners
tend to reverse the English adjective phrase to start with the noun before the adjective, as it is in their mother tongue.

With regard to Arabic interference in learning English as a target language, increasing numbers of studies detecting Arab students’ errors have referred to the fact that Arabic causes more interference in English as a target language compared to other languages (Meehan, 2013). Arabic interference in English learning was pointed to as one of the reasons behind most Arab students’ errors (Housen & Pierrard, 2005; Diab, 1996; Al-khresheh, 2007; Grami & Alzugaibi, 2012). This was mostly cited because of the huge distance between the Arabic and English language structures (Meehan, 2013; Mohammad, 2005). The most-reported Arab student errors were copula omission, preposition errors, definite article errors, and subject/verb repetition (Alshayban, 2014; Meehan, 2013; Elgibali, 2005; Al-Hassan, 2013). According to Al-Hassan (2013), translating ideas from Arabic to English was the reason behind most of these errors. Due to the weak foundation in English as a target language that Arab students reported having (Meehan, 2013), translation caused a great deal of inter-lingual interference between Arabic and English as a target language.

Al-Hassan’s (2013) study, which was held at Petra University in Jordan and investigated the utility of Contrastive Analysis in detecting the sources of Arab students’ writing errors, analysed ten essays on a given topic in addition to a 50-item multiple choice test. Al-Hassan (2013), who reported that the source of one-third of learners’ incorrect statements in the target language is in fact the learners’ native language, found a number of repeated errors that pointed to Arabic interference in English. Preposition errors, definite article errors, word order errors, coordination errors, and copula omission were reported as the most common errors in English syntax and grammar. Arab students’ tendency to mentally translate from Arabic when expressing
ideas in English was believed to be one of the problems leading to this kind of inter-lingual interference. The study had implications for teaching English in giving students more explicit instruction on their weak areas (Al-Hassan, 2013).

Al-Hassan’s study correlated what Kasem (1997) found earlier in a longitudinal study, which targeted ten Lebanese students newly moved to Australia. Around 30 pieces of writing were analysed and the students were observed during their schooldays and in their classes. The study concluded that copula omission was the major error that occurred 208 times in 329 cases. The wrong use of the copula was deduced as the second major problem, and occurred 185 times in 77 cases. The study highlighted a reduction in the students’ number of errors throughout their language progress.

Similar to Al-Hassan’s (2013), a study was held by Meehan (2013) and targeted 12 upper-intermediate level Arab students in a university in the UK. The study aimed to investigate the reason behind Arab students’ errors and the utility of a five-hour progress-facilitating intervention. The study pointed to the impact of the Arabic writing style on Arab students’ English writing. Students’ improvement after the five-hour intervention led to implications on providing some facilitating explicit instruction on the differences between English and Arabic.

Alshayban (2014) looked deeper in Arab students’ tendency to omit the copula, and through analysing 100 essays written by Saudi students at intermediate and advanced levels of English at Qassim University in Saudi Arabia, copula omission occurred frequently. It was noted in correlate with what Cortes (2006), and Abu-Jarrad (2008) found that intermediate-level students made more copula errors than advanced-level students, and that copula omission errors occurred more in present tenses than in past or future tenses. Alshayban (2014) pointed to the absence of copula verbs in the surface structure of the Arabic affirmative present tense as the
main reason behind Arab students’ copula omission. The study concluded with a recommendation for more explicit teaching of the differences between the structures of Arabic and English, which was expected to result in minimizing Saudi students’ errors with English structure.

Abu-jarad (2008) conducted a study on 179 students in their second semester of an English program at Al-Azhar University in Gaza. The students were given 59 multiple choice questions on 13 grammatical aspects. The wrong usage of definite articles was the most noticeable error by the students. Tenses, verb formation, and copula-dropping were also among the major errors by the students. The study had recommendations regarding English educators collaborating on a work to address error management.

These are all studies that have pointed to the impact of first language syntax generally and Arabic syntax specifically on the production of English as a second language.

**Explicit Form-Focused Instruction and Second Language Learning**

When the communicative approach was first introduced, it was intended as a strategy to be used in addition to form-focused instruction in order to put more focus on meaning. The experimental study, Vygotsky (1978), was used to prove the effectiveness of the approach did not compare the communicative approach to the traditional structure-based approach. The experiment instead examined the effectiveness of adding communicative practices to a structure-based strategy. The results showed excellent results for the group that were given form-based ESL teaching in a communicative environment (Spada, 2007). Although Vygotsky (1978)’s study called for a balanced focus on both meaning and form, later research was centered on the use of a communicative approach, excluding the focus on form. (Spada, 2007)
There has recently been a considerable understanding of the communicative approach, supported by a number of studies (Harley, 1989; Lyster, 1994; Spada & Lightbown, 1989; Spada & Lightbown, 1993; White et al., 1991) which proved the positive effects of using some form-focused instruction in communicative classrooms. The communicative approach presented by Krashen (2009) and his followers was difficult for ESL teachers to apply, and as a result, both ESL teachers and researchers developed different understandings and applications of the approach (Spada, 2007). Spada (2007) also reported that researchers have conducted studies on the effectiveness of the communicative approach since 1972, and the approach has proven its effectiveness and been adopted by many ESL teachers.

However, according to Spada (2007), one key reason for the misconceptions by ESL teachers and researchers had to do with the way in which two main second language acquisition theories have viewed the application of the communicative approach. Innate theorists have dealt with the communicative approach as a meaning-based approach that pays less attention to the accuracy of the forms in favour of the actual meaning (Spada, 2007). Although the innate theorist Krashen (1982) and the interaction theorist Long (1983) introduced the approach as an implicitly meaning-based approach that excludes form-based instruction and rejects any use of explicit feedback or instruction, this view was not strong enough to stand up to other studies conducted in the field.

Garcia Mayo (2002) reported that the communicative approach’s applications were successful in developing students’ motivation in language use, but failed in developing learners’ grammatical competence. Similarly, studies on the application of the communicative approach in classrooms where form-based approaches were excluded uncovered low student language competence (Harley & Swain, 1984; Spada & Lightbown, 1989). The study that Spada and
Lightbown (1989) conducted has implications on the superiority of including form-focused feedback over excluding it. The study compared a group of Grade Five and Six Francophone students in Quebec who received an intensive instructional English program with those who were of the same levels and received the regular program and with other groups who were in higher levels but received a similar number of hours of English instruction. The 33 classrooms that underwent the study showed differences in the types of instruction the students received and the focus of the instruction (form or meaning focus), according to the teachers' styles of teaching. The study mainly showed that the group that received the intensive program demonstrated higher interactional abilities and a better attitude towards English than both comparison groups. This study, as Spada (2007) cited, also indicated that those classes which excluded the form-based instruction failed to achieve higher levels of language competence.

On the other hand, studies which compared situations where both form and meaning were addressed within the communicative approach to ones where the focus was on the meaning side of the approach (Harley, 1989; Lyster, 1994; Spada & Lightbown, 1993; White et al., 1991) have supported Savignon's (1972) results. White et al. (1991) conducted a two-phase experimental study on the effects of form-based instruction on Francophone students' competence in English question formation. Both the five groups in Phase One and the four groups in Phase Two received enhancement activities on question formation and underwent pre- and post-tests to reveal the improvements made after being exposed to the enhancement activities. Two of the groups in Phase One and three of the groups in Phase Two received form-based instruction on question formation, while the other three groups in Phase One and the remaining group in Phase Two received no instruction on question formation but received instruction on adverb placement. The instructed groups in both phases were compared to the uninstructed groups and to a control
native-speakers’ group. In both phases the instructed groups showed significant differences that the uninstructed groups did not show between the pre- and the post-tests. This suggests that providing students with form-based instruction within communicative practices has a significantly positive effect on a student’s level of competence for syntactic aspects like question formation.

Thus, both research work and teaching experience have provided evidence that the most effective instruction is the one that focuses on form in addition to meaning (Spada & Lightbown, 2008). Recent work (Tomita & Spada, 2013; Valeo, 2013) has also shown the advantages of giving students explicit form-focused feedback to increase their linguistic accuracy. A study by Tomita and Spada (2013) aiming to investigate the effect of form-focused instruction on learners’ L2 communicative investments revealed advantages for form-focused instruction. Twenty-four Japanese students participated in the study and received 15 minutes of exclusive meaning-focused activity and 15 minutes of meaning activities, with attention to the form and the meaning. The results showed that form-focused instruction leads to greater second language investment through establishing learners’ identity as second language users.

Similarly, Valeo (2013) reached a similar result when comparing two groups through a 10-week study of content-based instruction in which one group had form-focused instruction and the other did not. Both groups showed significant gains, but the results showed significant advantages for the form-focused group.

Most importantly, studies investigating students’ perspectives on receiving grammatical instruction, although very limited, showed EFL students’ preferences for receiving explicit corrective feedback and grammar instruction (Spada, Barkaoui, Peters, So, & Valeo, 2009). Loewen et al. (2009) investigated 754 ESL/EFL students in an American university on their
attitude towards error correction, grammar instruction, and grammar and language accuracy, among a number of other variables. A large number of students reported that studying grammar was important for improving their language abilities in general as well as their separate language skills. These studies demonstrate that pairing more explicit and form-focused instruction with a communicative approach has a positive effect on student competence.

In addition, studies on communicative classrooms pointed out that the more explicit corrective feedback is, the more effective it is proved to be, as learners do not usually perceive the exclusively implicit feedback (e.g., recasting) as a correction (Havranek, 1999; Lyster, 1998; Lyster & Mori, 2006). Therefore, providing more explicit feedback and instruction in communicative classrooms helps to improve learners’ competence (Ammar & Spada, 2006; Lyster, 2004; Lyster & Mori, 2006). One of the major studies in this area is Spada and Tomita’s (2010) meta-analysis of 41 studies. The study compared the effectiveness of explicit and implicit instruction on simple and complex grammatical features, and the results showed a large effect of explicit instruction over implicit in both simple and complex grammar features, which suggests the effectiveness of including some explicit instruction when needed.

Meta-linguistic Awareness and Second Language Learning

Increasing students’ meta-linguistic awareness by giving them explicit instruction has been argued over the last few decades. Despite all the debate by the innate theorists and the interaction theorists about the utility of explicit instruction for second language acquisition, there has been a correlation between explicit instruction as a means of increasing student meta-linguistic awareness and student language proficiency.

A number of studies have indicated the superiority of bilingual children over monolinguals in tasks related to meta-linguistic awareness (Bialystok, 1986; Cromdal, 1999;
Ricciardelli, 1992). Similarly, recent research papers written by Dillon (2009) and Jessner (2013) have reported the meta-linguistic advantages that can be obtained by being around more than one language. Furthermore, Bialystok (2001) made a statement about effective executive functions (as variables of meta-linguistic knowledge), which were found to be stronger in bilingual children than monolingual children. Further to that, Bialystok, Craik, Klein, and Viswanathan (2004) duplicated the study with adults. They reported that the measurable exclusive functions were carried out more effectively by bilinguals than monolinguals.

In addition, studies done by Lightbown and Spada (2000), Hu (2002), Spada, Lightbown, and White (2005), and Ammar, Lightbown, and Spada (2010) have shown negative results of the absence of student awareness of the nature of the languages they already speak and how those differ from the ones they are learning. Students in Lightbown and Spada’s (2000) study were requested to explain orally the reasons behind their judging some English questions as grammatically incorrect. The study showed little evidence for a conscious awareness of the differences between French and English.

Ammar et al. (2010) correlated previous studies and showed that the majority of the students did not have meta-awareness of the differences between the nature of question formation in English and French, which affected their ability to verbalize reasons behind the judgment they made on the questions they formed. The study pointed to the need to increase students’ contrastive meta-linguistic awareness, and also to a correlation with the high levels the students showed and the correct forms of English questions they made.

Equally important, Eliss (2005) argued the importance of increasing students’ meta-linguistic awareness through the primary conscious involvement in the second language acquisition process through explicit instruction. This explicit instruction plays a role in
registering pattern recognizers for constructions, which then integrate into the implicit learning system during subsequent input processing. In other words, explicit instruction helps in smoothing the implicit learning process, which leads to successful acquisition by providing a solid base of knowledge to build on “meta-linguistic awareness” until the new constructions integrate into the subsequent input process.

Likewise, a number of studies (Bialystok & Barac, 2011; Francis, 2002; Golonka, 2006; Lavolette, 2014; Wistner, 2014) have supported Ellis’s (2005) claim about the positive impact of increasing students’ meta-linguistic awareness by driving their attention explicitly to the newly learnt structures. Golonka (2006), for instance, did a study on 22 American students studying Russian in order to question the meta-linguistic behavior differences between students who had achieved some grammatical gain during their study abroad (gainers) and those who did not (null-gainers). The measured meta-linguistic variables were self-corrected errors and sentence repairs. Self-corrected errors occurred with the gainers more than twice as often as the null-gainers, while sentence repairs occurred with the null-gainers at a rate of only 1/3.6 compared to the gainers. The study showed that both meta-linguistic measured variables in this study were affected positively by the grammatical gains in studying abroad.

As well, Bialystok and Barac (2011) found that meta-linguistic proficiency improved with increasing knowledge about the language of testing. This was found when 80 Anglophone children instructed in French were tested in their judgment on whether 120 sentences were grammatically correct, grammatically incorrect but meaningful, or semantically anonymous but grammatical. The results showed the link between students’ knowledge increase in the target language and the meta-linguistic advantages they gain within the same language.
Wistner (2014) stated that metalinguistic awareness was found to be a strong variable for L2 procedural knowledge. The study he conducted targeted 249 Japanese university students to investigate the effect of meta-linguistic awareness on L2 procedural knowledge. To assess the students’ meta-linguistic knowledge, they underwent one receptive and two productive meta-linguistic tests related to meta-linguistic terminology and English grammatical rules. The students’ procedural knowledge was assessed through their performance in a timed writing test. The results showed that meta-linguistic knowledge facilitates the development of L2 procedural knowledge. In fact, metalinguistic knowledge had moderate to strong effects on L2 complexity, accuracy, and fluency.

Lavolette (2014) reached the same results when comparing four groups of students who were exposed to different computerized feedback conditions. Each group received a test condition with either, item by item without meta-linguistic corrective feedback, item by item with meta-linguistic corrective feedback, end of the test without meta-linguistic corrective feedback, or end of the test with meta-linguistic corrective feedback. The students went through a pre-test and two post-tests, one of which was conducted five minutes after the corrective feedback conditions and the other one week after the corrective feedback conditions. In both post-tests, the item by item meta-linguistic group had higher gains than the other groups and demonstrated a better ability for generalization.
Chapter 3: Methods

Study Design Overview

This study addressed three main areas of inquiry obtained from its research questions: To what extent are Saudi students aware of the differences between Arabic and English sentence word orders; and, After receiving explicit form-focused instruction within communicative sessions, what are the students' perspectives on: (a) the impact of increasing their meta-linguistic awareness of the differences between Arabic and English word order on their sentence production and self-correction abilities; and (b) the utility of using explicit form-focused instruction for increasing their meta-linguistic awareness?

The first area of inquiry obtained from these research questions concerns students’ meta-linguistic awareness of the differences between Arabic and English word order. The second area focuses on students' perspectives on the impact of increasing this metalinguistic awareness of these differences between Arabic and English word order on their sentence production and self-correction abilities. The third area focuses on their perspectives on receiving explicit form-focused instruction to increase this meta-linguistic awareness.

In order to answer these questions, the study progressed through three steps. After receiving ethics clearance from the University Research Ethics Board at Mount Saint Vincent University (see Appendix C), the study started with: a) an initial interview to investigate the students’ meta-linguistic awareness; b) communicative sessions; and c) a final interview to gather students’ perspectives on the communicative sessions. Beginning with the initial interview, the study investigated four Saudi English students' meta-linguistic awareness of the differences between Arabic and English word orders. It also explored, through the final interview, five Saudi
students’ opinions on the utility of receiving instruction on the differences between Arabic and English word order.

**Case study approach.** Answers for the above mentioned questions were obtained from the participants as separate case studies. According to Duff (2008), using this approach allows exploration of the relations between different variables within certain phenomena, and goes beyond pure description to find relational patterns in those phenomena. Thus, the case study approach was taken to provide a deeper look into each student’s meta-linguistic awareness as a separate case and explore how each case’s different features (e.g., language level, academic background, length of stay in Canada) related as different variables and affected their meta-linguistic awareness. Then, a cross-case approach (Duff, 2008) was used as a tool to shed light on each student’s perspective on the helpfulness of meta-linguistic awareness and the utility of explicit form-focused instruction and to compare it to other students’ perspectives.

**Research context.** The study was conducted at two schools: the Canadian Language Institute (CLI) and the Nova Scotia Language Center (NSLC). Real school names were replaced by pseudonyms for confidentiality. At CLI, the study took just over two weeks, starting on May 19, 2014, and ending on June 4, 2014. At NSLC, the study was condensed into five days, from June 23, 2014 to June 27, 2014. The communicative sessions at each school covered 10 hours of the allotted study time.

**Participants**

**Recruitment.** I recruited five adult students from CLI and NSLC, two English language schools in Halifax, Canada. Three students were from CLI and two were from NSLC. No gender restrictions were imposed; however, all students who chose to participate in the study were female.
I adhered to two steps in recruiting the students for the study: (a) I gave a presentation to Saudi students at four schools about the nature of the study and what would be expected of the participants; and (b) participants who were interested and who met the criteria of the study were asked to sign a consent form. Detailed descriptions of the five participants are provided below.

At CLI. The study was presented to 12 Saudi students, of whom three female students signed the consent form. After the initial interview, one participant of this initial three was unable to make it to school until the final two days of the communicative sessions, and so she had to withdraw. Another female student was able to join the study only on the first day of the communicative sessions (having missed the initial interview), but thereby brought the total number of participants from CLI back up to three.

At NSLC. Two female students signed the consent form only after they made sure that the study would finish before the beginning of Ramadan, an Islamic month in which Muslims fast and their day-night system usually shifts (meaning that the participants might not be available during daylight hours).

All of the students who were recruited had the goal of improving their English skills in order to gain entrance to a university. They had finished their regular education in Saudi Arabia, had been studying English in Canada for more than three months, and shared the educational goal of being able to communicate in English using the correct forms of sentences.

Descriptions. The following table highlights the key features of the participants. The participants’ real names were replaced by pseudonyms for confidentiality.
Table 1

*Key information about the students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Amal</th>
<th>Hanaa’</th>
<th>Mai</th>
<th>Naomi</th>
<th>O’la</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language level (school-ranked)</td>
<td>3/6</td>
<td>Level 2/6</td>
<td>6/6</td>
<td>Level 5/6</td>
<td>Level 4/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of stay in Canada</td>
<td>15 months</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying in Canada</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>10 months</td>
<td>8 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of English outside the classroom</td>
<td>When necessary</td>
<td>When necessary</td>
<td>With friends, all the time</td>
<td>When necessary</td>
<td>When necessary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Students’ language level was determined by the individual schools on six-level scales.

*Summaries.* Drawing from the initial interview, below are summaries of the participants that highlight significant features about each of them.

*Amal.* Amal was a student at NSLC. Her last certificate was Grade 12, although she did attend a computer science undergraduate program for one year and a child education program for two years. She expressed high levels of confidence in her command of Arabic, her native language. Despite that, she reported that she has always had a tense relationship with English. During her school years in Saudi Arabia, her lowest grades were in English, and she changed her university major program to avoid studying in English. In Canada, she reported speaking English in the classroom and trying to speak English with her children, but she did not speak it much with others.
Hanaa’. Hanaa’ was a student at CLI. She held a Bachelor’s degree in Arabic from a Saudi university, which seemed to give her a strong background in Arabic grammar and linguistics. Like Amal, she reported constant struggles with English. She described her six years of studying English in Saudi Arabia as a completely useless experience. In Canada, she reported speaking English as needed, both inside and outside the classroom.

Mai. Mai was a student at NSLC. She held a Bachelor’s degree in English from a Saudi university. Mai taught English to high school students in Saudi Arabia and graduated with a relatively high level of English. She showed high confidence in her English linguistic knowledge. On the other hand, she did not show the same attitude towards Arabic, as she frequently reported that she was not very good at Arabic grammar and linguistics. She reported speaking English inside and outside the classroom whenever she could.

Naomi. Naomi was a student at CLI. Missing her initial interview, most of the information was obtained in her final interview. Thus, she did not get the chance to express her attitude towards either Arabic or English. Naomi held a Bachelor of Education degree from a Saudi university. She reported speaking English outside the classroom only when necessary.

O’la. O’la was a student at CLI. She held a Bachelor of Education degree. She did not report any problems with Arabic grammar. She expressed comfort in speaking English and reported speaking English outside the classroom whenever she could.

Instruments

Two interview protocols were developed and used in this study, based on the questions answered at the pre-communicative session and post-communicative session stages. These interview protocols were described in detail under the data collection section. Interviewing is a direct method of data collection that involves researchers seeking open-ended answers related to
a number of questions, topic areas, or themes (O'Leary, 2010). It is the most commonly used method in the qualitative approach because it focuses researchers' attention on the individual participants. Through interviews, the researcher is able to gather the participants' personal opinions, perspectives, and experiences, as well as investigate complex issues (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2011). Interview questions can investigate knowledge, experience, opinions, or feelings. It is important that the interviewer forms interview questions in a clear way in order to help the interviewees provide accurate answers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Thus, I selected interviewing as a means to investigate students' awareness of the contrastive areas in both Arabic and English word order, and to investigate each individual's personal perspective about the helpfulness of using explicit instruction to increase this awareness of their understanding of the nature of English word order.

Two semi-structured interviews were conducted in this study. This is the type of interview that starts with defined questions but gives the interviewer the freedom to shift the flow of the interview according to the situation (O'Leary, 2010). I used this style in both interviews because it allows follow-up questions to illustrate the exact meaning and verify the interviewer's understanding of the given answer.

**Interview 1.** The purpose of Interview 1 was to identify students' meta-awareness of the areas of difference between Arabic and English word orders. As was mentioned in Chapter Two, meta-linguistic awareness was defined by Ellis (2005) as the ability to focus on linguistic forms and to switch focus between form and meaning. Students reflect high meta-linguistic awareness when they show the ability to categorize words in parts of speech, switch focus between form, function, and meaning, and explain why a word has a particular function (Jessner, 2013).
Therefore, the focus of the Interview 1 questions was mainly on students’ knowledge of some basic differences between the word order of the two languages and the word functions in each language. Interview 1 was considered a first stage in this study and its questions were designed to inform the communicative sessions that followed. Interview 1 included five main questions (see Appendix D). Questions 1, 2, and 4 explored whether the students had the knowledge and ability to distinguish between important features in Arabic and English word orders, e.g., flexibility versus fixity, and basic elements of both English and Arabic sentences. Since the theoretical aspect of these kinds of differences is hard for ESL students to recognize on their own, the students were given practical questions (e.g., provide examples of different types of Arabic sentences, and ask them to describe the changes that occur in the sentences when put into English) to identify whether or not the lack of theoretical knowledge affected their use of the language and their error production. In contrast, questions 3 and 5 (see Appendix D) allowed the students to articulate their knowledge about differences between Arabic and English word orders.

Through these questions, the researcher was able to link the students’ theoretical knowledge with the application of that knowledge in their real-life use of the language. The purpose here was not to catch any errors that students might make when forming English statements, but to determine any gap in their awareness of the differences between Arabic and English, which is a potential underlying source for any repeated errors they might make.

Interview 2. Interview 2 was considered a second stage because it followed and provided perspectives on the utility of the communicative sessions which had been informed by Interview 1. Interview 2 investigated the students' perspectives about the effects of their awareness of the differences between the features of Arabic and English word order and the effectiveness of the
form-focused instruction they had received on their abilities to produce correct English sentences and how to self-correct their mistakes. The questions were mainly opinion questions and questions about feelings (see Appendix D), with the aim of finding out the students’ perspectives on experiences they had been through. The interview included six main questions, the last one of which helped the researcher determine if the knowledge the students received affected their abilities to observe and monitor their own mistakes, leading to their effective acquisition of the language (Krashen, 2009).

**Data Collection**

As described previously, the data collection was held at two different schools, with the same steps being followed at both.

Data collection at the first school started on May 19, 2014, and ended on June 4, 2014, with Interview 1 taking place on May 19, 2014 and the interviews taking around 10 to 15 minutes. For Interview 2 at the first school, one student was interviewed on June 3, 2014, and two students were interviewed on June 4, 2014. Each interview took around 15 to 20 minutes.

Data collection at the second school started on June 23, 2014, and went until June 27, 2014. It was condensed into five days because it took place in the last week before Ramadan. Interview 1 took place on June 23, 2014, with each taking approximately 20 minutes, while Interview 2 took place on June 27, 2014, with each taking around 30 minutes.

The first set of data obtained from Interview 1 was knowledge-awareness information. I conducted Interview 1 with three students at the first school and two students at the second school. Then, after both groups went through the previously explained communicative sessions, I conducted Interview 2 with the same groups of students. Interview 2 involved opinion questions.
Data Analysis

To analyze the data obtained from the five participants, a cross-case approach was taken, in which the data from each case were analyzed separately, and the results of each case were compared to look for similar and significant features and opinions (Duff, 2008). In order to analyze the data, a table was created from each interview. The tables contain the themes and codes that meet the study's research questions.

The data were analyzed sequentially, with two coding frameworks created for the two sets of interviews.

Coding Framework 1 (Interview 1). This identifies the different students’ Arabic/English meta-linguistic awareness, and includes three themes. Eight codes descended from these three main themes: three from the first, two from the second, and three from the third. The first theme, L1 awareness, looked into the students’ knowledge of the basic rules governing word order in Arabic sentences. L1 meta-linguistic awareness, L1 accuracy, and L1 syntactic meta-linguistic awareness were the codes under the first theme. The second theme, L2 awareness, explored the students’ understanding of word order rules in English sentences. L2 accuracy and L2 syntactic meta-linguistic awareness were the codes under that theme. The third theme, Arabic/English word order difference awareness, looked into the students’ understanding of the basic differences between the two languages’ linguistic and syntactic systems. Bilingual accuracy, interlanguage syntactic meta-linguistic awareness, and Arabic/English word order difference meta-linguistic awareness were the codes descending from the third theme. For more illustrations about the codes and their descriptions, see Appendix E.

Coding Framework 2 (Interview 2). This investigated the students’ perspectives on the role of explicit form-focused instruction in increasing meta-linguistic awareness of Arabic-
English word order differences. It was an inductive and open coding framework in which the researcher’s role is forming and presenting students’ opinions (Ellingson, 2011).

This coding framework included four themes, and 10 codes emerging from the students’ answers in Interview 2 were created. The first theme solicited the students’ opinions on the knowledge they received in the communicative sessions. Three codes descended from that theme: new; clear, applicable, and interesting; and useful. The second theme, the impact of knowledge, looked into how the knowledge would impact the participants, and four areas were used as the codes under that theme. These four codes were writing, speaking, self-correction, and helping others. The third theme was about the students’ opinions on the segment (e.g., beginner, intermediate, or advanced) that this knowledge should be directed to. There was a single code under that theme. The fourth theme was about the strategies that should be used to teach this knowledge, and two codes were created under this theme. The first of the two codes questions if the form-focused areas related to Arabic-English word order differences need to be highlighted, and if these areas needed explicit highlighting. Instruction in the communicative sessions focused on two main areas of Arabic and English word order, which are: the differences between Arabic and English word order, and English sentence word order. Therefore, the students’ opinions were taken on these two areas, and Coding Framework 2 was also applied to the two main areas of the communicative sessions’ focus. For more illustration and descriptions about the codes descending from the above-mentioned themes, see Appendix F.

In order to find a pattern within the students’ meta-linguistic awareness in Arabic and English, the Framework 1 codes were listed in a table with the students’ names. Four categories were established for the students’ answers. The students’ answers could be: ‘correct’, ‘not correct’, ‘not sure’, or ‘correct but with help’. Some codes emerged from questions that had two
answers, so they were represented in the table as ‘Sentence One’ and ‘Sentence Two’ (S1 & S2), and various codes emerged from two questions, Q1 & Q2. For more illustration about each code and the question from which it emerged, see Appendix G.

In order to find a pattern within the students’ overall opinions of the utility of the knowledge and the instruction they received, another table was created for the students’ frequently highlighted codes. The codes that emerged from students’ opinions were listed on the left, with the students’ names on top. The students’ opinions about Arabic/English word order differences (AEWO), English sentence structure (ESS), or both areas in general (G), were listed along with the frequency that they highlighted each code.

An ESL colleague helped me with the analysis process to guarantee the accuracy of the interpretations of the students’ opinions. I analyzed both sets of data manually using Microsoft Word and Excel to create the above-mentioned tables.

**Criteria for Evaluation**

In this study, the codes were identified inductively and the framework was set on the codes that emerged from the students’ opinions. In inductive analysis, a framework is grounded on the data, as opposed to applying an existing framework on the new data (Ellingson, 2011). My role in the study was first to explore the students’ awareness of the differences in Arabic and English word orders, and second, to investigate their opinions on using form-focused instruction to help them see these differences more clearly. My role was centered on interpreting the participants’ opinions. I allowed the participants to look at their transcripts and interpretations in both languages so that they could confirm their positions on the topic.

To me, students' errors are indicators of deeper problems. Unless deep solutions are provided, some errors will keep showing up. Lado (1975) viewed students' errors as attempts to
find systematic rules to apply while learning the language. From my experience in teaching English to Saudi students in Saudi Arabia, I noticed that solving the problem of dropping the copula in a sentence ("My sister a doctor") by recasting the sentence will not help the students avoid deeper levels of similar mistakes, such as treating, e.g., "This precious gifts from my old friend" as a sentence. However, giving more in-depth feedback about the need for a verb phrase in the basic structure of an English sentence can help students avoid producing such errors, and/or can help them self-correct when making these mistakes. I tutored at a Wall Street language school, where my role was to help students overcome their weaknesses in the language. There, I noticed that providing learners with clear, in-depth explanations of the difficult features of the language and how those features are supposed to function (unlike in their mother tongue) helped them to avoid related errors.
Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the findings from the two sets of interviews done in this study. As was mentioned in Chapter 3, four female Saudi students participated in Interview 1. Then, one more female Saudi student, who had missed Interview 1, attended the communicative sessions and participated in Interview 2 in addition to the four previously mentioned students. Thus, this chapter first highlights the data from the first four students’ meta-linguistic awareness of the differences between Arabic and English word order, and then, the chapter presents all five students’ opinions about the utility of the increase in their meta-linguistic awareness of the differences between Arabic and English word order and the effectiveness of receiving explicit form-focused instruction for that purpose.

The findings on the students’ meta-linguistic awareness were presented as separate cases to look in more depth into the individual differences and their effects on findings. Then a cross-case approach was taken in presenting the findings from the students’ opinions (Duff, 2008), which were presented in groups under the highlighted codes to avoid repetition and to provide emphasis for the most common opinions among the students.

Students’ Meta-linguistic Awareness of Arabic/English Word Order Differences

In general, the students’ meta-linguistic awareness of Arabic/English word order differences varied according to each student’s different academic background, level in English, and attitude towards English as a second language. The following table, Table 2, presents a summary of the students’ approximate levels of L1, L2, and Arabic/English word order difference awareness.
Table 2

Summary of the Students’ Meta-Linguistic Awareness of Arabic and English and the Differences between Them

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Arabic meta-linguistic awareness</th>
<th>English meta-linguistic awareness</th>
<th>A/E word order difference meta-linguistic awareness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amal</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Varying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanaa’</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mai</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O’la</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following paragraphs provide a preview of the findings from the students’ meta-linguistic awareness of the differences between Arabic and English word orders. For a more detailed presentation of the findings, see Appendix H.

Looking at the eight codes descending from the three main themes, each student showed a different level of L1 meta-linguistic awareness, L2 meta-linguistic awareness, and meta-linguistic awareness of Arabic/English word order difference.

Amal. Amal had a high level of meta-linguistic awareness of the Arabic linguistic system, as shown in Table 2. She was able to provide correct information and examples about Arabic as a language without any help, as is shown below:

Sarah: Do you remember when we were in Grade four, we were taught that Arabic has two types of declarative sentences?
Amal: Yes, nominal sentence and verbal sentence. They taught us that nominal starts with so and so, and the verbal starts with so and so.
Sarah: Great, can you provide examples for nominal and verbal sentences?
Amal: Yes, “Ahmad ate the apple” is the first verbal sentence we took, I believe.
Sarah: Okay, what about the nominal sentence?

Amal: The morning is beautiful.”

Moreover, she was able to name the main parts of Arabic speech and determine that “the noun” is the basic part of the declarative Arabic sentence.

Sarah: What is the part of speech that you cannot make a declarative Arabic sentence without?

Amal: The noun, because in the nominal sentence we do not need a verb.

Generally, she demonstrated strong syntactic awareness in Arabic. Her high level could be due to her reported passion about Arabic as a language and her exclusive reading in Arabic:

I love Arabic and used to do a lot of writings. I used to write short stories and articles for the local journals; I don’t have a problem with my language, I can make formal speech or write reports, I can write a piece of writing right now, I have no problem with Arabic grammar at all.

On the other hand, she demonstrated a low level of accuracy and meta-linguistic awareness in English, as shown in Table 2. She gave “nice morning” as an example for an English sentence. “Nice morning” was given by her as an equivalent for the Arabic nominal sentence “اﻟﺼﺒﺎح ﺗﺠﻤﯿﻞ” i.e., “The morning is beautiful”. This error reflects a misunderstanding and misapplication of the basic English sentences structure (noun phrase + verb phrase).

Amal’s English meta-linguistic awareness was also affected by a general low awareness the English linguistic system, considering that she was able to name parts of English speech but wasn’t able to correctly determine the basic elements that make an English sentence. Amal stated that the basic part of speech in an English sentence is the noun, as in an Arabic sentence: “We can make an English sentence without the verb in the nominal sentences, just like when we say ‘Nice morning’.” She used, for example, “Nice morning” as an example of an English
sentence that stands on two nouns, not an adjective and a noun. Such an example suggests that she was confused about the parts of English speech and about English sentence structure as well.

Amal did have a clear idea about the differences between the positions of the parts of speech in English and Arabic sentences. This was clear when she switched the positions of the Arabic words in her nominal sentence "الصباح جميل", i.e., “The morning nice”, and made it “Nice morning” to allow the adjective to precede the noun as in the English system. She did the same with her English verbal sentence “أكل أحمد التفاح”, i.e., “Ate Ahmad the Apple” when she put the subject before the verb: “Ahmad ate the apple.” She commented on the position differences when she was asked about the differences between her Arabic and English sentences.

Sarah: So what are the changes that occurred on your verbal sentence when you said it in English?

Amal: Words positions were switched. Verb comes instead of the noun. They, English speakers, don’t say “Ate Ahmad the apple” like we do. And this position difference is always a challenge for Saudi students, specially, in writing when they start the sentence with the verb instead of the noun.

Sarah: What about your nominal sentence (الصباح جميل, the morning nice)?

Amal: The adjective comes before the noun, unlike in Arabic, where the noun comes before the adjective.

However, Amal’s deep understanding of the Arabic linguistic system and Arabic word order seemed to have interfered with her judgments about English word order. During Interview 1, she used Arabic descriptors like “nominal sentences” even when she was talking about English sentence structures: “We can make an English sentence without the verb in the nominal sentences, just like when we say “Nice morning.” This was despite her statements about her understanding of the differences between the Arabic and English linguistic systems. She stated that she knew that Arabic and English were very different and that their linguistic systems were distant from each other: “The grammar of both languages are different, the words positions are different too.” Briefly, Amal’s meta-linguistic awareness of Arabic/English differences was
varied, as shown in Table 2. She had an awareness of the existence of the differences between the Arabic and English linguistic systems in general; however, she had a lack in her awareness of how and in which areas Arabic and English word orders differ.

In short, Amal had a high level of awareness in Arabic word order which interfered with her meta-linguistic awareness and use of English word order. Her inter-language meta-linguistic awareness varied because she was aware that there were differences between Arabic and English word orders, but did not know the areas of differences, which allowed her Arabic knowledge to interfere with her English learning.

Hanaa’. Hanaa’ resembled Amal in her high awareness of the Arabic linguistic system, as is shown in Table 2. She did not need any help in identifying information about Arabic:

Sarah: At the beginning of Arabic grammar studying, what were the types of Arabic sentences we have been taught?

Hanaa’: Sentences in Arabic are nominal or verbal. This is the basic. She also provided appropriate Arabic examples, which showed her high Arabic proficiency: 

“اليوم انجزت عملًا”, i.e., “Today, I accomplished the work.” She named parts of Arabic speech correctly: “nouns/pronouns, verbs, prepositions, adjectives, and adverb”, and she identified the noun as the basic part of an Arabic sentence: “I think the basic part of the sentence in Arabic is the noun, we cannot get rid of the noun.”

However, in English, Hanaa’ showed a moderate awareness of the language. Except from an error in missing an English article in her verbal sentence “Today I did work”, her English examples were complete, including noun phrase and verb phrase: “The weather is nice; today, I did work.” She was able to name English parts of speech, but she could not correctly determine the basic parts of the English sentence, the noun phrase and verb phrase. Like Amal, she also went with “the noun” as the basic part of an English sentence: “Regarding English, the
basic part is also the noun, I cannot make a sentence without the noun”, which showed some Arabic meta-linguistic awareness interference with her English meta-linguistic awareness.

In addition, Hanaa’ made statements that showed a lack of knowledge of the existence of inter-language differences between Arabic and English. Despite the list of differences between the Arabic and English sentences she made, when asked about the differences between them, she responded that there were no differences: “There are no differences between Arabic and English, just the language and the words. In English I use ‘I’ in ‘Today, I did work’, but in Arabic I don’t need the subject.” Moreover, she reported that both languages are the same from her point of view: “the same grammar and the same sentences, I can easily translate anything between the two languages, this is why I tend to translate everything from English into Arabic in order to study it”.

This lack of awareness of the presence of linguistic differences between the two languages caused her some confusion about the role of some parts of speech in an English sentence. For instance, she wondered what the role of “is” was in the sentence “The weather is nice,” which for her was equivalent to the nominal Arabic sentence “ال الجو راائع”, i.e., “The weather nice.” Since “ال الجو راائع” is an Arabic sentence standing on a noun and an adjective, she suggested that “is” was a pronoun that refers to the subject.

Hanaa’s lack of meta-linguistic awareness of Arabic/English word order differences did not seem to strongly affect her English accuracy at the basic level. However, it caused her to struggle in finding answers for many of her questions about the role of some words in an English sentence, because, as she reported, she kept translating and looking for equivalents for every word in the English sentence in its Arabic translation.
Briefly, Hanaa’ also had high Arabic meta-linguistic awareness, yet had lower English meta-linguistic awareness. Her meta-awareness of Arabic/English word order differences was low, as she was not aware that Arabic and English had different word orders. This did not show an effect on her language use at the primary level, but left her with a lot of unanswered questions.

Mai. Unlike Amal and Hanaa’, Mai showed higher awareness of the English linguistic system than the Arabic one, as shown in Table 2. Since Arabic was her first language, she had adequate Arabic accuracy. Despite that, her meta-linguistic awareness of the Arabic linguistic system was relatively low compared to her English meta-linguistic awareness. She needed examples to help her identify the types of Arabic sentences.

Sarah: What are the types of Arabic sentences we were taught in the beginning of Arabic grammar studying?

Mai: Meaningful sentences and meaningless sentences (Mai meant meaningful and meaningless speech, for sentences in Arabic should always carry meanings.)

Sarah: Okay, what is the difference between when we say, for example, “The weather is nice”, and “Ahmad wrote the lesson?”

Mai: They are nominal sentence and verbal sentence. Then she needed hints to come up with her own examples.

Sarah: Now can you give me examples for nominal and verbal sentences?

Mai: An example for a verbal sentence is “Ahmad ate the apple”, and for a nominal sentence, I do not know, maybe “Ahmad went shopping.” No, this is verbal again.

Sarah: Nominal sentence is an initiative noun and a predicate, e.g., noun and noun.

Mai: The book is useful.

That need for help showed her lack of knowledge about the language she spoke as a mother tongue. She was able to name the main parts of speech in Arabic with some help, but she incorrectly stated that every Arabic sentence needed a subject and a verb. She made this
judgment despite the Arabic sentence she provided (الكتاب مفيد, the book is useful), which does not include a verb in Arabic (The book useful).

On the other hand, she showed a great deal of English accuracy and meta-linguistic awareness. She provided correct English statements, named parts of speech in English, provided information about English sentence structure (e.g., “we can never begin an English sentence with the verb”), and determined that both subject and verb are necessary to make an English sentence. Mai’s English meta-linguistic awareness seemed to interfere with her Arabic meta-linguistic awareness, which led to mistakes about the basic parts of Arabic speech. This was clear when she stated, “Noun and verb are the necessary parts of Arabic speech, it is the same thing in English as well.” English accuracy and meta-linguistic awareness were both high in Mai’s case.

In addition, Mai had a clear understanding of the fact that Arabic and English word orders are different, and she pointed out some areas of these differences: “The two languages are different. Firstly, sentence structures are different. Second, we can sometimes get rid of something in one language but not in the other, so they are different.” However, wherever she was not sure, such as when she was determining the basic parts of a declarative Arabic sentence, her meta-linguistic awareness of English linguistic systems outweighed the Arabic one. This disparity was marked in her inability to determine the noun as the basic part of Arabic speech. Mai’s background (an English degree and a career as an English teacher) likely played a role in her high meta-linguistic awareness of the English linguistic system.

To sum up, Mai appeared to have higher meta-linguistics awareness in English than in Arabic. Her English meta-linguistic awareness seemed to interfere with her Arabic meta-linguistic awareness, yet it did not impact her use of either language. Her meta-linguistic awareness of Arabic/English word order differences is still high, however.
O’la. A significant point about O’la is that she did not show clear signs of inter-language interference. She had a moderate level of meta-linguistic awareness in the Arabic and English linguistic systems and in the inter-language differences as well. Her overall meta-linguistic awareness was described as moderate because, as was presented in Table 2, she showed signs of high awareness, yet she had errors which pointed to some gaps and confusion in that awareness.

O’la provided correct information about Arabic and supported it with correct examples, reflecting her understanding.

Sarah: What are the types of sentences in Arabic?
O’la: Do you mean past and present?
Sarah: I meant sentences not tenses.
O’la: Aha. They are nominal sentences and verbal sentences.
Sarah: Can you provide examples on these two types?
O’la: An example for a verbal sentence is “I ate the apple.”
Sarah: What about the nominal sentence?
O’la: My name is O’la.

She was able to provide accurate English sentences “I ate an apple”, “My name is O’la”, and she talked about how the two languages are different. She provided clear statements on the changes she had to make when expressing the same meaning in each language.

Sarah: What are the changes you see between both sentences in the Arabic and English voice?
O’la: The nominal sentence did not have a verb in Arabic, but it did in English.
Sarah: What about the verbal sentence?
O’la: The verbal sentence is almost the same. When we say “اَکْلَت التَفَاحًا”, i.e., “Ate I the apple”, the change is not having a subject in the Arabic sentence.

She was briefly unsure of the correctness of a “sentence” she provided, “eating an apple”, as an equivalent of the Arabic nominal sentence (اَکْلَت التَفَاحًا, I ate the apple), yet she quickly corrected
herself and provided a reasonable explanation: “We cannot say such a sentence because we need a verb in the English sentence.” This self-editing certainty showed a high level of meta-awareness in both Arabic and English and in the word order differences between them.

However, when she was asked about the basic part of Arabic speech, she stated that the verb is the most important part in both Arabic and English sentences: “We cannot take off the verb in either Arabic or English sentences.” This statement was inaccurate about Arabic despite the nominal sentence she provided (اﺳﻤﻲ ﻋﻼ, My name is O’la), which stands on two nouns (My name O’la). The statement she provided about English was also incomplete because an English sentence stands on at least a noun-phrase and a verb-phrase. O’la provided this answer despite the statement she made earlier, in Interview 1: “We need a noun and a verb to make an English sentence.” She doubted the information she provided about the verb being the basic part of an Arabic sentence “although we can make sentences without the verb”, but then she confirmed the verb as being the most essential part of an Arabic sentence. Her hesitation showed that she had meta-linguistic awareness in both languages’ linguistic systems but did not trust her knowledge, most likely because she had not explicitly been taught it.

In short, despite her relatively advanced English level, O’la showed confusion and uncertainty about her knowledge of Arabic and English word order more than she showed any inter-language interference.

**Students’ perspectives on instruction and increased awareness**

The following paragraphs describe the findings from the students’ opinions of the impact of increased awareness and the utility of explicit form-focused instruction. The students’ opinions were grouped according to the 10 codes that emerged from the students’ answers to the Interview 2 questions, yet the instructions which were provided within the communicative
sessions, and about which students were asked for opinions, focused on two areas: Arabic/English word order differences and English sentence structure. Therefore, the students’ opinions could be about the first area, Arabic/English word order differences, the second area, English sentence structure; or a general opinion about both areas. The students’ opinions were arranged in groups according to the 10 codes to allow for appropriate comparisons.

The five students who had attended the communicative sessions and participated in Interview 2 expressed their views (presented as codes) in Table 3 below. Table 3 presents the appearance/disappearance of each code by every participant. For a detailed overview of the students’ opinions, Appendix I presents students’ highlighting of the 10 codes, and, including the frequency of specific codes.
Table 3
*Summarized Presentation of the Students’ Opinions about the Meta-Linguistic Awareness Increase and the Utility of Explicit Form-focused Instruction*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Amal</th>
<th>Hanaa’</th>
<th>Mai</th>
<th>O’la</th>
<th>Naomi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear, applicable and interesting</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-correction</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping others</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target segment</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic forms should be highlighted</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They should be explicitly highlighted</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * represents a code’s appearance in the interview
The knowledge was new. Four of the five students, Amal, Hanaa’, Mai, and O’la, reported that either the knowledge they received was new for them or that the strategy of highlighting these areas was new for them. O’la referred to her studies in Saudi Arabia, saying, “They never taught us English sentence structure.” All five students made similar remarks. Mai, despite her English background and career, stated that it was her first time paying attention to these areas. She blamed her lack of attention to this knowledge for some of the major errors that she as an advanced English learner still makes: “We started with some errors that continued along with our language development.” Her statement reflected her absence of awareness of English sentence structure at the beginning of her English language learning, which resulted in some errors in sentence formation that are difficult to change.

The knowledge was clear, applicable, and interesting. Again, four students, Amal, Hanaa’, Mai, and Naomi, reported that the information they received was clear, smooth, and helped in clarifying the confusion they had before about English grammar. Hanaa’ expressed her opinion regarding the clarity of the information, saying, “After receiving these instructions about the differences between Arabic and English word orders, I finally understood; I was horribly confused,” which is understandable considering that in Interview 1 she had showed a complete lack of awareness of the existence of Arabic/English word order differences: “There are no differences between Arabic and English, just the language and the words”, and “They both have the same grammar and the same sentences.”

However, being able not only to understand the knowledge but also use it in everyday life makes the knowledge applicable, which was also highlighted by the students in Interview 2. Amal, Mai, and Naomi pointed to the opportunity they would have to apply the knowledge and how helpful this would be for their use of the language: “The explicit way of presenting the areas
of difference between Arabic and English word order made this information present in my mind all the time, so I get to use it because I always need it,” Naomi stated. Mai, as an English teacher, said that drawing students’ attention to English sentence structure helps the students to apply this knowledge correctly.

Surprisingly, considering the social perception of students’ dislike for receiving explicit grammatical instruction, Amal, Hanna’, Mai, and Naomi stated that they enjoyed having the areas of difference between Arabic and English word orders clarified explicitly. They expressed their opinions on different occasions: “The knowledge was very beautiful, especially the part related to the differences between Arabic and English word order; I also liked the part about English sentence structures as well” (Amal). Mai said highlighting the differences between Arabic and English was very interesting, and O’la said “Overall, it was beautiful, enjoying, to highlight these areas of differences”, whereas Hanaa’ was more specific, stating that it was very nice to know the differences between the two languages in order to be aware of these areas: “I think it is very beautiful to know the differences between your mother tongue and the target language, I think it is very important” (Hanaa’). The students used the word “beautiful” to express their appreciation for the increase in their knowledge, as it is common in Arabic.

**The knowledge was useful.** The usefulness of the students’ increased awareness of the differences between Arabic and English word orders was a predominant code that was repeatedly highlighted by all five students in Interview 2. Being useful involves having a positive impact on improving certain abilities in the students.

Thus, since all five students, with their various levels of language proficiency and meta-linguistic awareness, reported that both instruction focus areas would be useful, a question about
which areas would be impacted by this knowledge then followed. The students’ responses varied among four tracks.

**The knowledge has impacted my writing and/or speaking ability.** All five students focused more on how the knowledge of English sentence word order would be helpful for improving their writing and speaking ability. Hanaa’ expressed her difficulty with writing and her need for a strong foundation: “I needed this knowledge because it is the foundation for correct sentence formation. I love writing. I would not mind writing a 200-word essay. However, I always wonder why my teacher gives me low marks on writing, and his answer is always, it’s your grammar.” Amal, Mai, Hanaa’, and Naomi reported that both writing and speaking skills would be affected by this knowledge. O’la focused more on her speaking and how this knowledge would be useful for her to be understood: “It is important for me to be understood, it is helpful because speech is basically sentences, studying English sentence structure helps me to speak”. Mai, Hanaa’, Amal, and Naomi pointed out similar points as well.

**The knowledge has impacted my self-correction ability.** Amal, O’la, and Naomi highlighted how the awareness they gained in Arabic-English word order differences could help them in catching the errors caused by the influence of the Arabic linguistic system. “Knowing the differences between Arabic and English word order helps me avoid making the same errors every time,” Naomi said. Amal stated how it was important for her to go back to her writing every time to make sure that she had verbs in her sentences. She highlighted the impact of being aware of English sentence word order: “I could go back to see if my sentence follows an existing English format or if I have made it up myself.” O’la remarked on how being aware of both Arabic and English word order differences and structure made her more aware of translation risks: “When you think of the sentence in Arabic and switch it into English, you end up with a
different sentence because the structure of the sentence changes. As a result, you end up with errors.” She repeated similar remarks throughout the interview.

**The knowledge has impacted my ability to help others.** Amal, Hanaa’, Mai, and O’la all showed their excitement about sharing their knowledge about Arabic-English word order differences and English word order structure with their peers and other English students to help them overcome their problems and errors. “It helps them with their writing,” Amal said. Hanaa’ talked about her intention to spread this type of knowledge among Saudi students when she goes back home. O’la expressed a similar idea as well: “If I were an English teacher, I would teach the student the structure of the English sentence.”

**Target instruction segment.** When asked about the levels that should be the target for this knowledge, all five participants concurred on the primary levels, i.e., the first and second of six levels, as was reported by the students. O’la said, “Students need to start with the alphabet and learn some vocabulary in the first level. Then, a foundation about English sentence structure and how it is different from Arabic in the second level is helpful, because students are expected to write paragraphs after that.” Mai, as an English teacher, highlighted this idea repeatedly, explaining that the students would benefit more from having a correct foundation to build their language on: “Unlike us, we have built our language on some errors that we still repeat although we know they are wrong.” Mai thought that students should be taught the English sentence word order before they are asked to produce any piece of writing. Naomi highlighted the importance of providing beginners with the correct foundations of English sentence structure as well.

Not only beginning students, but English teachers were also believed by Mai to benefit from increasing their awareness in these areas. Mai reported that she benefited from being more
aware of the areas of difference between the languages: “I benefited from the knowledge, it might be due to my English background, but I have never paid attention to these areas.”

**The form-focused areas of both languages’ word orders needed to be explicitly highlighted.** This point includes two avenues, the importance of drawing students’ attention to the format of English as a target language, and the importance of doing it explicitly. Amal, Naomi, Hanaa’, and O’la pointed out students’ need for this knowledge to be emphasized. O’la commented on how the Saudi English system ignored such kinds of knowledge and focused instead on repeating English tenses, which could not be applied without knowing the English sentence word order. Hanaa’ also talked about her experience of studying English back home and said, “I feel sorry for students who are studying English back home, they are not benefiting because the strategies which are used there are very confusing.”

All five students highlighted the importance of providing explicit form-focused instruction about the areas of differences between Arabic and English word order and/or about English sentence word order. O’la said, “There should have been explicit instructing for this information. We would not have been able to figure it out ourselves because it is not easy.” Hanaa’ and Naomi reported that the way they have always most benefited from any kind of knowledge was through explicitly having their errors corrected for them. Naomi said, “When I miss a part of speech, the best thing is to point it out for me and correct it, this is how I avoid it the following time.” Mai pointed out the importance of explicit as well as implicit form-focused instruction and correctional feedback in teaching grammar and parts of speech. “Otherwise, students will concentrate on the contents and forget about the structural part of the knowledge,” and this is how Mai justified it. This is how all five students perceived the importance of
explicitly increasing Saudi students’ awareness of the differences between Arabic and English word order.

This chapter shared the findings that the interviews revealed about the students’ meta-linguistic awareness as well as their opinions on the impact of increasing it and on the effectiveness of receiving form-focused instruction to increase this awareness. The students’ levels varied in English proficiency and in meta-linguistic awareness of Arabic word order, English word order, and Arabic/English word order differences. However, most of the students agreed that receiving explicit instruction to increase their meta-linguistic awareness of the differences between Arabic and English word orders was a new, clear, interesting, and useful approach for improving their abilities in speaking, writing, self-correction, and/or helping others. Therefore, they recommended that beginning-level students receive more instruction in these areas.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

The current study looks at Saudi students’ awareness of the differences between Arabic and English word orders and the students’ opinions of the impact of receiving form-focused instruction in these differences on their sentence production and self-correction abilities. Thus, five Saudi English students in Halifax, Canada completed two semi-structured interviews separated by sets of communicative sessions (10 hours in total) for the purpose of finding answers to these questions. The study covered the following three main areas of inquiry: (a) to what extent Saudi students have meta-linguistic awareness of the differences between Arabic and English word orders; (b) what Saudi students’ perspectives are on the impact of increasing this meta-linguistic awareness on their language production and self-correction skills; and (c) what their perspectives are on receiving form-focused and explicit instruction for the purpose of increasing awareness in these meta-linguistic areas of knowledge. According to the findings, the students’ outcomes reflected, with some variation, a general lack of meta-linguistic awareness of the Arabic/English word orders differences. However, the students’ outcomes resembled each other to a high extent in their perspectives on the impact of explicit instruction and raising meta-linguistic awareness.

In this final chapter, a summary of the findings reported in Chapter 4 is discussed in relation to the literature and research questions. Generally, the findings appear to emphasize the following:

- Despite different language levels and academic backgrounds, all five students seemed to appreciate the impact of increasing their meta-linguistic awareness of word order differences on their linguistic abilities, and they highlighted the usefulness of explicit instruction for this purpose.
In general, Saudi students showed to various extents some lack of meta-linguistic awareness of the differences between Arabic and English word orders.

Most of the students were aware of the existence of differences between Arabic and English word orders; however, all of them seemed to face difficulty in differentiating between the basic features of each language’s word order.

The students with higher English language proficiency appeared to have higher meta-linguistic awareness in either English or both Arabic and English, depending on their academic backgrounds.

The students with lower English proficiency showed signs of Arabic word order interference with English sentences.

The chapter concluded with an overview of the limitations that faced this study, the implications of the study for second language acquisition theory and methods, and for language teaching.

**Research Questions**

The findings were discussed sequentially according to the two main research questions investigating Saudi students’ meta-linguistic awareness and their perspectives on increasing this awareness using explicit form-focused instruction.

**First research question:** To what extent are Saudi students aware of the interlanguage differences between Arabic and English word orders? First, in spite of the limited English utterances that the students made in Interview 1 and considering that assessing the students’ abilities was not a focus of this study, the students with low English proficiency made two of the errors Arab students most frequently make, which points to Arabic interference with learning English. According to Kasem (1997), copula omission, which was detected in Amal’s statement “nice morning” as opposed to “The morning is nice, i.e., الصباح جميل”, was the most frequent error
by Arabic-speaking Lebanese students in Australia. This was followed by the wrong use of definite articles, which showed up in Hanaa’s statement “Today I did work.” More recent studies on Arab students’ frequent errors (Abu-jarad, 2008; Al-Hassan, 2013; Alshayban, 2012; Meehan, 2013) reached similar findings, and Abu-jarad (2008) considered the wrong use of definite articles as the most frequent error. Just as the current study revealed, the frequency of these errors was higher in students with low or intermediate English proficiency more than in students with advanced language proficiency (Abu-Jarrad, 2008; Alshayban, 2014; Cortes, 2006).

However, despite the students’ different proficiency levels, all four students in Interview 1 reflected a gap in their meta-linguistic awareness of the differences between basic parts of Arabic speech compared to the basic parts of the English speech. In all the students’ answers, there was a tendency to make the same choice for both languages. This tendency reflects a general need for more awareness of the difference in the options that Arabic versus English give for their sentence structures, i.e., nominal or verbal for Arabic structure versus regular English structure, which is basically verbal. This finding correlates with what Ammar, Lightbown, and Spada (2010) found about students’ general lack of awareness of the differences between first and second language question formation.

Second, the above-mentioned lack of awareness of the differences between Arabic and English sentence structure options seemed to have different impacts on individual students. Students’ higher levels of proficiency seemed to reduce the impact of this gap. It was noted that with the higher-L2-proficiency students, Mai and O’la, meta-linguistic awareness of the second language outweighed that of the first language, and sometimes interfered with it. However, this meta-linguistic interference, despite the confusion it causes, does not seem to have a clear impact
on students’ proficiency at advanced levels. Examples from Mai’s and O’la’s answers are provided below for illustration.

Although Mai showed signs of English meta-linguistic awareness interference with her Arabic meta-linguistic awareness, it seemed to impact her ability to come up with Arabic sentences as easily as she did in English, although Arabic is her mother tongue. This could be due to the explicit instruction she had received in English during her Bachelor’s degree but she had not received the same explicit instructions while learning Arabic. This remark supports Ellis’s (2005) argument about the role of explicit instruction in facilitating implicit acquisition of the second language.

Similarly, O’la, who has lower L2 proficiency than Mai but whose proficiency is still high, showed some confusion in her answers about both Arabic and English, yet her answers were more accurate about English than Arabic. This could be due to the absence of explicit teaching of specific points about both languages’ word orders, considering that, unlike Mai, O’la’s academic background is not in the field of English. O’la’s relatively advanced English proficiency level suggested that when students reach high levels of L2 proficiency, whether they have received explicit instruction or not might not have a clear impact on their language fluency. This efficiency decrease supported what Ammar and Spada (2006) suggested about the effectiveness of explicit instructions for lower language proficiency levels more than for higher levels. It also supported Krashen’s (2009) hypothesis about the role of acquisition, which does not require explicit instruction, with regard to fluency. Krashen (2009) suggested that language acquirers do not need explicit instruction to accomplish second language acquisition, which happens when the acquirers spends enough time being exposed to the second language.
The hesitation O’la had with her answers suggested that the moderate level of meta-
linguistic awareness she showed in Arabic, English and the differences between them seemed to
be self-developed, which points to the correlation between meta-linguistic awareness increase
and being around more than one language (Craik, Klein, & Viswanathan, 2004; Dillon, 2009;
Jessner, 2014). Accordingly, a lack of explicit instruction appeared to impact high-L2-
proficiency students’ meta-linguistic awareness, in this case Mai and Ola, even though signs of it
do not always show up in their language fluency.

On the other hand, the absence of awareness of the above-mentioned differences between
Arabic and English word order appeared to impact lower-L2-proficiency students. For example,
Amal’s Arabic meta-linguistic awareness seemed not only to interfere with her meta-linguistic
awareness of English, it also interfered with her English sentence accuracy. Amal showed a
dominance of Arabic meta-linguistic awareness over her English one when she created an
English sentence that resembled the structure of an Arabic sentence. Although she expressed her
awareness of the existence of differences between the two language linguistic systems, she used
Arabic information when talking about English language. Amal is an example that supports
Lado’s (1957) hypothesis about first language positive transfer, which results in correct
statements, and first language interference, which results in wrong statements. Amal’s sentence
“Ahmad eats the apple” represents a positive first language transfer, because both the Arabic and
English versions of the sentence have the same parts of speech, i.e., subject, verb, and object.

However, when it came to the area of differences, the Arabic knowledge interfered and
likely caused the errors when she created an English sentence with an Arabic format (“Nice
morning.”). Amal highlighted the source of this error when she gave Arabic labels for English
sentences, e.g., nominal sentence. Hartsuiker, Pickering, and Veltkamp (2004), in their syntactic
influence model, presented a hypothesis explaining how second language learners see similar grammatical areas between first and second languages as areas shared by the two languages. This plays a role in the syntactic interference between the two languages. A number of other studies (Hartsuiker & Barkhuysen, 2006; Hartsuiker, Kolk, & Huinck, 1999; Hartsuiker, Kolk, & Huiskamp, 1999; Vigliocco, Butterworth, & Garrett, 1996; Vigliocco, Butterworth, & Semenza, 1995; Vigliocco, Hartsuiker, Jarema, & Kolk, 1996) showed evidence of first language syntactic interference with second language learning.

Another example of the impact of the lack of awareness of the different sentence structure options in both English and Arabic was Hanaa’. Hanaa’, whose language proficiency was higher than Amal’s but still on the lower side, showed significant confusion that resulted in her being unable to answer a lot of self-asked questions about the role of some parts of speech in an English sentence. This confusion was due to her complete absence of awareness of the existence of differences between and Arabic and English linguistic systems. Furthermore, the impact of her Arabic meta-linguistic awareness on her judgement about English sentences was clear in her answer when she said, after stating that the noun was the basic part of a typical Arabic sentence, “The noun is the basic part of an English sentence as well.”

In addition, not considering the copula a verb in her sentence, she had a lot of questions about the role of “is” in a nominal sentence. She was convinced when she decided that “is” could be a pronoun referring to the subject and found an Arabic equivalent for it, “ھﻮ” which means “he/it”. This tendency to refer to Arabic explanations for English linguistic dilemmas showed what Ullman (2001) stressed in his theoretical model. Hanaa’ was using the same first language grammar declarative system in learning her second language grammar. As a result of the above-mentioned absence of awareness of differences between the Arabic and English
linguistic systems, Hanaa’ showed a strong tendency to translate everything she needed to learn into Arabic. Hanaa’s repeated declarations that both languages were the same for her in meanings and the grammar indicated her dependency on the Arabic grammar declarative system instead of realising that English had its own system.

Although most of the students expressed their awareness of differences between Arabic and English, more than half of them reported their tendency to translate English statements into Arabic in order to understand them, and Arabic to English in order to produce English sentences. Considering their previous failure to determine the basic areas of difference between the languages’ word orders, syntactic errors were very likely to occur. It seemed that they knew it was a bad habit but could not get rid of it, or they might not have felt the necessity for that. Translating from Arabic while using English is another image of Ullman’s (2001) model, in which students depended on their first language declarative system for using the second language. Translation was also reported by Al-Hassan (2013) as one of the major problems that facilitated Arabic interference with English learning. This was also another form of first language interference in second language learning.

**Second research question. a):** After receiving explicit form-focused instruction within communicative sessions about the differences between Arabic and English word order, what are students' perspectives on the impact of the knowledge gained on their sentence production and self-correction abilities?

As was mentioned in the results, most of the students reported that the existence of differences between Arabic and English word orders was new knowledge for them. This declaration correlates what Meehan (2013) reported about the inadequate English foundation students receive in Arabic-speaking countries. This statement also confirmed what was found in
Interview 1 about the students’ lack of awareness of the differences between first and second language word orders, which correlated with Lightbown and Spada’s (2000) and Ammar et al.’s (2010) findings as well. The students in Lightbown and Spada’s (2000) and Ammar et al.’s (2010) studies showed little evidence of awareness of the differences between their first language, which was French and English. Mai, who had a career as an English teacher, reported that not having enough meta-linguistic awareness of the areas of difference between the two languages resulted in errors which kept showing up in her language, even after she reached high levels of proficiency. This statement seemed to correlate what Garcia Mayo (2002) advised about the failure of the communicative approach without form-focused aspects in helping learners reach higher levels of language accuracy. Mai’s remark pointed out the negative impact of a low awareness of differences between their mother tongue and the language they are learning (Ammar et al., 2010; Hu, 2002; Lightbown & Spada, 2000; Spada, Lightbown, & White, 2005).

As well, Mai’s remarks about the negative impact of not having enough meta-linguistic awareness supported what Alshuaifan (2009) reported about English educators at Hail University regarding the importance of increasing English educators’ meta-linguistic awareness of the differences between Arabic and English linguistic aspects in order to provide their students with more clarifications on their errors. This was also a recommendation made by some studies on Arab English learners’ frequent errors (Grami & Alzughaiibi, 2012; Meehan, 2013).

Furthermore, the utility of raising students’ meta-linguistic awareness in both languages’ word orders was highlighted by all the students in the current study, which matches what Bialystok and Barac (2011) and Lavolette (2014) reported about the positive effects of increasing students’ meta-linguistic awareness on linguistic their performance. In addition, having high
meta-linguistic awareness, which was proven to correlate with multilingual proficiency in a number of studies (Bialystok, 1986; Bialystok, Craik, Klein, & Viswanathan, 2004; Cromdal, 1999; Ricciardelli, 1992), was seen by the students in this study as a means of reaching more accurate writing competency. This correlated with what Wistner (2014) suggested about the impact of increasing students’ meta-linguistic awareness on skills like writing. Accurate speaking was highlighted as well as an area in which this knowledge would be helpful, and the students articulated goals like becoming more understandable. It also supports Grami and Alzughaibi’s (2012) recommendation of increasing students’ awareness of how Arabic linguistic aspects differ from those of English.

Similarly important was the impact of the increase of this awareness on students’ self-correction abilities. The students highlighted how this knowledge is helpful for them to correct their writing mistakes and avoid errors caused by the use of Arabic word order, such as sentence structure errors. The students also explained how understanding these differences clarified the risks of translation on sentence accuracy which supported the call made by Al-Hassan (2013) for the need to drive students’ attentions to the risks of thinking in Arabic and translating to English. The above points reinforce what was found earlier about the positive association between high meta-linguistic awareness and multi-lingual proficiency (Bialystok, 1986; Bialystok et al., 2004; Cromdal, 1999; Ricciardelli, 1992) and the positive effects of increasing students’ meta-linguistic awareness (Bialystok & Barac, 2011; Lavolette, 2014; Wistner, 2014).

**Second research question. b):** After receiving explicit form-focused instruction within communicative sessions about the differences between Arabic and English word order, what are students’ perspectives on the effectiveness of this explicit form-focused instruction for conveying this type of knowledge?
The students not only reported that the knowledge was new, but that the strategy of explicitly highlighting these areas of the target language within communicative exercises was new as well. The students’ acknowledgment of how this explicit form-focused strategy was new and effective for them and how lacking this form-focused knowledge hindered the use of the target language basically showed the importance of explicit instruction for more effective language gain, as was declared by Spada and Tomita (2010), Ammar and Spada (2006), Lyster (2004), and Lyster and Mori (2006).

Unlike the hypothesis that Krashen (2009) and other innate theorists had about the uselessness of explicit form-focused knowledge for second language learners, most of the students reported that the instruction they received was clear, interesting, useful, and applicable. They stated that what they had learnt helped them to clarify the confusion they had had with the second language. The students thought that the knowledge would be helpful for their use of the language, which does not match how Krashen (2009) described explicit form-focused knowledge as extra knowledge that students have but never use in their daily language use. Mai, who is an English teacher, highlighted the importance of drawing students’ attention to this kind of form-focused knowledge to help them apply it in their use of the language. This paralleled what Harley (1989), Lyster (1994), Spada and Lightbown (1993), and White, Spada, Lightbown, and Ranta (1991) suggested about the role of form-focused instruction in improving students’ language accuracy.

The students highlighted two main areas about the strategy of instructing and providing feedback: drawing students’ attention to the format of English as a second language, and using explicit instruction for that purpose. Most of the students highlighted the importance of drawing students’ attention to the areas of difference and not leaving it for the students to figure out
themselves. The students articulated that not helping them by highlighting these areas was a reason for their confusion while learning the language. More specifically, they emphasized the importance of giving clarifying instructions and correcting errors in their formation of the target language in order to help them learn. This supporting position for form-focused instruction resembled what Spada et al. (2009) and Loewen et al. (2009) reported about ESL/EFL students’ preference for receiving grammatical and form-focused instruction about English as a second language. The students’ statements reflected the important role reported by a number of studies for form-focused instruction in ESL classrooms (Harley, 1989; Harley & Swain, 1984; Lyster, 1994; Spada & Lightbown, 1989; 1993; Tomita & Spada, 2013; Valeo, 2013; White et al., 1991).

The students also pointed out the importance of using explicit instruction and feedback to address these areas of difference. They stressed that explicit strategies are always more effective than implicit strategies. This correlated with what Havranek (1999), Lyster (1998), and Lyster and Mori (2006) reported about students not interpreting implicit instruction as corrective feedback, and was confirmed by the students’ statements that receiving explicit feedback is the best way to identify their errors and learn from them. As well, after studying Arab students’ frequent errors, recommendations were given by Al-Hassan (2013) and Alshayban (2014) about giving students explicit instruction in the linguistic aspects of the target language.

Finally, most of the students showed enthusiasm about sharing this knowledge with their friends at the primary levels, and all five students suggested that primary-level language learners would be the group that would benefit most from this knowledge. That matches what Ammar and Spada (2006) highlighted about the effectiveness of more explicit strategies for primary levels as compared to advanced levels. Two students highlighted the importance of the accurate foundation this strategy would provide for primary levels, and that it would prevent them from
building on top of errors they would not be able to correct once the errors became part of their language. This supported the hypothesis Ellis (2005) made about the role of explicit knowledge in providing a stable base for implicit acquisition to occur accurately. Mai, considering her English teaching career, suggested that teachers as a group could benefit from this knowledge. This suggestion matched what university faculty and English teachers suggested in Alshuaifan (2009) about the importance of increasing teachers’ awareness of the differences between first and second languages.

**Limitations**

This study addressed a specific group of English learners who were Saudi students and had received their basic education in Saudi Arabia, and who were in Canada to study English. The students’ meta-linguistic awareness of the differences between Arabic and English word orders as well as their perspectives on the impact of receiving explicit form-focused instruction to increase this meta-linguistic awareness on their sentence production and self-correction abilities were explored in this study. The presence of some meta-linguistic shortage within the student’s awareness in these areas was expected, according to Ammar et al. (2010) and other studies. ESL/EFL students’ preference to receive form-focused grammatical instruction was anticipated as well by Spada et al. (2009) and Loewen et al. (2009). Despite the important findings that this study revealed, the following limitations were highlighted to be considered and avoided in further research in this area.

First, the students in this study were at different levels of English proficiency. Some of the students were beginners, while others were advanced, and one had an English background and career. Keeping in mind the features of the qualitative approach taken to address the questions in the study, this variation in the students’ levels is not as concerning as it would have
been if any other approach (e.g., quantitative) had been taken. Indeed, the qualitative approach allowed the study a wide range of students’ perspectives and shed light on students’ L2 levels as a possible variable for L1 interference. Perspectives from the student with multiple teaching/studying experiences with English did not interfere with her friends’ perspectives because they were interviewed separately. Rather, this student provided another line to see the effectiveness of the study’s approach from a Saudi teacher’s perspective. Thus, I see the variations in the students’ levels of proficiency as not only a limitation, but also as a positive for this study.

As well, all the students in this study were females although the study was open to both male and female students. There were no gender restrictions applied during the recruitment process; however, only female students brought the signed consent form back despite the interest that some Saudi males showed when the study was presented. It would have been a great addition to the findings to have a deeper look into males’ level of awareness of the differences between Arabic and English word order and their perspectives on the approach. However, further research could be conducted to address these specific areas.

Furthermore, a potential research effect on the students’ opinions was possible in this study, considering that the researcher was the facilitator for the communicative sessions, even though for the sake of the integrity of the results, the researcher tried her best to protect against this kind of influence. All the students who were recruited had no relationship to the researcher and did not know her before the study. The timeframe was very tight, and the communicative sessions and interviews all occurred during the students’ school days. The possibility of the facilitator’s influence on the students’ impressions towards L2 structures and their uses was undeniable, because this is part of the facilitator’s pedagogic approach for teaching English to
her own students. Showing the students how easy sentence structuring is once they know the elements they need makes the use of these structures to express meanings fairly easy. From the researcher’s point of view, this kind of influence is part of the education process, and while it could have had an influence on the students’ opinions, it is an influence that could not be helped.

**Implications**

In spite of the limitations, however, the study has many implications in various areas. First, this study demonstrated the importance of teachers’ reviewing different second language acquisition theories for the interest of their students’ language learning. There is no right or wrong theory that works for all second language learners, but there are techniques which are brought from the different theories and which work to different extents in different circumstances. For instance, one of the implications of this study is learners’ needs for a strong foundation and enough practise time to reach accuracy. Time is an important variable for second language acquisition according to the innate theorists; however, providing a strong foundation through analyzing students’ errors and increasing their meta-linguistic awareness in the differences between their first and second languages is an important principle of the behavioral theory, through its simplified version of the contrastive analysis hypothesis. This shows how language learning can be very complex.

Another implication showing the complexity of second language acquisition is the variation in students’ goals in terms of learning the second language; in other words, the level of accuracy versus fluency the student aims for. There is no ending when learning English following any second language acquisition theories, because each learner reaches a different point in their language acquisition. The amount of time and effort for each learner differs, and the priorities for accuracy versus fluency sometimes cause debate. It is notable, for example, that
Mai, although she is at a high proficiency level, never paid attention, or even had her attention drawn to, the differences between languages. That could be seen as support for the innate theory (Krashen, 2009) about the uselessness of the knowledge that students gain through explicit form-focused instruction. On the other hand, Mai’s long English learning history, along with the fact that she still has some steps towards reaching consistently high accuracy, shows what the effect of this knowledge could have been on how easily she had learned English. In fact, it supported what Ellis (2005) suggested about the role of explicit knowledge as a background foundation for implicit acquisition. Mai, despite her high proficiency, did not show strong meta-linguistic awareness in the differences between Arabic and English, which had an effect on her ability to help students at lower levels of acquisition and who needed this knowledge to overcome their difficulties. This is why she reported that she would definitely use this knowledge to help her students.

Again, students’ levels in relation to the type of instruction pointed out teachers’ responsibility for building their pedagogic approach upon their students’ needs. The study highlighted the effectiveness of explicit instruction with lower proficiency level students in particular, although it is considered beneficial with all levels. In contrast, the effectiveness of implicit instruction might increase with advanced students more than with beginning or low-achieving students, even if they are all in the same classroom.

Another implication which relates to students’ levels is about the impact of first language meta-linguistic awareness on the second language in relation to a student’s second language proficiency level. It is noticed that first language meta-linguistic awareness interferes with second language meta-linguistic awareness more with beginning students than with advanced
students. It is more likely that the more the student knows about the second language, the less dependent they become on the linguistic system of their first language.

Second, the current study has some implications for the use of qualitative methodology for second language acquisition research. This study took a qualitative approach to explore students’ opinions on their preferred second language learning techniques. Most of the studies on second language classroom instructions have taken a quantitative approach, through students’ achievements, to examine the effectiveness of certain types of instruction. However, it is not always possible to measure the utility of particular strategies through students’ achievements due to the practice time that many new skills require to be mastered. Because adult students are more able to assess the knowledge they receive and show their preferences for certain techniques, and to add more students’ voices to the literature, this study took a qualitative approach.

An implication for the use of a cross-case data analysis approach was then detected. Analysing the data from the first research question as separate cases provided a more in-depth look into the individual differences between language learners, e.g., L2 background, attitude toward the second language, L1 grammatical and literary abilities, and their effects on meta-linguistic awareness in the differences between their first and second languages. Then, providing comparisons of the cases’ perspectives helped in highlighting the most frequent opinions among the students’ answers. This was how this study highlighted the use of the qualitative cross-case approach to obtain the findings regarding second language acquisition strategies.

Finally, the study has implications for teaching English as a second language in terms of increasing English teachers’ awareness of how Arabic differs and might interfere with the acquisition of English. Furthermore, the study also has implications in terms of providing
beginning students particularly with more explicit instruction to increase their metalinguistic awareness of the differences between Arabic and English word order.

English teachers should be more explicit and form-focused when providing beginning and low-achieving Saudi students with corrective feedback. Within the communicative classes, giving some explicit form-focused instruction on the students’ weaknesses benefited both low-level and advanced students. Therefore, Saudi students’ English teachers should not deal with language learning as a whole entity, which comes together and they have no control over, by calling for students to just keep practising and the learning will come in time. They should instead deal with it as a procedural process that needs an underlying understanding, tracking of students’ weaknesses, and frequent error analysis in order to help the students to build a stable foundation for the language and overcome their difficulties without unnecessary frustration.

In addition, the Arabic linguistic system has some interference on English learning. When Saudi students’ English teachers become more aware of this kind of interference, most of the students’ errors will be understandable. By increasing students’ awareness of the differences between the linguistic systems of Arabic and English, teachers’ ability to help the students monitor and correct their mistakes increases. Moreover, by increasing Saudi students’ metalinguistic awareness of the differences between the Arabic and English linguistic systems, teachers can move from preparing fluent English speakers to preparing proactive English speakers. Proactive English speakers are not only able to function in English fluently and accurately, but also have enough meta-linguistic knowledge to understand the rules behind the language, and to help other language learners with their language usage and error correction. This was a belief that most of the participants showed by the second interview.
Conclusion

In conclusion, the study showed that despite different language levels and academic backgrounds, all the students demonstrated to various extents some lack of meta-linguistic awareness of the differences between Arabic and English word orders. The students also pointed out the positive impacts of increasing their awareness of these differences on their productive abilities, and they highlighted the usefulness of explicit instruction for this purpose.

In light of the present study’s findings, Saudi students’ English teachers might be interested in providing their students with some explicit form-focused instruction as corrective feedback or illustrative highlights within their classrooms. Adding an explicit instruction strategy is believed to provide the students with a strong foundation and better abilities to use the vocabulary they have in building better sentences and self-correcting their errors. Further research is recommended into the impact of explicit form-focused instruction on Saudi beginning-level students versus advanced-level students.
References


**Appendix A: Table of the First Five Sessions’ Plan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sessions</th>
<th>Instruction Topics</th>
<th>Communicative Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>- Introduction about the program</td>
<td>- Vocabulary collection and classification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Introduction about language (what is speech)</td>
<td>- Group work, collecting vocabulary to find out how much vocabulary each group has in total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What is your level? What do you really know?</td>
<td>- Totalling up the vocabulary words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Basic word categories</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>- The building blocks of the sentences: sentence / phrase</td>
<td>- Creating sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(noun p, verb p, adjective, adverb, prepositional p) /words</td>
<td>- Each one writes a word and pass the paper to the other to write the next word. Then, every group collects the good, syntactically and semantically correct sentences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(noun / verb/ adjective/ adverb/preposition)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The difference between sentence in English and Arabic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Thinking in English verse thinking in Arabic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The basic structure of the sentence in English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>- The subject (position and function)</td>
<td>- Building and breaking up each other’s sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The object (position and function)</td>
<td>- Breaking up sentences from newspaper pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>- The verb (regular/ irregular), forms and function</td>
<td>- Using subject / verb and object to form sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Group storytelling: the first student starts the first sentence and the others complete the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>- Communicative activities + corrective feedback</td>
<td>- Talking about the future and listening for each other’s errors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix B: Table of the Second Five Sessions’ Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sessions</th>
<th>Instruction Topics</th>
<th>Communicative Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>- The verbs (be, do, and have) as main and helping verbs + communicative activities</td>
<td>- Communicative activities on using verbs (be, do and have) as main verbs and helping verbs (auxiliary verbs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>- English sentence structure: (1-3) N + be + N N + be + adj. N + be + adv. (place)/ preposition phrase</td>
<td>- Each group sets a group of the highlighted structures for the other group to create a story of it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>- English sentence structure: (4-8) N + V N + V + N N + V + N+ adj. N + V + N + N N + V + N + adv./ preposition phrase</td>
<td>- Each student sets a number of structures for their friend to make a logical context following these structures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>- English sentence structure: (9-10) N + V + adj. N + V + N</td>
<td>- Communicative activities, e.g., talking about favorite sports, TV shows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>- Communicative activities, e.g., your favorite appliance, your dream invention</td>
<td>- Listening for each other’s errors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Ethics Clearance

Certificate of Research Ethics Clearance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effective Date</th>
<th>May 1, 2014</th>
<th>Expiry Date</th>
<th>April 30, 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>File #:</td>
<td>2013-114</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title of project:</td>
<td><em>Saudi Students’ Perspectives of Receiving Explicit Instructions on the Inter-language Differences Between Arabic and English Word Order</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher(s):</td>
<td>Sara Ibrahim</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor (if applicable):</td>
<td>Christine Doe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-Investigators:</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Version:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The University Research Ethics Board (UREB) has reviewed the above named research proposal and confirms that it respects the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans and Mount Saint Vincent University’s policies, procedures and guidelines regarding the ethics of research involving human participants. This certificate of research ethics clearance is valid for a period of one year from the date of issue.

Researchers are reminded of the following requirements:

- **Changes to Protocol**: Any changes to approved protocol must be reviewed and approved by the UREB prior to their implementation.
  - Form: REB.FORM.002
  - Info: REB.SOP.113
  - Policy: REB.POL.003

- **Changes to Research Personnel**: Any changes to approved persons with access to research data must be reported to the UREB immediately.
  - Form: REB.FORM.002
  - Info: REB.SOP.113
  - Policy: REB.POL.003

- **Annual Renewal**: Annual renewals are contingent upon an annual report submitted to the UREB prior to the expiry date as listed above. You may renew up to four times, at which point the file must be closed and a new application submitted for review.
  - Form: REB.FORM.003
  - Info: REB.SOP.116
  - Policy: REB.POL.003

- **Final Report**: A final report is due on or before the expiry date.
  - Form: REB.FORM.004
  - Info: REB.SOP.116
  - Policy: REB.POL.003

- **Unanticipated Research Event**: Researchers must inform the UREB immediately and submit a report to the UREB within seven (7) working days of the event.
  - Form: REB.FORM.008
  - Info: REB.SOP.115
  - Policy: REB.POL.003

- **Adverse Research Event**: Researchers must inform the UREB immediately and submit a report to the UREB within two (2) working days of the event.
  - Form: REB.FORM.007
  - Info: REB.SOP.114
  - Policy: REB.POL.003


Dr. Daniel Séguin, Chair

University Research Ethics Board

Halifax Nova Scotia B3M 2J6 Canada
Tel 902 457 6350 • Fax 902 457 2174
msvu.ca/researchethics
Appendix D: Interview Questions

Interview 1 Questions:

1.  A) What are types of sentences in Arabic?

B) What are some examples (x2 sentences)?

ما هي أنواع الجمل في اللغة العربية؟

هل من الممكن التمثيل على جملة اسمية وجملة فعلية؟

2.  What is the translation of these Arabic sentences in English (X2)?

3.  A) What differences do you see between your sentences in Arabic and English?

What did you have to change?

B) Why?

ما هي الفوارق التي تراها بين جملك في كلتا اللغتين العربية والإنجليزية؟ هل هناك أشياء اضطررت لتغيرها، أو إضافتها، لماذا؟

4.  A) What are parts of speech in Arabic?

B) What are the essential parts of speech (noun- verb – adjective – adverb) in Arabic declarative sentences? What part of speech must be included in Arabic declarative sentence?

C) What about in English?

ما هي أقسام الكلام في اللغة العربية؟

ما هي الأقسام (الاسم، الفعل، الصفة، الحرف) الأساسية في بناء الجملة العربية؟ ما هو المسمى أو الأقسام التي لا يمكن أن تخلو منه الجملة الإنجليزية العربية سواء كانت اسمية أو فعلية؟

هل تعتقد أن هذه الأقسام الثابتة والأساسية هي نفسها أهم الأقسام في الجملة الإنجليزية؟ لماذا؟
5. A) Do you think a sentence in Arabic can be translated word by word to English?

B) If not, then why?

هل تعتقد أنه من الممكن ترجمة الجمل العربية بشكل حرفي للغة الإنجليزية؟

إذا كانت الإجابة لا فلماذا؟

**Interview 2 Questions:**

1. What did you think of the communicative sessions? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the sessions?

ما هو رأيك في البرامج؟ ما هي نقاط القوة وجوانب الضعف من وجهة نظرك؟

2. What do you think of the knowledge you gained from them? Was it useful? If so, how? What do you feel about knowing the differences between Arabic and English word orders?

ما هو رأيك في المعلومات التي حصلت عليها في البرامج؟ هل كانت مفيدة؟ ما هو رأيك من ترويدكم بمعلومات حول جوانب الاختلاف بين صياغة الجملة في اللغة العربية واللغة الإنجليزية؟

3. What do you think of receiving explicit instruction and feedback about the differences between Arabic and English? Or, would you prefer that the teacher implicitly reformulates all or part of a statement when you make an error, but does not give you the direct rule or tell you that you made an error?

ما هو رأيك في سياسة إعطاء تعليمات صريحة وتصحيح مباشر بين الفرق بين صياغة كلا من الجملتين العربية والإنجليزية؟ هل كنت تستقبل اسلوب الاكتفاء بإعطاء إعادة صياغة للجمل الخاطئة بدون إضافة أي شرح تفصيلي؟

4. What do you think about giving instruction about how words are organized in English sentences? Do you think it is helpful?

ما هو رأيك في عمل معلم الدراسة المباشرة؟ هل تجد هذه الطريقة مفيدة؟
5. Do you think it would be helpful to share the information about English word order with your friends when they first learn English? Do you suggest any strategies? Do you have any suggestions on helping other students understand this type of knowledge better?

6. Do you think that knowledge about Arabic-English word orders has an influence on your learning of English? On constructing your sentences? On your understanding of corrective feedback that you receive? Or when speaking with others?
### Appendix E: Themes and Codes in Coding Framework 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes and codes:</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>L1 Awareness</strong></td>
<td>- Looked into students’ knowledge of the basic rules that govern Arabic sentence word order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1 Meta-linguistic awareness</td>
<td>- Explored students’ ability to verbalize information about Arabic word order correctly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1 Accuracy</td>
<td>- Looked into students’ ability to correctly express meaning related to the information they had provided about Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1 Syntactic meta-linguistic awareness</td>
<td>- Explored students’ ability to name parts of speech in Arabic and determine the fundamental part/s of an Arabic sentence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>L2 Awareness</strong></td>
<td>- Explored students understanding of word order rules in English sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2 Accuracy</td>
<td>- Looked into students’ ability to produce correct forms of English word order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2 Syntactic meta-linguistic awareness</td>
<td>- Explored students’ ability to name parts of speech in English and determine the basic part/s that make up an English sentence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interlanguage Awareness</strong></td>
<td>- Looked into students’ understanding of the basic differences between the two languages’ linguistic and syntactic systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Bilingual accuracy</td>
<td>- Explored students’ ability to express the same meanings in Arabic and English correctly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Inter-language syntactic meta-linguistic awareness</td>
<td>- Explored students’ awareness of the differences between basic part/s of speech that make up sentence in both English and Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Inter-language differences meta-linguistic awareness</td>
<td>- Explored students’ awareness of the differences that exist within Arabic and English word orders, and the adjustments they had to make in order to express the same meaning in both languages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix F: Themes and Codes in Coding Framework 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme and codes</th>
<th>Description.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opinion</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- New</td>
<td>- Asked students’ opinion of the knowledge they received in the communicative sessions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Clear, applicable, and interesting</td>
<td>- Asked whether it was new knowledge for the students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Useful</td>
<td>- Asked whether it was understandable knowledge, if the students would be able to apply the knowledge in their everyday life, and if the students enjoyed learning the knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Asked whether the knowledge was useful for the students’ current use of the language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impact of the knowledge on:</strong></td>
<td>Looked into how the knowledge would impact the students in four areas highlighted by the students:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>- How it would improve their writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>- How it would improve their speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-correction</td>
<td>- How it would improve their ability to self-correct their mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping others</td>
<td>- How it would allow them to help other Arab English learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target instruction segment:</strong></td>
<td>Explored student’s opinions on the levels that this knowledge should be directed to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Teachers</td>
<td>Highlighted the importance of this knowledge for primary language learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational strategies:</strong></td>
<td>Highlighted the importance of this knowledge for English teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form-focused highlighting</td>
<td>Asked which strategies were recommended to be used to teach this knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit highlighting</td>
<td>Asked whether one highlight should focus on sentence format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asked whether the highlight should be made explicit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix G: The Link between Coding Framework 1 and Interview 1 Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Interview 1 Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>L1 Awareness</strong></td>
<td>L1 meta-linguistic awareness</td>
<td>Q1 – A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1 accuracy</td>
<td>S1</td>
<td>Q1 – B (two sentences)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1 Syntactic meta-linguistic awareness</td>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>Q4 – A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>Q4 – B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>L2 Awareness</strong></td>
<td>L2 accuracy</td>
<td>Q2 (two sentences)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2 syntactic meta-linguistic awareness</td>
<td>Q4 – b</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interlanguage Awareness</strong></td>
<td>Bilingual Accuracy</td>
<td>Q1 – B + Q2 (two sentences X 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-language syntactic meta-linguistic awareness</td>
<td>Q4 B compared to C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>Q 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>Q 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Please refer to Table 10 in Chapter 4 and Interview 1 Questions in Appendix C to better understand this table. S = sentence, Q = question
## Appendix H: Students’ Metalinguistic Awareness of Arabic, English, and the Differences between Them (from the four Interview 1 students)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Amal</th>
<th>Hanaa’</th>
<th>Mai</th>
<th>O’la</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>L1 Awareness</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>L1 meta-linguistic awareness</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1 accuracy</td>
<td>S1</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S2</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1 Syntactic meta-linguistic</td>
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<tr>
<td>awareness</td>
<td>Q2</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>L2 Awareness</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2 accuracy</td>
<td>S1</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>awareness</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual Accuracy</td>
<td>S1</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Inter-language syntactic</td>
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<td>meta-linguistic awareness</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-language differences</td>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meta-linguistic awareness</td>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: S1, S2 = Sentence #1, #2, Q1, Q2 = Question # 1, #2

(✓) = correct, (X) = not correct, (?) = not sure, (✓--) = needed help, but correct
### Appendix I: Students’ Opinion about the Meta-linguistic Awareness Increase and the Utility of Explicit Form-focused Instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Amal</th>
<th>Hanaa’</th>
<th>Mai</th>
<th>O’la</th>
<th>Naomi</th>
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<td>AEWO 1</td>
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