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SHIFTING WORLD VIEWS:  
SAUDI STUDENTS LIVING AND STUDYING ABROAD

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In the name of Allah (God)  
the Compassionate, the Merciful.

## **ABSTRACT**

Recently, research on study abroad has received particular attention. The majority of these studies, however, involve individuals (typically American) who study in European settings or focus on studies about Eastern Asian (i.e., Japanese or Chinese) students coming to an English-Speaking country, such as, the United States and the United Kingdom. Not a single study investigates the experience of Saudi Arabians' or Middle Easterners in a study abroad context. Thus, the goal of this paper is contribute to the field of Applied Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) in exploring the journey of Saudi students as learners of English in the United States and how they see themselves changing as individuals and as learners. Also explored is how this experience of being away from one's own community plays a role in shaping one's identity and perceptions. Hence, the study aims to look at the totality of the Saudi students' experiences as people who arrived from and with a cultural, educational, and religious system that holds very different values and beliefs than those imbedded in the American culture. What would happen to a Saudi learner's social identity when inappropriate concepts within his or her culture (i.e., alcohol consumption) are encountered as appropriate within the host culture (America) or vice versa? How does his or her perception as individual and as learner change as a result of being exposed to and acquiring English as a second language in the United States?

In order to answer the abovementioned questions, the following qualitative study is constructed. The data were collected by conducting extensive, one-to-one, ethnographic interviews with five Saudi participants (3 males and 2 females) using their

native language, Arabic, in an attempt to fully capture the nature of their experiences. The participants were newly arrived, six months to one year, to the United States with low English proficiency and they were enrolled in intensive English program. The interviews were audio-recorded and ranged from 45 minutes to an hour and a half, depending upon participants' individuality. The data were then transcribed and coded in Arabic, and for presentational purposes, excerpts were translated into English. The data were coded using grounded content analysis. Using the grounded content analysis, the researcher found three super-ordinate categories: 1) educational views, 2) intercultural views, and 3) comparative views. Each of these super-ordinate categories included a number of subcategories, ranging from two to four themes, in an attempt to systematize the data and to better understand the participants' narrative. After the dissection of the data, some possible implication suggested for the Saudi English education, specifically, and for the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, generally.

The researcher personal experience as an English learner in Saudi Arabia and, later, an English learner in the US, served as one of the motivating reasons behind this study. Learning English in Saudi Arabia, where the system followed a form-based approach to language learning, focusing on structural features of the language while excluding the culture associated with the English language, had a major impact on the experiences of studying abroad in the United States. Thus, the significance of this project is to inform the Saudi English educational system the relative importance of learning cultural knowledge about the target culture and understanding English as a social practice, rather than just grammatical forms to be memorized.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Since 2005, the government of Saudi Arabia has boosted its efforts to encourage Saudi students to continue their education in universities abroad. Many government, as well as private companies, scholarship programs, such as the Ministry of Higher Education, ARAMCO<sup>1</sup>, and King Abdullah scholarships, have been created to sponsor and support students' complete education abroad. The usual target countries for Saudis are English-Speaking countries, namely, the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia. According to the Institute of International Education—IIE—(2007), there has been a significant increase, over the past five years, in the number of Saudis studying in the United States of America (see Table 1-1). By the year 2009, an approximate total of 12,661 Saudis arrived in the United States to receive undergraduate or graduate degrees in various fields. The Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission (SACM) asserts that the rationale behind this increase and the emphasis on studying abroad is that Saudis need to expand their knowledge and experience of various scientific and educational fields (i.e., Engineering, Information Science and Technology, Curriculum and Instruction, Psychology, etc.) to contribute to improving and developing the economy and education in their country (SACM, 2010). While this experience may increase the Saudis educational knowledge and improve their English proficiency, the question remains: What happens to them as people, that is, does the experience of living and studying

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<sup>1</sup> National oil company in Saudi Arabia

abroad change their perceptions of themselves and of others around the world? This is the central question that drives this project.

Table 1-1: Number of Saudi students studying in the USA (IIE, 2007)

<b>Year</b>	<b># of Students from Saudi Arabia</b>	<b>% of Total Foreign Students in U.S.</b>
2008/09	12,661	1.9%
2007/08	9,873	1.6%
2006/07	7,886	1.4%
2005/06	3,448	0.6%
2004/05	3,035	0.5%

Regardless of the abovementioned efforts for Saudis to study abroad, many Saudi families worry that study abroad experiences will change their youths' original beliefs and ideologies. Such ambivalence and concerns arise from the history of linguistic imperialism<sup>2</sup>, colonization, and the political issues around the Middle East region (see Karmani 2005; Prokop 2003; Mohd-Asraf 2005). Karmani (2005), for example, argues that English is seen in Middle Eastern countries as carrying opposing ideologies (i.e., independent, democracy, opposite gender relationships, etc) that may lead to reforming the ideologies found in the (Middle Eastern) society. Also, from a historical perspective, as a result of the British colonization history, for instance, English served as a tool for linguistic imperialism, cultural alienation, and (for Muslim countries) "de-Islamization of a targeted nation" (Elyas, 2008, p. 36). Consequently, most Saudis believe that including English-language culture in the classroom may be a threat to their national culture, because Western social values, behaviors, and comparisons might lead to personal dissatisfaction with one's own culture (Wesche, 2004).

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<sup>2</sup> Linguistic imperialism means imposing a foreign language on the local people due to political and/or economical power

Despite fears of English-Speaking cultures, English is still used at the national level, for example, to communicate with foreign residents or to conduct international business. It has begun to play an increasingly important role in daily life, work, and entertainment (popular culture). Also, there has been a spread of many popular Western food chains and stores, such as McDonald's, Starbucks, and Diesel, thus making avoiding English-speaking pop culture next to impossible. Figure 1-1, for example, shows McDonald's (American fast-food chain) with a Saudi twist, where women and men are segregated. Even though Arabic is the country's official language, English is found beside English on street signs and on store names (Figure 1-2). It is also essential for science, medicine, and engineering practitioners to learn English and use it thoroughly in their fields (Elyas, 2008). While the Anglophone culture<sup>3</sup> (Norton Peirce, 1995) is spread implicitly in Saudi society for economic and educational reasons, Saudi students have limited explicit exposure to the Anglophone culture. That is, the current English practices and the settings in which English is used tend to deny Saudis "access to a world community" (Wesche, 2004, p. 284). English education in Saudi Arabia includes only lessons about the structure of the language and excludes lessons about cultural knowledge and communicative skills. Such limitations in English language education lead Saudi students to develop biased views of the Anglophone culture (i.e., only pop culture) and restrict them from the various realities of these cultures. Hence, the question remains: How do Saudi students' perceptions of the Anglophone culture and of their own culture

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<sup>3</sup> Anglophone, generally, refers to English-speaking countries. I chose to use of this term because Saudi Arabian get expose, implicitly, to different English-speaking cultures and it is difficult to distinguish which English-speaking culture.

change as a result of learning English in study abroad contexts, where they are exposed to a new culture in both explicit and implicit ways?



Figure 1-1: McDonald's in Saudi Arabia (women section)



Figure 1-2: A bilingual street sign in Saudi Arabia

In order to examine the issue of learning English as a social practice with exposure of cultural knowledge, this small-scale study was conducted to look at the experiences of Saudi Arabians as learners of English in the United States. Having a clearer understanding of students' experiences of studying abroad in a foreign country could aid "in developing reasoned approaches to program design" (Kinger, 2009, p. 4). Specifically, this study examined how the Saudi students, coming from a Middle Eastern to a Western society, reacted and responded when confronted with concepts, values, and ideas embedded in the Anglophone's culture that are contrary to their own history, religion, culture, and beliefs (Figure 1-3). Additionally, the study explored how Saudis see themselves changing as people and as learners as a direct result of being exposed to and acquiring English as a second language in the United States.

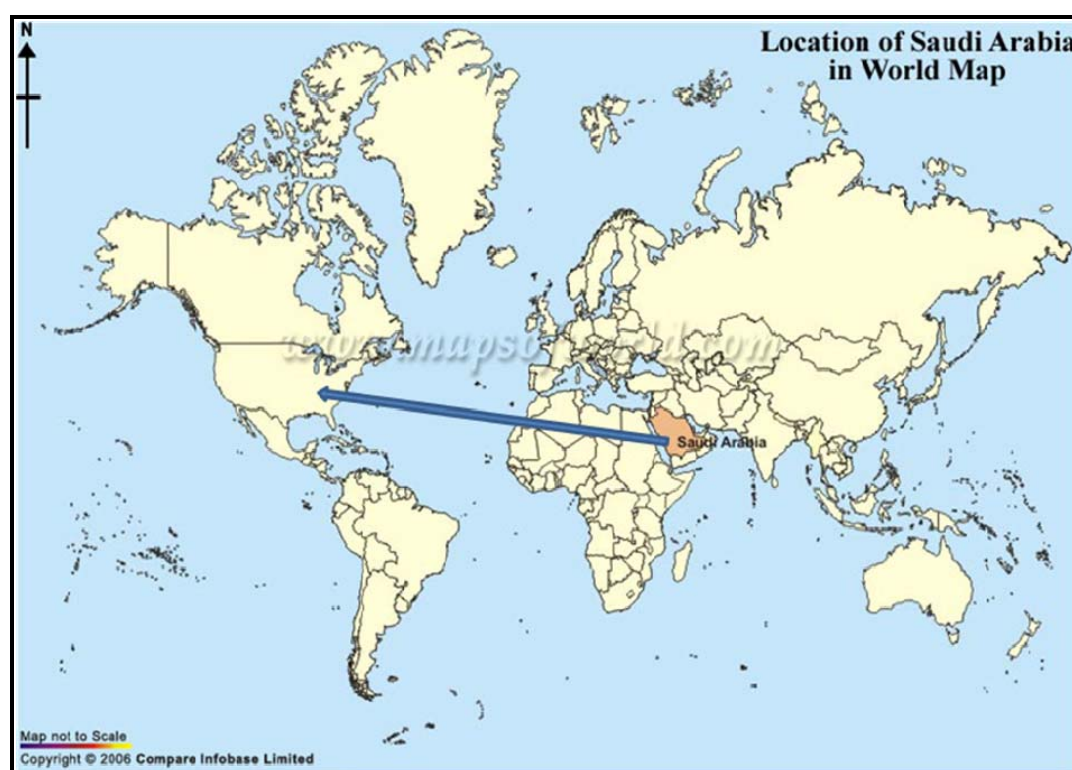


Figure 1-3: Map: Saudi students going from Saudi Arabia to the United States of America

Thus, the overall aim of this project was to look at the totality of the Saudis' experiences as people who come from a cultural, educational, and religious system that holds very different values and beliefs than those imbedded in the English language and culture. The values and beliefs imbedded in the English language become apparent when Saudis learn and use English where it is completely different from learning English in the foreign language classroom. The following diagram (Figure 1-4) summarizes what this study is about and why it was conducted, starting from the current social and educational status of English in Saudi Arabia and ending with the anticipated future implications of this study for the Saudi English educational system.

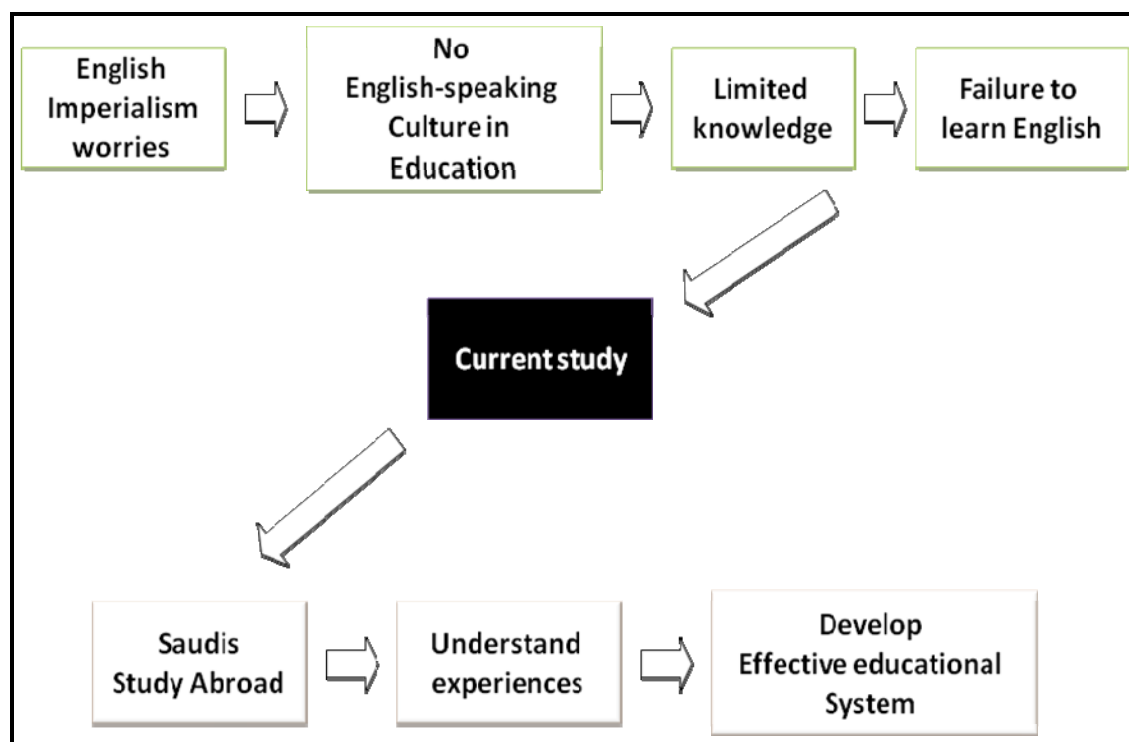


Figure 1-4: Study's setting

Nevertheless, one might argue that culture is a very broad concept and is very ambiguous when English-speaking cultures are involved. Culture has long been debated among applied linguistic scholars and researchers (e.g., Kramsch 1993; Kasper & Omori in press; Holliday 1999) in terms of whether it should be referenced to as its material production, social values, or signification (small vs. large culture). However, for this study, culture is defined from the social scientists perspective as the “attitudes and beliefs, ways of thinking, behaving and remembering shared by members of a community” (Young et al., 2009, p. 150). Culture is about a group’s perception of life, ethics, and other people “outside” and “inside” their community. Such views influence how people observe and deal with certain situations, and how they interact with others. Despite this definition, the Anglophone culture is very broad due to the spread of English around the globe. Whereas the American culture is a wide range—includes various “mini-cultures” dependant upon one’s region (the South or Midwest) and background (race, socio-economic status, and even religion)—it is used as the targeted English-speaking cultures for this study’s context. There are specific values and beliefs that are mentioned by the participants according to their study abroad experiences. An example of an American value would be *independence*, especially when an individual reaches the age of eighteen years old. Thus, depending on the participants’ experiences abroad, certain values and attitude of the American culture are raised.

Lastly, this study was also undertaken partly because of my personal experiences studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL), first in Saudi Arabia and then in the United States. For me, learning English in Saudi Arabia was not helpful because the focus was on structural features of the language, devoid of any access to the Anglophone

culture. This experience had a major impact on my journey to the United States, where initially I was unable to understand the American culture or communicate with others. After living and studying in the U.S. for a long time, my cultural and religious values have not changed; however, my perception of myself, my community, and others around me have shifted significantly. Hence, while there is personal significance to this study, hopefully the results will inform the Saudi English education system about the reality of the abovementioned cultural fears. Then, perhaps, this will lead to the development of an efficient English educational system that considers the relative importance of cultural knowledge in learning English as a foreign language for all students.



## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

Unfortunately, there is little research in the field of applied linguistics on a Saudi or Middle Eastern<sup>4</sup> experience within the context of studying abroad. In fact, most studies focus on Western students studying abroad in European settings (e.g., Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; Kinginger, 2004; Kinginger & Whitworth, 2005; Freed, 1995), or Eastern Asian students studying in Western settings (e.g., Jackson 2008; Churchill 2003; Calvin 1999), which is very different from Middle Eastern students' experiences coming to Western settings. Also, study abroad research, especially in the fields of applied linguistics and Second Language Acquisition (SLA), tends to focus more on the language development of sojourners<sup>5</sup>, rather than the cultural impact of studying abroad. Other fields, however, such as psychology and ethnography do focus on the development of intercultural abilities independent of language development. Specifically, in some of the literature (e.g., Jandt 2007; Byram & Fleming 1998; Hofstede 1986; Carlson & Widaman 1988), language is overlooked, because it is viewed as an unimportant element of study abroad experience (mostly from the US) or because students who study abroad (usually from Eastern Asian countries) are already proficient in the host language and plan to finish their higher education abroad. Therefore, this study will contribute to the field of applied

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<sup>4</sup> Most, if not all, Middle Eastern have similar views and beliefs. This was intended to make the search broader in the hope of finding literature.

<sup>5</sup> Sojourns are people who temporarily reside, study, and may work in a foreign country

linguistics and the shortage of SLA research on the experience of Middle Eastern students studying abroad.

To understand the background of this project, the following section provides first, an overview of the educational system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and then, a review of the literature that define the notions of investment and motivation within the context of the study abroad experience. Next, a discussion of the literature on identity and language socialization is provided. Finally, some information about study abroad is given to understand what it means in applied linguistics literature. The following diagram (Figure 2-1) summarizes the literature review section:

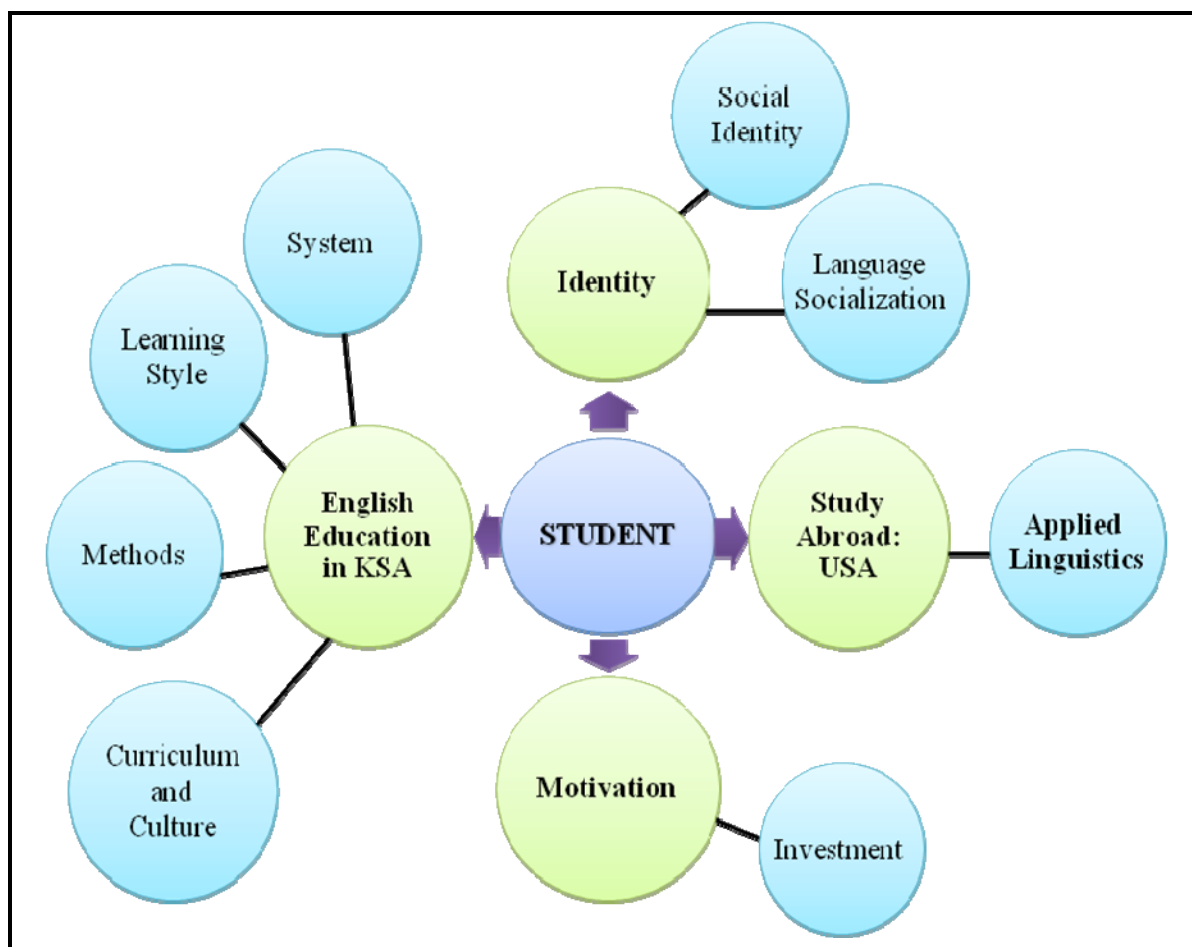


Figure 2-1: Literature review conceptual map

### Educational Background

The educational background of Saudi Arabia is discussed in order to understand the participants' context before they arrived to the United States. Generally, the educational system in Saudi Arabia is influenced by their cultural and religious beliefs (Prokop, 2005). The schools, for example, are separated by gender. Girls have only female teachers and administrators and boys have only male teachers and administrators (Baki, 2004). The girls' schools are enclosed, surrounded by high walls, in order for them to move freely in their school uniforms without wearing a *hijab*<sup>6</sup>. Women are not allowed to interact with unrelated<sup>7</sup> men without good reason, such as seeing a doctor at the hospital. They are also forbidden from having any pre-marital relationships (Baki, 2004). Thus, the educational system is integrated with the Saudi culture that is tied closely to religion and the Islamic history.

The way students have been studying for years influences their English education. Generally, Saudi culture is more of an oral culture than a written one (such as the American culture). Thus, parts of the educational system in Saudi Arabia include religious subjects that require memorization: Quran, Hadith, and Islamic subjects that are called in Arabic: *Jurisprudence, Unification, and Interpretation*<sup>8</sup> (Prokop, 2003, p. 79). As Aydin Yücesan Durgunoğlu (1998), a Turkish researcher in adult literacy development, indicated:

[a]nother common verb for 'to read'—particularly at the beginning stages—is *hafadh*, meaning more exactly 'to memorize'; this semantic linkage seems to

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<sup>6</sup> Hijab is the head and body cover; it is black in Saudi Arabia.

<sup>7</sup> Unrelated men include everyone except the woman's father, uncles, brothers, sons, and nephews

<sup>8</sup> Islamic subjects that teach about Islamic manners and beliefs in our everyday life

provide an emic rationale to many children, parents, and teachers who believe memorization to be the basic part of education. (p. 175)

There is little emphasis on writing or thinking critically in the Saudi educational system. Thus, the students' cultural learning style, memorization, affects their practical abilities to use English in communicative settings.

The English curriculum is standardized throughout the nation and applies to both public and private schools. Many teachers use Arabic to explain English; thus, students remain dependent on their first language to understand the second language. Larrea (2002), interested in foreign language education, argued that, "There was little (if any) we could get from using L1 in the communicative language ... students kept translating ... into and out of their own languages" (p. 2). Since the curriculum follows essentially an audio-lingual approach, little or no communication and/or interaction with a partner in English is encouraged. Therefore, the English methodology that many teachers use across the nation, with the exclusion of in-class activities, influences the efficiency of teaching the language and leaves no room for cultural inclusion.

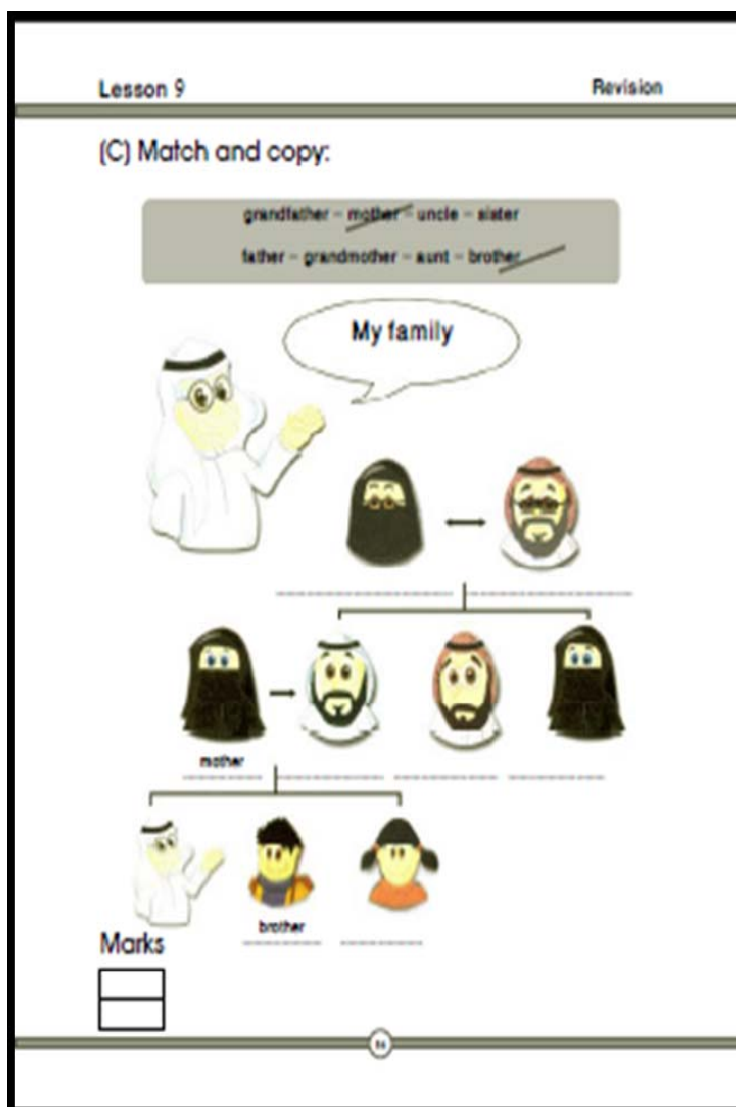


Figure 2-2: A page sample of a lesson taken from the Saudi English textbooks<sup>9</sup>

The Saudi English language curriculum textbooks include only images of Saudis/Arabs, with no images of a Western person or people (see Figure 2-2 and other examples in appendix F). There is no element of “English-speaking culture,” since it is perceived as inappropriate and contradicts Islamic culture. The Saudi culture stands in opposition to most of Western culture; there is no interaction between unrelated Muslim

<sup>9</sup> Taken from girls English textbook, 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

men and women. Many women cover their entire bodies, including their faces; however face covering is optional. Thus, the “educational authorities are often anxious to avoid the clash of cultural values to be found in the Western course books, while simultaneously embracing the English language” (Johnston, 2003, p. 115). The Saudi education system does not include Anglophone’s culture in order to avoid sedition, as they are worried about the impact of Western culture on Muslim youths. However, currently, Western culture is presented almost everywhere in the media, and the English language is increasingly needed in our globalized world. Hence, due to the major differences between the Anglophone’s culture and the local culture, the Saudi society excludes culture in its English education in the hopes of avoiding a cultural clash. While the above information is true about the general current status of the Saudi education, it is important to acknowledge that students have different experiences due to individual and background variations.

The inclusion of the Anglophone culture in the Saudi English language curriculum is quite controversial. What is culture? What is included in the definition? As mentioned in the introduction, culture here refers to people’s attitudes and beliefs shared by members of their community. The aforementioned definition is still broad, but it is suitable for the purpose of understanding this paper. Elyas (2008) conducted a study in which he distributed questionnaires to 65 freshmen university students in Saudi Arabia, asking them about their perception of English culture, with the result that the students perceived culture as understanding the “other” without interfering with their “Islamic identity” (p. 43). The “other,” a term used throughout this paper, is used to refer to anyone who does not share the same language and/or religion. For the context of this

paper, this means anyone who is not an Arab or a Muslim. Thus, the best way to include culture in English education in Saudi Arabia needs to be explored further.

Some socio-cultural elements are necessary to include in language education. As Kress (2000) argues, it is important to recognize that “theories of language cannot be developed apart from an understanding of social relationship” (cited in Norton & Toohey, 2002, p.118). That is, learning only language structure leads to deficiency in the proper usage of the language. While English language education is highly valued in Saudi Arabia, it lacks many of the important elements of effective language instruction, creating some difficulties and hardships for Saudi students who must use the language in communicative settings and, most importantly, for students who intend to study abroad.

### **Motivation and Investment**

Language learners’ motivation and investment in the target language are critical features in understanding the processes of second language acquisition, especially in the context of study abroad. Motivation was first studied from a social-psychological perspective by Gardner and Lambert (1959) and defined as integrative and instrumental. Integrative motivation is showing interest in learning and having a positive attitude toward the foreign culture and a desire to participate as a member of the target culture (effective). Instrumental motivation, however, is just learning a language in order to use it for a particular purpose, such as career advancement (Gardner & Lambert, 1959).

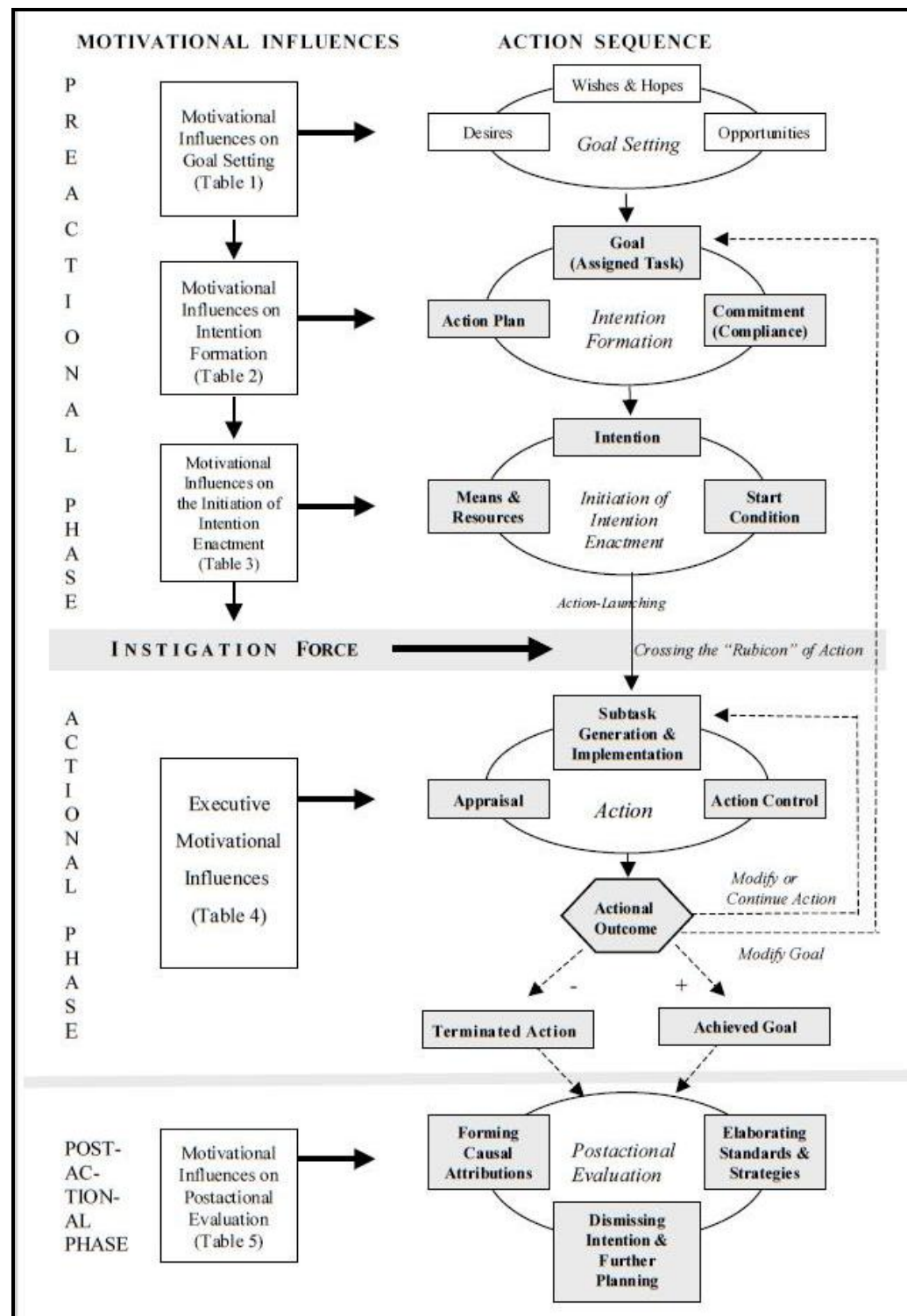


Figure 2-3: Schematic representation of *Process-oriented model of motivation*<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998, p. 48



More recently, researchers have begun to incorporate more dimensions into motivation, such as affective<sup>11</sup>, linguistic self-confidence, and goal-related aspects (Dörnyei & Clément, 2001). Motivation, over time, “is not seen as a static attribute but rather as a dynamic factor that displays continuous fluctuation, going through certain ebbs and flows” (Dörnyei, 2002, p. 140). Hence, students’ motivation changes as they develop intellectually and as they gain more experience over time. The *process-oriented model* of motivation (see Figure 2-3), as proposed by Dörnyei and Ottó (1998), has three different phases. The first phase is called the *Preactional Stage*, which entails the selection of a goal or task that the learner will pursue. The second phase, *Actional Stage*, is “learning-situation-specific ‘executive’ motives related to the L2 course, the L2 teacher, and the learner group” (p. 52). The last phase is the *Postactional Stage*, in which we uncover the “learners’ *retrospective evaluation* of how things went” (p. 52). While the literature on motivation is very diverse, understanding how students learning English are motivated to study abroad is important to understand, because such motivation shapes their experiences.

Alternatively, Norton Peirce (1995) argued that instead of using the conception of motivation, researchers should use the notion of investment. In distinguishing between these two notions, she viewed motivation, on one hand, as part of a learner’s characteristic—a static personality trait. Investment, on the other hand, shows the association between the language learner and the dynamic social world, viewing the learner as having “complex social identity and multiple desires” (p. 18). That is,

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<sup>11</sup> Affective dimension has to do with ‘cultural interest’ and ‘direct contact’ (Humphreys & Smith, 2007, p. 318).

understanding motivation is mediated by understanding learners' investment in learning a language, leading to the constant production and development of the language learners' social identity.

Norton Peirce's conceptualization of investment is understood in relation to Bourdieu's (1977) notion of *cultural capital*—"knowledge and modes of thought that characterize different classes and groups in relation to specific sets of social forms" (cited in Norton Peirce 1995, p. 17). Thus, as Norton Peirce explained, if learners invest in learning a language, they understand that they will append "a wider range of symbolic<sup>12</sup> and material resources<sup>13</sup>, which will, in turn, increase the value of their cultural capital" (p. 17). Investment, therefore, refers to the social and historical construction linking the language learner to the host or the target language. Such investment leads the learners to expect they will gain or receive access (goal) to current limitations, such as better education, work, and friends (social level). Hence, the investment in learning a language "is also investment in a learner's own social identity, an identity which is constantly changing across time and space" (p. 18). While students study and interact with others in the study abroad context, their investment in learning plays a major role in shaping their social identity, dependent upon their individual and group experiences.

### **Social Identity and Second Language Socialization**

Identity, in the literature, has manifold meanings, theories, and beliefs about what constitutes this notion. For this study, the terms *social identity* and *second language*

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<sup>12</sup> Symbolic resources – education, language, and friendship

<sup>13</sup> Material resources—capital goods, money, and real estate

*socialization* are explored to understand, theoretically, what identity is and how it changes over time. Identity or subjectivity, from a poststructuralist perspective, is conceptualized as dynamic, contradictory, and diverse. It is established according to one's own social community, and it adapts or changes according to new social communities. Social identity, a relatively new concept, is rooted in socio-psychology, where Tajfel (1982) discussed the concept in terms of in-group behavior versus out-group views. That is, a social context has elements through which individuals allocate others to "membership and learn the valuation applied by the in-group and relevant out-groups to this membership" (McNamara, 1997, p. 562). Thus, in study abroad contexts, language learners identify what behaviors or ideologies are considered appropriate or inappropriate for the host culture (in-group) as well as for their own culture (out-group). The question remains: What would happen to a Saudi learner's identity when inappropriate concepts within his/her culture (i.e., pre-marital relationship) are encountered as appropriate within the host culture (America) or vice versa?

Norton Peirce (1995) argued that SLA theorists have not "conceptualized" the relationship between the "language learner and the social world because they have not developed a comprehensive theory of social identity which integrates the language learner and the language learning context" (p. 9). Norton Peirce believed that language is not perceived as a medium of communication, but rather that it should be understood with reference to its social meaning. She drew on Weedon's (1987) conception of social identity or subjectivity. Weedon's theory, unlike many poststructuralists, connects "individual experience and social power in a theory of subjectivity" (p. 15) and she includes the important role of language when studying the relationship between the social

context and the individual. She argues that, “Language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed” (cited in Norton Peirce, 1995, p. 21). Thus, language is not only a tool for communication, understanding the other, and expressing oneself, but it is also a tool in which social identities are produced dependent upon different social contexts.

Ochs (1993) discussed social identity in terms of language socialization, where she argued that “language acquisition is closely tied to social identity” (p. 288), viewing language acquisition as a social process. Language socialization research aims to examine “the transformation by which novice participants learn to use language and, in this process, are socialized through language into the practices of communities as well as the local meaning of these practices (Ochs, 2002)” (cited in Kinginger, 2009, p. 158). That is, language learning is seen by Ochs (2002) as one aspect of the larger process of becoming a person in society; it is not just a process of acquisition, but it is also a process of socialization. Learning, from a second language socialization view, is “a matter of participation in the activities of the group and forming identities in relation to the group” (Kinger, 2009, p. 159). Hence, through interaction with host members of the culture, the learner has the potential to become a competent member of the host society. While a novice (foreign student) learns from the domestic community (host members) how to use the language appropriately, he/she will take on certain social roles.

Ochs (1993) argued that: “Speakers attempt to establish the social identities of themselves and others through verbally performing certain *social acts* and verbally

displaying certain *stances*” (p. 288). Thus, social identity has two elements: *social acts* and *stances*. *Social acts* refer to any “socially recognized behavior” (p. 288), such as making a request or apologizing. *Stance*, on the other hand, means a “socially recognized point of view or attitude” (p. 288). Social identities develop in the course of “social interaction, transformed in response to the acts and stances of other interlocutors, as well as to fluctuations in how a speaker decides to participate in the activity at hand” (Ochs, 1993, p. 298). While *social act* is difficult to identify using the current methodology, *social stance* is emphasized in order to understand shifts in attitudes and values. In the present study, Saudi participants’ social identity is defined by the context and the society in which they grew up, and how they position their social stances and acts is dependent upon their socio-cultural history. Again, the question driving this study is: When they are placed in a different context—Western/English culture—to what extent is their social identity influenced?

In the context of this study, the Saudi participants came from an English-learning system that emphasizes the structural aspect of the language rather than the social practice. Thus, when they arrived to the US carrying only structural knowledge, they faced hardship with a new culture, a new society, and different language knowledge (communication rather than structure). While they live and study among English-speakers, they need to interact and network with native speakers in order to learn and understand the language usage as social practice. According to social identity theory, the Saudi participants’ identity will shift in the host context as a result of their interaction with speakers of the target language. They will learn to position themselves according to different contexts, such as the interaction in a classroom versus the interaction in a

restaurant. They will position their social stance differently depending on various Anglophones' cultural settings. Therefore, if one examines the experiences of Saudi students studying abroad, one can understand how these students experience language learning in an unfamiliar culture, in the hope of getting closer to creating an improved English educational system in Saudi Arabia to prepare Saudi students better for study abroad.

### **Study Abroad**

In order to understand this study, there is a need to explore study abroad (SA) in the field of applied linguistics from recent perspectives. In *Language Learning and Study Abroad: A Critical Reading of Research* (2009), Kinginger examined and provided critical viewpoints of different SA studies over the past years. First, Kinginger elucidated the definition of SA within the context of student mobility and international education. On a spectrum, SA can be found between the two phenomena: migration and tourism. While tourism is a very short-term stay in a foreign country, for a vacation, migration is a life-long stay in a foreign country for economical, political, or even educational reasons.

To arrive at a concrete definition of SA, one needs to understand the broader context of cross-border education<sup>14</sup> and student mobility. Cross-border education has four main national approaches (Kinger, 2009): 1) mutual understanding<sup>15</sup>, 2) revenue-

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<sup>14</sup> Cross-border education means the students' and/or teachers' mobility and the mobility of educational institutions abroad.

<sup>15</sup> Attending intellectual programs for academic and research purposes

generating<sup>16</sup>, 3) skilled migration<sup>17</sup>, and 4) capacity-building<sup>18</sup>. Whereas the SA literature have students driven by a mutual understanding approach, such as American students studying abroad in France for a semester or so, the literature excludes students studying abroad for a capacity building approach, such as Asian students studying abroad for four years in the United States. Student mobility represents the major part of cross-border education with its three main categories (Kinging, 2009): a) full study abroad for a complete degree, b) an academic partnership within a home degree, and c) exchange study programs. The international student mobility has increased dramatically in the past 20 years, and the majority, about 85 percent, of foreign students has studied in the countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Many of these students, from countries outside the OECD, usually enroll in full study abroad for a foreign degree in an Anglophone country, mostly in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia. Therefore, SA meaning varies significantly according to each student's "origin, destination, and ultimate goal" (Kinging, 2009, p. 11).

According to Block (2007), whereas there are numerous studies about American students experiences abroad in Europe or in South America, there are little or no studies about the experiences of, for instance, Asian, African, or Latino students studying abroad in context, such as America, Australia, or the United Kingdom. While the usual type of student mobility in European, Mexican, and/or Canadian contexts does not go beyond the

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<sup>16</sup> Support country's higher education program for fee-paying students abroad in order to control a large share of the market.

<sup>17</sup> Attracting highly skilled students who could stay in the host country

<sup>18</sup> Encourage the domestic students to study abroad in order to improve the quality of their home educational and economical system

duration of one year, the student mobility of Saudi, as well as many Middle Eastern students, aims for full study of a certain degree in order to improve the economical and educational system upon their return. This capacity-building approach is underrepresented in SA research because, as Kinginger (2009) explained that:

[I]n the literature on language learning in study abroad, the limited representation of these students' experiences may be due to blurred boundaries between education and other, longer-term activities, and between study abroad and migration (p. 10).

However, there does exist documentation of the process of language learning in different forms within the broader literature of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), but it is not directly identified in relation to SA.

Keeping the above dilemmas—cross-border education, student mobility, and blurred views of SA—in mind, Kinginger (2009) defines SA as a “temporary sojourn of pre-defined duration, undertaken for educational purposes” (p. 11). This definition also includes students who study abroad for education purposes that encompass language learning experience, such as attending intensive English programs in an Anglophone setting. The definition also helps to “situate the field under consideration and to separate it from the broader phenomenon of more explicitly migration-related student mobility” (p. 11) and it does not exclude students from any national origin. Thus, this definition best suits this study because the participants plan to continue their education, undergraduate or graduate degree, with pre-defined duration.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Approximate duration for Baccalaureate degree is four years, for Master degree is two years, and for PhD degree is five years.



## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

The present study focuses on Saudi students' perceptions of their experiences studying abroad and traces how their perceptions of themselves, of Anglophone culture, and of their language learning have changed as a result of their experiences. The following research questions are explored:

- How are Saudi students' identities shaped by their study abroad experiences of living in the United States?
- How do their perceptions as individuals and as learners change as a result of being exposed to and acquiring English as a second language in the United States?

### **Participants and Context**

The participants in this study were three male and two female Saudi Arabian students who came to the United States specifically for the purpose of continuing their education. They were selected from local Saudi and/or Muslim groups in the local setting under the bases of being Saudi citizens, plan to continue their undergraduate or graduate studies, and attended the intensive English program for at least one semester. Before they entered the university, all the participants needed to be proficient in English. All five participants were learning English in an intensive English language program until they achieved a minimum score on the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language). Most had studied English for an average of one year in the United States when they were recruited. The participants were asked face-to-face to be in the study. They were also

given a consent form in Arabic to sign according to the Institutional Review Board (IRB), acknowledging and approving the use of their recording in this study (Appendix A and B). The following provides a brief description of each participant with given pseudonyms.

***Abdullah***

Abdullah is from a city located in the eastern coast of Saudi Arabia. He graduated from high school and wished to get his undergraduate degree in the US. He came to the local town, alone, and stayed for a couple of months. He then moved to another town, where he attended an intensive English program and lived with an American family for six months. Currently, he lives in his own apartment and attends the intensive English program.

***Nasser***

Nasser is from a small town located in the north of Saudi Arabia. After he graduated from high school, Nasser attended a technical college for one year and received a computer diploma. After working at a company in Saudi Arabia for few years, he decided to obtain a degree in higher education. He came to the USA in order to receive his undergraduate degree. After a year of attending the intensive English program, he and his wife moved to another university, where they were accepted to study there.

***Sara***

Sara is from an industrial city located on the western coast of Saudi Arabia. Her family moved many times, dependent upon her father's work in Saudi Arabia; Thus, she had been transferred to different private schools in diverse regions. When she reached middle school, her parents enrolled her in an international summer camp in London that lasted for two months. She then obtained her undergraduate degree in an international university in her home city where they used English in most of the subjects. After she received her Master's degree, she moved to the United States with her husband and two children to earn a PhD in her field. To this date, she and her husband are attending the intensive English program.

***Reem***

Reem is from a city located on the western side of Saudi Arabia. She completed her elementary, middle, and high school education in this city. After she graduated from high school, she attended the local university for three years, earning a degree in science. She, then, moved to the USA with her two siblings to study. Due to her high proficiency in English, she only needed to attend the intensive English program for one semester. She leads her siblings in English and help out in their social and educational needs. Currently, she is attending a local university in the US and taking courses for her undergraduate degree.

***Khalid***

Khalid is from the same industrial city as Sara, located on the western coast of Saudi Arabia. After graduating from high school, he wanted to obtain his undergraduate degree in the USA. His whole family agreed on studying abroad and they all encouraged higher knowledge. He arrived at the local town with his sister's family (husband and two children) and he attended the intensive English program for one year. His goal is to earn his Baccalaureate degree in the local university and his long-term goal is to obtain both a Master's degree and a PhD degree in the US.

**Data Collection**

The data were collected through ethnographic interviews (Charmaz, 2001) with each participant in an attempt to capture their perceptions of their study abroad experiences. Narrative self-report data were chosen, because this study values the voices of individual student sojourners and because their narratives aid in understanding their experiences studying abroad (Jackson, 2008, p. 11). The interview was structured so that each participant was asked the same questions. Also, they were asked to provide memorable moments or stories regarding their interactions with native speakers. I interviewed the female participants using their first language (L1), Arabic, since they are better able to describe their experiences, share their ideas, stories, and emotions when using their L1. I knew the male Saudi participants would feel more comfortable being interviewed by a male interviewer. Thus, I trained a male Saudi research assistant to do the interviews with the male participants with the same questions and manners.

The interviews contained open-ended questions (Appendix C and D) to allow the participants to describe their prior and current experiences and interactions with native speakers in the study abroad context. For more guided structure, follow-up questions were asked if a participant did not talk about certain aspects of his/her experience. The specific interview questions were designed to gain a deeper sense of who they are and how their experiences have or have not changed them as they dealt with different ideologies embedded in their first and second language and culture. The interviews were audio-taped, transcribed, and coded in Arabic; however, for presentation of results, the data excerpts were translated below (the most illustrative data sets) into English.

### **Data Analysis**

A grounded content analysis (Glaser, 1965; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Bogdan & Biklen, 1998) was conducted on the data collected in this study. According to the Grounded Theory Institute (GTI), grounded content analysis is an analytic process involving multiple readings of the data to identify “core variables” of reoccurring themes that addressed the study’s central research question. The benefit of a grounded content analysis is that allows for self-reporting information from the participants without “imposing preconceived categories or theoretical perspectives” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1280). The narrative data collected in the interviews represent stories that describe “real” life events and are mainly and can be described as “the linguistic form in which human experiences as lived can be expressed” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 17). Thus, the narrative data act as a representation of the “reality” presented and constructed from each

participant's own perspective. In other words, participants retrospectively recounted their experiences of studying abroad and "told" the interviewer their version of what happened and is still happening to them.

The themes (see appendix E for early analysis chart) that emerged from the data analysis reflect the participants' recollections and perceptions of their education, intercultural, and comparative views based on their study abroad experiences. Within these themes the data were also examined to find evidence of changes or shifts in their views of cultural values, social interactions with native speakers of English, motivation of language study, and their identities.

## Chapter 4

### Results

After conducting the data analysis, three super-ordinate categories emerged which represent the participants' general perceptions of themselves within the study abroad experience. Each super-ordinate category has two to four subcategories. For each subcategory, there are two or three excerpts from the data. The excerpts were chosen in order to represent the views of most, if not all, participants. While capturing every single feature of every single person proved difficult, the data included below presents broad categories that seem to explain their experiences. See the following figure (Figure 4-1) for a summary of the categories:

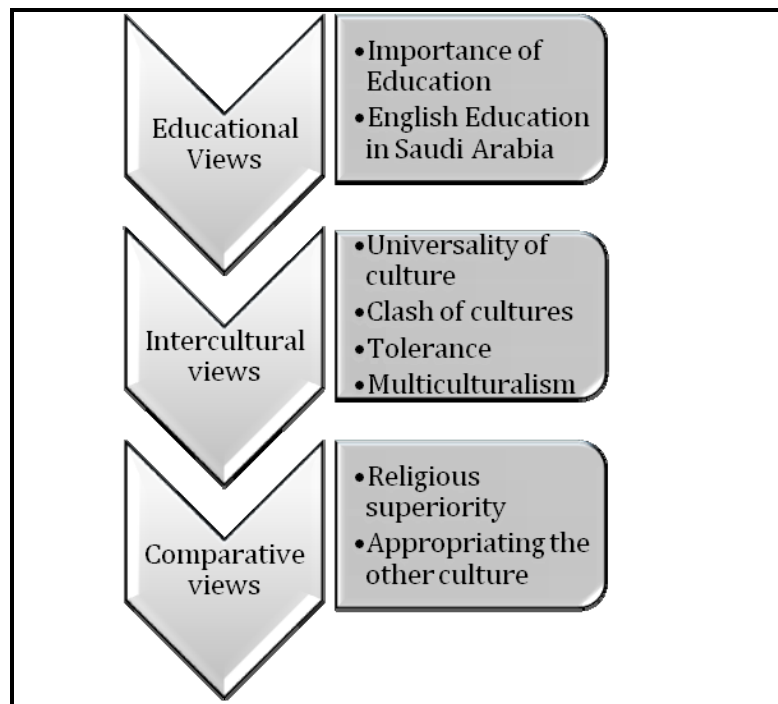


Figure 4-1: Data analysis results

## Language Learning and Educational Views

### Importance of Education: Motivation and Investment

Knowing why the participants decided to come to the U.S. is key to understanding their study abroad experiences. How they are invested in studying abroad shapes their experiences and interactions with others. All the participants reported that the value of higher education was their main motivation for coming to the United States. Thus, they came to the United States with the goal of obtaining a higher degree, but without the English language proficiency they needed. The following excerpts show how they felt about this dilemma and how their investment in continuing their education shaped their study abroad experiences. The ways in which the participants interpreted their experiences is a reflection of their motivation and investment in their education.

#### *Excerpt 1: Khalid*

أ: ما كان شعورك وانطباعك لما جيت هنا

A: What did you feel and what was your impression of coming here?

خ: والله كنت متحمس مرره لما أجي هنا ما كان عندي خوف ما دري ليه لكن كنت متحمس إني ادرس هنا اللغة الانجليزية وادخل الجامعة كان ... كان عندي هدف أو إلى ألام يعني هدفي انه .. إني اخذ ماستر اعرف الجامعة إن شاء الله إذا دخلتها و التحق ببعثه الشركات

K: God. I was very excited when I came here. I was not scared, I don't know why, but I was excited to study English here and enter university. I was ... I had a goal or I still do, I mean, I want to earn a Master degree. I know the university, God willing<sup>20</sup>, if I enter and get company's scholarship.

أ: جميل

<sup>20</sup> God willing, *in sha Allah*, is used Muslims worldwide to express their desire to do something with God blessing.



A: Good

خ: فالي ألان يعني أحس انه شي جيد إني

K: So, until now I feel it is a good thing that I ..

أ: يعني كنت متحمس

A: Meaning, you were excited

خ: إيه كنت متحمس

K: Yah, I was excited.

Here, Khalid expressed his excitement about his study abroad experience. He left his home and family because he was invested in improving his English proficiency and earning a higher education degree. While most of the participants attended an intensive English program for one year, they were still invested in pursuing higher education. Upon their arrival, improving their English language proficiency became the most important step in achieving their goals. None of the participants indicated a desire to learn about the culture or meet new people; their first priority was, and still is, education.

In looking at the participants' desire for education in terms of the *process-oriented* model of motivation, suggested by Dörnyei and Ottó (1998), the participants chose the goal of higher education in the *Preactional* stage. In the *Actional* stage, they tried to attain this goal by studying abroad and tolerating the new culture. Lastly, the participants have not reached the *Postactional* stage yet because they did not achieve their desired goals; thus, they cannot evaluate their experiences. This model is very simple, limited, and it does not expand upon the learners' experience, identities, or perception of themselves and others. While this model may work for looking at long term learners, it does not provide sufficient insights on the learners' subjectivity. Therefore, the notion of investment, put forth by Norton Peirce (1995), seem to be more applicable for the current study.

The participants use their “symbolic resource” (Norton Peirce, 1995, p. 17), education, as the main reason for living and studying abroad. Their investment in receiving a higher education played a major role in the participants’ experiences abroad. They positioned themselves as learners of English and students in their chosen fields, rather than as tourists or sojourners, and this positioning shaped how they viewed themselves and others. They were all determined to continue, regardless of the hardships they faced and will face in the future.

In addition to Khalid’s general perceptions, Sara makes a statement about learning in general, not just higher education, and how she strives for new knowledge.

**Excerpt 2: Sara**

أ: وش اللي شجعك تجين لأمريكا يعني في هدف ... أهداف معينه؟

A: What encouraged you to come to the United States, I mean, is there a goal ... certain goals?

س: طبعاً طبعاً

S: Of course, of course.

أ: اهم

A: Ahhm...

س: ما تقدر يعني تعيش حياتك من غير ما تتعلمي العلم أول حاجه بتقدم في كل ثانية

S: You cannot, I mean, live a life without learning. Knowledge, first thing, is progressing in every second.

أ: صح صح

A: Right, right.

س: فيعني أنتي تبغي تستفيدي وتبغي تفيدي أولادك إذا أنتي ما كنت مثقفه كيف حا تفيدي اهلك ولا بلدك ولا مجتمعك ولا أولادك

S: So, I mean, you want to benefit yourself and want to benefit your children. If you are not literate, how would you benefit your family, your country, your society, or your children?

أ: اهم اهم

A: Ahmm, ahmm...

س: وإذا جلسني في البيت ... ما أدري أحس انه مخك .. يفلت

S: And if you stay home ... I do not know I feel that your brain ... goes...

While the participants were invested in studying abroad because of their desire to learn and gain further knowledge, how they chose to invest shaped their experiences and their perceptions of those experiences. Sara believed that gaining more knowledge does not only benefit her but also her family, community, and country. Norton Peirce (1995) stated that investment should be viewed alongside the learners' effort "expanded on learning the second language" (p. 17). Whereas the participants are invested in learning the language to receive access to a higher goal, their efforts in learning the language shaped how they learned the language. Abdullah, for example, chose to live with an American family and these experiences created a different sort of investment for him. Unlike the other participants, his close personal connections with a host family led him to develop personal as well as educational investments in his study abroad experience. Hence, while all of the participants described education as their main goal, some held more personal reasons for investing themselves in their study abroad experience. Such individualist investment shapes their interaction and, thus, leads to a reconstructed perception of the other.

### **English Education in Saudi Arabia**

All of the participants were critical of the experiences learning English in Saudi Arabia. Their struggles with English in America, meaning they had to learn English again, made them see how the educational system in Saudi Arabia failed to prepare them

to use English to communicate effectively during their study abroad experiences. Every participant described why and how the system failed to prepare them for their study abroad experiences. Such views came from their experiences in the United States and how much time they needed to spend learning or “relearning” English. The following excerpt from Nasser indicates just how critical the participants were of the English educational system in Saudi Arabia.

*Excerpt 3: Nasser*

ن: السعودية أنا ما تعلمت شي نهائيا... ما تعلمت إلا إني تعلمت حروف يعني تعلمت إني حتى إني ما أقرأ بعد .. اللهم تعلمنا كيف ... كيف نأخذ بشكل عام يعني ... يعني كيف نعرف بشكل عام كيف يعني مش حتى النطق يعني كيف ننطق بعد لا ما تعلمنا فقط ...

N: In Saudi Arabia, I did not learn anything at all ... I did not learn except that I learned alphabets, I even do not read ... we only learned how ... how we take in general ... I mean how we know in general not even speaking or pronunciation. We did not learn at all  
أ: أنت تحدثني عن التعليم بشكل عام أم تعليم اللغة الانجليزية

A: You are talking about education in general or just English education?

ن: لا تعليم اللغة الانجليزية التعليم بشكل عام اه ...

N: No, English education ... education in general ah ...

أ: يعني تعليم اللغة الانجليزية في السعودية ما في أي فائدة ما في إلا أحرف فقط

A: Meaning that English education in Saudi Arabia has no benefit except the alphabets only.

ن: ما في إلا أحرف فقط يعني ما في احد يعني يتعلم اللغة الانجليزية إلا ما أدري عن مناطقنا بالنسبة لمنطقتنا والمناطق اللي حولنا يعني كل الطلاب اللي متعلمين ودارسين ومتخرجين من الثانوية ما عندهم أي شي باللغة الانجليزية إلى حد ألان إخواني بعد نفس الموضوع ما عندهم أي شي في اللغة الانجليزية

N: There are only alphabets I mean there is no one, I mean, learn English except I do not know about others areas, but our region and the surrounding areas, I mean, all of the educated students and scholars who graduated from high school have nothing in English. Till this day, even my siblings are in the same way; they do not have anything in English.

In Saudi Arabia, students are required to study English for a minimum of six years during their middle and high school years. Nasser, as well as the other participants, recognized that this was not sufficient, once they started studying abroad. They criticized the English educational system in Saudi Arabia, because it did not provide them with the adequate skills they needed to survive in the United States. They questioned why their English proficiency was so low, even though they had been studying the language for six years. Their initial experiences in the English language program shaped their views of both their prior experience of learning English in Saudi Arabia and also the experiences they had studying abroad in the USA. They also questioned how students could pass the English courses without knowing English. Abdullah, in the following excerpt, discussed this issue:

***Excerpt 4: Abdullah***

أ: يعني لما كنت في المتوسط والثانوي كيف كنت تنجح في اللغة الانجليزية

A: I mean, when you were in middle and high school, how do you succeed/pass in English?

ع: اللغة الانجليزية تمشي كل الطلاب اللي ينجحون ما في احد يعني إذا في احد فاهم أربع أو خمسة من الصف

Ab: the English subject passes all students who succeed. There is no one, I mean, if there is anyone who understand, maybe four or five in class.

أ: طيب لو قلنا مثلا هل المدرس يستعمل لما يشرح هل تحس انه شرحه بدائي مثلا ما يساعدك على الفهم مثلا

A: Ok. If we say for example, how does the teacher explain? Do you feel that his explanation is rudimentary, for example? It does not help you comprehend, for example?

ع: إلا والله؟؟ وبعدين ينقصون بحقه؟؟؟ مرره يعني تقعد تتكلم ولا هو فاهم؟؟ وفي نفس الوقت تتكلم عربي

Ab: Yes. God?? And they detract right??? A lot, I mean, talks and not understandable?? And at the same time talks in Arabic.

أ: طيب لو رجع بك الزمان إلى الوراء وش تتمنى يكون تدريس اللغة الانجليزية

A: Ok. If you go back in time, what would you wished you had is better English?

ع: أتمنى اهـ لو فيه لسننك وسبيكن وما يتكلم إلا عربي بالصف يعني بالفصل تلقاهم يسولفون وهذا

Ab: I wish, uh, if there was listening and speaking. He does not speak except in Arabic in class, I mean, in class you find them chatting and this...

أ: اهـ يعني الكلاسات اللغة الانجليزية كان فيه فوضى يعني

A: Uh, meaning, English classes were chaos, I mean...

ع: فوضى وبعدين ما فيه لسننك ما تسمع إذا تفهم تفهم المدرس وعربي ما فيه استفادة

Ab: Chaos and there was not listening, you do not listen. If you understand, you understand the teacher and in Arabic. There is no benefit.

When asked what he had hoped for in the English educational system, Abdullah expressed an interest in having instruction in all aspects of English, including listening, speaking, and using English to communicate. Other participants felt the English educational system failed to help them use English effectively and as a result they had to relearn the language. This view, consistent among all participants, implies that the current English educational system in Saudi Arabia relies on memorization in the same way as other academic subjects are taught. Thus, the curriculum fails to prepare these students adequately for their study abroad experience. Coleman (1998) indicated that, “socio-cultural and intercultural competence is an essential element of true linguistic proficiency” (p. 18). Language learning is not just about sitting in a class and memorizing; it needs to have some elements of socialization in order to improve the students’ language skills. While the participants’ experiences of being abroad and studying English shaped their negative views of the English educational system in Saudi Arabia, it also shaped how they understood what it means to study a “living” language that is to be used.

### **Intercultural Views**

This super-ordinate category deals with a broader view of culture that the participants now seem to hold in terms of attitudes, values, and behaviors. The participants' narratives show an increase in their tolerance toward others, an awareness of multicultural issues, and the struggles of having positive and negative feelings toward their own culture and the host culture.

### **Universality of Cultures**

Universality of cultures means recognizing the common and general elements of all cultures and avoiding biases and unrealistic perceptions. The participants shared a broader understanding of culture, recognizing that every culture has positives and negatives. When a student comes to a new place to study, the student will be in contact with aspects of life different from one's own culture, identifying both positives and negatives in each culture. As a result, students may show an increase in tolerance and a greater awareness of multiculturalism. He/she starts to live and observe some of these distinctions between one's own culture and the host culture (Saudi Arabia and the United States). Hence, seeing the good and the bad in both cultures may result in an individual capable of helping one's own society in ways familiar only to that society. Additionally, by using the tools one learns from the host society, that person can help others in his/her own society understand the host culture. The implication here is that new students who want to go abroad to study in the United States can benefit from students returning to Saudi Arabia to help them understand the American culture, before they leave for the US.

*Excerpt 5: Nasser*

أ: جميل..... طيب كيف وجدت الثقافة الامريكه ... هل وجدت الثقافة الامريكه  
أعجبتك؟

A: Good (long pause)... OK. How do you see the American culture  
... do you find the American culture pleasing?

ن: اهـ بالنسبة الثقافة أنا طبعاً فيه سلبيات وإيجابيات في أي مكان في العالم في إيجابيات  
وسلبيات

N: Ahhh for the culture I am of course, there are positives and  
negatives. In any place in the world there are positives and  
negatives.

أ: جميل جميل

A: Good, good

ن: إيه نعم فأكيد في سلبيات وفيه إيجابيات اهـ

N: Yah, yes, so of course, there are positives and negatives.

When asked about the American culture, Nasser responded with the general view that every culture has positives and negatives. Nasser, as well as the other participants, shared this understanding of how culture works. After moving to the United States to study, they faced both the positives and negatives aspects of their host culture. On the one hand, they shared stories when the others were nice and kind to them. They also shared stories, on the other hand, when people were mean and discriminatory against them. Therefore, when they were faced with negative interactions, for example, they accepted these as an individual act, not as a general act that covered the entire society. Their encounter of the positives and the negatives of the host culture shaped their social identity. They established their social identity by verbally displaying the universality stance (Ochs, 1993), where they socially recognized the attitude of commonality toward all cultures. They have positioned their social stance to accept similarities across cultures. This experience of living abroad and interacting with others resulted in a shift in their



views of their own culture, as well as the American culture, with the avoidance of bias generalizations.

**Excerpt 6: Khalid**

أ: طيب .. أسألك سؤال ... كيف وجدت تعامل الأمريكيان سواء بالمطار أو ما بعد ذلك  
يعني

A: OK ... I will ask you a question ... How did you find the treatment of Americans, either in the airport or after that, I mean...

خ: والله يعني ماتقدر تقول انه تعامل الأمريكيان تمام ما تقدر تقول ان تعامل الأمريكيان سيئ يعني في كل بلد بتشوف الزين وتشوف الشين

K: *God* (w'allah: word use for positive swearing—it does not carry any negative connotation), I mean, you cannot say that the Americans' treatment is good. You cannot say that the Americans' treatment is bad. I mean, in every country you will see good and you will see the bad.

Throughout his narrative, Khalid talked about his interactions with Americans and other international individuals and how fond he is of their cultures. After his experience studying abroad, he also expressed a much more universal view of society. Hence, it became impossible for him, as well as the other participants, to accept what might seem like the bias perception of others. Some participants, unlike Khalid and Nasser, did not explicitly bring up this sort of universal view, but their stories of both the positive and the negative experiences demonstrated how much impact their interactions had on their perceptions of others. The participants became much more aware of how all world cultures are similar to their own. Therefore, their interactions with others in the host society and their encounters in which they were faced with good and bad treatment shaped their unbiased view of a different society (USA), leaving them with a more

holistic sense of themselves as individuals. Hence, as the participants learn the language in a study abroad context, they are constructing their social identity.

### **Clash of Cultures and the Importance of Interaction**

Many of the participants shared stories of how they came to recognize a more universal ideology of cultures. Stories that carried negative and positive views evolved from their interactions with others different from them. From the analysis, the higher number of interactions with others, the more stories they shared and the longer the narratives became. From their stories, it appears that interactions with anyone outside of their community (not Arab or Muslim) were key elements in helping them develop different suppositions about others. By working through and learning about different cultures, they seemed to change some of their misconceptions about Americans.

#### ***Excerpt 7: Khalid***

أ: كيف تعلمت الثقافة في المعهد

A: How did you learn about the culture? in the intensive English program?

خ: والله اتعلمتها من يعني معاشره الناس

K: I learned it through my interaction with the people .

أ: معاشره الناس

A: Interaction with the people?

خ: القراءه والله يعني هذه القراءه يعني هذه الاشياء تعلمك يعني مثلا تشوف التلفزيون تشوف الناس كيف يتعاملو مع بعض ...اه طلعات مع الاجانب طلعات مع هذا تعلمك يعني الثقافات المختلفه خاصه انو جينا في امريكا وتتعلم الثقافة الامريكيه لازم يعني شي مهم يعني

K: Reading. God. I mean reading is one the things that teaches you, I mean. For example, when you watch television, you see people. How they interact with each other ...ahh going out/hanging out with

foreigners [meaning everyone other than Saudi] going out with this, teaches you, I mean, different cultures. Especially that we came to the US and we learn the US culture. It is something important, I mean.

أ: جميل .. جميل

A: Good .. good

Khalid learned about culture from reading, the visual media, and most importantly, his interaction with others in the host society. He utilized his time to understand others' cultures by interacting and communicating with them. Other participants' experiences of studying abroad and living with people who are different from them seemed to shape their daily interactions. Drawing upon their symbolic resources, they resisted the subject position as non-proficient English speaker or learner who cannot interact with others due to a language barrier in favor of the subject position friend. While their interaction with others were entirely voluntary, their choice to interact with and develop friendships, regardless of these differences and language barriers, demonstrated how much they wanted to understand others' culture.

In the following excerpt, Khalid provided an example of this interaction between these two very different cultures.

***Excerpt 8: Khalid***

أ: طيب وش اللي خلاك تشعر انك من الخارج يعني

A: OK. What made you feel that you are an outsider, meaning....

خ: اهـ والله .. اختلاف العادات والتقاليد بيني وبين الناس هذا شي كبير يعني بعض الاحيان يعني مثلاً زي النكت وما النكت هذه مثلاً اللي عندنا تختلف عن اللي عندهم انا مافهمهم هم مايفهمولي وهذه بعد ؟؟؟ تدخل بالعادات والتقاليد اهـ يعني هذي الاشياء

K: Ahh. God ... differences in habits and traditions between me and between the people. This is a big thing, I mean, sometime, I mean, for example, jokes and what jokes. This, for example, our jokes is different from theirs. I do not understand theirs and they do not understand mine. And this is within habits and traditions .. ahh I mean, these things.

As a result of his interactions, Khalid shared an example of a common cultural clash: jokes—when it is appropriate to laugh and what makes a joke funny to him or to others. His contact with others taught him how they view his culture, jokes, and how he should view theirs. His acknowledgement that Americans might not understand his Saudi jokes and vice versa—due to different backgrounds—suggests that his experiences in a study abroad context played a major role in shaping his social stance toward both cultures. He resisted the subject position of an arrogant learner for the subject position of a modest learner who is willing to learn about the other's culture. Hence, how the participants see themselves and position their social identity shape the interaction and experience abroad. While many of the participants struggled due to their limited cultural and linguistic knowledge, they described themselves as emerging from this experience as more competent members of an intercultural society.

***Excerpt 9: Abdullah***

أ: طيب كيف تعلمت الثقافة الامريكيه .. كيف تعلمتها

A: OK. How did you learn about the American culture? How did you learn it?

ع: من اللي اشوفه

Ab: From what I see...

أ: اللي تشوفه

A: From what you see?

ع: الحياه اليوميه

Ab: Everyday life

أ: الحياه اليوميه .. طيب ....

A: Everyday life ... OK

.....

ع: احتكاك ... بس في طلاب ما يحدد ... تلقاهم مع بعض طول اليوم ولا يحتكون في اي اجنبي وتبقى العادات السيئه ماتغير

Ab: Interaction ... but some students do not change... You see them with each other all day long and they do not interact with anyone who is different and the bad habits stay and does not change.

أ: يعني على حسب شخصيه الطالب .. هل مثلا تحس انك تغيرت

A: I mean, depending on the student's personality ... do you, for example, feel that you have changed?

ع - انا تغيرت من بعد ما احتكيت وشففت ..

Ab: I have changed after I interacted.

Despite the many stories the participants shared, some of them stated explicitly that their interactions with Americans and other international learners was the main reason behind their current views. For instance, Nasser did not interact very much with international people outside the classroom; consequently, he had fewer stories of intercultural interactions. Abdullah, on the other hand, had taken the time to challenge himself in order to learn the language and accelerate his goal of higher education. He chose to live with an American family and to move to another city that had no Arabs, in the hope of learning more about Americans and improving his language proficiency. He stated, as it is clear in the above excerpt, that he learned about culture from everyday life and from his interactions outside his comfort zone. He also realized that change is not possible if a student does not interact with anyone different from his/her own people. Different here means people who are nationally, linguistically, and even spiritually dissimilar from one's own.

As a result of such interactions, many of the participants saw themselves as changed from what they used to be or thought to be. Ochs (1988) noted that participation in language activities helps construct learners' worldview as they acquire the language. Therefore, interaction is an important aspect of study abroad, because it can change or broaden students' views of themselves and others. Spolsky (1989) argued that the language learners are exposed and have opportunities to practice the target language in two different settings: "the natural or informal environment of the target language community or the formal environment of the classroom" (cited in Norton Peirce, 1995). The participants' choices of whom and how to interact seemed to enable them to construct broader identities and develop wider trajectories about the other.

### **Tolerance**

As a result of the participants' interactions and how they came to understand cultural differences and similarities, their narratives showed more tolerance of the other's culture and a greater acceptance of such differences. They observed aspects of American society that are considered inappropriate, but they expressed a willingness to tolerate it. The following excerpt demonstrates how Sara felt generally about other cultures, in spite of extreme differences from her own.

#### ***Excerpt 10: Sara***

أ: ماكنت معتقاداتك عن الناس خارج المملكة هل تحسين أنهم كأنه مختلفين عنا او كان في شبيهات

A: What were your beliefs about the people outside of Saudi Arabia? Do you feel that they are different from us or are there similarities?

س: اكيد كل دوله لها عادات وتقاليد غير عننا انا احترم كل عاداتهم وتقاليدهم بغض النظر هم كيف كانوا يعني ماعمري بصراحه اقول لأحد انت ليه عاداتكم كذا واتريق على عاداتهم انا احب اللي يحترم عاداتي وتقاليدي احترم عاداته وتقاليده فماكن عندي صحيح اني كنت استغرب من عادات بعض الناس

S: Of course, every country has its habits and traditions that are different from ours. I respect all of their habits and traditions regardless of how they were, I mean. I never in my life, truly, say to someone why your habits are like that and make fun of their habits. I love the ones who respect my habits and traditions; I respect their habits and traditions. So there are not .. true that there are odd habits that people do

أ: اوكي وش اللي تستغربين منه مثلاً

A: OK. What makes things odd to you, for example?

س: يعني احد يقولي انه نحننا ناكل في بلدنا كلاب طبعاً استغرب تخيلي انتي ولما احد يسألني ليه نلبس طرح... العلاقات عادي عندهم حنا عندنا العلاقات هذي محرمه عندنا صحيح حنا نقعد مع بعض بس ماعندنا علاقات خارجيه مع احد ابدا

S: I mean, someone tells me that we, in our country, eat dog. Of course, I would be peculiar, you imagine. And when someone asks me why do you wear scarves ... the relationship is ok for them; for us, this kind of relationship is forbidden. True that we sit down together, but we don't have outside relationship with anyone at all.

Sara summarized what most of the participants believed or felt about other cultures. Their experience studying abroad placed them in the “stranger” position, where they saw themselves as a minority. Their encounter of living in a different majority, the host culture, shaped their social identity. They verbally display the tolerance stance, where they socially recognized the others attitude to their cultures and their own attitude to the others. In order to establish mutual respect, they accepted the subject position of minority. They became aware of their own differences and learned to appreciate others’ tolerance of their values and beliefs. Wesche (2004) argues that in order to be open to “otherness,” one needs to distance “oneself from one's own cultural assumptions and seeing oneself as also possessing a learned culture” (p. 279). Sara, as she stated in

excerpt 10, reported aspects of Saudi Arabia's culture, such as wearing scarves and prohibiting pre-marital relationship, which might seem odd for Americans. Nevertheless, many of the participants expressed a sense of respect for the American culture and they did not ridicule others' habits in the hope that others would have mutual understanding and respect for them. While they found aspects of the American culture to be odd or bizarre, they were willing to tolerate such differences. This suggests, at least for these participants, that studying abroad and living with a majority that holds different values and habits from one's own habits shape their social stance and may lead to reconstructing both their interactions with others and their willingness to tolerate behavior different from their own.

***Excerpt 11: Khalid***

خ: فحاول اني اعرف جميع التقاليد يعني التقاليد الناس اللي انا امشي معاهم عشان  
 ماتصير اخطاء يعني انا ماأكون قاصدها لكن مابغاهم يعني ياخذو يعني بخاطرهم يعني  
 K: So I try to know all the traditions, I mean, the traditions of people  
 that I go out with so no mistakes, I mean, I do not mean it but I do  
 not want them, I mean, to be upset, I mean....

Khalid, expanding on what Sara has stated, felt that he needed to know his friends' culture, because he did not want to upset or make them uncomfortable by anything he did or said. This asserted Ochs (1993) assumptions in regard to social identity and language socialization that, through interactions with host members, students desire to become competent members of the host society. Ochs believed that students have an obligation to learn about differences in order to avoid unwanted or unintended conflicts. Such desire, to understand the other, shaped Khalid's social identity, where he



resisted the subject position of an illiterate friend in favor of the subject position of an understanding and considerate acquaintance. Wesche (2004) also stated that people who speak more than one language and experience living in a different social environment are more tolerant of differences. The experiences of living abroad and the daily interactions with others could “lead one to understand and accept other world views better” (p. 282). While the participants encountered dilemmas in which the inappropriateness of their cultural intersected with the appropriateness of the host culture or vice versa, their social stance has become constructed to accept the others’ cultural values.

Whereas the participants were willing to tolerate aspects of the American culture, the way they approached tolerance shaped their social identity. For instance, Khalid’s willingness to tolerate meant that he needed to learn more about the American culture. Other participants shared different points of view in terms of how they tolerated aspects of the American culture or what it meant for them to be tolerant. Nasser, for example, did not like overt relationships between men and women, but he acknowledged that this is their culture and he can just look away. His way of practicing tolerance was by avoiding what he felt was inappropriate, yet accepting others’ habits or beliefs. Hence, the study abroad experience, and the participants’ interactions with people who hold different values, played a role in their emerging understanding of and tolerance toward what it means to have mutual understanding and respect of others.

## Multiculturalism

One of the major characteristics of many intensive English programs in the United States is that it has a diverse group of students from around the world. Therefore, the Saudi participants had the opportunity to meet and talk with other international students. This context supported the development of greater understandings of cross-cultural differences and increased their intercultural awareness. Accordingly, their misconceptions about people from around the world changed. The following excerpts describe how two participants shifted their perspectives about others and why such a change took place.

### *Excerpt 12: Reem*

أ: ايوه ايوه فتحسين انه مثلا انتي نظرتك انتي تغيرت للعالم  
A: Yes, yes, so you feel that, for example, your view of the world has changed?

ر: ايوه بديت اشوف الـ ....  
R: Yah, I started to see the ...

أ: الاختلافات مو بس  
A: Differences not just ...

ر: اشوف العوالم الثانيه  
R: I see the other worlds

أ: ايوه  
A: Yah.

ر: رقم واحد؟؟ لان انا بدرس مع البنات اللي بيدرسو بالاي سي بي  
R: Number one, because I study with the girls in the intensive English program

أ: ايوه  
A: Yah..

ر: فبشوف مثلا الحياه في ... مثلا كولومبيا .... يقولي ان كولومبيا مليئانه حروب و  
R: So I see, for example, life in ...for example Colombia ... he says that Colombia is full of wars and ...

أ: همم  
A: Hmm..

ر: كنت احسب؟ كلها فله وكلومبيا فله زي امريكا كل العالم فله هو يقولي لا البلد مره  
ماهو امن بيقتولي وانا اتمنى اعيش في امريكا عشان اخرج من بلدي مره ماهو امن  
حروب ومشاكل

R: I thought it was full of fun and Colombia is cool like America.  
All the world is cool. He says to me, no, the country is not at all  
safe, he says, and I wish I could live in America so I can get out of  
my country; it is not at all safe, wars and problems.

أ: هممم

A: Hmmm...

ر: يقولي انا نفسي

R: He say, I wish ...

ر: ايوه و... يعني العالم مو فله زي مالحننا نحسب كل شي كول وكل شي خطير ههه

R: Yah and ...I mean the world is not fun/cool like what we think  
that everything is *cool* and everything is cool (laughs).

Reem explained how she once perceived Colombia as a “cool and fun” place just like America, yet after she met a classmate from Colombia, her views changed dramatically. All of the participants acknowledged that they and others in Saudi Arabia carry mistaken conceptions of people around the world. Before going abroad, they were part of the majority, Saudis and Muslims, where they shared common views—everyone the same. However, while living, studying, and encountering others during their study abroad experiences, they discovered different conceptions of the world and this helped to broaden their intercultural knowledge.

The data suggest that the participants’ experiences in a multicultural context helped to reconstruct their social identity. Their perceptions of, what I would call, the “Global Other,” has shifted their social stance, which helped in shaping their intercultural awareness and led to an increasing interest in staying updated on the world’s social reality—from friends they met in the English language program.

*Excerpt 13: Abdullah*

ع: ... عرفت الدول مانعرفها اول وعرفنا ثقافات وعرفنا لغات ماكنت اعرف اول ان ناس كثير يتكلمون لغات اسبانيه و .. قبل لاجي هنا كنت اتوقع ان الصين واليابان وكوريا يتكلمون لغه وحده

Ab: I learned about countries that we did not know about and we learned about cultures and languages I did not know before. There are people who speak Latin languages and ... before I came here, I assumed that China, Japan, and Korea speak one language.

أ: لغه وحده

A: One language.

ع: بس الحين اكتشفته.. كلن يتكلم بلغه غير

Ab: But now I discovered .. that all speak in different language

Abdullah reported a different aspect about others that he discovered during his study abroad. Because of his interactions with others in the intensive English program, his social stance of others has shifted. He recognized that not everything he thought or heard is true about other people around the world. He accepted the subject position of cultural learner rather than the subject position of arrogant learner. All the participants' narrative data showed an increase in intercultural awareness, where they discovered new knowledge about how different people live and interact, what their values and beliefs were, and what kind of languages they used. The study abroad context gave the Saudi participants exposure to a multicultural setting in which they observed and interacted with people from diverse backgrounds and, as a result, this helped to increase and to correct their intercultural awareness or misperceptions. Although the participants studied in a multicultural setting, they had a choice of whether to interact with different people.

Their choice to interact with others played a major role in constructing their social identity led to different social acts and stances. It also shaped their perceptions of the world and, according to them, increased their intercultural awareness.

### **Comparative Views**

#### **Religious Superiority**

Moving from the social level to the spiritual level, after studying abroad, the participants described becoming more observant Muslims than they had been in Saudi Arabia. Their narrative data highlighted how much their perspectives shifted in terms of their religious practices. Prior to coming to the United States, they never questioned or thought about how Islam played a major part in their lives, because the majority in Saudi Arabia is Muslim, which raised the assumption that the domestic population of the US was the same. After they came to the United States, however, they started to view the positives of Islamic rules, such as drinking prohibition, and as a result, became more attached to it. The following excerpts are examples of how the participants' views toward Islam have changed.

#### ***Excerpt 14: Reem***

ر: بديت اشوف الاسلام الطيب اللي ما بنشوفه بالسعوديه

R: I started to see the good side of Islam that we do not see in Saudi Arabia.

أ: هممم

A: Hmmm

ر: موكل الناس تلبس حجاب ماتكوني؟؟؟ يعني انسانه محترمه لما تلبسي الحجاب

R: Not everyone wears Hijab, you don't ... I mean, be respectful person ??? when you wear the hijab [head scarf]

أ: صح صح

A: Right, right.

ر: لما جيت هنا والله اني مبسوطه اني لابس حجاب الحمد لله اني ماعشت في امريكا لما كنت صغيره يعني .... يعني لما اشوف المنظر اللي واصليته الاوادم مره بطل؟؟ في مجتمعهم فاقول الحمد لله اني اتولدت مسلمه والحمد لله اني ماوصلت لديه المرحله من غير مالدري

R: when I came here, God, I became very happy that I wear the Hijab, thank God, I did not live in America when I was little, I mean ... I mean, when I see what the people have come to is really bad in their society. So I say, thank God that I was born a Muslim, and thank God that I did not arrive at this phase without knowing.

أ: ايوه

A: Yah.

ر: فا بديت اشوف الاشياء الصغيره بالاسلام كده اللي احبها مره واني اكتشفتها بعد ماجينا

R: So I started to see the small things in Islam that I really like and I discover them after we came here.

أ: هممم حلو الـ من وشو الشي مثلا انك تشوفين الناس يشربون دايمًا نقولين الحمد لله ان الاسلام حرم الخمر مثلاً

A: Hmmm, good. Like what things, for example, you see people always drink and you say than you God that Islam prohibited drinking, for example.

ر: ايوه وانا متمسكه فيه وش الاشياء الثانيه اللي ممكن مثلاً العلاقات بين المراء والرجل من الاشياء هذه .... ايش اللي ضمنك لمن تتعرفي على واحد انه تتزوجو .... ايش ضمنك انه واحده ثانيه مايطلقك طيب يخونك طب يعني مايبغا اتزوج واحد ماني واثقه فيه عمري ماكنت واثقه بواحد متعرف على عشره قبلي ...

R: Yah, and I am attached to it and what other things that, for example the relationship between the men and women is from these things ... What makes you sure that when you know someone that you will get married? .... What assures you that another woman? Get divorce ok cheat on you ok ok, I mean, I do not want someone I will not trust. I will never trust someone who knows ten before me.

After living and studying in the United States for a short time, Reem expressed more attachment to Islam. Like the other participants, living abroad made her observe life without Islam; how people interact and what their non-Islamic way of life appeared to be. Hence, as Block (2007) asserted, study abroad experiences did not just lead to “greater intercultural awareness, but to an enhanced sense of national identity (p. 171). However,

in this case, the participants reported a sense of, what I would call religious identity instead of national identity. Before the participants came to the United States, there were many aspects of Islam that were part of their routine and everyday life, and they never explicitly thought about or came to appreciate these aspects. After they were confronted with a very different lifestyle, they started to notice and value their own. Reem, for example, shared her opinion about pre-marital relationships; in Saudi Arabia such a relationship is prohibited, and if someone broke the rule, he/she would face major consequences. Reem discussed such relationships from a social standpoint rather than a political one, where she sees it as unethical and unfair treatment for herself as a woman. She resisted the subject position of being an oppressed woman in turn of the subject position of free and dignified woman. Her social identity has shifted to one in which her social stance of men's and women's relationships have become stronger as a result of her studying abroad.

While the participants were confronted with an opposite way of life, they saw the negative consequences of some aspects (i.e., drinking) which made them appreciate their past religious beliefs and values. These experiences clearly influenced their reattachment to many religious values that were previously not in their consciousness. Their social identity has been reconstructed by establishing new experiences that make them more attached to their Muslim social stance.

***Excerpt 15: Abdullah***

أ: الناحية الدينية هل تغيرت أو أصبحت أكثر تمسكا بالدين أو ...

A: From the religious side have you changed or have you become more adherent of the religion or ...

ع: بلا تعرف يعني تشوف عاداتهم من وين وتشوف ضررها على المجتمع وتعرف

Ab: Yes, you know, I mean, you see their habits and from where and you see its harms on the society and you know...

أ: يعني اصبحت اكثر ايمانا

A: You mean, you have become more faithful?

ع: ايه نعم

Ab: Yah, yes.

Abdullah, on the other hand, was asked explicitly if he became more attached to his religion. In his experiences living abroad with an American host family, he observed some of the daily life family habits. He shared a story about how the father in the family was an alcoholic and how the family struggled with this. Abdullah noticed some of the consequences of drinking and learned how the American family dealt with it. After seeing and interacting with this negative aspect of the American culture, he appreciated some of the values that Islam requires (i.e. Drinking in Islam is prohibited). His social identity has been reconstructed due to his observations and interactions with the American family members. Whereas Abdullah was free to choose or reform his social stance on drinking, he chose—not just followed the Islamic rule of not drinking—to be positioned as independent individual, because he found reasons to adhere to the value of not drinking. Therefore, the data suggests that learning and living within another culture may not necessarily (too small a sample to say it happens with everyone) change a person's original religious beliefs; instead, it may actually lead to more adherence to certain religious values. These participants' experiences abroad played a major role in adding value to their personal and religious beliefs, thus, reconstructing their religious identity.



## Appropriating the Others

Finally, the participants expressed a desire to “tailor” the American culture they were living in so that it did not conflict with their religious beliefs. Bakhtin (1984) calls this phenomenon close to this as “appropriating language practices of others” (cited in Norton & Toohey, 2002, p. 117). However, this occurrence is not related to language, it is more related to appropriating the others’ culture practices. The following excerpt highlights this practice:

### *Excerpt 16: Khalid*

أ: وانت كذلك تحب مومو شرط الثقافه الامريكه ممكن كذلك زملائك الطلبة

A: And you also like, not just the American culture, but also your fellow students?

خ: ايه احب الثقافه يعني اتعلم تقاليد الناس يعني وعاداتهم وتقاليدهم واشوف يعني واقارنها بالعادات حقني اشوفها ايش الاحسن ومدري ايه ايش الاحسن ان شاء الله اذا تزوجت فربي اولادي اشوف مثلاً يعني هذه العاده مثلاً

K: Yah, I like the cult .. I mean learn peoples’ habits and traditions and see, I mean, compare it with my habits and see which is better. I do not know which is better, God wills, if I get married, I will raise my children. I see, I mean, this habit for example.

أ: سيئه

A: Bad?

خ: سيئه جيده مثلاً عادات عاداتي انا وفي عاده واحد ثاني شي جيد يعني انا بصراحه اه .... انا عندي القانون هذا حق سن ال 18 سنه قانون جميل جدا ..ليه ... اولا يعني عندنا احنا بالسعوديه الاب والام يحتكرو ولدهم يعني يعني كثير لدرجه غير طبيعيه

K: Bad or good, for example, habits, my habits. And there is one good habit I mean truly .... For me the law of 18 yrs old [where persons 18 and older be independent], is a very nice law ... why? ... First we have in Saudi Arabia the father and mother control their son, I mean I mean, extremely controlling.....

خ: هذا جيد الشيء جيد بحاله وحده لكن ب يعني فيه صلح فيه اكله اهلي زي انا الحين امي وابويا بالسعوديه ...

K: This a good thing [the law of 18yrs], under one condition, but, I mean, there has to be kinship with his parents. I call and stay

connected with my family, like I am now with my mom and dad in Saudi Arabia

Khalid expressed an interest in learning about different cultures if it would provide him with options for where he might raise his children in the future. He claimed he could compare each habit or tradition and then choose those that aligned with his ideals. In addition, he shared his approbation of the American value that individuals become independent when they reach the age of 18 years old by comparing this with the current view in Saudi Arabia, where, in his view, parents are controlling of their children, even after they graduate from college. Interestingly, even though he expressed a more positive view of this aspect of American culture, he added the Islamic principle in which children need to be in touch and connected with their parents—kinship (صلة رحم—*Selah Rahem*). Like Khalid, the other participants' social identities were reconstructed because he and they learned different, or maybe better, aspects of the other cultures. They formed a holistic social stance that perceived the positives of the other and replaced them with the negatives of his own culture under the criteria of his religious beliefs. They resisted the subject position of Saudi individual in favor of the subject position of holistic individual.

Overall, the participants seemed to accept the best of both cultures—not rejecting a culture that is vastly different from their own—but attempting to create their own hybrid identity. Thus, the data suggest that the experience of living and studying abroad enabled the participants to reconstruct their social identities which then broadened their perceptions of their own values, beliefs, and attitudes. In their minds, this reconstruction enabled them to become more knowledgeable, hybridized, and holistic individuals.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

This study started with two major questions that drove this analysis. In answering the research question: How are Saudi students' identities shaped by their experiences of studying abroad in the United States? As the data suggest, the Saudi participants' narratives indicate three super-ordinate categories (educational, intercultural, and comparative views). In analyzing these themes, the data implies that the participants' social identities changed according to different social contexts through interactions with others. Now, as in the abovementioned literature, identity is dynamic, contradictory, and diverse. Social identity is designated to understand the participants' identity shift, where their subjectivity changed depending upon social interactions with others. While the participants recognized and encountered social-cultural differences through interaction, they show different positioning of their social stances and acts (Ochs, 1999). Hence, through English language socialization, the participants not only communicated and understood others, they developed different social identities depending upon different social contexts. For instance, the participants' experience of studying abroad placed them in a minority position. Although their interaction with others was entirely voluntary, their choice to interact with and develop friendships, despite these differences and language barriers, demonstrated how much they wanted to understand others' culture—displaying a different social stance.

Furthermore, the participants' investment, rather than motivation (Dörnyei, 1998), using their "symbolic resource" (Norton Peirce, 1995, p. 17) of education, shaped their experiences of living and studying abroad. The participants' social identity shifted, because they were invested in going abroad to study and receive a higher education, which led to a range of different experiences and interactions. While the participants were invested in learning the language to receive access to higher goals, their efforts in learning the language constructed how they learned the language and interacted with others. As Kinginger (2009) argued: "the extent to which study abroad offers occasions for language learning also depends upon how students opt to position themselves with respect to these communities" (p. 203). They displayed different social stances (Ochs, 1993) according to their interactions and experiences in study abroad contexts. For example, although the participants encountered dilemmas in which the appropriateness of their culture came across as inappropriate in the host culture or vice versa, their social stance allowed them to accept the others' cultural values. The way Khalid, for instance, viewed and expressed tolerance—by learning more about others—is different from the approach Nasser reported tolerance—avoidance of the inappropriate. Thus, the experience of study abroad complicated the participants' identity because they received many different perspectives on how they looked at their own and others' culture.

This leads to the second research question of this study: How did their perceptions as individuals and as learners change a result of being exposed to and acquiring English as a second language in the United States? For the participants in this study, the experience of study abroad, in general, changed their perceptions of themselves, the world, and others. Their investment to earn a higher education in the study abroad context

shaped their interactions with others. Such experience exposed them to many different ideologies and cultures, which, in their words, increased tolerance and their intercultural awareness. The study abroad context gave the Saudi participants exposure to a multicultural setting in which they observed and interacted with people from diverse backgrounds (i.e., American, Colombian, Chinese, etc.) and, as a result, helped to increase their intercultural awareness. Regardless of how the participants differed in their investment and in their interaction with the others, their study abroad experience in the intensive English program created negative views of the English educational system in Saudi Arabia. They recognized the flaws in their previous English education—where they had studied for a minimum of six years—and how it did not prepare them for “real world” practice. Their criticisms of English education in Saudi Arabia played a major role in how they understood what it meant to study a “living” language.

In addition, what is evident from the aforesaid analysis, is that being abroad and learning more about other cultures did not change their ideologies or religious beliefs, and in fact, they found themselves adhering even more closely to those values. They were placed in a context in which they became a minority and they started to see the small aspects of their religion that they never noticed before. In their minds, living and studying abroad helped them become better people. The study asserts the assumption that “multilingualism is a key prerequisite for global awareness and that language learning, especially when it involves ‘a personal stake which extends one’s identity’ (Murphy-Lejeune 2002, p. 104) and offers unique forms of insight, empathy, and creativity” (Kinging, 2009. p, 222). As the participants learned English and developed a multilingual self, they seemed to develop their multicultural self. Namely, they appeared

to absorb some cultural aspects in the United States from English native and non-native speakers, while at the same time they became ambassadors of their own culture. They expressed a plasticity of the human's identity, where the study abroad experiences enriched their own perceptions and identities.

For this study, it is safe to say that “to become able to communicate and understand it seems essential to actively participate in the life of the target culture” (House, 1977 p. 61). Students who study abroad receive a:

deeper understanding of the diversity—yet commonality—of human experience, the stimulation of new ways of thinking and problem-solving, and international friendships that demonstrate the possibility of simultaneously experiencing difference and inclusion ... respect and trust across differences are possible, and it becomes increasingly difficult to conceive of “us” and “them” (Wesch, 2004, p. 284).

From her review on social psychology and language learning literature about learners' change in attitudes towards the others, this study also supports Morgan's (1993) conclusion that attitude change, if it is to be effective, will involve higher awareness and understanding towards many aspects of the communication process. Therefore, studying abroad goes beyond educational gains to influence students' social identities in a positive manner, thus, becoming better people.

While the common themes in this study can be generalize across the participants, there were also many individual variabilities that seem linked to personal socio-cultural histories, proficiency in English, and an understanding of culture. Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001) argue that “students are endowed with human agency; they consciously and

actively contribute to shaping their own learning experiences in which they may accept, accommodate, resist, or reject the communities and practice they encounter” (cited in Kinginger, 2009, p.156). In the end, each participant is a different individual and what is very clear is that their own lived history shaped the way they experienced what happened to them when they arrived here, what is happening to them now, and what they will experience in the future. Indeed, it is unrealistic to say that all Saudis experience or will experience the same nomenclatures; it is actually very individualistic and depends on a host of experiences that one has over the whole course of one’s life—the reality of this world. The studies Kinginger (2009) reviewed (e.g., Hashimoto 1993; Wilkinson 2002; Cook 2006; Dufon 2006) suggest that language learning is a “socio-historically situated activity in which learners interpret their experiences through the lens of their history” (p. 202). Such individual differences are, for example, socioeconomic status (SES), the privileges that they have been afforded, the kind of struggles they have, and even their travels to other countries. All of these factors play a role in shaping the way people experience a new culture and the way they change their perceptions of themselves and the world.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Implication for Future Studies**

How can the English education system in Saudi Arabia benefit from this study?

Due to the homogenous nature of the Saudi culture, Saudis are rarely exposed to intercultural settings. Consequently, when studying abroad, the participants in this study became more aware of intercultural issues. One of the reasons students study abroad is “to release them from the confines of the classroom and the protective but limiting oversight of their teachers” (Kinger, 2009, p. 221). Hence, both explicit instruction and social activity are needed. One implication of this study might be to integrate these intercultural experiences into the English language educational system in Saudi Arabian classrooms. Many scholars (e.g., Holiday, 1996; Atkinson, 1999; Morgan, 1993) support the idea of having an intercultural approach to language education. This approach supports “a critical, relativistic orientation to the familiar and different, and so aims to avoid superficiality and stereotyping” (Young et al. 2009, p. 165). By implementing the intercultural approach, students may become more interculturally aware and be ready to accept different values and beliefs, choosing intelligently what best align with their beliefs. Becoming an “intercultural speaker” may be, “better, more productive and attainable goal for most learners of English worldwide” (Young et al. 2009, p. 165). Nonetheless, research is still needed to examine the general appropriateness of this approach in the context of Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, changing the English curriculum in Saudi Arabia is essential, but insufficient for full transformation. The



misconceptions that Saudis hold about other cultures—for example, learning about different cultures will hurt their identity—need to be dispelled, especially since it is no longer possible to block other cultures in a world that is increasingly globalized.

One challenge that the Saudi educational system must address is how English language teachers are prepared to teach. Including a study abroad experience in teacher education programs would most certainly enable new teachers to understand how learning a language, while living in a new culture, is different from learning it in Saudi Arabia. Similar to the experiences of the participants in this study, teachers might benefit from a study abroad experience in order to develop a greater sense of intercultural awareness, recognize the challenges their students will face, and better prepare them for learning and using English in whatever settings they find themselves. If prospective teachers bring these experiences to bear on their instruction, their students' understanding of the language may be enhanced and their motivation may also increase (Young et al. 2009, p. 162).

Several studies (e.g., Lazaraton 2003; Atkinson and Ramanathan, 1995) provide examples “where culture and cultural difference can be used as a resource to foster language learning, rather than as an obstacle to overcome” (Young et al. 2009, p. 164). Bringing comparisons of cross-cultural values and beliefs into the Saudi English educational system may be an important first step. Giving future educators the opportunity to study abroad has the potential to enable them to act as mediators of both language and cultures and may enable them to have a positive impact on the English educational system in Saudi Arabia. From the Arabic old beliefs and original poem, teachers are seen as messengers.

فَمِ لِلْمُعَلِّمِ وَقَّهِ التَّجْبِيلَا  
 كَادَ الْمُعَلِّمُ أَنْ يَكُونَ رَسُولَا  
 أَعْلِمْتَ أَشْرَفَ أَوْ أَجَلَّ مِنْ الَّذِي  
 يَبْنِي وَيُنْشِئُ أَنْفُسًا وَعُقُولَا!

أحمد شوقي

*Stand to the teacher and show veneration  
 He almost be a messenger  
 Have you known a superiority or nobility from the  
 One who erect and construct selves and minds!*

Poet: Ahmed Shoqy

## Appendix A

### IRB consent form: in Arabic



Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research  
The Pennsylvania State University

**العنوان:** مسيرة دراسة اللغة للطلبة السعوديون في الخارج

**الباحث الرئيسي:** أسماء الثويني، طالبة بكالوريوس

1140 W. Aaron Dr.  
Appt 201  
State College, PA 16803  
(814) 880-2036; [ama267@psu.edu](mailto:ama267@psu.edu)

**المرشدة والمشرفة الدراسية:** كيرن جونسن

Dr. Karen E. Johnson  
305 Spark Bldg  
University Park, PA 16802  
(814) 863-2346; [kej1@psu.edu](mailto:kej1@psu.edu)

**1. هدف الدراسة:** الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو البحث في مسيرتك كسعودي تتعلم اللغة الانجليزية في أمريكا، في ما قد واجهت أموراً تتعلق بالقيم والمفاهيم والأفكار التي ترتبط باللغة الانجليزية والتي هي بعيدة عن تاريخك ودينك وثقافتك. كيف تتدبر هذه الأمور وتتكيف معها ، كيف تجد نفسك كإنسان وكطالب بعد مواجهتك لهذه القيم والمفاهيم المختلفة عن ما تؤمن به

**2. طريقة البحث:** تسجيل مقابلتين معك - المقابلة سوف تكون في لغتك الأصلية

**3. الفائدة:** يمكن أن تتعلم أكثر عن نفسك عبر مشاركتك في هذه الدراسة - سوف يكون لديك فهم أكثر لنفسك وكيف تغيرت نظرتك، الدراسة سوف تكون مفيدة لمدرسي اللغة الانجليزية لغير الناطقين بها ومن ينظم الدراسة في الخارج، سوف يكون لديهم فهم أكثر لتجارب الطالب السعودي الذي يدرس في الخارج خصوصاً أن ثقافة ومعتقدات السعوديون مختلفة عن ثقافة ومعتقدات الغربيين. عليه فإن هذه الدراسة سوف تساعد المدرسين والمنظمين حتى يطوروا برامج أفضل تتناسب مع هذه الاختلافات.

**4. التوقيت :** سوف تأخذ حوالي ساعة للمقابلة الواحدة

**5. الخصوصية والسرية:** مشاركتك في هذا البحث سوف تكون سرية جميع الأسباب المتاحة سوف اعتني بها لأضمن خصوصية وسرية هذه المقابلة، شخصيتك وهويتك سوف تكون غير معروفة في جميع مراحل جمع

البيانات وتحليلها ولجميع من يشترك في هذا المشروع. المعلومات التي يمكن أن تدل على شخصيتك سوف تبعد عن مصادر البيانات ، اسم رمزي سوف يستخدم عندما نقوم بملخص المقابلة وعند تفريغ البيانات وتزميزها وتخزينها. البيانات والتسجيلات الصوتية سوف تخزن في مكان آمن في جهاز حاسب آلي لدى الباحث الرئيسي، لا يوجد احد يستطيع أن يصل إلى الملفات الصوتية ما عدا الباحث الرئيسي كما سوف يتم إتلافها في شهر جون 2010

**6. حقه في السؤال:** من فضلك اتصل بالباحث الرئيسي أسماء الثويني هاتف رقم 8148802036 إذا كان لديك أي سؤال أو ملاحظة على البحث ، كذلك الدكتورة كيرن جونسن ، المشرفة الدراسية على هذا البحث ، في قسم تطبيقات اللغة سوف تقوم بدور الحكم في حالة أي شكوى حول المشاركة في هذا البحث، كذلك تستطيع أن تستشيرها حول أي ملاحظة لها علاقة في هذا المشروع - يمكن الاتصال عليها على العنوان التالي:

Dr. Karen E. Johnson  
Department of Applied Linguistics  
The College of the Liberal Arts  
305 Spark Bldg  
University Park, PA 16802  
(814) 863-2346; [kej1@psu.edu](mailto:kej1@psu.edu)

**7. حرية المشاركة :** قرارك لتشارك في هذا البحث اختياري ، تستطيع إن تتوقف في أي لحظة ، ليس عليك الإجابة على كل الأسئلة ، رفضك لجزء من هذه المقابلة أو انسحابك منها لن يترتب عليها أي عقوبة أو خسارة أي فائدة سوف تجنيها في أي حال من الأحوال. يجب أن يكون عمرك 18 سنة أو أكثر حتى تشارك في هذه الدراسة، إذا وافقت على المشاركة في هذا البحث وعلى المعلومات أعلاه ، أمل التوقيع مع كتابة اسمك والتاريخ ، سوف أعطيك نسخة من هذه الإقرار لملفك الخاص

A \_\_\_\_\_ أوافق على التسجيل الصوتي

\_\_\_\_\_ لا أوافق على التسجيل الصوتي

B \_\_\_\_\_ أوافق على الاستشهاد بمقاطع من مقابلتي في البحث

\_\_\_\_\_ لا أوافق على الاستشهاد بمقاطع من مقابلتي في البحث

\_\_\_\_\_ التاريخ

\_\_\_\_\_ توقيع المشارك

\_\_\_\_\_ التاريخ

\_\_\_\_\_ الشخص الذي يقدم هذا الإقرار

## Appendix B

### IRB consent form: in English



#### Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research

The Pennsylvania State University

**Title of Project:** Shifting Views:  
Saudi Students Living and Studying Abroad

**Principal Investigator:** Assma Al Thowaini, Undergraduate Student  
1140 W. Aaron Dr.  
Appt 201  
State College, PA 16803  
(814) 880-2036; [ama267@psu.edu](mailto:ama267@psu.edu)

**Advisor:** Dr. Karen E. Johnson  
305 Spark Bldg  
University Park, PA 16802  
(814) 863-2346; [kej1@psu.edu](mailto:kej1@psu.edu)

1. **Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this research study is to explore the journey that you, as a Saudi, and your experience as a learner of English in the United States, in which you are being confronted with concepts, values, and ideas embedded in the English language that are different to your own history, religion, culture, and beliefs. It explores how you are managing and/or coping with this experience, if at all, and to find out what conflicting messages and ideologies are issues for you. How do you see yourself changing as a person and as a learner as a result of being exposed to and acquiring English as a second language in the United States?

2. **Procedures to be followed:** I will audio record two interviews with you. The interview will be in your native language, Arabic.

3. **Benefits:** You might learn more about yourself by participating in this study. You will have a better understanding of yourself and how your views changed over the time.

The study will be beneficial to ESL teachers and study abroad administrators; they will have a better understanding of the Saudi students experience studying abroad, especially that Saudi culture and beliefs are different from western beliefs. Thus, this study will help teachers and administrators develop better programs accommodating these differences.

4. **Duration:** It will take about an hour to complete each interview.

**5. Statement of Confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is confidential. All reasonable efforts will be made to protect your confidentiality in all communications involving this project. Information that could be used to identify you will be excluded from all data sources: i.e., interview transcripts. Pseudonyms will be used at the point of transcription, coding, and the storage of data. The data and audios, digital, will be stored and secured at the Principal Investigator's computer in a password protected file. No one will have access to the audios except the Principal Investigator and they will be destroyed by June 2010.

**7. Right to Ask Questions:** Please contact the Principal Investigator, Assma Al Thowaini, at (814) 8802036 or [ama267@psu.edu](mailto:ama267@psu.edu) with questions or concerns about this study.

Also, Dr. Karen E. Johnson, my advisor for this research in the Applied Linguistics Department, will serve as an arbiter in case of complaints or concerns about this research. Participants can also consult her for any other concerns related to this project. Her contact information is as follows:

Dr. Karen E. Johnson  
Department of Applied Linguistics  
The College of the Liberal Arts  
305 Spark Bldg  
University Park, PA 16802  
(814) 863-2346; [kej1@psu.edu](mailto:kej1@psu.edu)

**6. Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Refusal to take part in or withdrawing from this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits you would receive otherwise.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study. If you agree to take part in this research study and the information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below. You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

A. \_\_\_\_\_ I **give** my permission to be **AUDIO** taped.

\_\_\_\_\_ I **do not give** my permission to be **AUDIO** taped.

B \_\_\_\_\_ I **do give** my permission for portions of this interview to be directly quoted in publications/presentations.

\_\_\_\_\_ I **do not give** my permission for portions of this interview to be directly quoted in publications/presentations.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Person Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix C

### Interview Questions: In Arabic

#### قبل:

- (1) كيف كنت تعيش في المملكة العربية السعودية؟ حدثني عن حياتك هناك.  
\* هل كنت متدينا أم عاديا؟
- (2) كيف كانت دراستك؟ أخبرني عن تجربتك مع التعليم في المملكة العربية السعودية  
\* كيف كان اسلوب التدريس؟
- (3) كيف كان تعليمك للغة الانجليزية في السعودية؟ هل أحببتة؟ أخبرني عن تجربتك في تعلم الانجليزية في السعودية
- (4) ما كانت أفكارك والمعتقدات عن الناس خارج السعودية؟  
\* كيف كنت تتصور أميركا قبل أن تأتي.
- \* مالذي جعلك تتصورها بهذا الشكل ... وسائل الإعلام مثلا؟
- (5) كيف قررت القدوم إلى الولايات المتحدة للدراسة؟ ما كان هدفك؟

#### بعد (في بداية السنة):

- (6) عندما وصلت إلى المطار، ماذا كان شعورك؟ أخبرني عن رحلتك بشكل عام.  
\* كيف تعامل معك الأميركيان؟
- (7) أخبرني كيف وجدت المعهد؟
- (8) خلال الأسابيع الأولى من الدراسة، كيف تجد تجربة التعلم هنا؟  
\* هل لديك مواقف مع الأميركيان أو الأجانب؟ من ناحية الدراسة أو الثقافة.
- (9) كيف تجد الثقافة الأمريكية؟ أخبرني ماذا تحب و / أو تكره في هذه الثقافة.  
\* كيف تعلمت هذه الجوانب من ثقافتهم؟
- \* هل المدرسين حاولوا مساعدتك في فهم الثقافة الأمريكية؟ كيف؟
- (10) هل شعرت ، في حين ما، انك "من الخارج" أي غريب؟ ما الذي جعلك تشعر بهذا؟  
\* ماذا تفقد هنا؟

#### بعد مرور عام:

- (11) هل تشعر بأن ما تتمتع به من القيم والمعتقدات يتغير بسبب ثقافة جديدة؟ ولماذا؟  
\* ماذا تغير من المعتقدات الشخصية؟ والثقافية؟ والدينية؟
- (12) هل هدفك في الدراسة تغير؟  
\* كيف؟ وعلى ما هو الآن؟
- (13) ماذا عن تصوراتك عن الثقافة الأمريكية – ماذا تغير؟  
\* هل تشعر أنك فهمتها بشكل جيد الآن؟
- (14) هل لديك أصدقاء من أمريكا أو من دول أخرى غير السعودية؟  
\* أخبرني عنهم وكيف تعرفت عليهم؟
- (15) عند العودة إلى السعودية، ما يمكن أن تقوله أو تخبر أصدقائك عن تجربتك في أمريكا؟  
\* هل تشجع الآخرين على الذهاب؟
- \* ما نوع المشورة التي تعطيها زملائك المبتعثون من السعودية إلى أمريكا؟
- (16) بوجه عام ، هل تعتقد بان الطالب المبتعث تتغير نظرتة للعالم؟ ولنفسه؟ إذا كان الأمر كذلك ، كيف؟

## **Appendix D**

### **Interview Questions: in English**

#### **Before**

- 1) How did you live in Saudi Arabia? Tell me about your life back there.
  - a. Were you religious or hold certain beliefs and values?
- 2) How was your education? Tell me about your experience with the education in Saudi Arabia.
- 3) How was your English education in Saudi Arabia? Did you like it? Tell me about your experience learning English there.
  - a. How was the pedagogy?
- 4) What were your thoughts and beliefs of the “outside” world?
  - a. Tell me about your perception of America before you came. How these views came? From the media?
- 5) How did you decide to come to the United States to study? Why?

#### **After (beginning of the year)**

- 6) When you arrived at the airport, how did you feel? Tell me about your trip to State College.
  - a. How was your interaction with the American?
- 7) How did you find the IECF?
- 8) How do you find the American culture? Tell me what you like and/or dislike about it.
  - a. How did you learn about these aspects of their culture?
  - b. Did your teachers/professors help you understand the American culture? How?
- 9) During your first weeks of your study, how did you find your learning experience here?
  - a. Do you have any incidents with the Americans or the international in terms of education or culture?
- 10) Did you feel, at some point of your staying abroad, that you are an “outsider”?
  - What made you feel that way?
  - a. What do you miss here?

#### **After a year**

- 11) Did you feel that your beliefs and values are changing because of the new culture? Why do feel that way?
  - a. What changed in your personal values? Cultural? Or religious?
- 12) Did your goal in studying abroad changed?
  - a. How? And what is it now?
- 13) How about your perceptions about the American culture—what changed?
  - a. Do you feel that you understand them very well?
- 14) Do you have American or international friends?
  - a. Tell me about them and how you met them.



- 15) When you go back to Saudi Arabia, what would you say or tell your friends about your experience in the United States?
  - a. Would you encourage others to go through what you been through?
  - b. What kind of advice would you give your fellow sojourners from Saudi Arabia?
- 16) Overall, would you say that being a student here change your views of the world? Of yourself? If so, how?

## Appendix E

### Early Analysis Chart

Participants	Spirituality in KSA	KSA Engl Ed	Views of USA	Ed	USA Eng Ed	Clash of Cultures	Universality of culture	Tolerance	Multicultural	Friends	Adherence to Islam	KSA Cult	USA Cult
Abdullah		☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆		☆
Nasser	☆	☆		☆	☆	☆	☆	☆				☆	☆
Sara	☆			☆			☆	☆	☆		☆	☆	☆
Reem	☆	☆	☆	☆		☆		☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆
Khalid		☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆
	3	4	3	5	3	4	4	5	4	3	4	4	5*

#### **NOTE:**

☆ indicates the occurrence of that theme in the participant's narrative

**KSA:** Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

**USA:** United State of America

**Engl:** English

**Ed:** Education

**Cult:** culture

\* The two last themes (KSA and USA culture) are interconnected they produced the major them "appropriating the other's culture?"

For this paper, only themes that occurred among at least four participants were selected (the shaded ones).

## Appendix F


## Saudi English textbook: Page samples

Sample I: Boys' 10<sup>th</sup> grade English textbook (first semester)


**Unit 5 - Lesson 3**

**Reading**

**Saudi Currency** ②


①  coins

Before 1952 AD, there was no Saudi paper money. People used coins. The most important one was the silver Saudi Riyal, but there were also gold coins.

③  a ten-riyal pilgrims' certificate


In 1952, the government introduced the first paper money, called pilgrims' certificates. You can see an example of one on the left. At first, only pilgrims used them during Al-Hajj, but then everybody began to use them because they were easier to carry than coins. The first banknotes appeared in 1961. There is an example of one of these notes on the right.


A second set of banknotes appeared between 1967 and 1969, and the newest ones, the ones which we use today, came out in 1984.

④  one of the first banknote

There are eight notes in the new set: a one-riyal note, a five-riyal note, a ten-riyal note, a twenty-riyal note, a fifty-riyal note, a one-hundred-riyal note, a two-hundred-riyal note and a five-hundred-riyal note.

Let's look carefully at the newest Saudi one-hundred-riyal note. It is 16 centimeters long and 7.2 centimeters wide. Its main colour is red. On the front, there is a picture of King Abdullah on the right and the old part of the Prophet's Mosque at Madinah in the centre. The value (the number of riyals) appears in Arabic in two corners (top right and bottom left corner). The serial number appears, also in Arabic, in black in the top left corner, and in red in the bottom right corner. On the back, you can see the Prophet's Mosque and the value in English twice.

⑤  serial no. front

 back


**A. Now answer the following questions:**

1. What was the name of the first paper money in Saudi Arabia?
2. When did the first banknotes appear?
3. What are the colours on the Saudi 100-riyal note?
4. Why do you think everybody wanted to carry paper money and not metal money?

**B. Discuss with your teacher the latest Saudi banknotes:**

55





Sample II: 11<sup>th</sup> grade girls' English textbook (first semester)

Unit 1 - Lesson 1 


**Discussion**


**A.** Look at the telephone numbers on the right. Then answer the questions below.

## **FIRES**

EMERGENCY NUMBERS		
<b>FIRE</b>		998
<b>POLICE</b>		999
<b>AMBULANCE</b>		997
<b>TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS</b>		993

**MEDICAL**  
**DOCTOR**  
**HOSPITAL**  
**PUBLIC SERVICES**  
**ELECTRICITY**  
**WATER**  
**AIRPORT**






Civil Defence

1. Where does this page come from ?

2. What is an emergency?

3. Can you give some examples of emergencies?

4. Which vehicle on the page is a fire engine?


**B.** A boy is talking to a telephone operator. 

Try to answer the questions below as you listen to their conversation.

- What emergency service does the boy want?
- What is the boy's name?
- Where is the emergency?
- Complete this sentence from the conversation: Don't waste ...
- Who is trapped inside the building?

**C.** Finally, discuss these general questions about emergencies in English with your teacher.

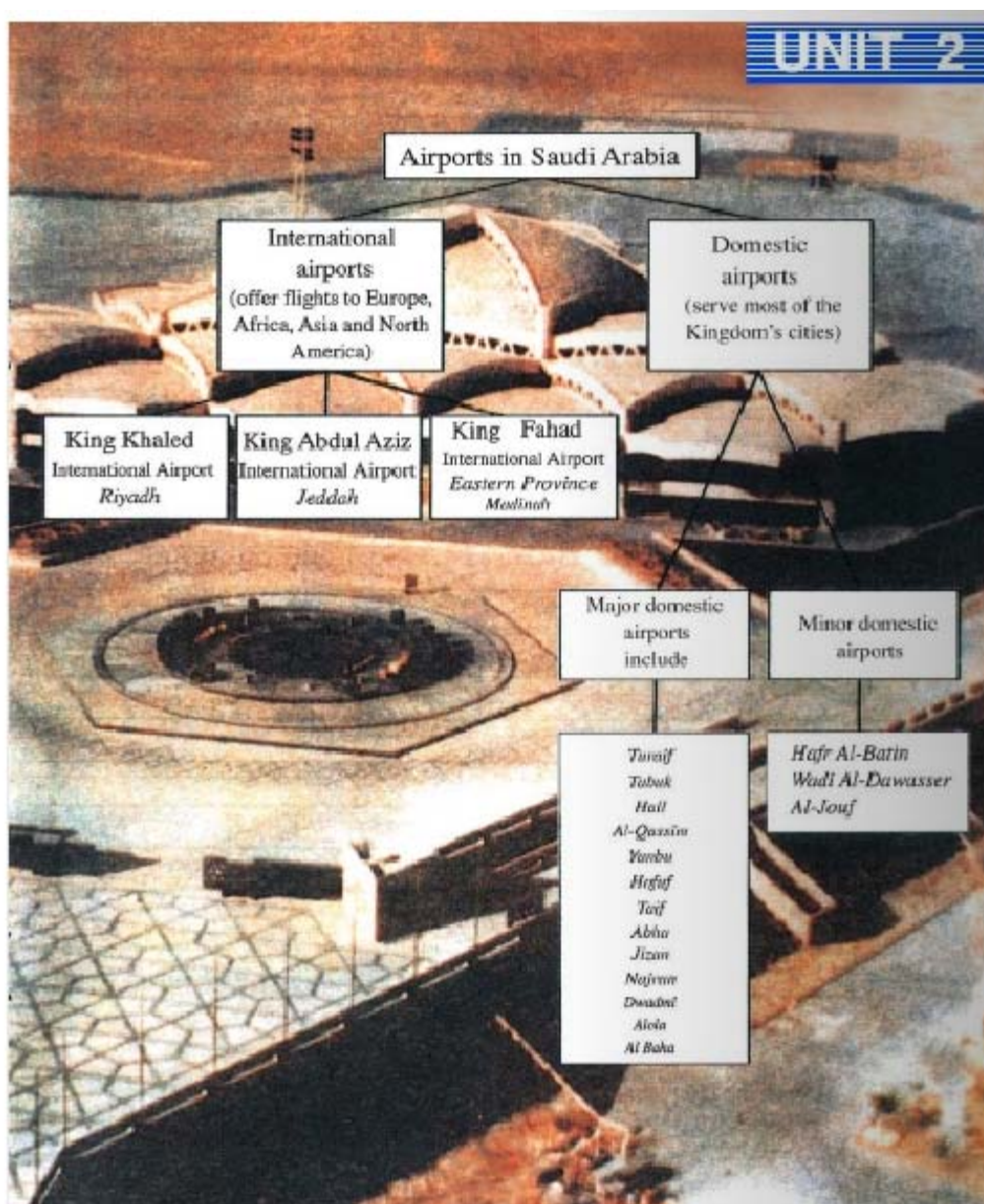
- Who deals with traffic accidents?
- Who deals with fires?
- How do fires start?
- Where is your nearest fire station?
- What do you know about firemen?



a telephone operator

1

Sample III: 12<sup>th</sup> grade boys English workbook (second semester)





Sample IV: 11<sup>th</sup> grade girls' workbook (first semester)

## Unit 5 - Lesson 2

## Reading

## Different Life Styles

Hamad is Khaled's grandfather. They love each other very much but their lives are very different. Hamad used to be a farmer but he is retired now. He has lived his whole life in the same village. As a boy, Hamad used to look after his father's sheep. The family rarely went away from home. When they did, they travelled on camels or horses. They lived in a traditional house made of mud, wood and chopped straw. They fetched water from a well, which supplied the whole village. Cooking was done on an open fire, and lighting was provided by oil lamps. Hamad never had any formal schooling. He learned to farm by observing and copying his father. When someone was sick, his mother used to make remedies from plants and trees that grew in the area. The evening entertainment was to sit and listen to stories told by the older members of the family. These had hardly changed for centuries.

Hamad's grandson, Khaled, has just bought a farm in a neighbouring district.

It was not there in Hamad's youth. The circular fields have been made out of desert through the use of modern machinery and technology. Khaled, a graduate of the local agricultural college, drives to the farm everyday in his car along forty kilometres of a brand-new, three-lane highway. The car has air-conditioning and heating, just like his modern house. This is a spacious, Spanish-style town house that Khaled has moved into with his family. The water is on tap inside the house. Electricity is used for cooking and lighting. The children go to the local government school. They all want to do different kinds of jobs when they grow up. The schooling is free, just like the medical treatment at the recently completed hospital nearby. In the evening, the family can listen to the radio or watch the latest programmes on television.

Between Hamad's and Khaled's generation there has been a big change in people's life styles.

Sample V: 12<sup>th</sup> grade girls workbook (second semester)

**Unit 13**
**Lesson 1**

**Discussion**

- Name the foods in A and B.
- Do you eat more of the foods in A or B?
- Why are the foods in B unhealthy?
- Can you name the different groups of the food pyramid?
- Study the food pyramid and find out if you are eating a healthy diet.

**Conversation**

**A. Listen and practise.**

Hussam : I'm hungry. Would you mind stopping at a supermarket?

Father : No problem.

Hussam : I'll just grab a bar of chocolate and a soda.  
Can I get you something?

Father : No, thanks. I've already had my breakfast.  
Are you going to have soda on an empty stomach? Why don't you have something healthier instead?

Hussam : Like what?

Father : A kelija. Here, try one.

Hussam : Ummm, it's really good. It's delicious.

Father : And it's good for you. It's rich in fibre.

**B. Do you eat whenever you feel like or do you follow the Prophet's advice? Why?**

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## RELATED EXPERIENCES

**Islamic School of Central PA** – State College, PA. Fall 2007 – Spring 2010  
*Arabic language teacher and website developer*

- Taught students of 5-7 years old how to write and read the Arabic alphabets
- Implemented different approaches in teaching a second language
- Reinforced and motivated students to learn a second language
- Developed behavioral strategies for classroom management
- Collaborated with the other teachers in order to teach Quranic Studies and Islamic Studies
- Created the school current website

**The Pennsylvania State University** – University Park, PA. Spring 2009  
*Intern* (English writing for academic purposes—International undergraduate students)

- Learned about and participated in the daily instructional activities
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- Developed and implemented appropriate assessment measures to evaluate student learning and achievement
- Observed a variety of ESL instructional contexts
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**American English Pronunciation** – University Park, PA

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