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Language learning as participation: case studies of Saudi Arabian international students

Olivia Michelle Groves
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Language Learning as Participation: Case Studies of Saudi Arabian International Students

Olivia Michelle Groves

**This thesis is presented as part of the requirement for the
Doctor of Philosophy
of the
University of Wollongong**

March 2015

THESIS CERTIFICATION

I, Olivia Michelle Groves, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the School of Education, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

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Olivia Michelle Groves

March 2015

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the nature of situated language learning; in particular, how learners of English participate in English speaking communities during an international study experience. It addresses a number of research questions to understand how one group of international students interacts with community members and the impact of their culture and identity on it, namely: How do Saudi Arabian international students participate in an overseas English study context? What opportunities are there for Saudi Arabian international students to interact and participate in English language communities of practice? To what extent are they taken up? What sociocultural factors influence the participation of Saudi Arabian international students?

The study was motivated by the desire to understand how learners negotiate their culture and identity to learn a second language whilst participating in a community of its speakers. Such a task is undertaken by international students studying in English speaking countries in order to improve their language skills, obtain higher degrees, and enjoy positive study experiences. Research indicates that English language development might not be occurring sufficiently for such students due to their lack of interaction with members of the local community. As such, this study is concerned with the opportunities that second language learners have to practise speaking the target language and the factors that influence their take-up.

This study investigates the participation experiences of ten Saudi Arabian international students studying at a regional university in Australia. It adopts a qualitative multiple case study design to examine the nature of students' interactions in the local community and the sociocultural influences on those interactions during a six-week period. Data comprise in-depth interviews, diary entries, and interview conversations about the diaries.

The research takes a sociocultural approach, which allows language learners to be viewed as social beings and has concern for their relationships with the social context in which their language learning takes place. The Community of Practice theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) and the Systemic Functional Linguistic concept of

Register (Halliday, 2009) are used in this study to analyse the complexities of situated language learning, particularly the specific nature of learner interactions, the broader concept of participation, and the complex influence of contextual factors on them.

The analysis reveals that Saudi Arabian international students vary in how active they are in the local community and the types of relationships that they have with locals. It is demonstrated that there are opportunities for Saudi Arabian international students to interact with members of the target language community but that take-up of those opportunities is different for each individual, often determined by factors such as culture and identity. Specifically, the practices and customs of Saudi students' home culture and their individual sense of identity impact the extent to which they participate in the host community during their sojourn. Overall, analysis establishes that students participated peripherally in the community, however this research shows that not all interactions contribute equally to language learning and that the degree of peripherality or fullness of participation determines the potential for language development.

The research has identified the nature of learner interactions in a community, a difficult area to study, and developed a set of criteria that assists in understanding those interactions that might be considered quality ones for the purpose of language learning. The thesis proposes a number of strategies that might promote those types of interactions. In addition, the research identifies aspects of Saudi culture that might conflict with Australian culture and impact participation in language learning, and suggests ways in which such students might be supported during their sojourn. The research contributes theoretically too, through application of the concept of *Register*, to exploration of the notion of participation in a community of practice, and advancing an understanding of the method of research interviews when they occur across cultures.

THESIS BY COMPILATION DECLARATION

This thesis is in the style of a Thesis by Compilation. It includes two articles researched and written during the author's candidature that have been submitted to academic journals. They are as follows:

Groves, O, Chen, H, & Verenikina, I (under review 26th February 2015)
Exploring complexity in cross-cultural research interviews, *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics*

Groves, O, Verenikina, I, & Chen, H, (accepted for publication 16th January 2015) Mapping participation in situated language learning, *Higher Education Research and Development*

I declare that I solely undertook the research for each of these papers and that the writing of them was done primarily by me. The co-authors of the papers made important contributions to them through collaborative discussions and critical reviews, however my role as lead author was substantial to their composition.

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Olivia Michelle Groves

March 2015

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Honglin Chen

March 2015

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Irina Verenikina

March 2015

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Although it is my name alone on the cover of this thesis, there are many whom I must acknowledge as contributors to this undertaking. It is only through their assistance and support that this doctoral work has been realised.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Chapter Introduction

This study is concerned with an important aspect of social, situated second language learning – students’ participation in target language communities. Fundamental to the investigation are the opportunities that second language learners have to practise speaking the target language and the factors that influence their uptake. International students studying in English speaking countries such as Australia desire to improve their English language proficiency and must do so for academic success and a positive sojourn experience. However, research indicates that this may not be occurring, due to students’ lack of interaction with members of the local community (O’Loughlin & Arkoudis, 2009). This chapter outlines the research problem and situates it in the context of research in the higher education sector. It describes the aims of the study and provides a general account of the theoretical approach. The chapter begins with an orientation to the stimulus for the study.

1.1 Background and Rationale

The inspiration for undertaking this study came in 2010 through my work as a teacher of English to speakers of other languages (TESOL). Employed to teach general English to international students at a university English language college, I heard first-hand from students the problems they encountered settling into and negotiating the practices of the local community. Having been an outsider to local communities on working sojourns to Malaysia and Nepal, I empathised with the challenges faced by the students. Equally I was interested in hearing of their individual experiences and perspectives of crossing cultures.

Additionally, at this time, a unique group of students began attending my classes, who started me thinking about the social aspects of language learning. Saudi women, who abided by the Saudi *hijab* dress code, and wore the abaya (robes), hijab (headscarf), and niqab (veil), attended my classes but interacted little with me and the other students. In contrast, the male Saudi students were vocal and interactive. I became curious about the

experiences of these students in Australia and the extent to which they interacted with people in the local community.

As I embarked on this PhD study, I discovered that international students faced considerable challenges practising their English outside the classroom and making connections with English speakers. Furthermore, I became aware that Saudi Arabian international students were increasingly studying in Western countries all over the world and would continue to do so in large numbers. Two problems became evident: the quality of the international student experience, and the experience of participation in local English speaking communities that Saudi Arabians had as they crossed cultures.

1.1.1 The quality of the international student experience

The international education sector in Australia is significant. It is Australia's third largest export behind iron ore and coal and contributes \$15.6 billion in export income to the economy annually (DFAT, 2014). In 2013 there were over half a million foreign students enrolled across higher education, VET and ELICOS institutions, schools and other educational centres (AEI, 2014a). Even though student numbers have declined in the past few years, the income generated by this industry continues to grow (AEI, 2014d). In addition to spending foreign income on tuition fees and goods and services while living and studying in Australia, international students help build closer international links and understanding, and enhance the culture and knowledge of Australian society (AEI, 2014d; Paltridge & Schapper, 2012; Yates & Wahid, 2013). Thus, the international education sector is valuable and its consumers, international students, should be kept satisfied.

International students undertake their tertiary study in Australia for a variety of reasons. In addition to obtaining a tertiary qualification, they seek opportunities to make friends and connections, and improve their English language skills through immersion in the Australian English speaking community (AEI, 2012; Benzie, 2010; Hellsten, 2002; Midgley, 2010; O'Loughlin & Arkoudis, 2009; Yates & Wahid, 2013). The majority of these students come from non-English speaking backgrounds (AEI, 2014c) and the development of English language proficiency is a stated aim of many students. Indeed, it can be more important than getting the degree itself (Yates & Wahid, 2013).

According to AUQA (2009, p. 1) English language proficiency is ‘the ability of students to use the English language to make and communicate meaning in spoken and written contexts while completing their studies’. However, students often seek higher goals such as to ‘speak like native speaker’ and ‘speak English naturally and fluently’ (Yates & Wahid, 2013, p. 1041). Thus, opportunities to practise English and achieve fluency are highly important for international students.

The development of English language skills is necessary for international students to support their disciplinary learning in higher education, and for academic success (Benzie, 2010; Kell & Vogl, 2007; Yates & Wahid, 2013). In a quantitative study by Salamonson, Everett, Koch, Andrew and Davidson (2008), the development of English language proficiency was shown to correlate with academic achievements of international students. In particular, international students have reported difficulty in understanding lecturers and classmates during lectures and tutorials (Edgeworth & Eiseman, 2007; Kell & Vogl, 2007; Suen, 1998), suggesting that the possession of a basic working knowledge of informal English is important for participation in academia.

However, there is concern over the proficiency levels of English of international students. It is argued that many international students have insufficient English language skills from the start and fail to adequately develop these during their sojourn (Benzie, 2010; Murray, 2010). Students themselves express disappointment that they have not achieved desired levels of proficiency (Midgley, 2010; Yates & Wahid, 2013). Overwhelmingly, lack of contact with members of the local English speaking community has been cited as a problem for international students (AEI, 2012; Chau, Li, & Noor, 2010; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011; Paltridge & Schapper, 2012) and is considered a factor central to students’ inadequate English language development (Benzie, 2010; Yates & Wahid, 2013).

This problem is significant for student outcomes and the international education industry. Yates and Wahid (2013) claim that not being able to develop speaking skills is a threat to the quality of international student experience. Furthermore, Wesley (2009)

warns that disappointed students might return home and convey critical attitudes about Australian society and the education system.

Responsibility for English language development has largely been seen as belonging to the students themselves (Bartlett, 2009; Dunworth, 2010; Yates & Wahid, 2013), but the significance of this issue has led to the development of a set of Good Practice Principles for the higher education sector by the Australian Government (Australian Universities Quality Agency, 2009). Two principles address the need for international students to be supported in making connections with members of the community and developing their English language skills. The principles represent a departure from what might traditionally be considered as the responsibility of universities.

Principle 8: International students are supported from the outset to adapt to their academic, sociocultural and linguistic environment (Australian Universities Quality Agency, 2009, p. 3).

Here it is acknowledged that international students face a range of challenges both on and off campus as they participate in and adapt to Australian life, the English language and their studies. It acknowledges that they need support in order to successfully overcome these challenges.

Principle 9: International students are encouraged and supported to enhance their English language development through effective social interaction on and off campus (Australian Universities Quality Agency, 2009, p. 3).

Similarly, the importance of interaction for language development, a concept that is widely supported in the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) literature (Gass & Torres, 2005), is recognised in Principle 9. Depending on which view is adopted, interaction is either input for language acquisition (Long, 1983) or part of wider participation which constitutes the learning process (Wenger, 1998) but nevertheless, imperative for language learning. Principle 9 is therefore recognising that students need to be encouraged and supported to interact effectively in order to improve their English language proficiency.

In addition, this principle acknowledges the importance of effective *off-campus* interactions in assisting language development. Compared to studying the English language that is limited to the classroom, studying in an English speaking country offers opportunities to participate in a wide range of authentic English language interactions in a community of its speakers. This practice, situated language learning, while generally not academic in nature, is important in developing English language proficiency and therefore a quality overseas educational experience.

Support services for international students that might assist them make connections in local communities, and acquire opportunities for language practice, are a concern. Bretag (2007) claims that the face-to-face support that international students receive is limited, due to reduced funding in the sector. ISANA (Ziguras & Harwood, 2010) found that international student services are in a state of fluidity in many institutions, with the search for more effective ways to deliver services ongoing and the need for support staff skills to be updated continually. The University of Newcastle's Community Connections program (Gresham & Clayton, 2011) has achieved positive results. However, adequate resourcing in terms of staffing and retention of volunteers has been central to its success and this could prove a barrier to its replication in other contexts. Sound reference materials such as the Australian Teaching and Learning Council's *Finding Common Ground ... Guide for Academics* (Arkoudis et al., 2010), ISANA's *Principles of Good Practice ...* (Ziguras & Harwood, 2010) and DEEWR's *Examples of Good Practice ...* (DEEWR, 2009) exist to support universities, academics, and communities in their efforts to enhance interaction between international students, domestic students, and the community.

Despite these understandings about good practice, the problem of international student English language proficiency persists (Yates & Wahid, 2013). As long as international students express disappointment in their language development and struggle to make connections with members of the community, the quality of the Australian international student experience may be at risk, and represents a weakness in the valuable international education sector. Thus, further research is required to better understand the

nuances of the problem and the specific factors which might influence it for certain groups of students, such as Saudi Arabian international students.

1.1.2 Saudi Arabian international students crossing cultures

In the last decade the international education sector has experienced an influx of students from new markets such as Saudi Arabia. The surge in students from Saudi Arabia is largely due to the King Abdullah Scholarship program which, since 2005, has sponsored tens of thousands of students from Saudi Arabia to study around the world (Saudi Arabia Ministry of Higher Education, 2010). Over 7000 students from Saudi Arabia studied in Australia in 2013 (AEI, 2014b), a significant rise from the 380 students in 2004 prior to the program's commencement (Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2010). The consequence of this scholarship program is that there is now a significantly large, new group of students who are in Australia, and worldwide, learning and using English as a second language.

Saudi Arabians are a unique cohort of foreign students due to their significant difference from other international students. While Saudi students share the experience of being an international student and 'foreign', they must also transition from a gender segregated environment to a mixed gender one (Alhazmi, 2010). Uniquely, Saudi Arabian students have come from a society in which women are excluded from public life, female interactions with men outside their family are not permitted, and men and women are segregated in educational settings (Hamdan, 2005). As Alhazmi (2010, p. 6) reports, the new cross cultural experience is at first 'strange', 'mysterious' and 'scary' for Saudi Arabian students. The adjustment to a mixed gender education system and society represents a unique challenge for these students, one that differentiates them from the larger body of international students.

Furthermore, Saudi Arabian international students are unique given their significant cultural difference from the host community. Traditional gender roles, restrictions on employment and education for women, and traditional Saudi dress are distinctive Saudi practices that distinguish them from Australians. Saudis have a conservative attitude towards the roles of men and women, and a Saudi woman must seek permission from her husband to perform many daily activities (Al-Khateeb, 1998; Hamdan, 2005;

Pharaon, 2004). Such subservience and restrictions on the freedoms of women are abhorrent to many in the West and potentially isolate these students from community membership. Female Saudi Arabian students are even more distinguished from the local community as a result of their traditional dress. The conservative dress of Muslim women remains a controversial topic around the world and in Australia, attracting much media attention and debate. In addition to being politically contentious, full Islamic dress is something many Australians are apprehensive of (UMR Research, 2010). Traditional dress makes Saudi women a visible minority, which also potentially separates them from local English speakers.

Despite the uniqueness of this growing student population, there is a paucity of information about this cohort and their participation in English speaking communities. To date, research has shown that Arab students give preference to Arabic cultural norms over Australian norms and tend to cluster together or bond with others from the same nationality or another close background (Shepherd, 2010). This may be a result of difficulties negotiating cultural differences and experiences of discrimination and racism (Giroir, 2014; Rich & Troudi, 2006; Shaw, 2010). In response to the sparse literature that exists with which to inform policy and practice in regards to these students' education, Shepherd has called for research to examine the Arabic international student cohort:

Practical research will help educators of Arabic students engage effectively in their studies, with the goal of meeting both Australian institutions' education goals, as well as the study expectations and needs of Arabic international students (Shepherd, 2010, p. 1).

Therefore, this study is timely in order to learn more about the experience of Saudi students crossing cultures and the quality of their language learning experience while undertaking study in an English speaking country. In doing this, the research provides insight into situated language learning – specifically the ways in which learners might interact with target language users, how the different types of interactions might contribute to language learning, and how factors such as culture and identity influence the process.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

This study examines the language learning experience of Saudi students from a sociocultural perspective of learning (Vygotsky, 1986). This perspective allows us to recognise that Saudi Arabian international students are a unique and significant group of learners and to take into account the factors unique to this cohort in an analysis of their participation in language learning. Traditional acquisition views of language learning focus on the individual mind and the mastery of knowledge (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000) without consideration of environmental factors. However, sociocultural theory places learning in the context of the learner's lived experience of participation in the world (Wenger, 1998). It sees learners as social beings and has a concern for their relationships with the social context in which their language learning takes place, and the structuring of the learning opportunities that this makes available. For language learning, the focus is shifted from language structure, to language use in context and the issues of participation, affiliation and belonging (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). The benefits of a sociocultural view of learning is that it makes visible those aspects of second language learning that the traditional acquisition theories leave hidden (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). Additionally adopting this perspective 'may lead to different ways of thinking and different activities' (Sfard, 1998, p. 5).

In applying sociocultural learning theory to the examination of the language learning of Saudi Arabian students, sociolinguistic factors are considered to be relevant and important influences on language use. Specifically, studies grounded in this perspective attend to the learning activities in the diverse environments in which learning occurs and the qualities of the physical and symbolic tools that learners use (Norton & Toohey, 2011). Given the concern for the English language proficiency of international students, research is required which comprehensively describes the environment in which Saudi Arabian students participate with the English language in non-academic settings and the qualities of the tools they use, that is, language, to do so. Such research will inform teachers and support staff in universities and language centres in order to better support and teach these students with the ultimate aim of ensuring a quality overseas study experience for them.

The theory of situated learning in communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) is complementary to this study because it sees learning as social and situated (Boylan, 2010) and occurring as a result of participation in a sociocultural environment. The Community of Practice theory has been applied to this study due to its analytical power to ‘unveil’ the complexity of contexts (Chen, 2010, p. 177). The Systemic Functional Linguistic concept of *Register* is likewise supportive of a sociocultural investigation as it allows for the close examination of the linguistic tools used by learners and the conditions that are conducive to language development.

The following three sections outline the theory of Communities of Practice (CoP) and how it will contribute to understanding the participation of Saudi international students in English speaking communities. Section 1.2.4 outlines the Systemic Functional Linguistic concept of *Register* that is used to understand the extent and quality of interactions that constitute participation.

1.2.1 Communities of Practice (CoP)

The concept of *community of practice* is a useful tool for thinking about participation within a group of people who already have the skill or knowledge being sought by a learner. Adopting this view ‘obliges us to think of learning as a process of becoming a member of a certain community’ (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000, p. 155). This process involves learning how to act according to the norms of the community as well as communicate in it (Sfard, 1998). Learning does not involve acquiring rules or codes, but ways of acting and different kinds of participation (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000).

The theory was initially developed in the context of informal learning situations such as tailors, midwives and members of Alcoholics Anonymous (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Despite Wenger’s (1998) later definition of a CoP (mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire), many authors still find a broader conception applicable to their studies of participation. In the field of second language acquisition, communities of practice have been delineated as communities of target language speakers, for example English speakers (Giroir, 2014; Nguyen & Kellogg, 2010), and speakers of other languages (Back, 2011; Nelson & Temples, 2011; Rajadurai, 2010). Other communities considered as communities of practice in this field are academia (Belcher, 1994;

Casanave, 1998), and specific academic disciplines (Vickers, 2007). In addition, regarding a target language community as a CoP is fitting because values, beliefs, cultural knowledge and shared assumptions are present in the use of English, especially in casual conversations (Eggins & Slade, 1997). Thus, the use of English is not simply a practice but a practice in context (Hoadley, 2012).

This study sees that international students seeking to develop their English while in Australia do so by participating in a community of people who speak English as part of their daily lives. To participate in the community, international students need to develop ways of knowing and saying in casual conversations (Eggins & Slade, 1997). For this research, the Community of Practice is defined as the local community, which includes residents, who engage in the practice of communicating in English as part of their daily lives (including both native and non-native English speakers). The CoP framework allows the interactions of Saudi students to be given more meaning through identifying and grouping the interactions and viewing them as participations in this community of experienced practitioners.

1.2.2 Legitimate peripheral participation

According to situated learning theory, learning occurs through participation in communities of practitioners who have the skill or knowledge being sought (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Within this theory, *participation* refers to the experience of living in the world in terms of social membership and active involvement in social activities. Two concepts – action and connection – are critical to understanding participation. This is because ‘[p]articipation refers to a process of taking part and also to the relations with others that reflect this process’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 55). Wenger (1998) did not provide further definition of these concepts and how they might be identified in the practices of learners in communities. The work in Chapter 5 provides further clarification of these elements of participation and puts forward an analytical framework with which to examine them.

In this theory, learning occurs when a person enters a community and, first *peripherally* and more fully later, takes part in particular practices of the community (Kanno, 2003). A community of practice has layers going from core membership to extreme

peripherality. The interaction of all these levels affords multiple and diverse opportunities for learning. Crucially, the periphery offers possibilities for participation to both outsiders and newcomers.

Different individuals can be peripheral members or full members depending on the degree of their participation. Peripherality is a modification that makes actual participation possible by engaging newcomers and providing a sense of how the community operates. As such, the periphery of practice is neither fully inside nor fully outside the community and ‘provides an approximation of full participation that gives exposure to actual practice’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 100).

The concept of peripheral participation allows us to view the interactions of Saudi Arabian international students not as isolated incidents, but as part of wider participation in a community. It allows for an analysis of the relationship between the individual students and others in the community and how they participate, either staying at the periphery or more fully. In this way, the nature of their participation in language learning can be understood as a social process.

1.2.3 Identities of participation

Participation in a community of practice involves being an active participant in it and constructing an identity in relation to it. Identity is seen as both a relational and a sociocultural phenomenon that emerges through interaction rather than residing within the individual (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Through the gradual, purposeful, active, and social process of learning through participation, learners undergo a process of becoming and changing (Nelson & Temples, 2011). Thus, through participation, learners develop an ‘identity of participation’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 56). This identity is defined by the way we experience ourselves through participation, the familiar and unfamiliar, where we have been and where we are going, and the reconciliation of multiple identities.

Critically, second language participation and identity development occurs within a globalised, sociocultural world (Norton & Toohey, 2011). Cosmopolitanism (Roudometof, 2012) is a theoretical gaze on social reality which accounts for the dynamic, shifting and negotiated nature of contemporary society. With this lens learners

are viewed as ‘citizens of the world’ (Cervatiuc, 2009, p. 265), and invested in global trajectories (Giroir, 2014) rather than regarded as belonging to static ethnic or cultural categories, and a broader perspective of identity formation is gained.

Significantly, identities can shape trajectories within and across communities of practice which define learning events and participation (Wenger, 1998). Wenger (1998) suggests that there is a variety of possible trajectories. Newcomers with the prospect of full participation are on *inbound* trajectories and those leaving the community are *outbound*. Those within the community can be on *insider* trajectories due to occasions for the renegotiation of identity and some have *boundary* trajectories as they span communities of practice. *Peripheral* trajectories do not target full participation but move through the community in the periphery. ‘By choice or necessity, some trajectories never lead to full participation. Yet they may well provide a kind of access to a community and its practice that becomes significant enough to contribute to one’s identity’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 154). Thus, even participation that is temporary and peripheral has implications for identity.

Saudi Arabian international students in this study move into an unfamiliar community of practice, bringing with them past identities and practices and future trajectories. In this situation students are challenged by notions about who they are, and are required to negotiate their identity in the new community of practice. This study examines the impact of identities on students’ participation in the local community; specifically how their identities of participation shape and are shaped by their situated language learning.

Sociolinguistic identity framework

Identity was considered in another area of the study as well – as part of the reflexive process, in order to improve the quality of the research. Bucholtz and Hall’s sociolinguistic identity framework (2005) was adopted in this study as part of the reflexive process which aimed to understand the impact of biases, beliefs, and personal experiences on the data collection process (Berger, 2013). The sociolinguistic identity framework (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) allows for the analysis of identity at an interactional level as it focuses on both the details of language and the workings of culture and society. The study takes advantage of the participants’ interactions with the

researcher to better understand the impact of identities on the research process. Specifically, the sociolinguistic framework (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) was used to understand the effect of the multiple identities of the female Saudi participants on the ways that they participated in the cross-cultural research interviews. Chapter 4 describes in greater depth how this framework was applied to the study.

As raised in 1.2.2 above, application of the concept of participation to a specific area of human practice requires further work. In response, this study adopts the Systemic Functional Linguistic concept of *Register* to support the investigation of participation in language learning. An outline of the concept follows.

1.2.4 Register

Within Systemic Functional Linguistics, the English language is seen as a resource for making meaning (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). This occurs during linguistic instances in the form of texts (Halliday, 2009). The language choices made reflect the social and cultural contexts in which they occur and portray three types of meaning, that of experiential, interpersonal, and textual. Specifically, linguistic choices are influenced by three variables of the *Register* – *field* (the nature of the activity), *tenor* (the role relationships), and *mode* (the symbolic organisation of text) (Halliday, 2009).

This study takes up the concept of *Register* to describe the nature of, and understand the social and cultural conditions surrounding, the English language interactions of international students through its three variables. The concept of *field* enables description of the purpose of the interaction, the language activity taking place and the subject matter (Halliday, 2009; Mohan, 1987). The *tenor* of texts deals with status relations, affective involvement, contact, and orientation to affiliation (Eggins & Slade, 1997). The *mode* of the interactions concerns the text structure and organisation of interactions, for example, telephone, SMS, email, and Skype.

The variables of *Register* connect to the concepts of *action* and *connection* that comprise participation. *Field* offers a tool with which to examine the *action* taking place within interactions. *Tenor* allows for the examination of the *connection* between participants in interactions. Close examination of these variables provides an in-depth

analysis of the notions of Wenger's action and connection to complement what the existing framework can provide. Chapter 5 further explains how this framework was utilised and presents the findings from the analysis of register.

1.3 Aim and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine how Saudi Arabian international students participate in English language communities of practice (CoP) during their overseas study experience. The study had two goals. The first was to describe the nature of Saudi students' social interactions and off-campus participation undertaken in English. Social interactions and participation in a wider community has been shown to be important for the well-being and academic success of international students. Furthermore, in this study, second language learning is seen as the process of becoming a member of a community which involves communicating and participating. Therefore, it is important for research to discover to what extent such students are participating in various English-speaking communities during their English educational experience.

The study also sought to discover the factors that influence the opportunities for language development through participation. The study uses a sociocultural lens and the Communities of Practice framework (Lave, 1996; Lave & Wenger, 1991) to examine potentially influential factors such as culture and identity. By adopting a sociocultural view and a focus on participation, new aspects of language learning are made visible, leading to different ways of thinking about these learners (Sfard, 1998) and the development of better activities for their teaching and support. The adoption of the Systemic Functional Linguistic concept of *Register* allows for greater understanding of the linguistic tools and contexts of language learning and exploration of participation as it applies to one area of practice.

This study aimed to answer the main question:

How do Saudi Arabian international students participate in an overseas English study context?

In exploring this question, the study examined the following research questions:

1. What opportunities are there for Saudi Arabian international students to interact and participate in English language communities of practice? To what extent are they taken up?
2. What sociocultural factors influence the participation of Saudi Arabian international students?

1.4 Significance

The study is significant in three ways: 1) theoretically, by developing aspects of the CoP framework, specifically, the notions of action and connection for participation, and participation across communities; 2) methodologically, in its contribution to understanding the complexity of interviewing across cultures, and use of diaries to collect data about interactions in the community; and 3) practically, in its contribution to understanding Saudi Arabian international students' language use, the context in which they are learning, and therefore the quality of their educational experience.

Firstly, the study is significant in its development of and contribution to aspects of the community of practice theory and analysis of data within its conception. Chapter 5 makes a theoretical contribution by developing Wenger's (1998) concept of participation and developing an analytical framework with which to analyse participation in practice. Specifically, Wenger's *action* and *connection* are aligned with the SFL variables of *Register* to allow for closer examination of participation in a community of practice. Lave and Wenger's (1991) Situated Learning theory has had wide appeal and been applied, expanded, critiqued and adapted across a range of situations in education and social science (Barton & Tusting, 2005). Second language learner participation in formal and informal learning communities has primarily been analysed using qualitative, ethnographic methods (B. Davies, 2005; Haneda, 2005; Iddings, 2005; Trent & Gao, 2009; Warriner, 2010), including microethnography (Young & Miller, 2004), thematic analysis (Trent & Gao, 2009), and grounded theory (Back, 2011; Morita, 2009; Nelson & Temples, 2011). Adopting the SFL concept of *Register* allows detailed analysis of the participation of members in English speaking communities of practice. The construct provides tools with which to identify and describe what constitutes quality interactions.

In addition, while communities of practice are often viewed as self-contained entities, this paper draws back the analytical lens to include participants' membership in a previous community. In doing so, it extends the Community of Practice model to account for the ways individuals' backgrounds influence participation and practice, a professed weakness of the model and literature (Hodges, 1998; Mutch, 2003).

Secondly, the study makes a methodological contribution by contributing to an understanding of the phenomenon of cross-cultural interviewing and the impact of participant identity on data collection and interpretation. The analysis and discussion in Chapter 4 demonstrates how cross-cultural interviews are potentially difficult and complex as they often occur in the absence of shared cultural experience. In this way, the study advances the use of qualitative methods in interviews across cultures.

Furthermore, this study contributes a new method by which to collect data about learners' interactions (and therefore participation) in a learning community. Much research into the international student experience has adopted methods of data collection that may not be producing detailed, accurate information (see Section 2.2.2). This study applies a new method of data collection and learner diaries, and triangulates its data with that from interview and interview conversations with participants in order to overcome this problem. In doing so, this study constructs more full and accurate information than previously obtained.

Lastly, this study contributes to improving practice by providing institutions, communities, teachers, and support staff with information about the overseas study experience of Saudi students. Specifically, it sheds light on an important area that is difficult to study – the social encounters of international students. The study does not seek to offer a corpus of data for analysis but rather traces the real encounters of participants in their language community and offers a way to understand an aspect of everyday life – casual conversation – and its significance in language learning for international students. This knowledge may be used by institutions and educators to inform teaching and support programs that will help increase the English language proficiency, well-being, and academic success of these students, therefore assisting the

provision of a quality overseas study experience. Furthermore, the study makes a valuable contribution to the debate about international students in Australia (and beyond) and the associated policies and practical initiatives. In particular, Section 7.2 of this thesis provides suggestions for improvements to the practices of higher education institutions and communities that arise from the findings of the research.

1.5 Organisation of Thesis

This is a thesis by compilation, that is, one that includes journal articles written and researched during the author's candidature. This thesis consists of a total of seven chapters, two of which are journal articles submitted to journals (Chapters 4 & 5). Chapter introductions to each of these chapters are provided to establish the relationship of them to the thesis as a whole. The articles are presented as accepted for publication or as under review (except for formatting) including their own reference list. These chapters also include an addendum, some of the findings that, due to the word limits of the journals, were not included.

The other chapters follow a conventional thesis format. A literature review (Chapter 2), situates the study within the current literature, and a methodology chapter (Chapter 3), provides a coherent account of the research process. Importantly, the thesis is unified with an Introduction and a Conclusion. The Introduction (Chapter 1) demonstrates the relationship between all aspects of the research including an introduction to the field of study, the research questions and how these are addressed through the chapters, and a general account of the theory and method. The Discussion and Conclusion (Chapter 7) draws together significant theoretical points raised within the findings chapters (Chapter 5 - Chapter 6), explains the outcomes of the study, and places them in the context of the research questions posed in the first chapter. The following paragraphs summarise the content of each chapter.

Chapter 2

This chapter provides a review of the literature relevant to this study. It draws on literature from the field of Higher Education to discuss what is known about English language proficiency and international students, and international students' experience of social interaction. It then examines the literature on the participation of second

language learners from the field of second language acquisition and the impact of identity on this. The chapter concludes by overviewing Saudi culture and identity and identifying what is known about how Saudis negotiate their culture and identity in English speaking communities.

Chapter 3

This chapter is an overview of the methodology of the study: the approach to the research, ethical considerations and the process of participant recruitment, the context of the study and its participants, and the data collection instruments and analytical tools.

Chapter 4

This chapter is a journal article, 'Exploring complexity in cross-cultural interviews,' submitted for review to *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics* on 26th February 2015. The article focuses on the methodological issues involved in interviewing across cultures. It discusses the findings from the reflexive analysis that highlights the impact of identity on data collection and interpretation. It argues that the identities participants bring to cross-cultural interviews influence the pragmatics of the interviews, the research relationships, and the data constructed within them. The article contributes to understandings about the phenomenon of cross-cultural interviewing. The addendum to this chapter presents another aspect to the complexity of the cross-cultural interviews: learner identity, positioning, and engagement with research.

Chapter 5

This chapter is a journal article, 'Mapping participation in situated language learning,' accepted for publication in *Higher Education Research and Development* on 16th January 2015. The article addresses the first research question: What opportunities do Saudi Arabian international students have to interact and participate in English language communities of practice? To what extent are they taken up? The paper offers a nuanced description of the nature of Saudis' participation and interaction in the local English community. It makes a contribution by suggesting characteristics of social interactions that might constitute quality interactions for the purpose of language learning. This chapter includes an addendum with two parts: data relating to the female participants, and the findings in relation to the mode for which there was not space in the article.

Chapter 6

This chapter presents the themes in response to the second research question: What sociocultural factors influence the participation of Saudi Arabian international students? The chapter discusses how culture and identity impact the participation of Saudis in Australia. Specifically, it shows how cultural practices and identities can continue or might shift as a result of the cross-cultural experience.

Chapter 7

The final chapter includes a discussion that draws together the findings of the study and discusses them in light of the research questions, literature, and theory. The chapter identifies the practical implications of the study, highlights the theoretical contributions of it, and suggests directions for future research. Additionally, at the end of the thesis is a complete reference list, which includes all references cited in the thesis (including those from the articles), and Appendices.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the research study. It has outlined the background to the study and rationale for it, and the theoretical framework applied to the research problem. The aims of the study and research questions posed were presented and its significance for theory, method and practice highlighted. The last section, above, explained the organisation of the thesis and briefly described the contents of each chapter.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter Introduction

This chapter begins with a discussion of what is known about second language learners' participation in target language communities of practice. As participation is comprised of discrete interactions, a discussion of the importance of social interaction for international students' second language learning and their experience of it as reported in the literature follows. The final sections discuss the literature around culture and identity that are central to understanding the nature of participation in language learning. Each section connects to the literature and understandings about the experience of Saudi Arabians in cross-cultural situations.

2.1 Participation

This section discusses the concept of participation as situated learning in which language learning is seen as a process of becoming a member of a certain community, as becoming part of a greater whole (Sfard, 1998). As put by Wenger (1998, p. 4):

Participation here refers not just to local events or engagement in certain activities with certain people, but to a more encompassing process of being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities.

The following section discusses what is known about second language learners' participation in their target language communities and the specific cohort of Saudi Arabian international students.

2.1.1 Learner participation in target language communities

Lave and Wenger originally conceived that 'the mastery of skill and knowledge requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the sociocultural practices of a community' (1991, p. 29). The theory indicates that learners do so from a peripheral

position, which locates them within the community and provides them with access to growing involvement (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Research has demonstrated that the participation of second language learners in target language communities is complex (Back, 2011). Participation can be challenging and not necessarily progressive (Nelson & Temples, 2011; Warriner, 2010; Young, 2008). Accounts which describe an unproblematic move by learners from outsider to insider status have been criticised as 'simplistic' (Warriner, 2010, p. 28). Rather, participation is situated and inseparable from the complex social, cultural, interpersonal and ideological factors of the local context (Gu, 2008).

This complexity has implications for participation and language learning. Back (2011) reported one student's success and another's failure to learn the Quichua language despite similarities in age, interest and experience and being in the same social environment. Likewise, Gu (2008) found that seemingly homogeneous learners can participate in various ways in the same community.

Variability in participation is related by some authors to issues of access and power, and the social structures of communities that allow for or constrain language learners' participation in them (Chen, 2010; Giroir, 2014; Norton Peirce, 1995; Rajadurai, 2010; Toohey, 1998). Individual factors too, are pertinent. Identities and the agency of learners influence the nature and extent of participation (Cervatiuc, 2009; O'Loughlin & Arkoudis, 2009; Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000; Trent & Gao, 2009).

Increasing attention in the literature is being given to the varied positions and types of participation experienced by language learners in communities of practice. Learners can be dismissed, neglected, excluded and marginalised at the periphery of communities (Rajadurai, 2010; Warriner, 2010). Limited, partial, provisional or non-participation can occur either as a result of marginalisation or through the challenges experienced by learners (Morita, 2009; Nelson & Temples, 2011; Trent & Gao, 2009; Warriner, 2010). In these restricted forms of participation, learners may be denied access to the community, members or aspects of practice, notionally fit in, or choose not to join (Handley, Sturdy, Fincham, & Clark, 2006). However, Giroir claims that the periphery

of communities can be more than a space of exclusion or restriction ‘but a space of dynamic possibility’ (2014, p. 53). Learners have been able to reject marginalisation (Cervatiuc, 2009) and achieve ‘fuller’ participation through identity negotiation (Giroir, 2014, p. 51).

Given the variety of interpretations of peripheral participation and its role in language learning, Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001, p. 155) have called for ‘robust and detailed case studies documenting the activities of people on the periphery of linguistic communities of practice’. This study provides an account of one group of learners in one learning context and contributes to understanding learner participation in target language communities.

2.1.2 Participation of Saudi Arabian international students

Research on Saudi international students or Arabic/Muslim students in other English speaking countries contributes to an understanding of what might be occurring for them in Australia. However, there is a paucity of information about the participatory experiences of Saudi international students in Australia.

One study stands alone in presenting Saudi students’ participatory experiences as relatively unproblematic. Shaw (2010) examined the experiences of both Saudi men and women in the U.S., and their strategies for success, and found that ‘... all participants told me that they enjoyed feelings of inclusion ... and felt that they were community members’ (Shaw, 2010, p. 213). However, more common are studies that describe Saudi students’ struggles to participate and the influence of their culture and identity on it.

A recent study by Giroir (2014) examined two male Saudi students’ participation in their host community in the United States. The author analysed the ways that the learners negotiated their positionality in the host community in order to achieve fuller participation in it. Rich and Troudi’s (2006) article similarly examined the identifications of male Saudi international students, but in the United Kingdom. The article focused on the experiences of these students in the learning community of the university, but did not look at the wider community. Nevertheless, the findings are

useful as they indicate that the marginalisation of Saudi Arab Muslim students can occur on account of culture, ethnicity and nationality.

Hall's (2013) doctoral study examined male Saudis' perceptions of study in the United States. This work contributes to understanding how the international study experience affects the personal values of Saudi men and alludes to the reconstruction of culture and identity. Similarly, a doctoral thesis by Alkharusi (2013) examined the interaction of Arabic Muslim students with New Zealanders and the ensuing reconstruction of their identities. Issues related to the tension between home and host values and the maintenance of cultural and religious identities were highlighted by this research that included participants from Saudi Arabia and other gulf countries. These studies highlight the centrality of culture and identity to Saudis' (or Arabic Muslims') participation in English speaking communities but did not discuss how they shape participation.

There is clearly a lack of information about how international students, and Saudi students in particular, participate in English language communities during a study sojourn. This study aims to fill this gap in knowledge by tracing the real encounters of language learners in their language communities and obtaining a picture of their participation in it. Doing this requires the examination of discrete encounters – social interactions, which, in combination represent a pattern of participation. The following section reviews the literature on social interaction.

2.2 Social Interaction

This section discusses the importance of social interaction for second language learners, their experience of it, and the implications for their language development.

2.2.1 Importance of social interaction for international students

The field of language learning has long recognised the importance of interaction for second language learning and it is for this reason that international students must participate in social interactions. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory views learning as first social and then individual, with second language development occurring moment by

moment in social interaction (Gibbons, 2006; Ohta, 2000). Wenger (1998) sees learning as social, situated, and occurring through social participation in the practices of a community. According to van Lier (2000, p. 253) ‘the environment is full of language that provides opportunities for learning to the active, participating learner.’ Second language acquisition (SLA) research views interaction as input for language acquisition with particular qualities of interactions significant for language acquisition (Gass & Torres, 2005; Long, 1983). Indeed, research demonstrates that study abroad can enhance every aspect of language ability (Kinging, 2011). Social interactions then are seen as a powerful tool for second language development that can be of significant assistance in second language learning.

The development of English language skills is necessary for international students to support their disciplinary learning in higher education, and to allow them to reach their full potential (Benzie, 2010; Kell & Vogl, 2007; Yates & Wahid, 2013). Although a sufficient level of English language proficiency on entry to university is important to academic progress (Oliver, Vanderford, & Grote, 2012), it is also critical that students continue to develop their language skills during their studies. Salamonson, Everett, Koch, Andrew and Davidson (2008), in their quantitative study, found that the continued development of English language proficiency correlated with academic achievements of international students. Specifically, students who used English more widely – for reading and thinking, and for speaking at home and with friends during their sojourn, performed better academically. Similarly, O’Loughlin and Arkoudis found that the degree of contact international students had with English outside the university strongly influenced their English language improvement (O’Loughlin & Arkoudis, 2009). Therefore, the use of the English language in social situations by international students during their study experience is important for their progress and achievement in higher education.

Furthermore, positive social interaction is important for international students’ wellbeing and their positive learning experience in Australia. The literature shows that interactions, connections and friendships with other students and local community are important to offset loneliness and homesickness, to promote self-esteem, and for a

productive and engaging study (Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998; Edgeworth & Eiseman, 2007; Gresham & Clayton, 2011; Kell & Vogl, 2007; Novera, 2004).

Language, and particularly casual conversation skills are essential to international students being able to connect and establish friendships:

Without the ability to participate in casual conversations, people from non-English speaking backgrounds are destined to remain excluded from social intimacy with English speakers, and will therefore be denied both the benefits (as well as the risks) of full participation in the cultural life of English speaking countries (Eggins & Slade, 1997, p. 315).

Social interactions, therefore, are vital for the inclusion and wellbeing of international students as well as their academic achievement and English language development during their study sojourn.

2.2.2 International students' experience of social interaction

Despite the imperative for social interaction, international students have been reported to often face social exclusion, isolation and loneliness (Guilfoyle & Harryba, 2011; Hellsten, 2002; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011; Paltridge & Schapper, 2012; Suen, 1998; Yates & Wahid, 2013). Research indicates that accessing Australians to interact with is a challenge for international students and that they face difficulties forming and maintaining friendships and getting to know people in depth (AEI, 2013; Barker, Child, Gallois, Jones, & Callan, 1991; Edgeworth & Eiseman, 2007; Kell & Vogl, 2007; Suen, 1998; Tran, 2009). It has been noted that 'building connections between international students and members of host communities is still not occurring naturally' (Gresham & Clayton, 2011, p. 365). Guilfoyle and Harryba (2011, p. 11) even refer to a 'hostile social environment' for international students. When facing this problem some students attempt to fit in, some isolate themselves or keep the company of others who share their culture (Barker et al., 1991; Edgeworth & Eiseman, 2007; Leder & Forgasz, 2004; Paltridge & Schapper, 2012; Shaw, 2010; Tran, 2009). Some international students reported avoiding interactions (Khawaja & Stallman, 2011) or going to familiar places and talking with familiar people in order to avoid challenging interactions (Liu, 2011).

Among these reports of lack of interaction and isolation, literature indicates some particular contexts in which international students might find success in forming relationships with locals. For example, Kell and Vogl (2007) found that international students do interact at BBQs, the pub with work friends, with health practitioners, at mothers' groups, and at work, sports, and in house-sharing situations. Other studies show that international students do develop friendships and establish peer support networks (Midgley, 2009a; Moores & Popadiuk, 2011).

Indeed, the range of authentic opportunities to interact with speakers of a target language is a reason many learners seek to undertake study in a foreign country (Benzie, 2010). However, there is still uncertainty over the extent of international students' interactions in the target language community during their studies. In response, the present study provides a detailed picture of the current participatory situation of international students in local English speaking communities.

Research has established that when interaction does occur between international students and Australians, it can sometimes be problematic. Social interactions with Australians can be superficial (Gresham & Clayton, 2011) and international students find it difficult to joke, converse on personal matters or interests, and express their true feelings (Khawaja & Stallman, 2011; Tran, 2011). In addition, communication can lack spontaneity (Tran, 2011) and be stilted due to social and cultural differences and lack of knowledge about each other's culture (Khawaja & Stallman, 2011). Similarly, some specific cultural interactional styles such as courtesy and passivity can be misinterpreted as coldness and aloofness (Khawaja & Stallman, 2011) or lack of interest and hesitation (Liu, 2011). Chau, Li and Noor (2010) argue that international students might engage passively with the local community by undertaking mundane tasks and low-level dialogue, and listening-to and observing their environment rather than actively participating in it.

Problems in interactions reported above such as superficial subject matter, low-level language-use, misunderstandings, and lack of connection might have implications for language learning. This raises important questions concerning the quality of interaction

that might have a positive impact on language learning. Currently, affordances for language learning are considered to occur through opportunities for making meaning (Gibbons, 2006). Within meaning-making opportunities, particular interactional qualities such as clarification requests, expansions, acknowledgements, and recasts, are seen as supporting language development (Ellis, 1999; Ellis & Wells, 1980). Moreover, substantive conversations, which involve extended, reciprocal talk about ideas embedded in a topic, are considered to contribute to linguistic development (Gibbons, 2006). Thus, quality interactions for the purposes of language learning might be those that are longer, about ideas on a topic, and which require a two-way making of meaning. This study sought to provide important understandings about the nature of students' actual interactions which might contribute to language learning, including the scope, content, and personal meaning, with the aim of better understanding language learning in social interaction.

Furthermore, the need for further study is warranted methodologically. Most research on the international student experience in Australia has been based on data produced by respondents reporting generally on their social interactions via interview or questionnaire (for example, AEI, 2013; Barker et al., 1991; Edgeworth & Eiseman, 2007; Guilfoyle & Harryba, 2011; Kell & Vogl, 2007; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011; Tran, 2009). However, these methods, which asked about interactions at a time after the events, may not be producing detailed, accurate and in-depth data. For example, Kell and Vogl (2007) found that when using interviews, on the surface it appeared that international students associated and socialised with students from their own backgrounds or exclusively with international students, but when questioned in greater depth to review associations and connections in their day-to-day experiences, they seemed to interact more with domestic students than they themselves recognised and recalled. This finding indicates that the interview and questionnaire methods employed previously by researchers exploring the international student experience may not be sufficiently accurate for obtaining the specific, detailed data which are required for a discussion of social participation and language learning.

2.2.3 Saudi Arabian international students' experience of social interaction

With specific regard to Saudi Arabian international students' experience of social interaction within local English speaking communities in Australia only two significant studies were identified. Of significant value is Midgley's (2010) doctoral thesis and published works (Midgley, 2009a, 2009b) which contribute to understandings of the experiences of male Saudi students in Australia. The thesis discusses participants' 'experiences of difference' in the areas of language, identity and culture through narrative focus groups and Bakhtinian analyses. Midgley concedes his study examined only one context, using one method. 'It seems to me that there is clearly space for many more studies to continue to explore these issues more fully' (Midgley, 2010, p. 183). The current study examines a different context and uses a different method to examine the Saudi experience. Importantly, Midgley (2009a) draws attention to the different approaches Saudi students might take to life in Australia – fitting in at the expense of some aspects of Saudi culture, or keeping the company of co-nationals in order to preserve Saudi culture. However, Midgley's study did not go further into analysing Saudis' participatory behaviour in the community. Furthermore, the study was limited to Saudi men and did not include the experiences of Saudi women. Thus, the current study investigates a research problem not explored by Midgley and includes participants excluded in that study.

Likewise, the findings from Alhazmi's (2010; Alhazmi & Nyland, 2013) doctoral study on the transitioning experience of Saudi students contribute to understanding the experience of Saudi students in Australia. Alhazmi and colleague's papers describe Saudi students' initial reactions to the mixed-gender environment and changes to their subsequent identities. The scope of this work is limited to participants' cultural identities as it relates to one aspect of the cross-cultural experience – a mixed-gender environment. Issues of other aspects of identity and culture have not been addressed in this study.

Fallon and Bycroft's (2009) paper focused on the support of homestay hosts of Saudi students but did not feature enough detail to contribute to understandings in this area.

In addition, other research on the broader groups of Arabs and Muslims inform this study. Shepherd's (2010) paper provides a review of the literature in regards to Arabic students in particular and work by Christine Asmar (Asmar, 1999, 2001, 2005; Asmar, Proude, & Inge, 2004) is focused on Muslim students (both local and international). These Australian studies highlight the differences between Arabic and/or Muslim students and members of the local population and the need for specific research and strategies to support them.

Further robust research urgently needs to be undertaken in order to develop a clearer, informative picture of how Arabic international students engage with the broader Australian community while studying in Australia (Shepherd, 2010, p. 1).

Given the sparse literature about the Saudi international student experience, research is required to further our understanding of their engagement with their communities. This study aims to fill this gap by providing a detailed picture of the participatory situation of one group of students and an understanding of the factors that influence it with the aim that it will help institutions support these students in their studies and adjustment to life in Australia.

As shown above, previous studies on Saudi/Arabic/Muslim students in English language communities have identified culture and identity as being central to how they participate. The remaining sections address these concepts and provide a review of the literature relevant to them.

2.3 Culture

This section discusses the literature describing how culture might impact the participation of learners in their target language communities. It then provides an overview of some aspects of Saudi culture significant to how they participate in their home society and discusses what is known about how they negotiate their culture during cross-cultural experiences, specifically those in English speaking countries.

2.3.1 Culture and participation in target language communities

Culture can be a relevant and influential factor on the participation of language learners in target language communities. Culture binds people together and shapes how they perceive and define themselves in comparison to other cultural groups or members of other groups (Shah, 2004). A cultural identity is comprised of one's cultural practices, values and identifications (Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010). Duff (2007) found that aspects of Korean culture impacted how Korean international students participated in local English speaking communities in Canada. Specifically, the pressures of in-group Korean-conformity and affiliation sometimes forced students to be less active in Anglo-community life. Younger Koreans were required to show respect to their elders by speaking Korean to them and serving them in some ways. This discouraged involvement in English-speaking activities and communities. Thus, social structures and customs from learners' home culture can influence how they act in the host country. In formal educational settings too, differences between the values, attitudes and norms, that is, culture that language learners bring to the learning community can influence how they participate in their learning (Morita, 2009; Pon, Goldstein, & Schechter, 2003).

Apart from these findings, there is a paucity of discussion on the impact of culture on participation and without it, the nature of participation and language learning cannot be completely understood. Mutch (2003), from the field of organisational management, advocates for a need to explore the social and educational origins of individuals entering a community in order to examine their effect on practice. In the case of second language learners, cultural origins are similarly relevant and potentially highly influential on individuals' participation in the community. Furthermore, the examination of cultural origins is particularly salient when the individuals entering the community of practice come from a significantly different cultural background, such as Saudi Arabian students entering Australian communities.

2.3.2 Saudi culture

Saudi Arabian students can be differentiated from other international students due to their cultural background. Saudi culture is a complex mix of social and religious values

that developed from Islamic doctrine and Bedouin tribal traditions (Al Lily, 2011; Pharaon, 2004). Although the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is an Islamic state and governed by *Shariah* law, a variety of non-Islamic influences are evident in its laws, particularly as they relate to the role of women (Pharaon, 2004). In addition, certain pre-Islamic customs have reappeared and gained a foothold (Hamdan, 2005).

The values and attitudes of Saudi culture shape how men and women participate in Saudi society. Family is important in Saudi culture and the division between the genders is seen as a natural one (Al-Khateeb, 1998; Hamdan, 2005). The role of a woman is to be a good wife and mother and to provide love and warmth for the family (Alhazmi, 2010; Pharaon, 2004). Conversely, a man is expected to be the head of the family and financially provide for them (Al-Khateeb, 1998; Mobaraki & Soderfeldt, 2010). Through these values, women are ascribed participation in the private world and men involvement in the public sphere.

Family honour, an important concept in Saudi culture, also influences how men and women participate in Saudi society. The male of a Saudi family is responsible for the behaviour of its family members and is responsible for safeguarding the family's honour (Le Renard, 2013). 'If a family loses its honour, it loses everything' (Al Lily, 2011, p. 120). Family honour and good reputation rest mainly on the public behaviour of women, and any impropriety committed by a woman has consequences for the whole family (Al Lily, 2011; Pharaon, 2004). Al Lily (2011) claims that anxiety about family honour has brought about a division of the sexes, a practice central to Saudi society.

Gender segregation is a Saudi practice in which men and women participate in separate spheres and essentially live lives separate from each other (Al-Khateeb, 1998). Saudi Arabia has separate schools, universities, hospitals, restaurants, and malls for men and women, and there are other women-only spaces (Alhazmi, 2010; Le Renard, 2013). There are also separate entrances for women and men into homes and businesses, and workplaces with separate quarters or entire buildings for each gender (Riedy, 2013). Men and women often have their own separate rooms in the house and separate gatherings for men and women to the extent that Saudi families now spend less time together (Al-Khateeb, 1998). Alhazmi (2010) reports that gender segregation is not only

a governmental regulation, but the will of Allah. Saudis believe that ‘separating the sexes is a protection and screen that prevents people from falling into “vice” or “sin” given that females are weak and cannot protect themselves from males who are not confident enough to control their sexual desires’ (Alhazmi, 2010, p. 9). As a result, women are protected from the outdoor world by high concrete walls around their homes and schools, and are not allowed to walk in public – chauffeured cars are used to transport women, even for short distances (Hamdan, 2005; Mobaraki & Soderfeldt, 2010). Thus, gender segregation prescribes the patterns of participation for Saudis in their home country and is potentially influential on their participation outside their country too.

Veiling is another practice which influences how female Saudis interact with men and other women when in public and dictates how they participate in society. Females are prohibited from mixing with men with the exception of the maharim, that is, those men to whom she cannot be married (Al Lily, 2011). When a Saudi woman meets a non-mahram, she must be veiled, and for as long as any non-mahram is in attendance; veiling is practised, whether inside or outside the house (Al Lily, 2011). Veiling requires that Saudi women wear abaya (robes), hijab (headscarf) and niqab (face veil) when in the presence of male non-relatives. Additionally, if a Saudi woman has a need to communicate with a man, she is expected to keep this communication to a minimum, to address him without looking at him and to lower her voice (Al Lily, 2011). Veiling and instructions on communication with men strongly shape Saudi men and women’s patterns of participation in their home culture.

Furthermore, the nature of Saudi citizens’ participation in their society is determined by strict laws which restrict the freedoms of women and designate men as their guardians. Saudi men control their wives’ abilities to work, travel and obtain government services and a Saudi woman is required to gain permission from her male guardian to perform many daily activities (Al-Khateeb, 1998; Hamdan, 2005; Mobaraki & Soderfeldt, 2010; Pharaon, 2004). Women’s access to employment and education are limited and at the discretion of their male guardians, and they are forbidden to drive (Pharaon, 2004). These practices are central to understanding the participation experience of Saudi

international students in their home country, and how this experience might shape their participation when in Australia.

In summary, gender roles and segregation, male guardianship, veiling, and restrictions on women's employment and education represent sociocultural practices that dictate the patterns of participation of Saudi citizens in their home country. Although no longer bound by the laws of their country, Saudi students in Australia still have with them their culture and a lifetime of participating in their society in a certain way. The extent to which their culture and first language participation influences their participation in a second language community is of interest to this study. The following section examines what is known about how Saudi students negotiate aspects of their culture in new communities.

2.3.3 Negotiating Saudi culture in English speaking communities

Saudi Arabian international students bring with them aspects of their culture to their overseas study experience. The daily lives of Arabic Muslim students in New Zealand were guided by their religious and cultural values (Alkharusi, 2013). Researchers, (e.g. Midgley, 2010; Shaw, 2010), have identified the areas of difference between Saudi and western cultures. These cultural differences range from pragmatic ones, for example, the unavailability of halal food, shop trading hours, road rules, and festival celebration, to significant struggles such as racist attitudes, language difficulties, and norms related to male hand-holding and cheek-kissing. This section examines what is known specifically about how aspects of Saudi culture influence international students' interactions in English speaking communities.

Coming from a gender-segregated society, Saudi students have no experience of mixing and interacting with members of the opposite sex outside their families. They therefore face challenges in transitioning to a mixed-gender society. Alhazmi (2010, p. 5) reports that this new cross-cultural experience is at first 'strange', 'mysterious' and 'scary' for Saudi Arabian students and this influences how they initially participate. For Saudi men, studying in Australia means learning how to interact with females, who have been portrayed as sexually provocative objects (Alhazmi & Nyland, 2013). For Saudi women, living in Australia means learning how to interact with men who, they have

been led to believe, are a threat from whom they have been shielded for the whole of their lives (Alhazmi, 2010). Hall (2013) found that Saudi men in the United States interacted with Saudi women in ways they would not have done in Saudi Arabia though Alkharusi (2013, p. 181) concluded that over time, Saudi students in New Zealand ‘had no difficulty with mixing.’ However, Hall (2013) found that Saudi men still spent most of their time with other Saudi men. Therefore, the extent to which Saudi students cross gender boundaries and interact with the opposite sex remains unclear.

The traditional roles of men and women in Saudi society potentially have implications for how they participate in Australia as well. Midgley (2009b) showed how Saudi men’s strong commitment to family responsibilities influenced their behaviour in university classes. Specifically, if a man’s wife needed him, he would skip class, leave class early, or interrupt class to take a phone call from her. Other than this, no other research describes how gender roles and responsibilities influence Saudi students’ off-campus participation in language learning.

The conservative dress of Muslim women remains a controversial topic around the world and in Australia, attracting much media attention and debate. Additionally, Islamic dress is something many Australians are apprehensive of (UMR Research, 2010) and Muslim students face negative attitudes and discrimination on a daily basis (Asmar, 2007). Midgley (2010, p. 102) reported an instance of racism towards a veiled Saudi woman and her husband with ‘Terrorist! Where’s the bomb?’ being yelled at them by a passing stranger in the street. Hijab-wearers reported ‘uncomfortable’ experiences and being ‘targeted’ off-campus (Asmar, 2005; Asmar et al., 2004). Veiled Muslim students in the US preferred relationships with other Muslims due to the feeling of comfort and understanding they were able to receive (Seggie & Sanford, 2010). The students in New Zealand restyled their dress due to the interactional challenges that it created for them (Alkharusi, 2013). Thus, wearing a veil, or even a headscarf, and being visually identifiable as Muslim, has implications for how Saudi students interact in the community.

Lastly, Saudi students in Australia encounter new opportunities for participation that they must negotiate. Saudi women largely have not participated in employment, sport or

even women's groups and associations that are prohibited by law (Pharaon, 2004). They have not experienced freedom to move around the community, by foot, by bike or by driving themselves. Nor have they experienced being in public without a male escort. These aspects of participation are available to Saudi women in Australia and they might choose to take them up or not. However, the literature is silent on this matter. The extent to which Saudi students take up new opportunities for participation while in Australia is another area in need of understanding.

The overall impact of culture on Saudi students' participation in situated language learning is uncertain. It does appear that Saudi international students interpret aspects of their culture and individual histories (Giroir, 2014) and negotiate discrimination and racism (Rich & Troudi, 2006; Shaw, 2010) as they navigate their participation. However, there is a paucity of information about this cohort and their participation in English speaking communities. Shepherd (2010, p. 4) has called for cross-cultural research to 'identify those aspects which may come into conflict with Australian culture by examining issues to do with gender issues, social roles and cultural traditions.' This study contributes to filling this gap by examining how the culture of Saudi students influences their participation in their local English speaking communities.

The following section overviews the literature in relation to the second theme of this thesis – identity.

2.4 Identity

This section reviews the literature in relation to the impact of identity on the participation of learners in target language communities. Identity is central to the theory of situated learning as participation in a community shapes what we do as well as who we are and how we interpret what we do (Wenger, 1998). This section discusses the concepts of investment in language learning, identifications, and imagined identities, and concludes with discussion of the literature regarding the identities of Saudi Arabian international students.

2.4.1 Identity and participation in target language communities

Identity and language learning are of central concern to many scholars in the field of language education as identity theorists highlight the diverse positions from which language learners are able to participate in social life (Norton & Toohey, 2011). As participation is not just about taking part in new cultural settings but about a profound struggle by learners to reconstruct a self (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000), understanding identity is crucial to understanding language learners' participation in communities of practice.

The current sociocultural theory defines the concept of identity as: complex, contradictory and multifaceted; dynamic and changing across time and place; negotiated, constructed and conflicted; and susceptible to relations of power (Block, 2006, 2007; Miller, 2000; Norton, 2006; Ramanathan & Pennycook, 2008; Ricento, 2005). The field of language learning and identity goes beyond the views of second language learning as a system to be internalised, and is recognised as a process occurring in a complex context of boundary crossing, multilingualism, and human agency (Block, 2007; Norton & Toohey, 2011).

Previous research has argued for the centrality of identity in shaping the nature of learners' participation. Learners experience identity conflicts as they move between communities, and this creates tensions and challenges for participation (Morita, 2009; Nelson & Temples, 2011). Specifically, differences in language, culture, gender, previous experience and knowledge, and expectations can create tensions for learners and require adjustments to their identities before fuller participation can be achieved (Alhazmi & Nyland, 2013; Block, 2007; Morita, 2009; Nelson & Temples, 2011; Norton, 2000; Trent & Gao, 2009). However, it is possible for learners to blend identities into one another across contexts, develop new roles, and successfully engage in learning (Chen, 2010; Morita, 2009).

Adding to the complexity of identity negotiation across communities is that the community may position newcomers in certain ways, which may be desirable or undesirable to learners (Chen, 2010; Trent & Gao, 2009). Learners may choose to conform to or contest this positioning (Chen, 2010; Trent & Gao, 2009). They may

successfully foreground certain identities to position themselves in particular ways, claim the right to speak, and achieve fuller participation (Giroir, 2014; Norton Peirce, 1995; Rajadurai, 2010). However, the resisting of positioning might have a negative impact on participation. Learners in Trent and Gao's (2009) study resisted and rejected the identities offered to them and enacted their preferred identity positions by adopting a strategy of non-participation in the community. Thus, negotiating imposed identities created tensions for learners and influenced the nature of their participation in the community.

Successful identity negotiation depends on the power relations and social structures within the community (Block, 2006, 2007; Chen, 2010). Communities might not legitimise the efforts of learners to participate, particularly when those learners belong to a language minority group (Back, 2011; Kanno, 1999). '[L]earners are often blocked from the very resource that is vital to their acquisition of the L2: opportunities to interact with native speakers' (Kanno, 1999, p. 129). Learners can be marginalised by the communities they are seeking to enter and denied participation based on identity categories such as race, gender, and religious beliefs.

In these ways, membership in communities and identities are co-constructed by learners and community members, which has implications for participation and ultimately learning (Back, 2011; Gu, 2008; Morita, 2009). The following section examines the concept of investment that is central to understanding the participatory behaviour of learners in communities.

2.4.2 Identity, investment and second language acquisition

The concept of investment makes a connection between learners' desire and commitment to learn a language as a result of their identity and the language practices of the community (Norton & Toohey, 2011).

[L]earners 'invest' in the target language at particular times and in particular settings, because they believe they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will, in turn, increase the value of their cultural capital. As the value of learners' cultural capital increases, so learners reassess

their sense of themselves and their desires for the future (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 420).

Identity and investment relate language learners to the target language and can explain their sometimes ambivalent desire to learn and practise it (Norton & Toohey, 2011). Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) suggest that learners might decide to learn their second language 'to a certain extent', so that they might maintain their old ways of being in the world rather than adopting new ones. This idea is supported by the work of Midgley (2009a) who found that a Saudi international student was content to acquire proficiency in English to a certain extent if it meant he could maintain his Saudi culture. Alternatively, learners might invest in an identity that promotes their participation in specific English-related activities that lead to learning (Gu, 2008; Kanno & Norton, 2003).

The following section discusses the concept of identification that is important for understanding language learners' investment and participation in language learning.

2.4.3 Identifications

From a cognitive psychology point of view, learners' connection with the language community has been explained using Gardner's (1985) concept of integrative motivation. According to Gardner and Masgoret (2003) integrativeness is 'an openness to identify with, at least in part, another language community' (p. 126) and contributes to motivation to learn the language. However, this concept is limited because it only accounts for learners' attitudes towards the target language group, that is, their identification with the target group. Wenger's (1998) concept of identification, however, includes identifying with and, in addition, considers the process of identifying as and being identified as something or someone. Extended in this way, identification has the potential not only to be an element of a students' motivation to participate but also to describe the interplay between identity and participation and its effect on investment in language learning.

Identification refers to the bonds and distinctions which constitute our identities and is investment by learners in relations of association and differentiation (Wenger, 1998). It

is identity that is ‘established across differences’ where a ‘knowledge of self emerges in relation to others’ (Miller, 2000, p. 72).

Research in the field of acculturation is informative for this study as it has focused on individuals’ identification with both home and host cultures (Kashima & Pillai, 2011). Polat and Mahalingappa (2010) suggest that second language learners’ attainment may depend upon the strength of their identification with the home community versus integration and acculturation in the host community.

Identification with the second language culture can result in greater access to the community, more successful language acquisition (Back, 2011), and better sociocultural adaptation to the situation (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999). On the other hand, dis-identification with the community can lead to separation or non-participation (Hodges, 1998; Tran, 2009). Tran (2009) found that the ethnic identity of Vietnamese students in Australia prevented them from identifying with the host community and led to their separation from it.

It was demonstrated that identification with the host culture does not affect the identification with home culture. In a study by Cemalcilar and Falbo (2008), international students from 26 countries significantly increased their identification with the host culture after three months of study in the US. At the same time, their identification with their home culture remained consistent. Thus identifications with home and host cultures are independent. Indeed, identification with both home and host cultures at the same time is possible, even desirable. Those individuals who are engaged with (and therefore identify with) both home and host cultures are better adapted than those who acculturate by identifying with only one or the other (Sam & Berry, 2010; Zheng, Sang, & Wang, 2004).

Despite these understandings, research in the field of second language acquisition has moved beyond examination of home and host culture identification to consider learners’ identification with communities of the imagination and their imagined identities. These concepts are examined next.

2.4.4 Imagined identities

Identity refers to the relationship of individuals to various social and cultural groups which can extend past previous and current relationships and positions to include those of the imagination (Norton, 2006). According to Wenger (1998, p. 173), imagination involves ‘creating images of the world and seeing connections through time and space by extrapolating from our own experience.’ For many learners, the target language community is a community of the imagination, a desired community that offers possibilities for an enhanced range of identity options in the future (Norton & Toohey, 2011). An imagined community assumes an imagined identity, and a learner’s investment in the target language can be understood within this context (Norton & Toohey, 2011). Indeed, for some learners, their investment in the target language is ‘best understood in the context of future affiliations and identifications, rather than prevailing sets of relationships’ (Kanno & Norton, 2003, p. 244).

When considering imagined identities, there is a focus on the future when learners imagine who they might be and who their communities might be when they learn a language. The imagined communities of language learners can positively influence their investment in language learning and participation in learning activities (Gu, 2008; Kanno & Norton, 2003). However, negative self-perception with regard to an imagined community may lead to non-participation (Pavlenko, 2003).

Recently, the concept of cosmopolitan identities has been suggested as accounting for learners living in globalised sociocultural worlds and the global structures that impinge on the identity of language learners and their learning (Cervatiuc, 2009; Norton & Toohey, 2011). Giroir (2014) found that a Saudi international student’s prior experiences and investments in both local and global spaces – cosmopolitanism – was a factor in his openness towards social participation in the U.S. and success in achieving it. Identification with an imagined cosmopolitan community can result in the merging of home and host cultures into a ‘hybrid, hyphenated identity’ (Cervatiuc, 2009, p. 265). Alternatively, identification with a broader cosmopolitan community of English speakers might not require a compromise to cultural, linguistic or religious identities at all (Norton & Kamal, 2003).

Imagined identity is an interesting notion for English language learners such as Saudi nationals who have cultural, religious, and linguistic identities at odds from English language host communities and who might struggle to negotiate them. The nature of this Saudi identity is discussed next.

2.4.5 Saudi identity

Cultural identity refers to the relationship between an individual and members of a particular ethnic group who share a common culture, history, language and world views (Norton, 2006). The Saudi identity is partly derived from the cultural norms and practices of their society. Alhazmi and Nyland (2013) indicate that gender segregation is a cultural norm that is a significant factor in forming Saudi cultural identity. As discussed in Section 2.3.3 above, Saudi men and women operate in different spheres and essentially live lives separate from each other. This practice is entwined with traditional gender roles in which women are responsible for the home and family, and men, the public sphere of business and politics. In addition, the practice of male guardianship and the restrictions that are placed on women contribute to how women see themselves (Hamdan, 2007).

Furthermore, the practice of veiling is strongly linked to the identities of Saudi women. There are debates, however, as to whether the veil is a religious symbol or simply a cultural one (Galadari, 2012). Chelebi (2008) claims that Islam did not introduce the veil. Pharaon (2004) argues that the hijab became popular at the end of the twentieth century in Muslim communities to protect women from change and the influence of the West. Regardless of its origin, it is agreed to be symbolic of an expression of society and for many it is a symbol of identity or culture (Galadari, 2012). In Saudi society, it is seen as ‘an indisputable religious obligation and as a symbol of the depth of religious conviction’ (Pharaon, 2004, p. 360). In practice, a veil identifies Saudi women as Muslim and creates solidarity with other Muslim women (Le Renard, 2013; Pharaon, 2004) and is thus influential on her identity.

Saudi culture and therefore the Saudi identity derived from it is not static, however. Saudi society has undergone massive changes since the discovery of oil (Al Lily, 2011). A sudden increase in wealth brought about a more comfortable way of life, more

equitable marriages, and materialism in Saudi culture (Al Lily, 2011). These have implications for the identities of Saudi men and women in relation to each other and the outside world. Moreover, young, urban Saudi women are transgressing rules relating to dress and public conduct resulting in new norms and collective identifications (Le Renard, 2013). In these ways, Saudi culture is evolving and the Saudi identity with it.

In addition, the identity of Saudi Arabian citizens is grounded in their Islamic faith. Islam provides guidance to its followers for all aspects of life including educational, economic, political, social and philosophical spheres (Chelebi, 2008). Indeed, Saudi customs and cultural practices are influenced by the Islamic faith such that culture and religion are virtually inseparable (Al Lily, 2011; Alkharusi, 2013; Hamdan, 2005; Pharaon, 2004).

To understand the Saudi identity requires understanding the Islamic faith, its foundations and guidance provided to its followers (Alkharusi, 2013).

Islam means finding peace and salvation through submission to God's will. A Muslim is one who freely, without any compulsion, submits their will to the will of God and follows God's guidance (Chelebi, 2008, p. 1).

Muslims are guided by the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* (Alkharusi, 2013; Chelebi, 2008). The *Qur'an* was revealed by Allah and is accepted as the highest and final authority on Islam, its teaching, and stances on various issues (Alkharusi, 2013). The *Sunnah* are the recorded teachings and actions of Prophet Mohammad (Chelebi, 2008). These sources together contain the principles, doctrines, and directions for every sphere of human activity and provide guidance on how Muslims are to act (Alkharusi, 2013). Importantly, Muslims are required to perform five basic obligations, called the five pillars of Islam which include the declaration of faith, five daily prayers, fasting in Ramadan, almsgiving, and the pilgrimage (Chelebi, 2008). The Islamic identity is firmly grounded in these fixed beliefs, teachings, and obligations.

However, the Islamic identity has the ability to evolve through the application of secondary sources and individual interpretations to the complexities of life (Alkharusi,

2013). Worship in Islam occurs directly between the individual and God and there is no official leader of all Muslims (Chelebi, 2008). However, there are guides and sources to provide direction. *Imams* lead ritual prayers and provide social, religious, and welfare guidance and *muftis* are jurists who interpret Islamic (*Shariah*) law (Chelebi, 2008). *Ijmaa* (analogical deductions) and *Qiyaas* (reasoned answers on a given issue) are interpretations by Islamic scholars on issues arising from modern life, however, there is no single person or authority whose interpretation is accepted as the only valid one (Alkharusi, 2013). Indeed, Muslims may seek the opinions of a number of *muftis* on an issue (Chelebi, 2008). Thus, Islam and the Islamic identity can be dynamic and changing in response to the individuals involved and the unique context.

In summary, the identities of Saudi Arabians encompass both culture and faith based practices, values, and attitudes. Specifically, the practices of gender segregation and veiling, and the restrictions on women, are significant in how Saudis see themselves. An Islamic identity is also a significant factor that guides Muslims in their daily lives. However, neither Saudi culture nor Islamic faith stands still and so the Saudi identity is dynamic and evolving in response to Saudis' interactions with the world.

2.4.6 Identity and Saudi Arabian international students crossing cultures

Studies from Australia and other English speaking countries suggest how the participation in language learning of Saudi Arabian international students might be influenced by their identities, cultural and other. In the US and the UK, Saudi international students foregrounded identities as international students/ foreigners/ newcomers/ outsiders to the larger host community to account for their initial difficulties negotiating community practices (Giroir, 2014; Rich & Troudi, 2006). Being able to appropriate these identities and shape their own trajectories represented fuller participation for these students (Giroir, 2014). Arab Muslims in New Zealand varied in their identification and dis-identification with their cultural and religious identities and these shifted over time (Alkharusi, 2013). Upon arrival, participants in Alkharusi's (2013) study showed strong identification with their cultural and religious values which influenced how they participated in the learning community. Specifically, they experienced homesickness and culture shock that led to separation and less interaction. However, over time their participation changed as they were influenced by the

university's norms and values. Thus identity shaped participation and was shaped by participation.

Furthermore, the experiences of Saudi Arabian international students on study sojourns shape their cultural identities (Alhazmi & Nyland, 2013).

[T]he transitioning experience has been transformative and potentially affected their own view of how they perceived themselves in relation to Saudi culture and Saudi society (Alhazmi & Nyland, 2013, p. 354).

In a UK study, Saudi students' identities constructed through ongoing discursive practices within the community led some participants to shift to a marginalised and inferior position (Rich & Troudi, 2006). However, in another study, (Alhazmi & Nyland, 2013), transformed identities left participants empowered with confidence and independence, a changed attitude to the role of parenting girls, and a more inclusive approach to citizenship and rights.

Identity conflict and negotiation have the potential to profoundly impact the participatory experience of Saudis in English language communities. This study examines how the identities of Saudi international students influence their participation in local communities and thus, their learning of another language.

Chapter Summary

This review of the literature has demonstrated the importance of social interaction for international students' language learning, academic success, and wellbeing and that their experience of it might be absent, challenging, and of low quality. However, there is a dearth of information about the ways that Saudi Arabian international students, a new cohort seeking to learn English through study abroad, experience social interaction when in Australia. The literature indicates that participation is complex and situated in sociocultural contexts with issues of culture and identity influential and prominent. Saudi culture is unique and inconsistent with many practices in Australia and Saudi international students must negotiate extreme difference in order to interact socially and

more fully participate in the local Australian community. Furthermore, identity conflicts might result in separation from the community or the reconstruction of identity resulting in fuller participation in community practices.

In summary, how Saudi Arabian international students participate in local communities during overseas study is unclear, but essential to understanding their situated English language learning. This study aims to shed light on this problem which will allow these students to be better taught and supported in their efforts to learn English, obtain tertiary qualifications, and have a quality overseas study experience.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Chapter Introduction

This chapter describes in detail the methods employed in this study. Briefly, this study is a qualitative case study investigating the participation of Saudi Arabian international students in English language communities. Data collection involved in-depth interviews, learner diaries, and interview conversations in relation to those diaries. In addition, the researcher kept a reflexive journal. Participants were five male and five female Saudi Arabian international students studying at a regional university. Three analyses were conducted on the data: a reflexive analysis of the cross-cultural interviews, analysis of register of the learner diaries, and a thematic analysis of the interview data.

3.1 Research Aims and Questions

The study aimed to answer the question:

- How do Saudi Arabian international students participate in an overseas English study context?

In exploring this question, the study examined the following research questions:

1. What opportunities are there for Saudi Arabian international students to interact and participate in English language communities of practice? To what extent are they taken up?
2. What sociocultural factors influence the participation of Saudi Arabian international students?

3.2 The Research Approach

The literature review (Chapter 2) showed that there is a gap in knowledge about the research problem and research is required to better understand it. The research questions

posed reflect the exploration needed to investigate and understand the area of study. The approach taken to the research in this study was derived from this, the type of research necessary to investigate the problem, as well as the paradigm adopted by the researcher to inform and guide the inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

This study was conceived within a social constructionist paradigm due to the ontological, epistemological, and methodological beliefs of the researcher in relation to knowledge and its acquisition. In this view social reality is seen as being constructed by the participants in it and constructed continuously in local situations (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In response, the study adopted a qualitative approach, which allows for the study of human actions in natural settings, and attempts to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Specifically, a case study approach was selected for this research study to allow the central issues of participation and language learning to be examined and illustrated with cases. According to Merriam (1998), case studies are chosen when researchers are interested in insight, discovery and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing. This project was about insight into and discovery of the English language participation of Saudi Arabian students and an interpretation of the factors that influence it. It adopted a case study approach specifically for its facility for description and heuristic. Furthermore, Hansen and Liu (1997) believe that dynamic phenomena such as social identity, should be studied with dynamic methodologies such as case studies and interviews. These have been employed by interactional sociolinguists and second language researchers to study the complex and contradictory nature of social identity (Hansen & Liu, 1997). As a result, case studies are used in this project to illustrate the complexities of a situation – ‘the fact that not one but many factors contributed to it’ (Merriam, 1998, p. 30) and illuminate the reader’s understanding of the phenomenon under study. In this study, each case is an individual participant, a Saudi Arabian international student. According to Cresswell (2007, p. 76), ‘the more cases an individual studies, the less depth in any single case’. Reflecting this, ten cases were deemed appropriate with which to investigate this area.

3.3 Research Design

The design of this study is interrelated with the researcher's higher degree research journey. The study was initially designed to satisfy the requirements of a Master of Education qualification but with a goal of expanding it to a doctoral study after an initial period of research. The initial research phase consisted of recruiting five female Saudi Arabian international students and collecting data from them through three sources: in-depth interviews, learner diaries, and interview conversations about those diaries. In addition, the researcher kept a reflexive journal. After this data had been collected and summarised, the researcher applied to expand the project to meet the requirements of a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) study. The enlarged study sought to incorporate the experiences of male Saudi students and explore aspects of identity for participation. Involving male participants also allowed for the consideration of gender issues that might have been a factor in understanding the research problem. With the expansion of the study, the interview protocol was revised to reflect the status and scope of PhD research and male participants were interviewed with it. Second interviews with the female participants were requested in order to acquire the additional data relevant to the PhD inquiry.

After data collection, two analyses were conducted on it: analysis of register of the learner diaries, and a thematic analysis of the interviews. Data from the interview conversations supported both analyses. Reflexive analysis occurred during data collection and was intensified at its conclusion.

3.4 Participant Recruitment

Recruitment of the female participants involved writing to the UOW Saudi club (Appendix i) and speaking with members of the Saudi community. The selection criteria for the participants were: (1) female Saudi Arabian international students, (2) studying at university, or (3) studying an English language preparation course prior to commencing university study. These methods succeeded in securing the participation of five women. Due to the poor language skills of one of the female participants which constrained interview data constructed with her, male participants with high levels of English language proficiency were sought so that they would be able to provide the type

of information required during interviews. In the recruitment of male participants, the above approaches were unsuccessful. Therefore, an email (Appendix ii) was sent by the university on the researcher's behalf. This succeeded in securing the participation of six men. One of the men did not wish to continue with the study after the initial interview bringing the final number of male participants to five.

Reciprocity, by which research acknowledges the give and take of social situations, was promoted in this study (Harrison, MacGibbon, & Morton, 2001). While the researcher had the most to gain from the research, it was suggested to participants prior to commencing that participation would represent English language practice and could benefit them. People engage with research for many reasons, and by highlighting the material value of participation it was hoped to secure the involvement and engagement of participants (Clark, 2010).

The development of positive relations with the research participants was an important consideration, which began with the initial communication and flowed through all contact that the researcher had with the participants. Rapport and trust were cultivated through offering some benefit to the participants for participation (reciprocity, discussed above), the highlighting of similarities and common interests between herself and participants (discussed further in 4.5.2 and 4.5.3), and adopting a respectful, interested and relaxed manner where participants were regarded as participants and collaborators rather than research subjects (see also 3.8 below).

3.5 Participants

The participants for this study were all Saudi nationals studying at a regional Australian university in mostly postgraduate courses across a range of disciplines – commerce, education, ICT, engineering, and mathematics.

While most participants were in their thirties, three were much younger. Jahira, a 25-year-old female, was unmarried and stayed with her younger brother and mother in an apartment in the area. Medina, 25, lived with her husband who also studied at the university. Medina's 19-month-old daughter was in Saudi Arabia with relatives so that she could focus on her studies. The youngest participant was Rushdi, a 23-year-old male

who had been married for one year and lived in a homestay situation with his wife while in Australia.

The other seven participants were married with children. Like Medina, Riyadh had sent his family (four children and wife) back to Saudi Arabia so that he had time to study. At the time of data collection he lived in a private room in university student accommodation. Habibah, Aamina, Raabia, Haydar, Ahmed, and Hafiz all lived with their partners and children in rented apartments. All of the partners of these participants were also studying except for Haydar's wife who cared for their three young children full-time.

This introduction to the participants shows that while there is a level of homogeneity among this group of participants (for example, age bracket and family status), there are interesting differences between them (for example, residential situation), which might be influential on the research topic.

3.5.1 Research site

The participants of this study all attended the same regional university, which boasts 30,000 enrolments of which international student numbers make up 40% across 143 nationalities. The university is a significant part of the community due to its size and influence. All participants resided in the community adjacent to the university, a coastal city of close to 200 000 people (profile.id, 2014). The community is culturally and linguistically diverse with 27% of its residents being born outside of Australia, 20% of households speaking other languages, including Arabic, and 4000 members of the community practising Islam (profile.id, 2014).

3.6 Data Collection Methods

Data were generated from a combination of four sources: semi-structured interviews; detailed diary records of interactions generated daily by participants; and a series of interview conversations in relation to these diaries. In addition, a reflexive journal was kept by the researcher. These methods are explained in the following sections.

3.6.1 Interviews

In the interviews, participants were asked about their background, English language learning development, and attitudes towards English and Australians (Appendix iii). In addition, the male participants were interviewed using a revised interview protocol, which included more detailed questions about Australians and living in Australia (Appendix iv). They were also asked to respond to two vignettes (Appendix v).

The vignettes were composed as ‘snapshot’ scenarios as opposed to a series of unfolding situations (Jenkins, Bloor, Fischer, Berney, & Neale, 2010). Vignettes were included in the interviews to elicit participants’ attitudes towards interaction with Australians, maintenance of traditional culture, and identity. Vignettes used in social research can be used to elicit beliefs and values and are more successful at producing rich data when scenarios are plausible (Jenkins et al., 2010). The vignettes in this study were based on the experiences of two participants described in Warren Midgley’s (2009a) article on the different adjustment accounts of two male Saudi Arabian nursing students at an Australian university. The situations of these two men were chosen due to their believability (Jenkins et al., 2010). Indeed, participants commented that they knew students similar to both characters: *There are a lot of people like Latif, a lot of people like Rashad* [Raabia, Interview 2]. Thus, the vignettes used were credible and may have supported the acquisition of relevant rich data on this topic. The participants’ responses to the vignettes revealed information about their identity and are used to support the discussion in Chapter 6.

At this stage, the female participants were re-contacted and asked if they would be willing to participate in an additional interview. Two of the five women (Habibah and Raabia) accepted and were interviewed with the expanded portion of the interview protocol (Appendix vi) and the vignette response.

Issues involved in interviewing across cultures became pertinent and are examined in Chapter 4.

3.6.2 Learner diary and interview conversations

After the interview, both groups of participants were asked to keep a diary for six weeks in which they recorded every interaction, in English, undertaken when not on campus. Off campus interactions were specified because the research was interested in situated language learning in the broader community, rather than English language development in the academic sphere. A method of learner diaries was chosen to obtain detailed information about students' interactions.

In the diaries, participants were asked to document every English language interaction that they had (Appendix vii). Details of the interactions, such as where an interaction occurred, with whom, for how long, for what purpose and any other comments about the interactions were logged. Table 1, below are the prompts provided to participants under which they recorded their interactions.

Table 1: Diary entry prompts

Date & time of interaction	Who did you interact with? What is your relationship with them?	Where or how did you interact with them?	How long did the interaction last?	Why did you interact? What was the purpose?	Was the interaction planned or unplanned? Who started the interaction?	General comments. How did you feel about the interaction?
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Every two weeks, the researcher met with each of the participants to discuss their diary. These meetings were to clarify what was recorded, and to explore more deeply interesting and significant interactions. All meetings were audio-recorded and promptly transcribed. Interviews and interview conversations with each participant were held at a place chosen by them, in their homes or on campus, for example, at a café or private meeting room. (Further exploration of the implications of this decision occurs in Chapter 4).

3.6.3 Reflexive journal

A reflexive journal was used to improve the trustworthiness of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). During the data collection period, a diary was used by the researcher to record a variety of information about herself and methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This

diary was a useful tool for reflecting on the methods used in the study and the role of the researcher and contributed to the data used in Chapter 4. This chapter also provides more detail about this method of data collection.

3.7 Research Quality

In this study, practices were employed to improve the quality of the research.

Within a social constructionist paradigm, the researcher is seen as a co-constructor of knowledge rather than a neutral and objective observer (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). To minimise the subjectivities of the researcher, reflexive practices were adopted and these contributed to the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings and the rigor and quality of the study (Berger, 2013; Finlay, 2002). Further description of the reflexive practices employed in this study and the outcomes of critical reflection are presented in Chapter 4.

Furthermore, the trustworthiness of the findings has been improved through the use of multiple data sources and triangulation. Specifically, these two practices were used during the data collection and analysis phases to critically consider the claims made by the participants and the researcher's interpretation of them. Data were constructed progressively from four sources. Repeated opportunities over time to understand the research problem increased the likelihood that findings were valid. In addition, data were not composed solely from participants' memories – the learner dairies required that participants record interactions as they occurred, thereby minimising the effect of memory loss or distortion.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Before the recruitment of any participants began, ethics approval was obtained from the University of Wollongong Human Research Ethics Committee (Appendices viii, ix & x). As mentioned previously, participants who had sufficient language skills to participate in the study in English were sought. While involvement in research in participants' first language has advantages (Donohoue Clyne, 2004; Shah, 2004; Tabane & Bouwer, 2006), it also brings about significant issues for the research when

translation is required (Temple & Edwards, 2002). Translation is problematic due to the variability of language, and interpreters' own subjectivities and perspectives are influential on the construction of data (Temple & Edwards, 2002). Given that the participants in this study were using English at a high level in their studies, the study was conducted in the researcher's first language, English, in order to avoid the problems associated with translation.

Informed consent was obtained prior to data collection (Appendices xi and xiii). As suggested by Sands et al. (2007), the purpose of the study (via a Participant Information Sheet: Appendices xii and xiv) and each data collection instrument was made clear to the participants prior to the interview and they were given opportunity to ask questions about the topics to be covered and how the data would be used. The researcher drew on her professional and personal knowledge of and experiences with Saudis and Muslims throughout the research process, treating the participants with consideration, respect, and sensitivity. It is recommended that cultural sensitivity in the form of knowledge about the group, adoption of culturally appropriate communication, and a willingness to learn is important in cross-cultural research (Liamputtong, 2008). However, Davies and Bentahlia (2012) argue that for successful intercultural communication with Arabs, humility, open-mindedness, and an awareness that communication and adaptation are not one-way processes are qualities that are equally or more important than linguistic and cultural knowledge. Accordingly, an interviewing style was adopted in which the participants were seen as valuable active contributors and colleagues (Sands et al., 2007); collaborators rather than research subjects.

3.9 Data Analysis

The first phase of analysis for this study involved the researcher familiarising herself with the data. Each participant's diary, interview and conversation transcripts were read, a profile of each participant was created, and summaries of data by research question were composed. In this way, the researcher became familiar with the length and breadth of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Three types of analyses were used to study the data collected in this study: reflexive analysis, analysis of register, and thematic analysis. Detailed explanation of the

reflexive analysis and the analysis of register can be found in the relevant chapters (Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 respectively). To avoid repetition, presented here is a brief overview of their use and benefits to the study. Description of the thematic analysis is presented here in detail.

3.9.1 Reflexive analysis

Reflexivity is increasingly being recognised as critical in qualitative research as it allows for better understanding of the role of the self in the creation of knowledge and the impact of biases, beliefs, and personal experiences on research (Berger, 2013). It is commonly viewed as a *continual* process of internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation and crucial through all phases of the research process (Berger, 2013). In this study, this ongoing reflexive process was intensified after the first phase of data collection in order to capture some of the conditions and constraints under which data were produced (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). The reflexive analysis involved examining the impact of contextual influences on the data constructed with female participants during the interviews. This analysis informed the study by highlighting the impact of participant identity on interviews that occur across cultures. Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) sociolinguistic identity framework was utilised to analyse and better understand the exact influence of identities on the data collected (see Section 1.2.3 and Section 4.2). The journal article *Exploring complexity in cross-cultural research interviews* and addendum in Chapter 4 discuss the findings of the reflexive analysis.

3.9.2 Analysis of register

An analysis of register was undertaken to answer the research question: *What opportunities are there for Saudi international students to interact and participate in English language communities of practice? To what extent are they taken up?* A detailed description of the analysis of register, rationale for its use, and findings from it are included in Chapter 5. A summary is presented below.

According to Systemic Functional Linguistics, linguistic choices within linguistic instances, for example, interactions, are influenced by three variables of the *Register* – *field* (the nature of the activity), *tenor* (role relationships), and *mode* (the symbolic

organisation of text) (Halliday, 2009). Register Analysis, analysis of the linguistic situational and functional characteristics of a text, is performed on complete texts or a collection of text excerpts in order to understand a variety of text associated with a particular situation of use (Biber & Conrad, 2009). In this study, the ‘texts’ of interest were the verbal exchanges between Saudi students and their interlocutors. Register analysis of these texts would have required the recording, transcribing and analysis of every conversation had by participants – an unacceptably arduous task for the purposes of this research. Instead, Halliday (2009, p. 78) proposed

To gain some impression of “language in the life of an individual”, it is hardly necessary, or possible, to keep detailed records of who says what, to whom, when and why. But it is not too difficult to take note of information about register, with entries for field, mode and tenor in the language diary.

Therefore, inspired by Halliday, data about the interactions were recorded and an analysis of register was done on that data, rather than on transcripts. Specifically, participants were asked to keep a diary record of all interactions that they had in English beyond the university campus. The interactions recorded in the diary entries were analysed for the *field*, *tenor* and *mode* according to their components summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Analysis categories

(adapted from Eggins & Slade, 1997; Halliday, 2009; Mohan, 1987)

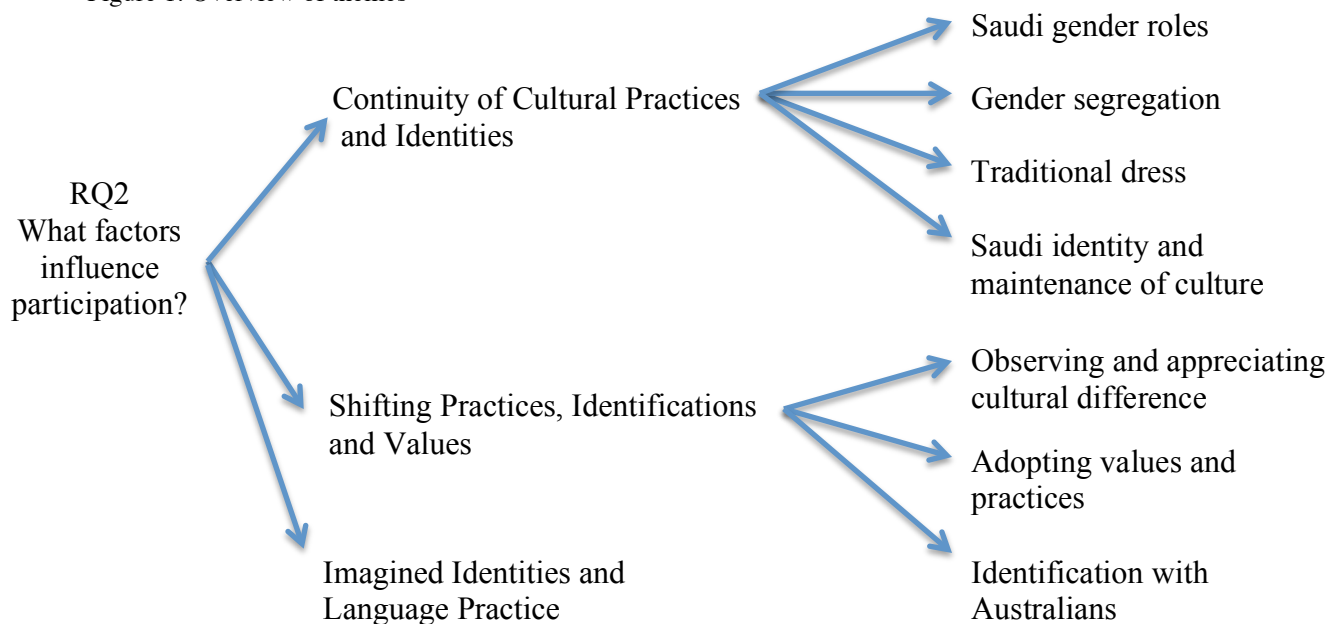
No.	FIELD	TENOR	MODE	LENGTH	COMMENTS
	Purpose: pragmatic or casual conversation	Status relations: taking on and attributing relevant social roles	Spoken or written		How was this interaction significant?
	Language activity	Affective involvement: the degree to which we ‘matter’ to those with whom we are interacting	Face-to-face, email or phone		Participation: action & connection?
	Subject matter	Contact: level of familiarity	Language of interactants		
		Orientation to affiliation: extent to which we seek to identify with the values and beliefs of those we interact with			

Thus, through an analysis of the register of the conversations recorded in the diaries, the nature of the interactions of the participants and the extent to which they participated in those interactions could be understood.

3.9.3 Thematic analysis

Lastly, a thematic analysis of the interview data, and to a lesser extent the interview conversations, was completed, the findings of which are presented in Chapter 6. A thematic analysis was chosen for its ability to develop a rich, detailed and complex account of the interview data and was used to answer the research question: *What sociocultural factors influence the participation of Saudi Arabian international students?* During the thematic analysis, the entire data set was worked-through systematically, with codes attributed to relevant parts of the data. The focus of the analysis was driven by the researcher's theoretical interest in the area. Specifically, coding was informed by accounts of language learner participation in communities of practice, and the experience of Saudis in Australia and other English-speaking countries. Through a recursive process, the codes were sorted into themes. The researcher's active role in identifying patterns/themes, selecting which are of interest, and reporting them is acknowledged (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). A map of themes and sub-themes is presented in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Overview of themes



Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter outlined how the research study was designed and undertaken. It made connections between the research questions and the qualitative case study approach adopted and provided an introduction to the individual participants. The methods of data collection: interviews, learner diaries, interview conversations, and reflexive journal, were outlined and relevant chapters referenced for further information. In addition, the chapter discussed the measures that were used to ensure the ethical integrity and quality of the research. Lastly, it described the analytical tools used to examine the data (reflexive analysis, analysis of register, and thematic analysis).

The following chapter is a journal article that examines the complexity of one data collection tool employed in this study: the research interview. It draws on the interviews with the female participants to discuss the influence of identity in cross-cultural interviews.

CHAPTER 4: EXPLORING COMPLEXITY IN CROSS-CULTURAL RESEARCH INTERVIEWS

Chapter Introduction

This chapter consists of a journal article under review with the Australian Review of Applied Linguistics.

Groves, O, Chen, H, & Verenikina, I (under review) Exploring complexity in cross-cultural research interviews, *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics*

Honglin Chen and Irina Verenikina are co-authors due to their contribution to the article through their critical reviews of the paper and involvement in conceptualising its content. The article examines issues involved in interviewing across cultures and is presented as published except for formatting which was made consistent with the rest of the thesis.

In addition to the article, this chapter contains an addendum, a section of analysis and discussion omitted from the article due to the word limit imposed by the journal. This analysis is important in understanding the full complexity of the cross-cultural interviews and the identities of participants.

Abstract

Cross-cultural interviews are potentially difficult and complex as they often occur in the absence of shared cultural experience. Issues involve practicalities and access problems, and more critically, cultural identity that might impinge on interview data and research outcomes (Shah, 2004). This paper argues that the multiple identities that participants bring to cross-cultural interviews influence the pragmatics of the interviews, research relationships and the data constructed within them. This is evident in cultures that manifest a strong sense of identity through specific cultural artefacts such as a veil. In

this paper, we draw on analysis of interviews with five Saudi Arabian women who studied in an Australian university to demonstrate how aspects of their identities influenced the location of the interviews, the positioning of the researcher, and the construction of the data. The findings contribute to understanding the phenomenon of cross-cultural interviewing and the impact of participant identities on data collection and interpretation.

Key Words: cross-cultural interviews, positioning, identity, interview location, data construction, data interpretation

4.1 Introduction

From a social constructivist point of view, research interviews are socially situated communicative events in which meaning is co-constructed by participants informed by their individual biographies and cultural norms (Block, 2000; De Fina & Perrino, 2011; J. Gubrium & Holstein, 2003; Hoskins & White, 2013; Mann, 2011; Talmy, 2011). During interviews, interviewers and interviewees bring their personal, social and cultural attributes, such as race, affiliation, traditions and beliefs to the interviewing process (Berger, 2013; Fontana & Frey, 2000). Previous research has shown that interview practicalities such as access to participants, interactional codes and patterns of behaviour, and meaning construction and interpretation, are influenced by cultural identity. However, less is known about how participants negotiate their multiple identities of culture, gender, affiliation, language and social status when significant cultural difference exists between interviewer and interviewee. What is particularly unclear is how participants foreground difference and similarity with the researcher along different dimensions of identity, not just culture, at various times during the research process.

This paper aims to examine how participants' cultural and other identities influence the construction of interview data and its interpretation. Drawing on interviews with five Saudi Arabian women, we demonstrate how through adequation and distinction, a tactic of intersubjectivity (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005), participants navigate their complex identities and shape the construction of interview data. Our analysis suggests that participants' identities influenced their choice of physical location of the interviews and

researcher positioning within the interviews. This paper contributes to understanding the complexity of cross-cultural interviews by moving beyond simplistic insider/outsider classifications to discuss the impact of relational identity processes on data construction. The following sections expand on the research in these areas.

4.1.1 Complexity of cross-cultural interviews

Cross-cultural interviews are potentially more difficult and complex than those within the same culture, as they often occur in the absence of a shared cultural experience. A shared cultural experience in interviews has many benefits as it facilitates ease and relaxed talk, reduces misunderstandings, and allows for clear communication of language and non-verbal messages and signals (Liamputtong, 2008; Sands et al., 2007; Shah, 2004; Tabane & Bouwer, 2006). A shared cultural experience, therefore, supports meaningful communication and understanding between the interviewer and interviewee and is considered critical to the construction of relevant, consistent and accurate data. However, if there is no shared cultural experience, a number of issues may arise. These include access to participants, positioning of the researcher, and meaning-making considerations such as language difference, non-verbal misinterpretations, preconceptions and stereotypes, and socio-political insensitivity, all of which have been identified as potential problems for data construction within cross-cultural interviews (Donohoue Clyne, 2004; Mercer, 2007; Shah, 2004; Tabane & Bouwer, 2006). These problems may result in data that are irrelevant, incongruent, or inaccurate (Tabane & Bouwer, 2006).

The interpretation of interview data can also be affected by the absence of a shared cultural experience. Researchers often draw on their tacit knowledge of culture as a frame of reference in making sense of the data. Where data may not fit within the researcher's known frame of reference, false assumptions, reading too much into the data, or overlooking meaningful data might occur (Shah, 2004; Tabane & Bouwer, 2006). Tabane and Bouwer (2006) argue firmly that data from cross-cultural interviews should not be interpreted without reference to the composition of the dimensions of culture of that interview. Therefore, the examination of complex and multiple cross-cultural issues and dimensions is essential for both relevant data collection and their accurate interpretation.

4.1.2 Positioning in cross-cultural interviews

The impact of culture in interviewing is widely addressed in the literature through the dichotomy of the positioning of the interviewer and interviewees as insider and/or outsider. The positioning as cultural insider is thought to have the advantage in cross-cultural research due to shared cultural experience (as discussed in the previous section) (Liamputtong, 2008; Sands et al., 2007; Shah, 2004). However, it is also argued that there are advantages to conducting research by an outsider with a distanced perspective as it creates the need for the interviewee to provide detailed explanations (Gair, 2012) and to relate the sense of self to a new context (e.g. Berger, 2013; Mercer, 2007; Tinker & Armstrong, 2008).

Yet, the insider/outsider distinction simplifies the relationship between researcher and researched in cross-cultural interviews (Sands et al., 2007). The dichotomy is not sufficient to capture the experiences of researchers who find themselves as neither total insiders nor total outsiders to their participants (Song & Parker, 1995). Indeed, the identification of the interviewer and interviewee with each other occurs along a continuum of many different characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, residence, affiliation, and tradition (Mercer, 2007; Tinker & Armstrong, 2008). Participants can move in and out of similarity and difference in relation to the researcher (Tinker & Armstrong, 2008). At times they may highlight how they are similar to each other and at other times differentiating themselves from the researcher. This paper further conceptualises the dynamic relationship between the researcher and researched as being actively negotiated by participants in reference to their multiple and shifting identities within cross-cultural interviews.

4.1.3 Identity in cross-cultural interviews

Identity is defined in this paper as ‘the social positioning of self and other’ (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 586). Shah (2004) points out that culture might make people perceive and define themselves (in spite of all other variations) as a cultural group in opposition to another cultural group or a perceived member of another group. However, obviously, identity is more than categories of one’s ethnicity, language and nationality (e.g.

Norton, 2006). Current discussion about identity recognises the complex, contradictory and multifaceted nature of identity as flexible and negotiable (Abbas, 2010; Norton, 2006; Ryan, Kofman, & Aaron, 2011; Santoro & Smyth, 2010; Tabane & Bouwer, 2006; Tinker & Armstrong, 2008). Attempting to study cultural identity in isolation from the other aspects of the person's identity would disregard its complexity. As suggested by Bucholtz and Hall (2005, p. 593), '[i]t is not a matter of choosing one dimension of identity over others, but of considering multiple facets to achieve a more complete understanding of how identity works.' Thus, a study of cultural identity needs to take into consideration other facets of participants' *identities*. This adds another dimension of complexity to cross-cultural research interviews, as interviews will inevitably involve positioning along different dimensions.

Positioning between participants and researcher is often unstable and requires revisiting as the process of disclosure and justification reveals more information about both parties (Song & Parker, 1995). During interviews participants can claim commonality along one dimension and then establish difference along another. As a result, there can be multiple positionings throughout the course of an interview (Song & Parker, 1995). Culture, ethnicity, and race have received much of the attention in studies of relations between participants and researchers, however other facets of identity have been found to be prominent and influential on the research process (Ryan et al., 2011). For example, Song and Parker (1995) found that gender and language impacted the interview process.

Therefore it is necessary to critically examine the positioning of the interviewer and the interviewees within the research process and determine its impact on data in addition to culture or ethnic identification. Particularly, 'the ways in which researchers' positionings shape their research work needs to be interrogated and to be made explicit' (Santoro & Smyth, 2010, p. 501). This paper aims to contribute to understandings about the complexity of cross-cultural interviews, specifically the effects of participant multiple identities on the research process and data.

4.2 Theoretical Framework

This study is framed by a constructionist view of interviewing, which acknowledges the co-construction of data, active role of participants, and the importance of the interview context (Fontana & Frey, 2000; J. Gubrium & Holstein, 2003; Mann, 2011; Roulston, 2010, 2011; Talmy, 2010). Theorising interviews in this way contrasts to the more common, under-theorised perspective of the interview as a research instrument and signals further appreciation of interview theory in this field (a concern highlighted in the 2011 special issue of *Applied Linguistics*, e.g. Talmy & Richards, 2011). In this perspective, both what was said and how it was said are important aspects of an interview and should be analysed (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997; Talmy & Richards, 2011).

Adopting such a theorisation of research interviews requires critical reflection of the influence of the interview *process* on data construction (Talmy, 2011). This reflection allows for a better understanding of the role of the self in the creation of knowledge and the impact of biases, beliefs, and personal experiences on research (Berger, 2013). Tabane and Bouwer (2006) argue that an interviewee's responses and the context in which they were formulated work together to co-direct and co-inform data interpretation. In this study, undertaking a reflexive analysis together with the initial thematic analysis was important for strengthening the quality of the research findings. Reflexive data collected in this study were created through the researcher's contemplation on the contextual details of the interviews including the identities of the participants (both interviewer and interviewees) at various times throughout the interviews. The outcomes of the reflexive analysis, which illustrate the complexity of cross-cultural interviews, were the stimulus for this paper.

4.3 Analytical Framework

This paper draws on Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) sociocultural linguistic identity framework to analyse the impact of the multiple identities of five Saudi Arabian women on the ways that they participated in the cross-cultural research interviews. The framework views identity as emerging in linguistic interaction and encompassing macro-level demographic categories such as nationality or gender, interactionally

specific stances and roles, and micro, moment-to-moment emergent positions. This conception of identity moves beyond broad, static identity categories to allow for the examination of the situationally specific stances, roles and positions that may influence cross-cultural research interviews.

The framework argues that identities are intersubjectively constructed through a variety of relational process or ‘tactics of intersubjectivity’ (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 599). One such tactic used by participants in linguistic interactions is the establishment of similarity and difference. Bucholtz and Hall label these *adequation* and *distinction*, to distinguish their conceptualisation from other discussions such as the insider/outsider dichotomy. Adequation implies an identity relation of similarity ‘supportive of the immediate project of identity work’ (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 599). Conversely, distinction alludes to the identity relation of differentiation which involves the ‘suppression of similarities that might undermine the construction of difference’ (ibid, p. 600). These concepts differ from traditional meanings in that similarity and difference between participants need not actually exist but must merely be understood to exist for current interactional purposes (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). These concepts are useful because they allow for the intentionality of participants in the positioning of self and other in interviews, a particularly important consideration for this study in which lack of shared cultural knowledge might be assumed to exist and work against the construction of data.

4.4 The Study

This paper presents part of the data from a larger study examining the English language learning opportunities of Saudi Arabian international students who at the time were studying in an Australian University. The primary research question concerned the Saudi Arabian students’ participation in their local English speaking communities as an opportunity to learn English language in an informal interactive environment. This paper aims to examine the issues of interviewing across cultures involving Saudi participants which are of particular interest to this study, given the importance of cultural identity for the Saudi participants and its distinctive manifestation through an element of their culture – the veil.

The methods of data generation for the study included in-depth semi-structured interviews, participant diaries in the form of journal logs, and a series of interview conversations in relation to those diaries. The researcher also kept a reflexive journal. The initial interviews sought to elicit information about the participants' backgrounds, opportunities for off-campus English language interactions, and attitudes and behaviour towards English speaking communities. Following the interviews, participants kept diaries in the form of journal logs in which they recorded every English language interaction that they had off-campus for six weeks. Interview conversations about those diaries with participants took place every two weeks. This paper focuses on and presents data constructed within the interviews and interview conversations with participants.

The first author, a doctoral student and Anglo-Australian, conducted all the interviews and undertook all interactions with the participants in English. Table 3 presents a demographic profile of the researcher/interviewer.

Table 3: Researcher demographics

	Gender	Age	Family Status	Cultural Background	Language Background	Religion
O (Interviewer)	Female	32	Married	Anglo-Australian	English	None

Five participants, Habibah, Aamina, Jahira, Medina and Raabia (pseudonyms are used), were studying graduate courses at an Australian University and were between 25 and 32 years of age. Further details about them are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4: Demographic profiles of interviewees

Participants	Family Status	Length of Residence in Australia	Veil
Habibah	Married, 1 child	1.5 years	Yes
Aamina	Married, 3 children	2.5 years	Yes
Jahira	Single, living with brother's family and mother	4 years	No
Medina	Married, 1 child in Saudi Arabia	2.5 years	No
Raabia	Married, 2 children	4 years	Yes

4.5 Findings and Discussion

In the ensuing sections we discuss how, through the processes of *adequation* and *distinction*, participants drew on aspects of their identities to position the interviewer, how the location of interviews and negotiation of space reflected participants' cultural identities and characteristics of the interviewer, and the implications of these for the research process and data construction.

4.5.1 Positioned as culturally different

The analysis shows that a process of *distinction* was at work during the cross-cultural interviews. Specifically, the interviewer was often positioned as different from the participants, based on nationality and culture. In these interviews, the interviewer was positioned as someone who was not a Saudi national, Muslim, nor a visitor to Australia. At certain times in the meetings, all women highlighted the researcher's difference to their Saudi identity by describing or explaining aspects about their country or culture that they thought the researcher might not understand. The three quotes below are examples of this.

We don't have to have the veil if there is inconvenience or it is hard to us to wear it. [Medina, Interview conversation 3]

Actually in my culture, the stranger man don't supposed to talk to woman. But here, within the culture of Australian culture, it is ok to talk to us. [Jahira, Interview conversation 1]

...you know the education for my country, in my country, all my country talk Arabic. [Aamina, Interview 1]

Being positioned as different from the women was inevitable and necessary as the women sought to make sure that the researcher understood them and their lives. As can be seen from the above quotes, the women constructed *distinction* between self and the researcher through their identities as Saudi nationals (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). The recognition that the researcher might not share the same level of knowledge and

understanding of their country and culture resulted in extended interview accounts of additional factual explanations and descriptions.

4.5.2 Positioned by language ability

Positioning of the self is an important consideration in interview research because, when entering an interview, the interviewer needs to communicate an identity that can quickly create trust, rapport and commitment (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002; Shah, 2004). This process of establishing rapport is central to developing research relationships and enabling the collection of good quality data, particularly in cross-cultural research (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Liamputtong, 2008; Ryan et al., 2011). However, positions are constructed during an interview both by the interviewer and interviewee (E. Gubrium & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005) and it is not always easy to predict how researchers would be placed by participants in the research process (Ryan et al., 2011).

In this study, the researcher positioned herself primarily as a researcher/interviewer, however, in the early stages of rapport-building with the participants she informed them that she had been a teacher of English for a number of years. Furthermore, reciprocity, in which research acknowledges the give and take of social situations, was promoted in the study (Harrison et al., 2001). In this vein, she suggested to the participants that involvement in the research would result in English language practice that could benefit them as an outcome of the study. People engage with research for many reasons, and by highlighting the material value of participation it was hoped to secure the involvement and engagement of participants (Clark, 2010). The researcher's positioning of herself in this way foregrounded the difference in language ability between herself and the participants, a position that was taken-up strongly by one participant in particular.

Distinction on the grounds of language ability occurred between the interviewer and one participant in particular as a result of their identities and the relational process of positioning. One participant (Raabia) identified herself strongly as an English language learner and this identity was evident in the series of interview and interview conversations between her and the researcher. Furthermore, Raabia's identity as a language learner supported the positioning of the researcher as a native speaker 'expert' and these identities further shaped the construction of data within the interviews. These

positions are evident in Raabia's asking of questions about language use and language practice during the interviews. Raabia asked questions about correct usage (e.g. *I choose, chose. What's the past tense of choose?*) and used the interview as an opportunity to practise (e.g. *And for the last week ... in the last week ... During the last week I don't have such an opportunity*) [Raabia, Interview 1]. This corroborates the experiences of Yee and Andrews (2006) who felt that they were often considered more than researchers and were asked advice as educational experts. Usually this focus did not impact the direction of the interview, as Raabia continued to give her response to the interview question after receiving language-specific feedback from the researcher.

At other times however, Raabia's language learner identity and interviewer as language expert positioning intruded into the interview conversation. For example, Raabia interrupted the interview questioning with: *By the way, how is my English?* [Raabia, Interview 1]. This statement temporarily side-tracked the direction of the interview as the researcher courteously responded to the question. This is a further example of Raabia's positioning of the interviewer as a language 'expert', someone who could assess and judge the level of her English speaking, and evidence of the process of *distinction*.

However, despite distinctions by culture and language ability, the Saudi participants in this study primarily foregrounded similarities between themselves and the researcher. The following sections examine the process of *adequation* that occurred in the cross-cultural research and the result of this on the interview process and data collection.

4.5.3 Foregrounding similarities

A process of adequation (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) was evident in the interviews with Saudi women when differences between them and the researcher were downplayed and similarities supportive of rapport-building were foregrounded. Specifically, the women drew on aspects of their identities to attribute subtle temporary and situated memberships, roles and positions of similarity (woman, local resident, university student, and friend) to the interviewer throughout the interview process.

The participants' identities as women influenced the way they positioned the researcher. Being female allowed for a connection between the researcher and female participants (Sands et al., 2007). This connection fostered a closer relationship and increased rapport between interviewer and interviewee that in turn influenced the content of the interviews. For example, Raabia's following response demonstrates her trust in the researcher: *Last semester I'm really busy. But for the gym, I used to go last year so I get the benefit. I was fat. Good that you didn't see me last year* [Raabia, Interview 1]. This trust is an integral part of good rapport and a close relationship. The acknowledgement of gender as a shared trait also affected what was discussed (personal, feminine topics such as physical appearance and weight loss). In these ways, positioning through gender, a site of similarity, influenced the research relationship and content of the interviews.

At other times, the interviewer was positioned as a member of the local community who had knowledge of the local area, the people in it, shops and businesses that afforded a point of similarity between her and the interviewees. This was evident with one participant in particular, Habibah, who drew on her identity as a resident in the area. Instead of being vague and mentioning 'a gym' and 'a swimming pool' she made reference to the specific names. Explicitly naming those places assumed the shared contextual knowledge of the places under discussion. For example, in discussing a relationship that she had formed outside her studies, Habibah mentioned a Muslim woman, *Maybe you know her I think. She is very active* [in the local community] ... and then Habibah showed the researcher a photo of the lady on her mobile phone [Habibah, Interview conversation 1]. These examples show how Habibah positioned the researcher as similar to herself as a part of the local community, who shared an understanding of the surrounding area and the local residents. By positioning the researcher as similar to herself, Habibah actively developed the relationship, increased familiarity and trust. This allowed the interview to proceed openly, contributing to the construction of quality data.

Being a university student helped to establish a shared identity. For Medina, the researcher was an insider who shared knowledge of the university and the program she was studying in. The common understandings opened up the conversational space for

data construction. Medina and the researcher had studied in the same faculty and had studied similar subjects. While they did not know each other before the research, it was evident that this common ground shaped the generation of data. For example: *It happened for the first time in the education library. Do you know that there's a big table and you can sit with other group?* [Medina, Interview conversation 3] And also in response to a probe, *O: Have you got some Australian friends? M: Yeah I do. Do you know Audrey?* [Medina, Interview 1] Here acknowledging the interviewer's position as a university student supported feelings of affinity and supported the establishment of rapport.

Perceived similarities foster affinity and trust, which in turn cultivate friendly and cooperative relations. As a result of the affinity and trust that had been developed with participants over the course of the research, towards the end of the study the researcher was seen as a 'friend' – this friendly relation meant that favour could be requested:

O: Yes. Well, thank you very much for coming to talk with me.

H: You are very welcome. Now I need your help. If you know of a special teacher ... I need to know about the literature review. [Habibah, Interview 2]

Habibah's foregrounding of friendly relations with the interviewer created a relaxed, open atmosphere for data collection, potentially allowing for quality data construction. For example, during the final interview Habibah shared with the interviewer a funny moment that she had had with her husband about the progress of her driving lessons.

[Laughing] My husband say, 'If you know how to drive really good, I think I will wake up one day and won't find you and I will not find the car.' *[Still laughing]* *I say 'maybe, maybe – who know?'* [Habibah, Interview 2]

Although Habibah might not have seen this light-hearted interaction as contributing to answering the formal interview questions, it was significant for the researcher in interpreting the data. Specifically, it provided insight into Habibah's personality and her relationship with her husband and assisted in understanding how cultural norms (such as

gender relations) impacted her participation in the community. Thus, the positioning of the interviewer as a friend had implications for data construction and interpretation.

This section has analysed the roles attributed to the researcher by the interviewees at various stages of the interview process. While the researcher was culturally different from these Saudi Arabian/Arab/Muslim women, they chose to draw on other aspects of their identities and attribute characteristics of similarity to her (woman, local, university student, and friend). In this way, the researcher was not considered different from them but similar to them in some ways. The process of *adequation* resulted in a closer relationship and increased rapport, and consequently enabled generation of quality interview data with rich interview responses.

The following section examines how participants further suppressed the cultural differences between themselves and the researcher through the manipulation of the place and space of the research interviews.

4.5.4 Identity negotiation through the place and space of interviews

This section explores how through controlling the physical location of the research interviews, the women were able to downplay the significant cultural differences between themselves and the researcher, and negotiate an interview space which was satisfactory to the two parties.

Providing participants with a choice for interview location, especially when interviewing on sensitive, private, or emotional issues, is regarded as an important consideration (Adler & Adler, 2002; Herzog, 2005; Merry et al., 2011). Other considerations in setting interview locations include allowing for the comfort of participants and promoting equity or fairness (Herzog, 2005). The women in this study were asked to participate in an interview at a time and place of their choice. Two women (Jahira and Medina) elected to be interviewed in a public place and the other women (Habibah, Aamina, and Raabia) chose to be interviewed at home. Our analysis showed that the choice of the locations was associated with the veil the women wore as part of their cultural identity. The women who elected to be interviewed in a public

place arrived for the interview unveiled. The other women who were veiled in public were interviewed at home.

While the women in the study were not explicitly asked why they chose their interview location, it appears that the women may have chosen interview locations that catered for their individual needs. The veil's purpose in Arabic culture is to 'hide away' the women from the opposite sex (Pharaon, 2004, p. 360). Being female, the interviewer was allowed to speak to the women without a veil and without the presence of their husbands. Unveiled, one-on-one interviews in the home would not have been possible for a male interviewer. The home environment may have enabled the veiled women to speak more at ease without the veil.

In addition, the veiled women's choice of an interview in the home may have been an attempt to downplay differences between themselves and the researcher and be an example of *adequation*. By meeting in the home, the participants could interact with the researcher unveiled, often in modern dress similar to that of Australian women. Evidence for this came from comments by one participant who indicated her desire to downplay difference and be seen as *normal* by others in the community.

Yeah, on the last class of TAFE I have some friends. They are man from Congo and Japan and China and the first day they feel scared and don't say anything for me. After maybe first week I have friendship with them ... And they say "You are normal" and I say, "Yes, I'm normal. Don't worry because my clothes. Everyone have different clothes". And I say [to] them "I will [look] like [a woman] in front of all women, but just in front of man, no". [Habibah, Interview 1]

The quote above demonstrates Habibah's downplaying of differences between herself and her international friends, specifically her wearing of traditional dress. Another comment from Habibah further illustrates her desire to be seen as *normal*. It occurred after the researcher had asked Habibah if her different background and dress made it difficult to make friends.

Yes, in the beginning, outside the home, yes. But later when they know me, contact with me, they feel I'm normal and they keep their friendship ... they change their idea - totally. [Habibah, Interview 1]

It appears as though Habibah is proud of her ability to win the friendship of people who may have considered her different from them at first. This desire to be seen as normal may be an example of *adequation* where 'differences irrelevant or damaging to ongoing efforts to adequate two people of groups will be downplayed' (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 599). Therefore, the location of the interview may represent efforts by participants to adequate themselves with the researcher; to foreground similarity and position themselves accordingly.

The following reflection from the researcher's journal illustrates how the cultural identity of a veiled participant played a significant role in negotiating the physical space in which a subsequent interview conversation with her was conducted. (As outlined above, participants attended an initial in-depth interview and then met the researcher another three times to discuss the contents of their diaries. These short interview conversations occurred at times and in places convenient to the participants – often on campus in public places.)

At Raabia's suggestion, we met at a busy Uni café for one of our diary meetings. It was lunchtime and there were many people inside and around the café. Raabia wore traditional dress – long brown robes, a headscarf, and veil tied to cover her nose and mouth. After we had ordered and collected our drinks, we moved into the dining area and approached a large table that had three empty seats on our side. In the brief moment of uncertainty while I decided where to sit, Raabia pointed to the seat closest to the wall and told me to sit there. She took the seat next to mine, turned to face me, and removed her face veil. In this position she could face me and the wall with no one else seeing her face. We had our meeting clearly and socially. At the end of our conversation she re-wrapped her headscarf and re-tied her face veil before leaving. [Extract from researcher's reflexive journal]

In addition to the selection of the location, the seating was also influenced by factors related to the women's cultural identities. It was clear from the above quote that this interview event was a confluence of interview participant relations, a specific location, and sociocultural context. Being female, the interviewer was permitted to see Raabia's face, however, as there were men in the vicinity, Raabia still needed to maintain her modesty and manipulated the seating to achieve this.

As is argued by Herzog (2005), the meaning of the location is not defined by the setting or the study topic. It is constructed through 'the interaction between the two and the verbal or symbolic dialogue that takes place between interviewer and participant' (2005, p. 44). The physical space of the above interview conversation was significant as it afforded a space where the identities of the interviewer, interviewee, and sociocultural context can be negotiated. Specifically, on this occasion, Raabia negotiated an aspect of her cultural identity, the veil, and the space of the interview conversation to meet her need for a safe, comfortable place to talk. Additionally, her manipulation of the seating so that she could speak without the veil may have been an example of *adequation* – an attempt to reduce the cultural difference between her and the researcher. By not speaking through the veil at this meeting, Raabia potentially removed it as a point of difference between her and the researcher that would allow for identity and positioning work that was more salient to her.

In addition, the choice of the interview location had an impact on the scope, length and depth of conversation and layers of information about the participants. It seems that interviews undertaken at homes resulted in more lengthy conversation between the women and the researcher (with the exception of the interview with Aamina whose spoken English language proficiency was low). The recordings from on-campus interviews were 26 and 44 minutes in length, with little further conversation taking place before or after the interview. However, two of the interviews undertaken at women's homes were significantly longer. The interview with Raabia was the longest, lasting 1½ hours, though this included a short visit and discussion with her husband and some social conversation.

Home interviews place the participant in the context of her family, community and locality and acquaint the researcher with her home environment (Herzog, 2005). The extended conversations with Saudi women in their homes contributed data towards the research problem. Although at times the formal part of the interview (e.g. with Habibah in her home) was not that long, there was often a substantial amount of time spent in social conversation. Pinsky (2013, p. 2) refers to these types of interactions as 'incidental ethnographic encounters' and argues that they too add layers of information which can assist in answering the research questions.

Despite potential disadvantages from interviewing in the home, for example, intrusiveness, pressure to provide hospitality, and unexpected, practical and personal ethical dilemmas (Adamson & Holloway, 2012; Yee & Andrews, 2006), it was evident that allowing the participants to choose the place for the interview contributed to creating a comfortable and relaxing environment for these participants, an environment in which the two parties could become *adequated*. This relational process has potentially allowed for increased rapport and closer relations and the rich data to be constructed.

4.6 Conclusion

Reflective engagement with interview practices is important to understand the complexity of interviewing across cultures. This paper demonstrated how cultural identities impact the interview process and data. In this study, adoption of a constructionist perspective allowed cross-cultural interviews with Saudi women to be investigated, and illuminated the influence of cultural (and other) identities on the interview events.

The identities taken-up by participants in interviews is an important area for study in relation to those conducted across cultures. While absence of a shared cultural experience can be significant for data construction and interpretation of findings, culture is not the only characteristic of relevance to participant relations and interactions in cross-cultural interviews. Different aspects of the multiple identities of participants are salient and influential on the research process at different times. Participant identities and identification shape interview construction in complex ways and require close

examination in order to gain a complete understanding of how participant biographies impact the research process.

Our research provides insights into the complexity of identity negotiation in cross-cultural interviews. Specifically, it shows how the choice of interview location and the positioning of the researcher are influenced by participants' identities and relational processes. Our analysis showed how positioning along different dimensions of identity occurred at different times depending on the content being discussed and feelings of trust and affinity constructed between interviewer and interviewee. It demonstrated how identity influenced the pragmatics of the interviews, research relationships, interview content and the data constructed within them.

While cultural identity was an influential factor in this study, other aspects of identity were also salient. Gender, residence, status as a university student, and English language proficiency were all characteristics of the women that were reflected in the interview events. The women drew on aspects other than cultural identity to position the researcher as similar to them. Adequation occurred when differences between participant and researcher were downplayed and similarities supportive of rapport-building were foregrounded (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). This positioning established rapport and developed the relationship, which influenced what was spoken about in the interview and how it was spoken. It appears that while consideration of cultural identity is important for understanding cross-cultural interviews, it cannot be studied in isolation from participants' complex multiple identities.

Cultural identity was an important consideration in determining the location of the interviews. Allowing the participants a choice of interview location permitted them to select a place for intelligible and undistracted data construction, given the cultural restriction of the veil and the identities of both participants. This negotiation of the space of the interviews resulted in longer, richer interview data and allowed for the cultural differences between interviewer and interviewee to be downplayed. The findings have implications for interviewing strategies in cross-cultural situations. Allowing participants a choice of interview location takes account of individual needs and preferences as a result of their cultural identity, and may stimulate quality data

construction. Where cultural identity has unique requirements, such as privacy, and manifestations, such as the veil, considering interview location becomes even more important for the research process. Furthermore, these decisions are not simply technical matters but part of the social context of the study which is taken into account when interpreting findings (Herzog, 2005).

In summary, the study of identity in cross-cultural interviews is important given the many differences possible between researcher and researched. How interview participants actively negotiate (or otherwise) similarities or differences through researcher positioning, and its impact on data construction, needs to be taken into account. Further exploration is required of how the place and space of research interviews can allow for rich data construction, particularly for Muslim, veiled women and other groups of participants who have cultural norms which may not easily align with a traditional interview method.

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Addendum to Chapter 4

This addendum contains a section of the findings and discussion edited from the paper *Exploring complexity in cross-cultural research* due to the space constraints of the publishing journal. It is concerned with an aspect of participant identity and how it impacted the construction of data within the research interview. This discussion contributes to understanding the complexity of cross-cultural interviews. It also sheds light on the identities and identifications of one participant and is drawn upon in the concluding discussion (Chapter 7) to discuss the impact of identity on participation in language learning.

4.7 Discussion and Findings

In the journal article above, it was discussed how the location of interviews and negotiation of space was influenced by the participants' cultural identities and characteristics of the interviewer. It also addressed how the participants drew on aspects of their identities to position the interviewer, and the impact this had on data construction. A third complexity for cross-cultural interviewing is how participant identities impact their engagement with the research. This issue is discussed below.

4.7.1 Negotiation of the positioning of interview participants

The following discussion demonstrates how one participant in particular drew on an identity as a language learner, positioned the researcher as an English language 'expert', and pursued an agenda for language practice which influenced the content and direction of the research interviews and data collected within them.

One participant (Raabia) identified herself strongly as an English language learner and this identity was evident in the series of interview and interview conversations between her and the researcher. Specifically, her identity as a language learner is evident in her responses to interview questions. The following interview extract illustrates how Raabia formed her response to a question early in the interview based on her identity as a language learner:

O: So tell me about how you came to be in Australia?

R: I'm just apply for a scholarship for a Masters degree. My friends applied too so we encourage each other even though we know that we are gonna study in different language. But we have ... You know we have the basic[s] in our country, the English basic[s] but because we don't practice it, we lose it. So when I came here I start with the college, and we still have the problem, no practice so even if you just get the rules, if you didn't just practice it, or ... you will lose it. [Raabia, Interview 1]

While Raabia initially answered the interviewer's question, she continued talking, bringing the topic back to the challenge of being a language learner, a principal aspect of her identity she forged in the interview. This example demonstrates how identity and positioning of self as a language learner, rather than simply an interviewee, influenced what was discussed and therefore the data collected.

Furthermore, Raabia's identity as a language learner supported the positioning of the researcher as a native speaker 'expert' and these identities further shaped the construction of data within the interviews. These positions are evident in Raabia's asking of questions about language use and language practice during the interviews. Raabia asked questions about correct usage (e.g. *I choose, chose. What's the past tense of choose?*) and used the interview as an opportunity to practise (e.g. *And for the last week ... in the last week ... During the last week I don't have such an opportunity*). [Raabia, Interview 1] This corroborates the experiences of Yee and Andrews (2006) who felt that they were often considered more than researchers and were asked advice as educational experts. Usually this focus did not impact the direction of the interview,

as Raabia continued to give her response to the interview question after receiving language-specific feedback from the researcher.

At other times, however, Raabia's language learner identity and interviewer-as-language-expert positioning intruded into the interview conversation. For example, Raabia interrupted the interview questioning with: *By the way, how is my English?* [Raabia, Interview 1] This statement temporarily side-tracked the direction of the interview as the researcher courteously responded to the question. This is a further example of Raabia's positioning of the interviewer as a language 'expert', someone who could assess and judge the level of her English speaking.

In addition, such behaviour in an interview may have been a result of an agenda for participation in the research. Positive engagement with a research study is not always assured, even with consent, as participation in research is voluntary, and so 'people have to choose to engage with research' (Clark, 2010, p. 400). Therefore, just as the interviewer enters an interview with specific communication objectives, needs and agendas, so does the interviewee (Clark, 2010; E. Gubrium & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005; Tabane & Bouwer, 2006). Participants bring with them to an interview multiple agendas including: seeking rewards, sharing a story, venting, communicating a message, contributing to knowledge or a solution, or satisfying an interviewer (E. Gubrium & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005). Raabia's identity as a language learner might have given her powerful reasons to participate in the research, to obtain language practice and feedback from a language expert. E. Gubrium and Koro-Ljungberg (2005) suggest that agendas at different times can limit and support the negotiated goals of the interview as the respondent works to seek what they want out of the interview. Raabia's question for the interviewer about her language ability is an example of her working to achieve her goal for participation in research – English language development. At the time of the above example, Raabia's agenda did not support the goal of the interview, diverting its course and impacting the nature of data collected.

In another example of participant agenda influencing data collection, after a scheduled interview conversation Raabia requested that the researcher listen to her rehearsal and provide feedback on a presentation. Clark (2010) identifies material interest as a reason

for participation in research, and a request for feedback is a clear indication that Raabia wanted to benefit from the research as well. Due to this incentive, Raabia was favourably motivated to participate in the research and accommodate the researcher's data collection needs. In fact, Raabia was highly enthusiastic at an interview conversation meeting and launched into narrative as soon as the recorder was switched on.

O: Ok, I think it's working now.

R: Ok, I'm going to describe to you what I have done in my English diary. To be honest, I'm really sad about my progress because I don't have such a chance to practice with English people. I spent a lot of time working on my assignments.

Sometimes I watch TV... . [Raabia, Interview conversation 1]

At this meeting, the researcher was a captive audience and Raabia eagerly set about making the most of the opportunity to converse with the researcher. Raabia spoke at length and in detail on the topic, with only a few prompts and questions from the researcher. As the intention of this interview conversation was to gather information on participants' language learning experiences, particularly their interactions with English speakers, Raabia's focus on language learning primarily supported the goals of this part of the research.

However, Raabia's agenda to obtain language practice is evident in other parts of the interview data with different implications for the interview event. In the following example, a breakdown in meaning was turned by Raabia into a language learning opportunity for her. Prior to this extract Raabia had stated that she had had opportunities to speak English when attending a gym and the researcher then asked whether she went to the gym by herself.

O: Do you go by yourself or do you always take another ... ?

R: Yes, it just takes ... Ah, you mean by yourself - alone?

O: Yes, alone?

R: How you may ask me if you want to ask me the way that I go there? Ask me this question in the two ways.

O: ...I'm probably asking you incorrectly. Do you go there by yourself or do you go there alone? Probably alone is more correct.

R: So what is the other question?

O: How do you get there? Good point. So, do you go to the gym alone? [Raabia, Interview 1]

In the above example, Raabia was not content to simply understand and respond to the question that the researcher had asked. Driven by her focus on language learning and ongoing positioning of herself and the researcher as language learner and expert, she was keen to use the breakdown in meaning to learn the nuances of English language usage. It was only polite for the interviewer to oblige Raabia's questions about language, however, it was evident that the identities of research participants (interviewer and interviewee) were present in the interview event and her agenda diverted the interview direction, therefore impacting data construction.

Furthermore, Raabia's agenda sometimes narrowed the focus of her responses and potentially prevented her from contributing to the wider issues of the study. While it is positive that Raabia directly benefited from the research experience, her goal often gave her answers a focus on specific details of language grammar rather than the wider social and cultural contexts of language learning. For example:

O: Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about living in Australia, speaking English in Australia, studying in Australia?

R: Again, I have the same problem, I don't practice ... when I just talk, I feel that sometimes I say the sentences in the wrong way ... [Raabia, Interview 2]

In the quote above, Raabia comments on her use of the English language rather than on any potentially larger issues to do with cultural difference, discrimination, or fitting in. Thus, her agenda and positioning of self and interviewer, influenced the direction of the interviews and responses to the interview questions.

The above discussion has demonstrated that the researcher was positioned as an English language 'expert' which affected the relationship between the researcher and the

participants of the study in a twofold way. Importantly, it created a motivation for participants to be involved in research, as it was seen as an opportunity to practise their oral English language skills. However, it was somewhat problematic as it sometimes limited the interviewee's responses to language issues as it was demonstrated in the case of Raabia. While this positioning as a native speaker 'expert' can be certainly attributed to the researcher herself, what was unknown to her during rapport-building was how her disclosure of her experience as an English teacher, and signalling of a language learning benefit of participation, could impact the participants' positioning of themselves during the interviews and therefore affect the construction of the data. Indeed it was only through a reflexive analysis that the impact of the researcher's positioning and participants' identities on the research interviews became clear. The identity of a language learner during the interview was strongly put forward by the participant, which was not altered by the researcher because of the promised benefits. The awareness of such possibility would have helped the researcher during the interview to firmly re-negotiate her own identity as a researcher and the participant as an interview, but at the same time to negotiate a separate space for language learning.

This section highlights the impact of researcher positioning when it aligns with a dominant aspect of a participant's identity and an agenda for participation in the research. The positioning of the researcher as an English language 'expert' occurred inadvertently through the researcher's positioning of herself, and by Raabia drawing on her identity as a language learner and positioning the researcher in this way. At the time, the researcher was not aware that the information she disclosed about herself would set herself up for positioning that would hinder the interviews. Raabia pursued her agenda at the interview times, which impacted data construction and added an additional layer to the complexity of the data.

The implication of these findings is that interviewers need to be aware that they might need to renegotiate their positioning throughout the interview/research process. In this case, it might have been beneficial for the research for the interviewer to create a space separate from the interviews for Raabia to obtain language practice and feedback on her language so that this identity and agenda impeded less into the interview data.

Chapter Summary

This chapter explored some methodological issues of researching across cultures, as occurred in this study with Saudi Arabian participants. The reflexive analysis employed during the study to improve the quality of the research highlighted how the identities of the participants and researcher might impact the interview process and construction of data within it. In addition, this analysis shed light on the identities of the female participants that might be active in shaping the nature of their participation in situated language learning (discussed further in Chapter 6) thereby contributing to the findings of the study as a whole.

PREFACE TO FINDINGS CHAPTERS

The findings of this study are laid out across two chapters (Chapter 5 and Chapter 6) in order to present them logically and in a theoretically coherent manner. This preface outlines the structure of these chapters and justifies their organisation in this manner.

The first findings chapter (Chapter 5) establishes the nature and extent of participation of the Saudi participants. It reports on data from the learner diaries and interview conversations about those diaries. Analysis of register was used to examine the interactions recorded in participants' learner diaries. The analysis revealed how many interactions participants had, where, with whom, and for what purposes. This information establishes exactly how the participants interact in the English speaking community and lays the foundation for the rest of the analysis and discussion.

Learners crossing into a new community of practice bring with them the practices and dispositions of their previous communities, and there is the potential for the practices of the new community to conflict with those of previous ones (Handley et al., 2006; Hodges, 1998). This is particularly so for the participants of this study, Saudi learners with unique cultural practices who, upon entering English speaking communities, encounter new and possibly conflicting cultural attitudes, values, and practices. The second findings chapter (Chapter 6) examines the extent to which Saudi culture impacts learners' involvement in the new Australian English speaking community. It primarily reports on data from the interviews, but data from the interview conversations are also used to support the findings. This chapter shows that the culture of Saudi students, despite its incongruence with the culture of the new community, is evoked during the study experience, with some aspects continued and others displaced.

The conflict resulting from the incompatibility of Saudi culture and Australian culture creates a struggle for learners to reconstruct their selves (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). Indeed, learners experience identity conflicts as they move between communities as a result of differences such as culture (Morita, 2009; Nelson & Temples, 2011). The tension created by this conflict requires that newcomers reconcile their identity in order to participate and learn. Chapter 6 also discusses how the identities of Saudi participants

are reconciled during the cross-cultural experience and the consequence of this for participation and learning.

CHAPTER 5: MAPPING PARTICIPATION IN SITUATED LANGUAGE LEARNING

Chapter Introduction

This chapter contains a journal article accepted for publication in Higher Education Research and Development.

Groves, O, Verenikina, I, & Chen, H, (accepted for publication) Mapping participation in situated language learning, *Higher Education Research and Development*

As in the case of the other article in this thesis, Irina Verenikina and Honglin Chen are co-authors due to their contributions conceptualising and editing the article. The article included here is presented as published except for formatting which was made consistent with the rest of the thesis. As required of a stand-alone paper, this article includes a review of the literature, account of the theory and analytical framework, and description of the study. As such there is some repetition of information presented previously in this thesis, however this has been minimised where possible.

The article examines the nature and extent of male Saudi international students' participation in their local communities during their study experience and is part of the findings of the first research question.

In addition to the article, this chapter contains an addendum that includes additional findings not included in the article. The addendum that follows the article discusses the findings about the nature and extent of participation of the female participants (Section 5.9) and the results of analysis of the mode of the diary entries (Section 5.10). The article and addendum complete the findings in reference to the first research question.

Abstract

Research on the international student experience in Australia has highlighted the challenges that international students face when obtaining tertiary qualifications in an Australian University (AEI, 2012). Specifically, international students are reported to have difficulties achieving their stated goals of making connections, forming friendships and improving their oral English language skills during their sojourn (AEI, 2013; Yates & Wahid, 2013). This paper investigates the interactions of five male Saudi Arabian international students in the local English speaking community and considers how they participate in it. Diary records and interview conversations are used to examine the nature and extent of participation drawing on the linguistic concept of register, or analysis of situation. The findings indicate that quality interactions for the purpose of language learning are derived from casual conversations and those without pre-defined social roles, which afford opportunities for identity negotiation and interactional benefits.

Keywords: situated learning, register, international students, Saudi Arabian, participation, language interaction

5.1 Introduction

While undertaking tertiary study in Australia, international students seek opportunities to make friends and connections and improve their oral English language skills through immersion in the Australian English speaking community (AEI, 2012; Benzie, 2010; Midgley, 2010; Yates & Wahid, 2013). In addition to social interaction being important for student wellbeing and for international students' positive learning experience in Australia (Chau et al., 2010; Edgeworth & Eiseman, 2007; Gresham & Clayton, 2011; Kell & Vogl, 2007), studies have shown that immersion into a local community during study abroad can enhance every aspect of language ability (e.g. Kinginger, 2011).

The development of English language skills is necessary for international students to support their disciplinary learning in higher education, and to allow them to reach their full potential (Benzie, 2010; Kell & Vogl, 2007; Yates & Wahid, 2013). For example, Salamonson, Everett, Koch, Andrew and Davidson (2008), in a quantitative study,

demonstrated that English language proficiency was strongly correlated to academic achievements of international students. Yet, general language proficiency has been frequently cited as a significant ongoing problem for international students studying at university in an English speaking country (Benzie, 2010; Birrell & Healy, 2008; Bretag, 2007; Murray, 2010; Oliver et al., 2012). Research has shown that many international students not only have insufficient English language skills from the start but also fail to adequately develop these skills during their higher education (Benzie, 2010; Murray, 2010).

General English language proficiency enables international students to communicate effectively with lecturers and fellow students and act appropriately in professional situations (Benzie, 2010; Kinginger, 2011), which enhances their employment opportunities (Yates & Wahid, 2013). However, international students express disappointment at their levels of general English language development on completion of their study (Kinger, 2011; Midgley, 2010; Yates & Wahid, 2013). For example, the participants in the study of Yates and Wahid (2013) felt that study in Australia had not been the socially and linguistically enriching experience that they had expected and hoped for and that their spoken language had not improved, as a result of a lack of need to use it.

While universities place strong emphasis on the development of academic English skills, responsibility for general English language learning in the community has largely been seen as residing within the students themselves (Yates & Wahid, 2013). Because of the numerous opportunities for language practice outside the classroom there is often an assumption that students will automatically develop language skills at the same time as progressing through their discipline studies (Benzie, 2010; Yates & Wahid, 2013). However, in Australia, recent research has shown that international students face many difficulties and problems in accessing host communities (Kell & Vogl, 2007; Yates & Wahid, 2013). Research has documented the loneliness, isolation and social exclusion international students experienced during their study abroad (Guilfoyle & Harryba, 2011; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011; Paltridge & Schapper, 2012; Yates & Wahid, 2013). This pointed to the need for provision of support for ensuring greater and more meaningful engagement of international students in the practices of host communities

(AEI, 2012; Kinginger, 2011; Yates & Wahid, 2013). Programs have been developed to help international students to interact with the broader Australian community (DEEWR, 2009; Gresham & Clayton, 2011; Ziguras & Harwood, 2010).

This paper aims to provide a picture of the current participatory situation of one group of international students in an Australian University – Saudi Arabian male students. The findings of this paper can potentially inform the work of university and community projects which seek to support international students developing their language through participation in the broader community.

Issues around the role of social interactions of international students with host communities for their language learning, raise questions about the quality of interactions. Data were obtained from participants in the form of diaries and interview conversations about their English language interactions. Through discussion within a sociolinguistic frame, this paper explores the nature of international students' participation in the wider host community and suggests some factors that might constitute quality social interactions and promote broader participation in language learning.

The study on which this paper reports is informed by theories of situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004), and the analysis of casual conversation (Eggins & Slade, 1997).

5.2 Theoretical Framework

This paper is grounded in the view that learning is social and situated, and occurring through social participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Participation is seen as not just engagement in certain activities with certain people but a more encompassing process of being active participants in the practices of social communities (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). The concept of *community of practice* (CoP) is a useful tool for thinking about participation within a group of people who already have the skill or knowledge being sought. In the field of second language acquisition, communities of practice have been delineated as communities of target language speakers, for example English speakers (Giroir, 2014; Nguyen & Kellogg, 2010), and

speakers of other languages (Back, 2011; Nelson & Temples, 2011; Rajadurai, 2010), who share the practice of using English. Regarding a target language community as a CoP is fitting because values, beliefs, cultural knowledge and shared assumptions are present in the use of English, especially in casual conversations (Eggins & Slade, 1997). Thus, the use of English is not simply a practice but a practice in context (Hoadley, 2012). To participate in the community, international students need to develop ways of knowing and saying in casual conversations (Eggins & Slade, 1997). For this research, the Community of Practice is defined as the local community, which includes residents, who engage in the practice of communicating in English as part of their daily lives (including both native and non-native English speakers).

Learning as participation in social practice frames the task of English language learners in a particular way, that is to participate in the practices of local English speaking communities (Young, 2008). This raises questions about what different degrees of participation might look like and how participation might be evaluated. Participation is the process of taking part in some activity or enterprise and the relations with others that reflect that process (Wenger, 1998). It follows that Wenger's concepts of *action* and *connection* might be the keys to understanding the interactions of students' participation in the English speaking community. Attention to these elements of participation would allow for appreciation of the extent and the quality of interactions for the purpose of language learning.

However, the application of these concepts to a specific area of human practice requires further examination. Handley, Sturdy, Fincham and Clark (2006) concede the difficulties of operationalising the term, participation and suggest that, '[a]lthough many researchers have embraced the theoretical strength of situated learning theory, conceptual issues remain undeveloped in the literature' (Handley et al., 2006, p. 1). In search for an analytical framework to describe participation, this paper has adopted the Systemic Functional Linguistic concept of *Register* (a variety of language use for a particular purpose and in a particular context) to assist in the description of action and connection in the interactions of international students. Eggins and Slade's (1997) approach to analysing casual conversation is also drawn-upon.

5.3 Analytical Framework

Systemic Functional Linguistics sees the English language as a social semiotic system, a resource with the potential aim of meaning-making (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). This potential is realised during *acts of meaning*, or linguistic instances, in the form of texts (Halliday, 2009). At the same time, language choices connect to the social and cultural contexts in which they occur. In the immediate context of a situation, linguistic choices are influenced by three variables of the register – *field* (the nature of the activity), *tenor* (role relationships), and *mode* (the symbolic organisation of text) (Halliday, 2009). Together these register variables combine to portray three types of meaning, those of experiential, interpersonal and textual. Close examination of these variables provides an in-depth analysis of the notions of Wenger's (1998) action and connection to complement what the existing framework can provide.

Specifically, the concept of *field* enables description of the purpose of the interaction, language activity taking place, and subject matter (Halliday, 2009; Mohan, 1987). To enable analysis of *field*, the terms *pragmatic* and *casual conversation* were adopted from Eggins and Slade (1997) to define the type of participation students were engaged in and the purpose of the interactions in which they participated. A pragmatic conversation is practically orientated to achieve a specific purpose, whereas a casual conversation is defined as one not motivated by any clear practical purpose (Eggins & Slade, 1997). In addition, *field* concerns *language activity* and *subject matter* (Halliday, 2009; Mohan, 1987) thus offering a powerful tool with which to assess the *action* taking place in the reported interactions. The *tenor* of texts deals with status relations, affective involvement, contact, and orientation to affiliation (Eggins & Slade, 1997). Consideration of these elements helps delineate the *connection* of participants in the reported interactions. The *mode* of the interactions concerns the text structure and organisation of interactions, for example, telephone, SMS, email, and Skype.

The integration of the theory of *Register* to that of situated learning achieves two purposes. Firstly, it allows for the concept of participation to be further delineated and its meaning explored and better understood. Secondly, it allows for analysis of the contextual conditions of social interactions that might contribute to language learning. Defining participation and identifying quality interactions add to understanding of

Wenger's theory of situated learning in relation to language learning, and are outcomes of this paper.

5.4 The Study

This paper presents part of a qualitative study examining the participation of Saudi Arabian international students in English language learning during their overseas study experience. Saudi students were chosen due to their increased presence in Australian universities (AEI, 2014b) and significant cultural difference from the target language community. Five male and five female Saudi Arabian international students were recruited to participate in the study. This paper focuses on data generated from the male participants only because the nature of the interactions of the men and women when in Australia is potentially influenced by the strong cultural differences that exist between the genders in Saudi culture (Hamdan, 2005).

The study sought to describe the nature of the students' off-campus interactions and discover the factors that influence participation and the take-up of opportunities for language development. The paper addresses the following research question: What opportunities are there for male Saudi international students to interact and participate in English language communities of practice? To what extent are they taken-up?

5.5 Method and Participants

To identify international students' social interactions, data were collected from three methods: detailed diary records of interactions generated daily by participants; a series of interview conversations in relation to these diaries; and semi-structured interviews.

A method of learner diaries was suggested by Halliday (2009, p. 78) as useful for data collection in relation to register:

To gain some impression of "language in the life of an individual", it is hardly necessary, or possible, to keep detailed records of who says what, to whom, when and why. But it is not too difficult to take note of information about register, with entries for field, mode and tenor in the language diary.

In the diaries, kept for six weeks, participants were asked to document every English language interaction that they had. Details of the interactions such as where each occurred, with whom, for how long, for what purpose and any other comments about the interactions were logged. Table 5 below is the header provided to participants under which they recorded their interactions.

Table 5: Diary entry prompts

Date & time of interaction	Who did you interact with? What is your relationship with them?	Where or how did you interact with them?	How long did the interaction last?	Why did you interact? What was the purpose?	Was the interaction planned or unplanned? Who started the interaction?	General comments. How did you feel about the interaction?
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Every two weeks, the researcher met with the participants to discuss their diary entries. These meetings were to clarify what was recorded, and to explore further interesting and significant interactions. A further purpose was to provide an additional motivation for participants to complete the diaries fully. These meetings were audio recorded and the researcher kept a reflexive journal in which aspects of the context of the interviews and meetings were recorded.

5.5.1 Participants

Five participants, Rushdi, Haydar, Riyadh, Ahmed and Hafiz (pseudonyms have been used) were all Saudi nationals studying at a regional Australian University in postgraduate and undergraduate courses. The men were aged over 30, married and with children except for Rushdi who was much younger (23), newly married (1 year) and without children. At the time of the study they had been in Australia for varying lengths of time: 1.5 to 4 years. Three of the men lived with their families in rented apartments. Rushdi lived in homestay accommodation and Riyadh in university student accommodation, while his family were back home in Saudi Arabia. Table 6 provides an overview of the participants.

Table 6: Participant overview

Name	Age	Length of time in Australia	Degree	Living Situation
Rushdi	23	1.5 years	Undergraduate. Bachelor of Engineering (Civil)	Married (1 year) with no children. Lives with wife in homestay accommodation. Homestay family is two parents and two young boys.
Haydar	37	3 years	Postgraduate. Master of ICT Management	In a rented apartment with wife and three young children.
Riyad	37	2 years	Undergraduate. Master of ICT	Married with four children. Family is in SA. Riyadh lives by himself in an ensuite room in university student accommodation.
Ahmed	36	3 years	Postgraduate. Master of Education (ICT)	Lives with wife and son in a rented apartment.
Hafiz	31	4 years	Undergraduate. Bachelor of Commerce (HRM)	Lives with wife and baby daughter in a rented apartment.

5.6 Data Analysis Procedures

The SFL concept of *Register* was applied as an analytical framework to the data. Specifically, the interactions recorded in the diary entries were analysed for the *field*, *tenor* and *mode* according to their components summarised in Table 7.

Table 7: The categories of analysis

(adapted from Eggins & Slade, 1997; Halliday, 2009; Mohan, 1987)

No.	FIELD	TENOR	MODE	LENGTH	COMMENTS
	Purpose: pragmatic or casual conversation	Status relations: taking on and attributing relevant social roles	Spoken or written		How was this interaction significant?
	Language activity	Affective involvement: the degree to which we 'matter' to those with whom we are interacting	Face-to-face, email or phone		Participation: action & connection?
	Subject matter	Contact: level of familiarity	Language of interactants		
		Orientation to affiliation: extent to which we seek to identify with the values and beliefs of those we interact with			

Transcripts from the interview conversations about the diary entries were consulted to supplement the diary data. As many of the reported interactions occurred in a face-to-face manner, the *mode* is not analysed and discussed further in this article.

5.7 Findings

The findings are presented as a series of themes that align closely with the analysis categories presented in Table 7. The themes are organised under two headings: sociocultural action (Field), and interpersonal connection (Tenor).

5.7.1 Sociocultural action (Field)

This section describes the *field* of the participants' interactions. In this analysis, the *field* constitutes the sociocultural action consisting of the purpose, place/activity, and subject matter of the interaction. The findings are discussed in relation to two themes that reflect the extent to which the men exhibited action in their interactions.

Going about day-to-day business

All the participants reported that they moved around the local community, interacting in a variety of public (e.g. supermarket, offices, restaurants, medical centres, post office) and private (e.g. own homes, homes of friends, apartment building) places. Most of the interactions undertaken by the men were for pragmatic reasons, for example, paying bills, purchasing goods, making appointments, seeing professionals, and ordering food, and were usually short in duration.

Haydar's example is characteristic of all the five participants. Much of the subject matter discussed during Haydar's pragmatic interactions reflects day-to-day business (*to get coffee, printing coloured cards, to reserve a table, to repair my son's iPod, getting food*) [Haydar, diary entries], as well as his interest, expertise and part-time work in information technology (website design, website use, and computer program design). This is consistent with literature that describes Saudi men as undertaking most of the day-to-day business for their families out in public as part of Saudi cultural norms (Al Lily, 2011). Undertaking the day-to-day business means that Saudi men move around the community interacting in English. Whilst this physical movement resembles the

notion of action in the community of practice, the following situational analysis sheds insights on the quality of such participation.

Subject matter and casual conversation

While the participants in the study were similar in their experience of interacting on day-to-day business, they varied considerably in their casual conversations. The number, length and subject matter of these conversations differed between participants. For example, Rushdi had long (many 30 min. to 1 hour), varied personal conversations. Ahmed reported shorter (a few minutes up to 20 min.), repetitive, generic, business-only related conversations. This is also evident in his interview in which he admitted that he moved around and interacted in the community but was engaged in more or less the same type of conversation each time.

... But it's short conversation. Yeah and it is ... a general things. These conversations repeat themselves. Nothing new. [Ahmed, Interview]

The subject matter was repetitive and general in nature rather than topical or personal. For example, in his diary Ahmed noted about his conversation with a barber:

We talked about my hair and about my study at UOW. [Ahmed, Diary entry]

In comparison, Hafiz had casual conversations that were 15-20 minutes in length, with one chat over coffee lasting 45 minutes. These casual conversations covered individual backgrounds, personal issues, personal experiences and cultural difference, topics that require personal investment and engagement with the exchange. For example, he described his conversation with former classmate at supermarket:

We were chatting about social life ... and I explain to him some of the issue that I faced there. [Hafiz, Interview conversation 2]

Subject matter is significant in considering the action of international students in interactions. Topics that are repetitive, impersonal and driven by the pragmatic activity indicate less engagement than those that are varied, personal, and context-dependent

such as cultural differences and personal issues. Passive engagement is problematic for meaningful social interaction (Chau et al., 2010). Initiating conversations on diverse, personal and topical subject matter, however, could be considered as active participation in the community.

Analysis of the *fields* of the men's interactions suggests that they are quite active in the community. They move around public and private spaces undertaking a variety of different language activities related to day-to-day business, hobbies and interests, and family. However, only those who engaged in casual conversations on personal, varied and context-dependent topics could be said to be demonstrating *action* in their interactions and participating in the local community of practice.

5.7.2 Interpersonal connection (Tenor)

In this section, the analysis seeks to portray the relationship roles as reflected in the reported interactions. The *tenor* analysis is discussed in four themes: pre-defined status relations; affective involvement in interpersonal relations; contact and familiarity; and affiliation.

Pre-defined status relations

The men's interactions were commonly characterised by functional roles which pre-defined unequal status relations. For example, in over half of Haydar's interactions, he was the customer in functional roles of customer/service or sales. In these routine roles, the sales person had some degree of authority or power over the situation (hotel receptionist, restaurant manager, real estate agents). When seeking advice from his children's teachers, speaking with an immigration officer, and attending a course as a student, he was also put in a less powerful position, experiencing pre-defined roles and unequal status relations.

The status of interactants is important due to the work of identity construction that occurs through interaction (Eggins & Slade, 1997). As argued by Eggins and Slade (1997, p. 52), '[t]he construction of a social self through interaction involves taking on a recognised social role, and attributing to fellow interactants relevant social roles.' Language learners who experience only role relations such as customer/sales person or

doctor/patient with pre-defined identities, are largely precluded from the exploration of other social identities which is an important part of social participation. This is because our identities only emerge in relation to other identities within interaction (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Wenger, 1998).

In contrast to Haydar's experiences, Rushdi was engaged in interactions with more informal roles as he experienced interactions without set role relations with the members of his homestay family. Such interactions appeared to create affordances for the negotiation of social identity. A casual conversation with the female homestay host while they were watching television together is an example of this.

You know The Voice, the program The Voice? [Yeah] We were watching that and we had a chat. [Rushdi, Interview conversation 1]

She was so open about her relationships over her life and experiencing with people and countries. [Rushdi, Diary entry]

Rushdi also was able to move beyond pre-defined roles to turn pragmatic interactions into more lengthy casual conversations on more varied subject matter. Two interactions in which the interactants started out with customer/sales or service roles for pragmatic purposes, were shifted by Rushdi into casual conversations. In one, Rushdi called the man brother (bhai) in the man's native language, thereby implying personal, and equal relations in his interactions.

I know some words in Indian so I start the conversation with him in these words like 'khaha la bhai', like 'how are you my brother.' Yeah, he likes it. He usually wants to talk more. [Rushdi, Interview conversation 1]

Coming together in interactions without set status relations allows for exploration of similarity and difference and the negotiation of social identity. It seems that experiencing only functional and pre-determined role relations limits the connections that can be made with English speakers, and therefore their participation in the community.

Affective involvement in interpersonal relations

Affective involvement is a dimension of the socially meaningful participant relationships of social interactions and influences the tenor of those interactions (Eggins & Slade, 1997). Often, the interpersonal relations experienced by the participant men in their English language interactions were quite impersonal as they were often strangers or distant acquaintances. This example from Riyadh illustrates the impersonal relations that he experienced.

This lady, she is from Germany and she is stay in Uni accommodation in Marketview ... She's room close to my home. But I don't ... me and her don't see each other. She's busy ... [Riyadh, Interview conversation 1]

Three of the men did experience interactions in English with affection (Rushdi, Hafiz and Riyadh). For example, Rushdi reveals his affection towards his homestay hosts and their family. His interactions with them were marked by humour (*he's so funny* [Rushdi, Interview conversation 1]; desire to share a joke with them), openness and a relaxed attitude (sharing personal stories while watching television).

Having affective involvement and emotional investment in an interlocutor is understood as contributing to connection in interactions.

Contact and familiarity

A key finding was that the interactions of participants were mostly isolated incidences, or one-off occurrences that did not feature regular contact or familiarity between interactants. These include day-to-day business with people in functional roles such as customer service assistants or sales people. Even if participants frequented a particular café, restaurant or shop, they might not interact with the same staff on each visit. In this way, a pragmatic focus to interactions does not promote repeated contact, the building-up of familiarity, and connection in interactions.

In this study, only two participants experienced a series of social interactions, extended over time that built up familiarity and developed a connection – Rushdi with his

homestay family and Riyadh with his close circle of friends. These interactions exhibited connection and therefore contributed to participation in the community.

The possible development of familiarity and connection through regular contact is best illustrated in Riyadh's friendship with Sarah, an Australian flatmate of another Saudi student. Shortly after the initial interview, Riyadh began interacting with Sarah whom he saw when visiting a Saudi friend. By the first interview conversation, Riyadh had not spent much time with her and did not have much to say about her except the ambiguous *Yeah, yeah she's very good*. [Riyadh, Interview conversation 1] Two weeks later he indicated that he liked her and had spent time with her: *I cooked there. No plan but we spent more than one hour talking and eating*. [Riyadh, Interview Conversation 2] During the final interview conversation, Riyadh indicated his increasing time spent with the group and Sarah. ... *we eat dinner. Every day. Sometimes, like Thursday we go to dinner outside*. [Riyadh, Interview conversation 3]

Regular contact and developing familiarity with English speakers can contribute to connection with them. As established previously, participation in a community of practice involves both action and connection (Wenger, 1998).

Orientation to affiliation

The fourth factor which influences the *tenor* of interactions stems from the inclination or disinclination to affiliate with interlocutors. 'Orientation to affiliation refers to the extent to which we seek to identify with the values and beliefs of those we interact with in different social contexts' (Eggins & Slade, 1997, p. 53). Orientation to affiliation can impact the tenor of interactions with English speakers by encouraging or preventing connection. The men in this study varied in their orientation to affiliate with English speaking Australians in the local community in a range from being well orientated, to not inclined to identify with them.

Rushdi, for example, appeared to be well orientated to affiliate with Australians. This affected the tenor of the interactions and the connections that were made. Rushdi placed great value on interactions and saw them as the key to his language development: ... *the first important things is to talk to people*. [Rushdi, Interview]

Rushdi desired the social aspects of interactions and sought to find common ground (or establish intersubjectivity in a sociocultural term) (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) in his interactions with locals, which in itself is a point of connection and demonstrates an orientation to affiliate with Australians. This affiliation was supported by Rushdi's belief that Saudis and Australians have far more things in common than are different. This is evident in this quote: *The kind of thinking is 80% the same and, I mean, the way that we think is the same.* [Rushdi, Interview]

Rushdi often made connections with strangers and invited people to socialise with him. The following example of interaction while sharing a *hookah*, or water pipe, at the beach with friends illustrates Rushdi's friendliness and openness to make connections, supporting the idea that Rushdi was well orientated to affiliate with others he interacted with. ... *he asked to join us to try this unique things. Um, and he tried it and he liked it and then he came back to visit [with] friends.* [Rushdi, Interview]

In contrast, Haydar seemed to demonstrate a different orientation – a disinclination to affiliate with Australians. Haydar appeared not to identify with the values and beliefs of Australians, which had implications for his participation. Through identification we determine the extent to which we invest ourselves in what we do and our relations with other people (Wenger, 1998). Thus, Haydar's lack of identification with Australians probably impacted both his action and his connection in the community. A perceived difference in culture appears to be a barrier to Haydar affiliating with Australians. *I try to make conversation with some people but here in Australia it's so hard to because different culture.* [Haydar, Interview] Specifically, Haydar saw that Australians' attitudes to life and priorities differed from his.

I think people here just want to drink at the bar. They just drinking and working. This is life. That's the problem. Just working all time, and weekend, just drink. We can't take that. What else? What about other things? [Haydar, Interview]

Haydar's lack of identification with Australian culture also stemmed from his religion. Haydar prayed the requisite five times a day, often at the mosque, attended the weekly

lecture at the Islamic centre, gave lectures at the mosque, and sent his children to school where they learnt Arabic and the *Qur'an*. Thus, he faced a conflict between the practices of the English speaking community and those with which he identified (Hodges, 1998). As a result, it seems that Haydar spent his time interacting with people who shared similar religious beliefs and values, that is, Muslims.

... actually majority of my time I spend it with Muslims community. [Haydar, Interview]

Diary records support this comment. Haydar had only two casual conversations in English during the study and one of these was with a Muslim man. From this it can be seen that in general, Haydar did not find opportunities to speak to Australians unless for a pragmatic reason. This preference for interacting with the Muslim community demonstrated a disinclination to make connections with Australians and dis-identification with the community of practice (Hodges, 1998) which impacted his participation.

In summary, despite being active in the community, in general the men appeared not to be experiencing much connection in their interactions. This conclusion was drawn through examination of the tenor of the participants' interactions that featured pre-defined role relations, little familiarity with interlocutors built up through regular contact, and few affective relationships with locals. An orientation to affiliation was also found to encourage or prevent connection.

5.8 Discussion and Conclusion

Mapping of the register of five Saudi Arabian students' English language interactions has revealed the nature of their interactions. Wenger (1998) refers to participation as a process of taking part (action) and relations with others (connection). Analysis has shown that in general, the Saudi men in this study somewhat actively took part in the local community but often could not establish connections with others.

While the men moved around the community interacting in English on a variety of topics proactively undertaking various language activities, most of their action was for

pragmatic purposes. Such pragmatic interactions were limited in their contribution towards participation due to the impersonal, superficial and repetitive subject matter, and often lasted for a short duration. As put aptly by Eggins and Slade (1997, p. 20), '[i]t is difficult to linguistically loiter once your task has been achieved'. On the other hand, the casual conversations recorded by participants in the study were longer, and on subject matter that was personal, diverse and on a range of topics. This type of subject matter requires engagement with both the topic and the interactional exchange. Thus, this type of interaction represents more extended action by international students and signifies their participation in the English language community. Thus, based on our findings, casual conversations were of higher quality than interactions for pragmatic purposes in terms of their length and subject matter and afforded more learning opportunities.

Casual conversations also represent quality interactions for the purposes of language learning as they allow for the important process of social identity negotiation and the formation of intersubjectivity through particular discourse (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). '[D]espite its sometimes aimless appearance and apparently trivial content, casual conversation is, in fact, a highly structured functionally motivated, semantic activity' (Eggins & Slade, 1997, p. 6). Casual conversation is motivated by interpersonal needs to continually establish who we are, how we relate to others and what we think of how the world is (Eggins & Slade, 1997). For Saudi international students as non-native speakers in a foreign country, their negotiation of identity and need to socially construct their reality would be at a peak. Discussing cultural difference, history, traditions and personal experiences with members of the local community (as did Rushdi, Hafiz and Riyad) exposes a process of reflecting and constituting their social world, and is indicative of participation in the local community.

Experiencing connection within interactions is also considered a characteristic of quality interactions as it contributes to the broader concept of participation in the local community. Many of the participants' interactions were isolated incidents with people who were distant and unattached. While such interactions can provide language learning practice and interactional benefits, without connection, participation in the local

community of practice cannot occur. For this reason, interactions within which there was connection are considered quality interactions for the purpose of language learning.

Interactions that are not bound by predetermined social roles are also considered as quality conversations for the purposes of language learning. Many of the men's interactions were constrained by established social roles (e.g. customer/sales or service). These roles limited the relations possible between interactants and restricted negotiation of social identity unless the participant was able to overcome fixed roles and establish common ground, as Rushdi did. However, when participants entered as strangers without pre-defined status relations, the social work of making sense of the world and identity construction was able to occur, as evidenced in the subject matter of the casual conversations between friends.

Considering orientation to affiliation suggests how individual differences can impact the nature and quality of interactions, and ultimately participation in language learning. Quality interactions are more likely to occur when a learner has a positive orientation to affiliation with members of the community. Examples from Rushdi and Haydar demonstrate how their identification with Australians determined whether conversations were started with strangers and whether pragmatic interactions were capitalised-on and turned into higher quality casual conversations. Given the limited and arguably incorrect perceptions that Haydar has about Australians, time spent engaged in real, personal, quality conversations with Australians might allow for greater understanding about Australians and open up a space for some identification with them. This new identification might create a spiral of learning about, orienting with, and connection, connection that would allow for participation in the English language community of practice and participation in learning.

To increase the potential of international students' language learning through engagement with the English speaking community, ways need to be found to encourage and support these students to have casual conversations with English speakers. Repetitive pragmatic interactions of low quality do not necessarily contribute to language learning. Learners need opportunities to participate in casual conversation and make real connections with members of the local English speaking community in order

to obtain the benefits of participation, which is essential for English language development. Programs that support students' repeated regular contact with a small number of community members rather than larger isolated mix-and-mingle events, might help achieve this. So too, might programs that match international students with locals with whom they are likely to share common interests and experiences and develop meaningful relationships with. The University of Newcastle's *Community Connections* program in Australia (Gresham & Clayton, 2011) is founded on these ideas and is reporting success in assisting international students to develop interpersonal connectedness with locals. A significant outcome of the program for international students has been significant gains in English language proficiency, suggesting that such a program has the potential to support international students' language development during their study abroad.

The application of the SFL concept of *Register* to identifying the *action* and *connection* in concept of participation (Wenger, 1998) provided an additional way to determine and describe quality interactions. By doing so, this paper offers a new perspective on understanding the nature of language learner interactions. Further application to other groups of learners will refine and develop the criteria for analysis and our understandings of what constitutes quality participation.

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Addendum to Chapter 5

This addendum contains two aspects to the findings addressing the first research question that were not included in the journal article. The first section lays out the nature of the participation of female Saudi Arabian international students. The women's data was not included in the article to allow for a discussion that was not complicated by gender issues. The second section presents the findings in relation to the *mode* of participants' interactions, that is, the role that language played in the interactions. It was not included in the article due to the word limitations of the publishing journal. These extra sections of data are presented here to answer the first research question and to establish the nature of participation of this cohort before continuing the thesis to examine the factors that might influence it.

5.9 Participation of Female Saudi Arabian International Students

The participation of female Saudi international students in the local English speaking community of practice occurs along a continuum from relative isolation from English speakers through to moderate activity within the community. Analysis shows that although most of the women move around within the community, they do not come together with members of the local English speaking community in casual conversation nor experience connection in their interactions with them. As discussed previously in this chapter, these aspects characterise quality participation and ultimately represent participation in language learning.

5.9.1 Sociocultural action (Field)

Diary records of the male and female participants in this study reveal differences in the number of interactions that they had in the English speaking community. The men reported an average of 23 interaction episodes each during the six-week period whereas the women recorded just over half that many, averaging 13 interactions each. The number of the men's interactions ranged from 12 to 35 whereas the number of interactions of the women varied from 3 to 25. Table 8 below shows the number of interactions each participant recorded.

Table 8: Number of interactions by participant

Participant (female)	Interactions	Participant (male)	Interactions
Habibah	25	Rushdi	12
Aamina	18	Haydar	26
Jahira	6	Riyad	35
Medina	15	Ahmed	28
Raabia	3	Hafiz	16
Average	13		23

The female Saudi Arabian international students in this study interacted in a variety of public and private places in the community such as: their homes, leisure centre, shopping mall, special events, clinics, restaurants and cafes, schools, beaches, and gym. They did so while having swimming lessons, getting treatment, purchasing goods, consulting a doctor, meeting with teachers, hosting people in their homes and training at a gym. These activities seem to be related to their leisure activities (e.g. swimming, gym training, shopping, special events and outings), and personal or children's health (e.g. laser treatment, doctors' appointments). There were a few examples of the women going about day-to-day business; in the cases of two participants only (Jahira and Medina), for example, dealing with mobile phone connection, health insurance, and rent, however, these things were largely missing from the female participants' diary records of English language interactions. This is unlike what was experienced by the men as discussed in 5.7.1 (Going about day-to-day business) and may be attributable to differences in Saudi gender roles. This issue is explored fully in Chapter 6.

Similar to the sociocultural action of the men was that most of the interactions that the women had during the study period were for pragmatic purposes such as purchasing goods, making inquiries, seeking medical advice or treatment, and discussing children's schooling.

Asked her about some products. I got some useful information. [Aamina, Diary entry]

I ask her if I can replace the t-shirt if the size is not good. [Habibah, Diary entry]

To order hazelnut latte. [Jahira, Diary entry]

Making an appointment for physiotherapy. [Medina, Diary entry]

The pragmatic conversations were on mundane topics such as mobile phone use, food and beverages, health issues, travel, and often required use of the language of transacting. These interactions are characterised by a short length, routine nature and everyday language use. The primarily pragmatic nature of the female participants' conversations was the same as those experienced by the male participants.

Also comparable to the experience of the men was that the female participants did not commonly engage in casual conversations, where participants come together to relate to each other. Areej recorded no casual conversations; Medina, 1, Hadba, 2, Raabia, 3, and Habibah, 5 casual conversations which lasted from a few minutes to 1.25 hours. The casual conversations that the women had, however, were more likely to be on personal and meaningful topics such as relationships, religion, family, politics, study and everyday life. Habibah spoke about her interaction with her neighbour in her home.

He just ask to open [the door] and excuse to sit with is. He was very angry because his wife will leave and he was very sad. He talk about many things and he was very confused. Talk about political and suddenly about our religion then about his life etc. [Habibah, Interview conversation 3]

The depth and breadth of subject matter within casual conversation Habibah experienced was evident in her conversations at a fundraising event. *We talk about our life, study, family, Wollongong, religion, all in English.* [Habibah, Diary entry] Another participant, Aamina, also discussed broader subject matter with her swimming teacher who was interested in finding out about her life.

O: What did she ask you questions about?

A: About the customs, about ... anything. About my hair, my clothes

[Aamina, Interview conversation 1]

In summary, the female participants' interactions in the community were mostly related to their and their children's activities, which were in contrast to the men's, which were primarily on household business matters. This difference in participation is explored in the following chapter. Similar to the men's interactions however, was the primarily pragmatic nature of the interactions rather than casual conversations, which have benefits for language development and identity negotiation, as argued in Section 5.8 above.

5.9.2 Interpersonal connection (Tenor)

Within the interactions, the women experienced mostly predetermined and unequal role relations which is similar to the male participants' experience outlined in Section 5.7.2 above. Many interactions involved customer/service roles with the other having some degree of experience or expertise used by the women. The women also experienced power differences in the roles of student/teacher (swimming lessons), patient/doctor, and parent/teacher.

There were some examples of the women coming into relationships as equals, however. These were either with friends or strangers met in public. Aamina had only one experience of equal relations in English. She chatted to a stranger for 20 minutes in the mall as their children played together. Habibah also came into interactions as equals with strangers out in public. Medina and Raabia were the only two participants who reported interacting in English with friends. Even then, they had only one friend each and interacted with that one only a few times during the study. Raabia's Kenyan *friend* was also a student, English language learner, mother, international student, and an equal. Medina's friend Audrey studied with her and they continued to meet socially. These relations were characterised by equality and some affective involvement.

However, the majority of interactions in English undertaken by the women did not involve any level of affection with their interlocutors. They were mostly impersonal, isolated, one-off encounters with strangers. The people with whom the women had high affective involvement and regular contact, that is, close friends and family, were spoken-to in Arabic. Raabia described how she unsuccessfully tried to speak in English at home with her husband and sons.

Sometimes I ask him, you are an English teacher, speak with me in English and he say yes and we promise each other to speak in English. So we start the day just one hour then I can't continue because I can't fight with English. We keep fighting so I can't fight with you. It's easy just to go back to your language and just say the words quickly. [Raabia, Interview 1]

My other friends, their kids like to speak English, in English at home but my kids, no. So, they help her even she's not a student. They help her. Her English very good because (they speak it at home). They fight in English, they make everything in English. [Raabia, Interview 1]

There are some relations in which some level of affection could be involved due to regular or intermittent contact. Habibah may have had some friendliness towards her swimming teacher, gym trainer, neighbour, doctor, and her son's teacher. However, Habibah didn't actually express any affection towards these people in the interviews. In two cases Habibah expressed a lack of connection. For example, of her neighbour she said,

I don't know what I can say. He was very sad. I feel sorry for him but he also have wrong and bad ideas about Islam and he said to us in our home without giving us any chances to explain for him. [Habibah, Interview conversation 3]

And of her gym trainer, She was totally unpolite [sic]. I don't know why. I know her before she is my trainer but I am sure she had something bad in this day. [Habibah, Diary entry]

Jahira too experienced a connection that was negative and undesirable. During the study, Jahira had an altercation with a neighbour about the cleaning of the carpet in the lift and his subsequent harassment of her. *He was very rude person and I shout on them on words that I know. [Jahira, Diary entry]* This argument ended only when Jahira called the police to resolve the dispute. *I called the police to stop my neighbour from harassing me. [Jahira, Diary entry]* Coming up against her neighbour involved relations

of power, force, and expertise. The Australian male had physical size and strength, experience in these matters, fluent English and citizenship over Jahira, a young, female, non-resident. The police, when they arrived, had authority over the situation and over Jahira. This relationship with her neighbour was negatively affectively-charged and probably would remain so until one of them moved away.

As with the men's interactions, within the women's English-language interactions there was little evidence of connection between participants. Most of the interactions were with strangers or professionals with whom there was little affective involvement. Furthermore, the interactions were often isolated events with the participants coming together involuntarily in unequal role relationships. Medina and Raabia seem fortunate each to have made connection with a peer that extended beyond the classroom, which allowed for quality interactions.

In summary, even though the women moved around the community somewhat, they did not have high quality interactions in which they conversed casually on personal and meaningful subjects, nor did they make connections with members of the target language community. Without this connection, the women did not experience participation in the local English speaking community of practice and therefore little opportunity to maximise their situated language learning. This is similar to the conclusion drawn about the participation of the male participants and, at this stage of the analysis, is a generalisation that can be said to apply to this cohort as a whole.

5.10 Role of Language (Mode)

The *mode* of interactions describes the medium through which they occur and the role that language plays in them. The primary medium of interaction for all of the participants of this study (both male and female) was face-to-face. While participants did record some communication via other mediums such as via telephone, SMS, social media, email, and Skype, interactions with members of the community largely occurred in person. Table 9 displays the mediums through which participants' interactions occurred.

Table 9: Medium of interactions

Participant (female)	Face-to-face	Other modes	Participant (male)	Face-to-face	Other modes
Habibah	20	5	Rushdi	12	0
Aamina	18	0	Haydar	18	8
Jahira	3	3	Riyad	33	2
Medina	11	4	Ahmed	26	2
Raabia	2	1	Hafiz	14	2

Most of the English language interactions reported by the Saudi participants were with native speakers (or those whose fluency was of such a high standard that it was hard to identify whether or not they were second language speakers) (see Table 10). Hafiz, Rusdhi, Haydar, and Ahmed each reported a few instances of speaking English with another non-native speaker, and these were primarily with other international students. On two occasions Habibah interacted with other Muslims who did not speak Arabic. Although they shared a common religion, their first languages were different, and English acted as the mode of communication.

Table 10: Language background of interactants

Participant (female)	English native (like) speaker interactant	Non-English native speaker interactant	Participant (male)	English native (like) speaker interactant	Non-English native speaker interactant
Habibah	21	4	Rushdi	9	2
Aamina	18	0	Haydar	18	4
Jahira	6	0	Riyad	26	9
Medina	15	0	Ahmed	26	2
Raabia	0	3	Hafiz	14	2

Riyad and Raabia, however, exhibited different participation patterns within which the English language often worked as a common tool for communication for the interactants. Riyad's diary shows that 30% of his English language interactions were with other non-native speakers of English. These primarily included interactions with international student residents of his student accommodation, other international students at a weekly university volleyball competition, and within his close circle of friends, which comprised Australian native speakers and Saudi Arabians. Raabia too, experienced the use of English as a mode of communication between speakers of other languages. Raabia's only English language conversations away from campus were with

another international student, a Kenyan classmate. In these cases, English operated as a shared language through which meaning was created between students of different first languages.

Chapter Summary

This chapter showed that the Saudi participants in this study varied in their interactions with English speaking members of the community. However, in general, participants demonstrated some levels of activity in the community but did not experience connection with members of it. Without action and connection, quality participation in the practices of the community does not occur. This chapter makes a contribution to knowledge by outlining the characteristics of quality interactions for the purpose of language learning.

This chapter has established the nature and extent of the interactions of the participants. The following two chapters address the factors that influence the interactions and broader participation of the participants in the local community.

CHAPTER 6: CULTURE AND IDENTITY – CHANGING AND EVOLVING ACROSS CULTURES

Chapter Introduction

As established in Chapter 2, sociolinguistic second language research (e.g. Duff, 2007; Morita, 2009; Pon et al., 2003) suggests that the second language learners' original culture can influence how they participate in target language communities and in their learning. This is particularly important when considering learners with significant cultural difference from the target language group, such as Saudi Arabian international students. In addition, research demonstrates that investment, desire or commitment, in learning a language is intricately connected to learners' identities that might affect their participation in language learning (Gu, 2008; Haneda, 2005; Norton & Toohey, 2011).

This chapter examines how the traditional culture and identities of Saudi Arabian international student participants impact their interactions in the local community and their investment in learning English. The findings fall into three categories: continuity of cultural practices and identities; shifting practices, identifications and values; and imagined identities and language practice.

The themes presented in this chapter were constructed during a thematic analysis of the interviews and interview conversations with all participants. Significant data in relation to identity were created during the interviews in relation to two vignettes which participants were asked to read and respond-to (see Section 3.6.1 for more detail). The experiences of two male Saudi international students, 'Latif' and 'Rashad' were presented in one paragraph each (Appendix v) and are summarised below:

'Latif' has many Australian friends, enjoys socialising at nightclubs and bars with them and values the friendships and language development opportunities they provide.

‘Rashad’ has only Saudi friends and feels strongly that he should maintain his religion and culture while in Australia even if it means that his English language opportunities are limited.

Participants were then asked: What do you think of the experiences of these men in Australia?

6.1 Continuity of Cultural Practices and Identities

Aspects of traditional Saudi culture are evoked and continue through the cross-cultural experience. For some participants, the Saudi identity also endures. This section examines how Saudi gender roles, the practice of gender segregation, traditional dress, and a desire to maintain a Saudi identity impact the participation in the local community of the Saudi participants of this study.

6.1.1 Saudi gender roles

Male participants had, on average, more interactions during the study period than did the female participants (see Section 5.9.1). The analysis of the diary entries and interview data revealed that a potential explanation for this might be traditional Saudi gender roles.

When in Australia the Saudi students in this study appeared largely to maintain their traditional roles and responsibilities. For male students it meant continuing to be responsible for the public sphere of business, religion and politics on behalf of the family. For women, it meant continuing responsibilities in the private sphere, the home. The well-defined gender roles of men and women in Saudi Arabia are expressed in a division of Saudi life into public and private spheres. Men are concerned with the outdoor world and women with what happens indoors (Al Lily, 2011). The public sphere is the area of business, religion and political activity and is the man’s domain. The indoor world is the woman’s domain and it is where her responsibilities lie (Alhazmi, 2010). It is not appropriate for a Saudi man to engage in domestic duties (Al-Khateeb, 1998).

The maintenance of traditional gender roles was reflected in the locations in which the participants interacted. The majority of the men's interactions occurred out in the public sphere: banks, restaurants, post offices, supermarket, and were for household business reasons such as paying bills, purchasing goods, making appointments, seeing professionals and ordering food. There were few examples of the women attending to business in the public sphere and they were in the cases of two participants only (Jahira and Medina). Overall, attending to business in the public sphere was largely missing from the diary records of female Saudis. It appears from the data that the men undertook most of the day-to-day business for their families out in public. Comments from two participants confirmed the division of labour in their households. Hafiz confided that he undertook the tasks in the public sphere while his wife only interacted there while shopping in the mall.

O: So, do you do most of the talking for these types of things – insurance and visa, that type of thing? Does your wife do much talking to these people?

H: My wife, she's talking in the mall.

O: And you do the business things?

H: Yeah. [Hafiz, Interview conversation 2]

Similarly, Raabia's household conformed to gender roles even though her husband encouraged her to go out and participate in the public sphere.

I wish I can go out and go to the mall. My husband, he encourages me to do things by myself. He keep asking me to ...for example ... to pay for the rent at the real estate. He asked me to, for example to go and communicate and do the things. He encourage me for example to pick my kids because he always pick my kids from the school, he has a good chatting with the parents. So he asked me to do that but really I ... I'm really busy [with my family]. [Raabia, Interview conversation 1]

The admission by Raabia here, *but really I ... I'm really busy* points to another aspect of the lives of female Saudi students that prevented them from greater interaction in the community. It too partly stems from Saudi gender roles.

Responsibility for the private sphere of a Saudi family appears to limit the time a female Saudi student has for interacting in English. As discussed earlier, responsibility for the private sphere requires undertaking all domestic duties and care for children. In addition to full-time postgraduate study in a second language, keeping up with these duties limits the time a Saudi woman has for her own recreation – meeting friends, hobbies, and other leisure pursuits. Indeed, diary analysis found that only three Saudi women reported English interactions in the private sphere (either in own home or cafe) and then it was only one each, except for Raabia who had three. Comments from female participants expressed the challenge of private sphere responsibilities and study.

...I'm really busy with my family. I have just to do my work at University, go back and take care of my family, so I don't have that much communicate outside my home, you know, because I'm so busy. Maybe my friends they don't have kids or something, they are more free than me. They can go outside, spend time outside with friends more than me. [Raabia, Interview 2]

I hope talk very well. When I talk I want talk faster and ... but I think it's difficult. (O: Why is it difficult?) Because really I can't make relationship with the people outside and I'm busy. I'm busy really, with my daughter(s), and with my study and with my husband. Just I'm writing. [Aamina, Interview 1]

Saudi women's responsibility for the private sphere is more challenging when in Australia due to a lack of support. In Saudi Arabia, the women have support from their family and network of friends, which eases their burden of taking care of the private sphere. *There is a lot of support from the family rather than here.* [Raabia, Interview 1] In Saudi culture, '[a] mother is not the only person who takes care of children since a grandmother, an aunt and domestic help share this responsibility as well' (Al-Khateeb, 1998, p. 178). Hafiz expressed the difficulty of caring for a new baby, his first, without the help and guidance of family:

H: Also we learn from the childcare how dealing with the baby, how sleep her. Yeah, you know it's the first baby to me and still you have to deal with the baby

and you're not here. Just me and my wife to help us, nobody to learn us. And also it's difficult to call your family 'how can I do this?' and 'how can I do this?' Yeah and different time between us and my country. It's now 11 here morning. In my country it's 4 morning.

O: So you can't say 'My baby is sick, what do I do?'

H: You can't, you can't. It's really sad. [Hafiz, Interview]

Furthermore, responsibility for the personal sphere is more difficult in Australia without paid help to assist with household duties, a practice that Saudi women are accustomed to at home. Due to the affluence from oil money, it is common for Saudis to have hired help within the home (Al-Khateeb, 1998). 'Many Saudi women depend on domestic helpers to clean the house, wash and iron clothes and take care of children' (Al-Khateeb, 1998, p. 182). Jahira expressed the challenge of studying, and taking care of her home and sick mother without assistance from hired help.

But she's now old and because she's older and sick and I try to make comfort for her. This is the difficult thing that I've found here. Because in my country we have a driver and housekeeper always in my home. When I come here I find it difficult. And it's too (difficult) to bring housekeeper with us. Too many things to do. [Jahira, Interview 1]

Saudi Arabian women face a significant task caring for children, maintaining the home, and studying at a postgraduate level in a second language without any hired assistance or extended family to assist them. In this way, Saudi women's traditional role as maintaining the home influences the extent to which they are able to interact and participate in the local community.

The following section examines the extent to which another aspect of Saudi culture, that of gender segregation, influences the participation of Saudi students in Australia.

6.1.2 Practice of gender segregation

The practice of gender segregation in Saudi Arabia prescribes patterns of participation for Saudi men and women when in their home country. Apart from when in the

company of family in the home, Saudi men and women do not mix. *I don't travel to western country. I don't deal with women.* [Haydar, Interview] Analysis of diary records and interview transcripts shows that this practice of gender segregation influences how Saudi international students participate during their sojourn in Australia.

Many of the interactions of the participants did not require them to interact across gender lines, thereby maintaining their experience of gender segregation. For most participants, significant relationships such as those based on friendship (as experienced by Raabia, Medina, and Hafiz) were same-gender ones. Five participants did not record any (Raabia) or any significant (Haydar, Medina, Habibah, and Aamina) interactions with the opposite sex. In some of the interactions, the gender of the interactant was aligned with an occupation or role, for example, female beauty therapist, male mechanic, and cross-gender relations weren't an issue. In some, students could choose a provider of the same gender (e.g. swimming teacher, gym instructor). Other encounters were fast, routine and superficial such as goods purchase, inquiry with receptionist, and food order, and required only a little engagement across genders. Furthermore, Habibah, Raabia and Aamina were veiled in public, achieving the veil's purpose to 'hide away' (Pharaon, 2004, p. 360) the women from the opposite sex. Thus, participants' experiences of interactions in the community were largely same-sex or ones that did not require much engagement with the opposite sex.

Although this study did not seek to examine Saudi students' interactions with their co-nationals (unless interactions occurred in English), data indicates that Saudi students spend time with other Saudis of their gender. There is evidence that Saudi international students spend leisure time in same-sex groupings despite no longer being bound by gender-segregation policies. In her interview, Habibah describes how Saudi students separate along gender lines.

O: Do you have friends over often?

H: Yes, my country, here, yes, a lot. Every Friday we sit together in one home. We are seven womens. It's like order. Me this week, you next week.

O: What do your husbands do?

H: Go with his friend. But they don't have to sit at home like us.

O: They can go out?

H: Yeah, maybe something like mosque or the university or beach or coffee. We go to coffee but on the day, not the night. We can't do this. [Habibah, Interview 1]

This quote shows that Saudi students socialise separately with the women gathering in the private sphere and the men socialising in the public world. Jahira's interview comment confirms this behaviour:

Saudi women here, they always together. And, like every week they meet together and they don't look for international people. [Jahira, Interview conversation 1]

Likewise, a separation of the genders was found in the diary records of the female participants' English language interactions. Analysis of the women's interactions in English showed that they spent time with other women shopping. All of the women (except Raabia) recorded interactions around shopping. Saudi women also spent time together whilst undertaking other leisure activities. The women attended or had attended a woman's gym, and taken swimming lessons in all-female classes at a pool which was open to them after hours:

It is school for swimming ... but because I can't go to the water without covering something like this we ... We discussed this with the owner of this [pool], and because she closed at 6, she opened for us from 6 to 7. [Habibah, Interview 1]

Another example of the maintenance of gender separation between Saudis in Australia was an outing undertaken by 17 Saudi families to a farmstay that Habibah described here:

O: 17 families. Who organised that?

H: Our club. Saudi club here. Just book and say who need to go, pay and enrol your name. And divided the work between the families – you need to bring this, you need to bring this, you need to bring this. And we live 2 days separate. All

women in big house and all men in big house. Because it's funny. Usually in our home me with my husband. But I need to make it a little bit separate. A holiday from my husband. It was great!

O: And the children with the women?

H: With women or with man. Come either. And we don't cook. Man cook for us. And we have a lot of activity like ... I don't know what is this name? [Mimes shooting an arrow] and they feed and make nursing but I didn't do this - I was in my IELTS exam. But we enjoy. At night we sit around the fire. It's wonderful!

[Habibah, Interview conversation 1]

Habibah's recount shows that Saudi men and women continue to socialise separately. This finding is supported by Hall's (2013) US study which found that Saudi men spent the largest part of their time with other Saudi men. Interacting primarily with people of the same gender limits the types of participation experienced by learners of English. Furthermore, when those people are co-culturals and the first language is spoken during exchanges, development of the target language does not occur.

Although reports of significant cross-gender interactions in the participants' diaries were rare, the ones recorded demonstrate an interruption to Saudi norms of gender segregation, which opened up opportunities for participation. Participants were able to experience interacting across genders when associating with their children's teachers (Ahmed) or carers (Hafiz), at international student volleyball games (Riyad), student accommodation (Riyad), and events (Ahmed), and with neighbours (Jahira), host family members (Rushdi), and friendship groups (Ahmed, Riyad). These interactions provided opportunities for quality interaction (as defined in Chapter 5) due to the nature of the subject matter, affordances for casual conversation, and the development of familiarity and affective involvement. The best opportunities for interaction across genders appear to be afforded by residence outside Saudi family units.

Despite being in a foreign country, Saudi international students appear to maintain the structure of their traditional family units and this may have had implications for their participation. Unlike the majority of international students in higher education in Australia who are young (85 per cent are aged 20-29, AEI, 2011) the Saudi Arabian

participants in this study were older, brought their families with them and resided in nuclear family units. Seven out of the ten participants lived with their spouses and children in private accommodation, a situation similar to what would have existed in their home country. Historically, Saudis lived in extended families, however, recently nuclear family units are the norm (Al-Khateeb, 1998). Jahira too, although unmarried, lived with the same family unit that she would have at home (i.e. with her mother and younger unmarried brother). The exception to staying within family units were Rushdi, who resided in a homestay, and Riyadh whose family had been in Australia but at the time of the study had returned to Saudi Arabia and left him living alone in student accommodation. These two students recorded interacting across genders that stemmed from the affordances of their living situation.

The participants who resided in ‘student accommodations’ were afforded opportunities to interact across genders. As a result of his residence in homestay accommodation, Rushdi was afforded the opportunity to interact with the female host of the home and her mother. In addition to providing Rushdi with experience interacting with the opposite sex, these interactions could be considered quality ones for the purpose of language learning, as they were casual conversations which allowed for opportunities for connection (see Chapter 5). On one occasion, Rushdi *had a chat* to the female host whilst watching television and *She was so open about her relationships over her life and experiencing with people and countries*. [Rushdi, Diary entry] Another time, Rushdi spoke with the mother of his host *She just came from USA. She likes to play golf so she went there. I think she went to a competition, a golf competition in Washington*. [Rushdi, Diary entry] These interactions represent significant crossing of gender segregation boundaries that Rushdi would have experienced to date.

Riyadh too experienced opportunities to interact with the opposite sex as a result of his residential situation. Residing in an apartment in a student accommodation block, he had opportunities to interact with females, other international student residents. He was involved with female students at a meeting to *discuss about kitchen rules* [Riyadh, Diary entry], and at a party for their floor, *they made a party, food in our accommodation*. [Riyadh, Diary entry] He met them within the building and around town (e.g. on the bus, *We talked about the uni and the accommodation*). [Riyadh, Diary entry] Furthermore,

Riyad had a small group of friends, one of whom was a female Australian, with whom he regularly interacted. These friends cooked, dined out and spoke English together. As his family was in Saudi Arabia, Riyad had the opportunity to develop this friendship group and spend time with them. Thus, Riyad's residential situation allowed him to modify patterns of participation stemming from gender segregation more easily than other participants who maintained their traditional family units. This finding is supported by that of Giroir (2014) and O'Loughlin and Arkoudis (2009) who found that accommodation style influenced Saudi (and other) international students' opportunities for interactions with others and speaking skill gains. It appears that Saudi students in Australia who maintain the structure of the family unit forgo affordances for participation resulting from homestay or student accommodation situations.

The first two sections have examined the influence of Saudi gender roles and gender segregation practices on how Saudi Arabian international students interact in Australia. It has shown that they largely maintain a separation of the sexes during their study sojourn. From this analysis it appears that the cultural norms regarding gender continue to influence the behaviour of Saudis in Australia. The next section explores the extent to which another aspect of Saudi culture – Saudi traditional dress, has influenced the experience of the participants in their local communities.

6.1.3 Traditional dress

Another aspect of Saudi culture, which is potentially influential in the new context is Saudi traditional dress. Chapter 4 proposed that the wearing of the veil (or not) influenced the nature of female participants' involvement in research interviews. This section builds on this and shows how Saudi traditional dress affects participants' interactions and participation in the English language community.

The national dress of the Saudi people was made uniform early in the twentieth century when it was required that men wear the *thobe*, long tunic or robe, and women observe the veil (Al Lily, 2011; Al-Khateeb, 1998). In mixed-gender public spaces, women are required to be draped in the abaya, to cover their hair with a hijab and to veil their whole face with a niqab (Al Lily, 2011). In this study, whether or not participants wore traditional dress was identified as a factor that potentially impacted their participation.

The findings from this study suggest that wearing the full expression of the Saudi public dress for women, that is, abaya, hijab and niqab, when in Australia, influenced participants' involvement in the community as it exposed them to racist attitudes. Two female participants in this study, who veiled in public, reported experiencing negative reactions and verbal assaults when wearing their traditional dress. Habibah reported being the victim of negative comments from people outside the university campus.

In the beginning, yeah, I face really big problem, not inside the college and university, but outside when I have shopping or go just for my son's school or hospital. Some people doesn't say anything but some people say bad thing.

[Habibah, Interview 1]

Habibah describes the verbal insults, *bad thing[s]* as a *big problem* for her initially. It is unclear whether the comments ceased or Habibah became immune to them. Likewise, another participant, Raabia, experienced negative reactions from strangers. In this extract she reluctantly admits as such.

R: I think all Australians respect me, respect my hijab and that's really good things. Just a few people think I'm strange or something. And the most of them, they are very respectful.

O: Excellent. So you've been here four years, and in four years, how many times you would say that you've experienced something negative?

R: Ah...for what, from what?

O: About your wearing the hijab ...

R: No, as I just said, they respect me.

O: Excellent. You said there were a few people?

R: Just a few people, they may say rude words or something but they don't ...

O: In public?

R: Yes, in public. But they didn't do rude things, just say word, rude word.

[Raabia, Interview 2]

Raabia admitted that people had said *rude word* to her as a result of her traditional dress but was reluctant to elaborate on these incidences. Comments from Habibah about the experiences of her friends shed light on the *rude word[s]* and *bad thing[s]* that these women might have been subjected to. Apparently for her friends, ... *people stop in front of them and say, 'Go [back to] your country' and 'Don't come here'*. [Habibah, Interview 1] Comments such as these convey some Australians' attitudes towards the practice of veiling (UMR Research, 2010).

In addition to sustaining open negativity towards their traditional Saudi dress, veiled participants also experienced distance and aloofness from English speakers in the community, which they attributed to their clothing. Aamina reported that her neighbours wouldn't talk with her and suggested her veiling was the reason.

A: Yeah, I don't know. I think my neighbours won't show me, don't talk with me.

O: Maybe they're just not nice?

A: I don't know. Maybe because I'm wear the hijab and cover my face? I think this is the major reason. [Aamina, Interview 1]

Habibah too, experienced reservation from the people she met and similarly attributed it to her veiling.

H: ... in the beginning I imagined I can contact, not just inside the class, even outside the class but later I find it is hard, not all people need to contact with me. Maybe especially because of my clothes, I don't know. I cover my face outside. [Habibah, Interview 1]

The impact on participation of outright verbal assaults and the more subtle unwillingness of people to interact with veiled participants is complex. In the interview, Raabia sought to highlight Australians' positive attitudes towards her: *I think all Australians respect me, respect my hijab*. [Raabia, Interview 2] This comment and Raabia's downplaying of her negative experiences suggests that she worked to overlook and set aside the adverse behaviour of the minority. However, data from the diary analysis showed that Raabia had very low levels of participation in the community. In

fact, in the six-week study period, she recorded only three English language interactions, all with a Kenyan classmate (on the phone, in her own home, and at the beach). It is possible that this lack of interacting in the Australian community may stem from how Raabia is received in it as a result of her traditional dress. Raabia attributes her lack of interactions to time restrictions: her own *really I'm busy* [Raabia, Interview 1], and Australians' *they are very busy*. [Raabia, Interview 1] However, it is likely that social and cultural factors also play a role in limiting Raabia's participation.

Negative reactions to Saudi traditional dress might not impact overall participation but certain facets of it. Habibah reported that the negative reactions of people out in public made her fearful and limited her mobility outside her home.

H: I have to be careful sometimes because I'm Muslim, I'm woman and ... yeah.

O: You don't feel as safe as you did at home?

H: Not at night. Sometimes not at day.

O: Wow ... what makes you feel unsafe?

H: Some people shout me until make me very scary. I go hurry from this place. It not always happen but when it happen it make me scared and just keep [me] home. I don't go outside my home alone, or not even walking, maybe after eight.
[Habibah, Interview 2]

This comment reveals that people shouting at her on the street made Habibah scared and reluctant to move around out in public, especially at night. However, despite this fear and self-imposed restriction on movement, Habibah had the highest number of interactions of all the female participants – 25 for the duration of the study. Close examination of the interactions shows that they often occurred 'inside', at swimming classes, a women-only gym, shopping mall, and practitioners' clinics, places possibly protected from verbal insults from passers-by. In this way, Habibah's traditional dress influenced the nature of her interactions in the community.

Not wearing Saudi traditional dress allows students to conceal their nationality from interlocutors, which also has implications for their participation. The researcher observed that many of the participants in this study did not continue to adhere strictly to

traditional Saudi garb as part of their everyday dress in Australia. None of the men wore the thobe (male Saudi traditional dress) and two of the women did not observe the veil at our meetings on campus or at public places. Those two female participants dressed modestly in jeans or pants and covered their hair with a scarf. This is an interpretation of *hijab* practised by Malay or Indonesian Muslims and is one familiar and comfortable for westerners (Alkharusi, 2013). Despite being more acceptable, a headscarf still identifies its wearer as Muslim and leaves them open to racialised attitudes and stereotypes (Asmar et al., 2004). On the other hand, the Saudi men who disregard traditional dress can be ‘invisible.’ In the present study, the men blended in with other male students on campus by wearing jeans. Indeed, one participant reported being mistaken for Indian by members of the community. *They [Australians] consider me as an Indian ... most of them say I’m Indian.* [Rushdi, Interview] Ambiguity over cultural identity can help avoid negative perceptions and attention and promote interaction (Alkharusi, 2013). In this way, the wearing (or not) of traditional dress influences how Saudi international students interact in the community.

The traditional dress of Saudi international students, particularly veiling can influence their participation. Being veiled invited verbal abuse and distance from some members of the community towards female participants. While our understanding of the extent to which this impacted their participation remains incomplete, for one participant it certainly made her fearful and restricted her movements outside the home.

The following section builds upon these aspects of culture to examine the Saudi cultural identity and how it impacts participants’ approach to participating in the local community.

6.1.4 Saudi identity and maintenance of Saudi culture

Saudi Arabian international students bring with them an identity partly derived from their religion and the unique cultural practices of their country. During their studies, this identity is challenged by exposure to the culture and practices of the host community. The extent to which this identity and associated cultural practices are amended or maintained is of interest in understanding how they participate in the community and the language learning opportunities it provides. This section examines this experience

for three participants: Haydar (male), Ahmed (male), and Raabia (female) whose participation appeared to be influenced by their desire to maintain their Saudi identity and culture.

The participants, Saudi international students, are on a study sojourn, that is, they seek to obtain their qualification in Australia and return to Saudi Arabia. Some of them indicated that this temporary nature of their residence in Australia influences the degree to which they are willing to invest in learning English through participation in the English speaking community. For example, Riyadh expressed his focus on obtaining the degree and returning home:

... when I came here I just focus on study, finish, graduate and have to come back. [Riyad, Interview conversation 2]

He contrasted his goals and experiences to those of other international students who he saw as seeking permanent residency in Australia:

Chinese or other nationalities, they came here spend on the study and they are not looking for the high marks. They are looking for the part time job - long term stay. Different situations, quite different and different plan for the study. [Riyad, Interview conversation 2]

Similarly, Ahmed explains that he desired to return to his old life in Saudi Arabia on completion of his studies:

I will be happy because I will see my friends, my family, my parents and I will come again to my lifestyle. I have a house there. I don't have to rent like here.
[Ahmed, Interview]

Ahmed reported having missed his house, lifestyle, friends, and family while in Australia. *I will come again to my lifestyle* indicated that Ahmed planned to return home after his sojourn and take up the practices and patterns of his life before he left. Hall (2013), who researched male Saudi students studying in the US, found that they did not

think that they could transfer changes they had adopted while in the US to their lives once back at home. They believed that pressure from family and friends would prevent them from integrating aspects of their sojourn experience. It seems then, that Saudi students might not want to, or might not be able to transfer aspects of Australian culture to their Saudi lives. Thus, an inevitable return to Saudi Arabia and a Saudi lifestyle supports the maintenance of Saudi culture and identity throughout the sojourn experience.

Furthermore, the data demonstrates that Saudi students' strong sense of cultural and religious identity promotes the need to maintain their Saudi cultural style of behaviour during their study sojourn. For example, Ahmed foregrounded an identity based on his culture and religion and his response to the vignette highlighted the importance of this identity to him.

I think Latif maybe he like this way ... But ...for me, I can't lose my religion and my culture, for language. Then I will continue my life without any identity.

Because my values start from my religion and my culture. This is my opinion.

[Ahmed, Interview]

For Ahmed, the foundation of his values was his religion and culture, which he would not compromise. He prioritised his culture and identity over other goals such as language learning. As a result of this, Ahmed would invest in learning another language only when it did not compromise his identity.

Similarly, Haydar's response to the vignette highlighted the importance of maintaining his Saudi identity and values through this experience.

From an English language perspective, Latif can achieve his goal. But as you know, in our life we don't only have one goal. There are many goals. As Muslims, Latif is not good because he drink alcohol and go to bar. From Muslims view, there are other things we have to see, to look for. He is a young guy and maybe after five years will he go back to Saudi and he try to get Saudi culture again. But as I said Latif will get English better than Rashad. But

Rashad is a real Saudi guy because he save the real culture of Saudi as even he is here. [Haydar, Interview]

Here Haydar demonstrated his prioritising of *saving* Saudi culture over the learning of English during the sojourn experience. It is clear that Haydar saw the preservation of Saudi values and customs as his primary goal and success at this would define him as *a real Saudi guy*.

Likewise, Raabia, a female participant, disagreed with the approach of the vignette character Latif and supported that of Rashad, advocating the maintenance of the Saudi identity.

I'm with Rashad ... with some points. I can make friends but I don't have to just follow my Australian friends and change my ... religion just to improve my English ... But with Latif, I'm not agree with him because I think ... he has to be ... more strong and believe in his religion. Don't, just because he want to improve him English he can change his religion – no. I'm with Rashad ...
.[Raabia, Interview 2]

But what should I say ... actually we are really sad about the people that go the same way with Latif because as I just say there's a lot of things to do rather than just follow the culture and change the ... change the religion. [Raabia, Interview 2]

In this response to the vignette Raabia revealed her strong Saudi identity and the importance of her religion to her identity. She also indicated her belief of maintenance of religion over other goals such as language learning.

The prioritising of Saudi culture by these participants was evident in data that indicated that they spent considerable time with other Saudis, Arabs or Muslims. Raabia admitted to having only Saudi and Arabic friends.

Saudi friends. Ah ... Just Saudi friends. We have a lot of Arabic community so we have different err ... Arabic origin like Egyptian, Libyan, Syrian. So, we have a lot of friend from Arabic language, you know. [Raabia, Interview 2]

Haydar too spent most of his time with other Muslims. ... *majority of my time I spend it with Muslims community. [Haydar, Interview]*

The maintenance of Saudi culture was evident with the continuation of cultural traditions. Raabia voiced appreciation at being able to celebrate special occasions.

... something we used to do in Saudi Arabia. As I said, there are some occasions umm ... that like, Eid festival, that we still do it here. As I said, Australians are very multicultural and allow us to do these things. [Raabia, Interview 2]

In addition, the maintenance of religious practices was apparent. Haydar maintained his religious practices including prayer, attending lectures and giving talks at the mosque.

But as Muslims I have to pray five times a day as you know. So every maybe three hours or four hours I have to go pray at the mosque. So when I go there I stay sometimes a day. Many of my time, majority of my time in the day are with the Muslim community. That's a problem. And that why I am not communicate with Australian many times. [Haydar, Interview]

In a similar vein, Ahmed sought to share his culture with Australians. *I'm working with the Saudi club here to present our culture and our thing about Saudi culture. [Ahmed, Interview]*

For these three participants, a Saudi identity created a desire to maintain their cultural practices throughout their study sojourns. They prioritised cultural maintenance over language learning, which influenced their investment in learning English. This is evident in the mapped participation of these participants, which showed that they participated in the community in a limited way (see Chapter 5). Haydar and Ahmed both only really interacted for pragmatic purposes and did not have casual conversations

with English speakers with whom they had connection. Raabia had very few interactions – only three during the diary study. Thus, a Saudi identity is influential on the participation of Saudi students in Australia by limiting the number and quality of their interactions.

6.2 Shifting Practices, Identifications and Values

The first half of this chapter discussed how some aspects of Saudi culture continued in the new community and how these, in conjunction with a desire to maintain a Saudi identity, limited and constrained participation.

This section explores how the identifications, practices and beliefs of participants were disrupted or unsettled in response to their experiences in the host culture. Changes in these areas reflect an evolution in cultural identity (Schwartz et al., 2010) and this section shows how dynamic cultural identity provided opportunities for increased participation in the community and in language learning.

6.2.1 Observing and appreciating cultural difference

Despite the differences between the culture of the host community and their own, the participants expressed being happy living in Australia.

When we come to here, really I'm happy. Nice weather, nice people and when I'm study, I'm happy. [Aamina, Interview 1]

I'm happy here, you know. It's beautiful city, people here. I like this. [Haydar, Interview 1]

[Australia is] a great place for international students to come and continue their studies. It's really safe, it's friendly. [Raabia, Interview 2]

Everything is here nice. Also the people, nice people. [Hafiz, Interview]

I got many things good in Australia. Learning method or teaching method, life system, a lot people say always say the truth. I trust them. A lot of things I got from Australia. [Ahmed, Interview]

Participants indicated that they enjoyed the weather, lifestyle and people of Australia and got much out of the experience. These things contribute to the sojourn being a positive one for the students. In addition, participants appreciated the improvements to their language skills that had occurred, adding further value to their experience.

O: So how do you think being in Australia impacted your English language development?

H: Just talking to native speakers. That's enough for me to get good English, especially speaking skill. I missed this skill and need to improve it so when I hear two people talking to each other I try to ... Australia, it's the first time for me to talk to native speakers. [Haydar, Interview]

O: So, how do you think being in Australia has helped your English?

R: Yes of course. (In what ways?) Although I'm not very well now, but if you compare that with 3 years ago or 4 years ago, you'll find a difference. So my English progressing now. Even my husband realise that 'yes, you've improved.' I'm very happy with that. [Raabia, Interview conversation 3]

For me it's [language skills] big difference. [Jahira, Interview conversation 1]

O: What do you think being in Australia has done for your language learning?

M: Interacting with native speakers. Listening to English all the time everywhere, shopping. [Medina, Interview conversation 3]

O: So, since you've been in Australia, how has your English changed or improved?

H: Yes, improved! It's improved too much, better than before. [Hafiz, Interview]

While a happy life and language learning development are benefits of the overseas study experience, new perspectives and opportunities to learn about yourself and others represent deeper and more significant advantages for these participants. Raabia's comment below highlights what she sees as the positive aspects of her cross-cultural experience.

We have friends here, different environment, different living, different perspective as I said, so it's good. [Raabia, Interview 1]

Different perspectives occurred specifically as a result of encountering Australian systems and services. Participants appreciated the systems of healthcare, childcare, transport, and the availability of goods and services in Australia.

Also the driver system here is good. The city organisation, the way the city organised, you can reach all facilities. ... Here you can go to Coles, you can go to Woolies, Aldi. This I think is good system because everything in this Hypermarket or Supermarket ... But there are lots of things. Childcare systems we like, the health system. [Hafiz, Interview]

I don't face any problems here ... No more problems here in Australia. Everything is developed. Services are developed, systems are very clear. What can I say more than that? [Haydar, Interview]

Cross-cultural perspectives were enriched on deeper levels too. Haydar observed Islamic perspectives embodied in Australian systems and cultural practices and saw how they might be better represented in his own country.

In Islamic religion, governments have to provide services for citizens. The citizens must be happy. I found this here in Australia but I didn't find it there. So it's good sample of Islamic view ... I found many Islamic concepts here in the Australian community. This makes me very happy, very happy. [Haydar, Interview]

However, Hafiz's enlightened cross-cultural perspectives made him angry and frustrated towards his own country.

O: And when you go back to visit Saudi Arabia, how do you feel then?

H: It's bad feeling there [in] my country because why do my country, why do my government they don't do like Australia government? We have a good resource, the oil resource that means we have enough money to do everything nice. [Hafiz, Interview]

Also the freedom you have it. The freedom you get it here, you will lose it there. [Hafiz, Interview]

You can't speak against the government for, you can't use Twitter, Facebook, you can't ... Yeah, you know what I mean. We lose freedom there. Also the freedom of religious ... we some of the beliefs lose everything. [Hafiz, Interview]

No, it's just a big problem we have it there also. You can't practise your beliefs. My government have own belief and I have my belief. My belief is different than governments. Why don't you give it, the right to do my beliefs? [Hafiz, Interview]

Research (Alhazmi & Nyland, 2013; Hall, 2013) has shown that the international sojourn offers opportunities for Saudi students to reflect on aspects of their culture and makes them question their long-held cultural beliefs. Hafiz's comments above indicate clearly that he had had this experience. Likewise, the following excerpt reveals how Habibah made comparisons between Australia and Saudi Arabia on visits back home.

O: You went back home for a holiday, and how did you feel when you went back home? Did you notice some things? Did you feel different?

H: Hmm ... yes! I made comparison all the time between here and there. [laughing]

O: Oh, you made comparisons.

H: Yeah, for everything! But I try to keep this for myself because my friend and my family not like this. Yeah. [Habibah, Interview 2]

The result of the cross-cultural comparisons for Raabia was an increased understanding of her own country.

... it's a good idea to get the knowledge from different country and I realise now the difference - the weaknesses in my country mainly, the strength in my country as well. [Raabia, Interview 1]

In Hall's (2013) study of Saudi men in the US, the cross-cultural experience brought about changes in understandings, attitudes, and behaviours. For participants in this study, it also appears to have occurred as a result of the process of comparison described above. Thus, having had access to an English speaking community and Australian culture and systems was a positive experience for the participants. It allowed them to enjoy their stay, develop their English language skills, and reflect on their country and culture. In these ways, the cross-cultural experience provided opportunities for cultural patterns, attitudes, and perspectives to be agitated and potentially disrupted.

6.2.2 Adopting values and practices

Saudi women are restricted in many ways by the religion, laws and customs of their country. At home, their education, employment, and leisure pursuits are controlled and limited compared to those of men. Saudi international students on a study sojourn might reproduce limited patterns of participation in these areas or displace such restrictions and embrace the opportunities afforded by an English speaking country. Both options have implications for the nature of their participation in Australia.

Female Saudi students might explore freedoms offered by life in Australia and participate in more ways. During the interviews and conversations with Habibah, she repeatedly expressed a desire to *enjoy my life outside my country*, [Habibah, Interview 1] and explore the freedoms offered by her time in Australia. In her words, *I need to do everything here*. [Habibah, Interview 1] This motive demonstrates a desire to break

away from the restrictions that have been placed on her in her own country to participate more fully in the Australian community.

Physical education opportunities are not provided for women in Saudi Arabia, and Habibah embraced the chance to participate in them while here. Habibah desired being able to swim and took swimming lessons in an attempt to achieve her goal.

I need to be pretty good. [Why?] I think swim is very good to reduce my weight and I think it is my dream. I need just to go to the beach or the swim pool. I think I feel more confident if I go into the water and I didn't have this feeling before. I just put my leg and play with my son but in the safe area for children but the future, no [Habibah, Interview 1]

Although the swimming class was for Muslim women, Habibah's swimming lessons provided her with opportunities to interact with English speakers. Interactions with the pool owners, swimming teachers, and English speaking Muslims were afforded by her taking-up of this opportunity. So, too, attending a gym afforded her interactions with the English speaking instructors.

Habibah expressed a desire to learn to drive a car as well, and this too would provide her with opportunities to interact with members of the English speaking community.

H: And I need to do a lot of things, like learning to drive. I will do this next semester. I don't know anything! I will try to do this 'cause I like to drive car.
[Habibah, Interview 1]

Initially, taking the lessons and the licensing tests would provide opportunities for interaction. More importantly, once Habibah acquired her license, she would have the ability to travel independently, which might open up more avenues for participation. However, it appears that other Saudi women in Australia are not always supportive of her taking-up of this freedom.

H: Before one week my friend say to me 'You don't need [to learn to drive]. We have a lot of driver at my country.' I say to her 'Yes, I know but I need to do this because it's something in myself. I can do it.' She said, 'You are crazy.'

[Habibah, Interview 2]

Habibah did not see her religion as a barrier to taking up the opportunities that Australia has to offer, but other Saudis did not see it as appropriate. Disapproval of taking up new opportunities while in Australia created a divide between Habibah and those that held such opinions. As a result, Habibah was more selective in choosing the friends she kept in Australia and the people she chose to befriend had to have the same perspective on these matters as she did.

H: Maybe here we learn to be more careful about our friend ... in the start of my life here I just open my home and my time for any friend. But after 3 months, no, I know who is good, who is not good ...

O: So you got better at judging people, who is a good person ...

H: Yeah, I don't let them go to my life really strongly until I know they can understand, can think [like me] ... They have many thing to do it like me. Some people just, especially as my friend, as always a woman ... some of them think when I go to Uni or talk with someone like my supervisor or other student or ... I take off my religion, or I don't respect rules, or something like this. Maybe because they don't study, they don't try something like this ... Because I believe I can do everything, even if I am Muslim and I have my religion, there is nothing preventing me from doing it. [Habibah, Interview 2]

This comment denotes a divide between women who are eager to take up the opportunities presented to women outside of Saudi Arabia, and those that seek to maintain Saudi culture. Hall (2013) found that Saudis in the US could be distinguished from each other by how they adapted culturally. A similar situation was illustrated here. Habibah demonstrated a desire to break away from the cultural norms and restrictions placed on her gender and take up the opportunities afforded by life in Australia, but was met with disapproval. This had ramifications for her interactions with members of the local community and other Saudis.

Additionally, Habibah increased her participation in the local community through the adoption of some Australian values. The following excerpt illustrates Habibah's appreciation of, and take-up of, Australian values, specifically, how Australians fit many things into their day and their time management strategies.

H: I like how they can organise their time and do everything. They have time with their family and they have time for their work, their study.

O: Australians? It's not like that in Saudi Arabia?

H: No, a lot of people here study and work but in my country, no, we are students or worker. A little bit maybe. Not more than 10% of my country study and work at the same time. And maybe when I come here I feel really time is important because I need to do everything by myself, not like before so I respect my time. I don't have diary before I come to Australia. I just think to do something and I do it or leave it until the next day. But now I have to use it. I need to organise every half an hour. This for clean, this for visit, this for doctor, this for study, this for my son. [Habibah, Interview conversation 3]

Habibah's appreciation of time indicates the adoption of a Western value. By managing her time, using a diary and planning her day, she took on practices of the community. In other ways too, Habibah adopted the practices of Australians.

I try to study like them – hard. I like to be simple in my life like them. Maybe the culture in my country is not like here. Because we have some people help us and so I don't care about clean home or I have some woman to do this. And I don't use plastic at all. It is very rare. But here, no – life is very simple. I can cook last, before one day. I can use plastic. I can have a friend without clean my home really good. They understand I'm busy. [Habibah, Interview 2]

Here Habibah provided insight into the ways her life had become simpler, like Australians'. *I like to be simple in my life like them.* Specifically, she didn't need to cook fresh food everyday but was happy to save leftovers for the following night. She

did not feel the need to have a spotlessly clean house when visitors came but took more responsibility for its upkeep rather than relying on help.

Indeed, when Habibah returned home on visits, she reported missing her Australian life and the new habits she had established there.

...I miss my organised life here. Because always when we go on holiday ah ... we stay, wake up all the night just talk or visit and friend and family and maybe we go to our bed at 6, 7 am.

O: Wow, it's very different.

H: Yeah very different. At the end of holiday we was very, very tired. [Habibah, Interview 2]

Specifically, while on holidays back home, Habibah reverted to old patterns of staying up all night and sleeping all day which left her very tired. During this visit, she missed her life in Australia and the practices that she had adopted there. After her sojourn, Habibah anticipated holding onto such practices.

O: Do you think when you go back and, after you finished all your study, you'll try and have an organised life again?

H: Yes! [emphatically] [Habibah, Interview 2]

Another participant too had adopted some of the practices and values of Australia. Hafiz had learned how to cook.

Also we learn the cooking here, me and my wife. Yeah because we need our food sometimes. Actually we have a good time. [Hafiz, Interview]

Hafiz was also able to identify some of the values and attitudes of Australians and demonstrated respect for them.

O: Are there any other aspects of Australian life that you have picked up or adopted?

H: Yeah. It's too much. How's the flat people [live] together, dealing with their aspects together. ... This respect is good. [Hafiz, Interview]

In addition, he became more conscious of managing his time and planning his life in the Australian way.

... You can't use time management [in Saudi Arabia?]. You can't. If you use time management in Saudi Arabia, you will lose your family, you will lose your friends. [Hafiz, Interview]

But this thing is a little bit change with those students who is going overseas, studying overseas and coming back to my country. They use time management. If you don't call me two days or three days before then I can't come to you. This I use it when I went to my country in the holidays ... [Hafiz, Interview]

Participants who took up some of the practices and values of the new culture disrupted the patterns and practices of their traditional culture. This adoption of practice represents a changing cultural identity and increased participation in the local community.

6.2.3 Identification with Australians

Given that learning through participation involves learning ways of behaving and communicating in the new community, and the adoption of their preferences, theories, and culture (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Young, 2008), the ability to identify with members of the target language community might be central to greater participation and learning for newcomers. This is because identification establishes a psychological tie between the individual and the group, and provides them with new identities, worldviews, attitudes, and norms (Kashima & Pillai, 2011). Dis-identification on the other hand, may lead to non-participation with the target community (Hodges, 1998). Identification with Australians indicated a changing cultural identity that was interrelated with their participation in the host community.

For example, interview data with Habibah shows that she identified with some aspects of the lives of Australians, which is illustrated by the following.

O: So, how would you ... you said Australians were busy, how else would you describe Australians?

H: I think I like their life. Uh ... because they have everything to do it – they study, they work, they enjoy. At weekend, they enjoy everything but at other days do their study, they work, they go to make sport. It's fantastic! I try to make my life like them.

O: Ah, ok ... so that was my question. Do you feel like your life is becoming a bit more like that?

H: Yes.

O: Yeah, ok. In what ways?

H: Maybe at study and ... sport maybe. I try to have some walking every day, especially because I ... my home is close to the beach. And so in the beginning I go and it's a little bit, I feel tired but when I see them walking I say, 'I'm like them I can do it.' [Habibah, Interview 2]

This excerpt clearly shows that Habibah admired the lives of Australians. *I think I like their life.* She appreciated that they participate in many different activities including work, study and recreation. ... *they have everything.* Habibah envied this to the extent that she tried to achieve the same in her life. *I try to make my life like them.* Habibah's identification with Australians is reflected in her participation in the practices of the community. One of the ways Habibah suggested that this had occurred was through her taking-up walking along the beach as exercise. Even when she felt tired, Habibah drew on her identification with Australians to find the energy to go walking anyway: *I'm like them I can do it.*

Initially, Habibah was surprised when she realised that she had needs and values in common with Australian women.

Yeah, I surprised of this when I go to this gym Contours ... In the beginning I thought just would find myself and some Saudi woman but I found a lot of

Australian. They say we just need freedom without any man. [Habibah, Interview 1]

This quote is an example of adequation (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005), with Habibah foregrounding similarities between herself and Australian women and identifying with them (introduced in Section 4.2). Similarly, Habibah identified with Australians who need to go through a long process of acquiring a full driver's licence. *I need to do everything here like Australian people.* [Habibah, Interview 1]

Habibah's enhanced cross-cultural perspectives, adoption of Australian practices, and identification with Australians indicates a shift in her cultural identity as it evolved to incorporate characteristics of the Australian identity. When asked if Habibah felt like she belonged in Australia, she laughed and replied: *Maybe.* [Habibah, Interview 2] Although she was unsure of her sense of belonging, it appeared that other Saudis saw her as having adopted enough Australian practices to be considered as belonging.

... when I go, when I talk with my friend or just go to my country ... they say to me 'You are Australian now!' [laughs] [Habibah, Interview 2]

While other participants did not express their identification with Australians as clearly as Habibah did, Hafiz had adopted some of the values and practices of the host culture (Section 6.2.2) and appeared to have experienced some degree of identification with the host culture. This identification might be a result of an open-mindedness to new ways of thinking and behaviours that Hafiz exhibited. For example, when Hafiz saw differences between the countries, he sought to understand them and often found positive practices that he sought to adopt.

Yeah, it's different from any country. Every country have different beliefs, different culture. But here sometimes we ask ourself 'why they do like this?'. And we try to find that answer. Actually, most the things we find it here, it's a good thing. We need to learn how they do it. [Hafiz, Interview]

Another indicator of openness to change lies in the fact that Hafiz actively distanced himself from other Saudis when in Australia, especially those who sought to apply their culture to the Australian context.

Actually, I don't have more Saudi friends because I'm always with my family and actually and I'm trying to be far away from them because some of them, most of them, they want to change their ... They want to bring their culture to be here, they want to be right thinking to change the bad behaviour. They want to bring their culture to here in Australia. I don't meet with them too much. [Hafiz, Interview conversation 1]

Here Hafiz revealed an aspect of his participation in Australia. In this comment he distanced himself from Saudis who were not open to the new culture. This aligns with Hafiz's other comments, which illustrate a broad-mindedness to difference and the adoption of new values and practices where appropriate for him. Thus, Hafiz's cultural identity also evolved to incorporate aspects of the new culture and identify more with it.

In summary, this section has shown how cultural identity might change as a result of encountering a new culture during overseas studies. Habibah and Hafiz adopted some of their values and practices of the local Australian community and in this way demonstrated identifying with them. These new identifications, practices, and values represent an evolution to their cultural identity. Changing cultural identities represents increasing participation in the target language community and investment in learning English. Other participants simply developed new perspectives that potentially unsettled the culture and identities of them.

The following section discusses how another aspect of identity, participants' future or imagined identity, influenced their investment in learning English.

6.3 Imagined Identities and Language Practice

During the interviews, participants referred to a vision of themselves in the future – what Norton called an 'imagined identity' (Norton, 2001; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Norton Peirce, 1995). In this study, the imagined identity of two participants, Habibah

and Ahmed, in relation to their use of English language, was a factor in their investment in their language learning. The evidence for this imagined identity lies in their reasons for learning, proficiency goals and future uses of English.

6.3.1 Ahmed

Ahmed's vision of his future self established for him robust reasons for learning English and specific goals for the proficiency that this future self would require. Ahmed's future identity as an influential media person and international user of English created a strong investment in learning English. In addition, his future identity stemmed from his past identity. Ahmed had employment in Saudi Arabia, to which he planned to return when he completed his degree in Australia. He worked full-time as an Educational Supervisor, part-time as a News Presenter on television, and wrote for magazines and newspapers. *I'm a little bit famous man in my country.* [Ahmed, Interview] Although he used Arabic in these roles, he saw English as playing an important role in his future.

I want to, in my aim, my dream to speak very well in English because I'm working with media ... And English language it [is] very important for me to use it during my job in media. [Ahmed, Interview]

Ahmed believed that English language skills would be important for his future career in media. His desire to continue his work in media established for Ahmed strong reasons for learning English as well as standards of proficiency to work towards (*speak very well in English*). Ahmed saw that specific aspects of his work in media would benefit from fluency in speaking English. He had already travelled outside Saudi Arabia a few times and had had to have someone translate English for him.

...for a conference, many people from all countries around the world. And sometimes I have to make interview with anyone. And I have somebody to help me to translate this interview. [Ahmed, Interview]

However, Ahmed hoped that in the future he would not have to use a translator; he desired to be proficient enough to interview English speakers himself. *This is my aim, to in future I will translate for myself with anybody.* [Ahmed, Interview]

Ahmed believed that English was going to become increasingly important in Saudi Arabia, and wanted to be prepared. Ahmed predicted that his country was going to change as a result of the King Abdullah scholarship program, which is supporting over 100,000 students to get international educations. *Can you imagine when they come back? When they go back, I think this is the time to communicate by English.* [Ahmed, Interview] Specifically, Ahmed saw that English would be used more widely in his field of education. *And also the new system in our education, English language becomes very important now in unis or higher schools.* [Ahmed, Interview] Likewise, he had observed that Saudi youth were increasingly using English words and he saw that it was important to be able to understand this new usage.

Now, the new generation in my country, they use English language ... With each other. Not speaking completely in English language but they use some words ... mixing. And you have to understand it. [Ahmed, Interview]

Ahmed's imagined identity as a cosmopolitan user of English created a desire for proficiency in English – a main goal he set for his overseas studies.

O: So why did you decide to come to Australia?

A: Because I want to improve my language. This is the first thing and I want to, in my aim, my dream to speak very well in English. [Ahmed, Interview]

Later in the interview, Ahmed reiterated that the main purpose of his sojourn was English language development. *The main thing is to come to Australia to get a good things in English language. That's it.* [Ahmed, Interview]

Ahmed's future identity as a fluent user of English provided significant reasons for him to come to Australia and invest in learning English. Ahmed's efforts to learn English can be seen in the quote below.

O: Since you've been in Australia, what things do you do to help your English?

A: Actually I tried many things to improve my language. In the beginning to make friendship with people outside ... Yeah, then last holiday I worked, was worked, I have been worked at Crust Pizza as a delivery and work in the kitchen. This not just for work, I aim to improve my language with communicate with people there ... And also sometimes I go to attend conversation class here at Uni ... And also if I go anywhere, if face anybody, anything I just ask him to open conversation. [Ahmed, Interview]

I invited many people to my house and outside just to make friendship with him. [Ahmed, Interview]

Ahmed reports having tried many ways to improve his English language since being in Australia. He attended conversation classes and took up part-time work at a pizza restaurant. He started conversations with strangers and tried to form friendships by inviting people to visit him. These efforts at obtaining language learning practice result from his desire for the speaking fluency required of his future self. However, due to Ahmed's desire to maintain his culture as discussed above, these efforts for language learning remained constrained to those that would not compromise his Saudi identity. Thus, Ahmed's investment in language learning is a result of a mix of his Saudi and future cosmopolitan identities.

6.3.2 Habibah

Habibah too, had a clear identity of her future self as an English speaker, which created reasons for her to invest in learning the language.

Habibah identified herself as a highly educated Saudi woman who used English in her work. Habibah's employer sent her to Australia to obtain a doctoral qualification and develop her English language skills. *I work in my University and they send me here to learn English and have PhD. [Habibah, Interview 1]* Habibah had strong career-focused goals for learning English and upon completion of her PhD, she aimed to return to her work and pursue her ambitious career goals.

I will complete my study to have professor, not just PhD. Maybe I will be the manager of the department of mathematics in my University. Because usually after having PhD, you can be this manager. [Habibah, Interview 1]

Habibah saw herself as one day being a professor and the head of her university department. These positions would require Habibah to have high levels of English language proficiency. In addition, Habibah would like to attend conferences internationally in countries like Canada, America and Australia, for which she will require the English language.

I need to be perfect in English speaking, writing because my goals in the future I need to participate in international conference for Mathematics. I can't do this if my English not good. [Habibah, Interview 1]

Here, Habibah expressed the importance of English to achieving her goal of participating in international mathematics conferences. For this, she claimed she needed to *be perfect*. [Habibah, Interview 1] Later, in the interview, Habibah reiterated her goal for proficiency. *I need to be perfect but I know that I will have more mistakes.* [Habibah, Interview 1]

In addition, Habibah saw herself as a pioneer, someone that would return to Saudi Arabia and be involved in the changes that she believed were to come. Specifically, Habibah aimed to be one of a few women with strong English language skills in her country and be at the forefront of change.

H: After the change in my country curriculum, especially in my University to be in English, it will be very good for me when I come back and teach girls in English.

O: You'll be highly respected [Yes]. And you'll be one of the first to be very strong in English.

H: Yeah, we are not more but maybe I will be one of the first 10 woman to come back to my country from outside. [Habibah, Interview 1]

Habibah looked forward to being one of the first women to return to Saudi Arabia to teach in the new English curriculum in her university. This comment alludes to a connection that Habibah felt with other women who were on study sojourns outside of Saudi Arabia, a sense of participating in an imagined community of educated female Saudi English speakers.

Furthermore, Habibah's comments suggest a connection with a larger community of international speakers of English. Habibah appreciates that English is a global language and that she can: *understand anything if I learn English – all website, all books, all libraries, all people around the world use it.* [Habibah, Interview 1] She planned to holiday in Indonesia and Hong Kong where she would use English to communicate. Also, she planned to send her son to an International School when they returned to Saudi Arabia. In these ways, it appears that Habibah identified as belonging to an international community of English speakers.

An identity as a future user of English established for Habibah reasons for learning English that motivated her to invest in her language learning. Her investment in learning English can be seen in her efforts to obtain language practice. Habibah elected to do more study at TAFE before starting her doctorate in order to give her time to improve her language skills. ... *if I start my PhD there is no more chances to speak.* [Habibah, Interview 1] She also attempted to improve her language by starting conversations while shopping. *Sometimes I just go to the mall. I don't need buy anything, just to talk with people.* [Habibah, Interview 2]

To conclude, for two participants, Habibah and Ahmed, imagined identities as cosmopolitan English users were influential on their investment in language learning. They imagined themselves as participating in communities of proficient international users of English, for example, conferences, and at the forefront of change in their own country in their respective fields, education and media. These imagined selves required English language fluency and established reasons for Habibah and Ahmed to invest in learning the language.

Chapter Summary

This chapter examined the cultural and identity influences on the participation of the Saudi participants of this study. It presented findings that showed that aspects of Saudi culture continued in the new context, which influenced how participants interacted and more widely participated in the local community. In addition, some participants exhibited a desire to preserve their Saudi identity through the experience that also had ramifications for the extent and nature of their community involvement.

Other findings presented in this chapter demonstrated how culture and identity were unsettled by the cross-cultural experience. Specifically, some participants observed cultural differences and appreciated the opportunity to make cultural comparisons; two participants, Habibah and Hafiz, adopted some practices and values of the host community and identified with them. Additionally, this chapter identified an influence on participants' participatory experiences of their future identities and desire to obtain language learning practice.

Overall, this chapter has demonstrated that learners' experience of participation in target language communities is interrelated with the culture and identities that they bring to the situation. Participation can be limited by cultural practices and a desire to maintain a cultural identity, or increased by a willingness to compare cultures, adopt values and practices, and identify with the target language community. Imagined identities that extend past the current context may similarly promote investment in language learning.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Chapter Introduction

This chapter draws together the findings and analysis from the thesis to respond to the research questions, and discusses a number of issues raised by the results. It draws conclusions from the study and outlines its significance in light of the problems posed in the introductory literature. Recommendations for future research conclude this section.

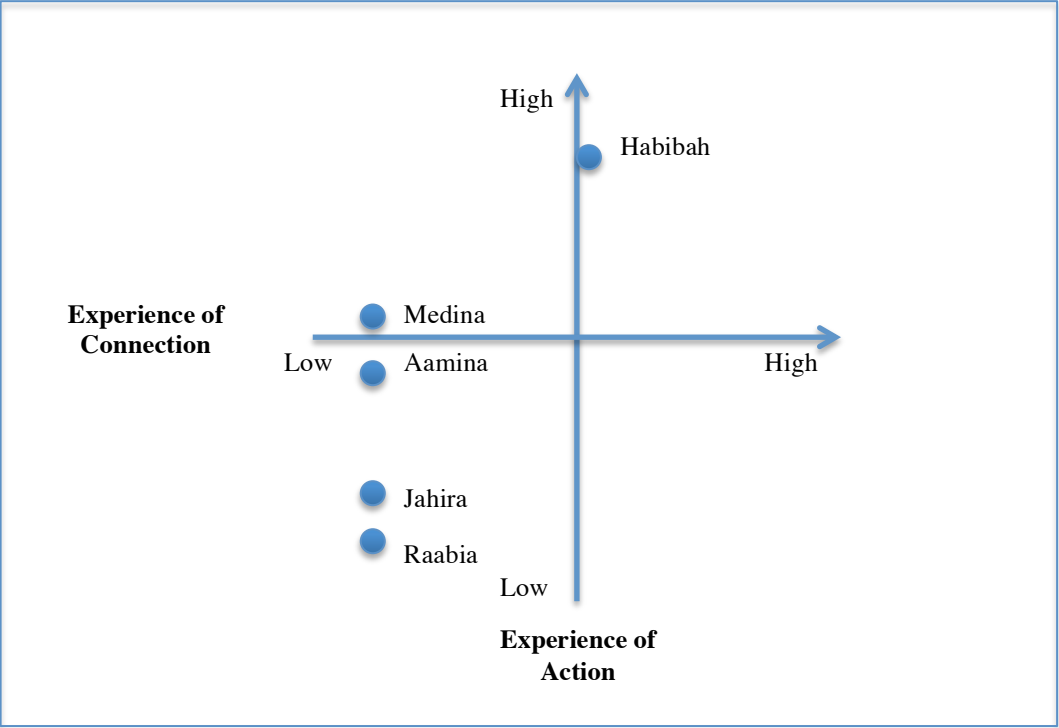
7.1 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine how Saudi Arabian international students participate in English language communities of practice (CoP) during their overseas study experience. It aimed to describe the nature of Saudi students' social interactions and off-campus participation undertaken in English, and to discover the sociocultural factors that influence it. This section summarises and theorises what was found and generalises the findings beyond the scope of the study.

7.1.1 Nature of interactions in the community

Analysis of the data from the participants (interviews, diaries, interview conversations) revealed the nature of their interactions, specifically their activity levels and relationships with others. According to Wenger (1998), participation comprises *action* (taking part) and *connection* (relations with others). Table 11 charts the participation of each female participant along two axes, action and connection.

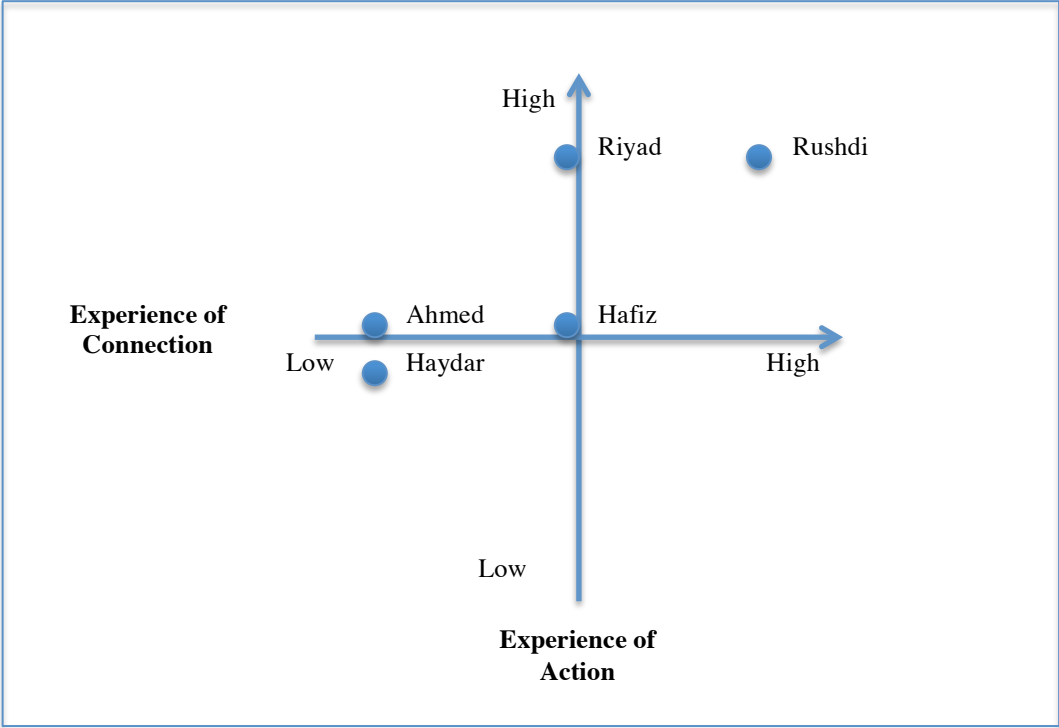
Table 11: Female participation graphed along two axes



The female participants exhibited low, moderate or high levels of action (y-axis) within the community. Habibah interacted in different parts of the community, was actively engaged in varied subject matter and thus demonstrated high levels of action. Medina and Aamina are situated on the graph with moderate levels due to their moderate activity levels but experience of limited, repetitive subject matter. Jahira and Raabia experienced very low numbers of interactions and thus little action at all.

The female participants predominantly experienced low levels of connection (x-axis) in their interactions. The exception to this was Habibah who experienced a range of status relations and regular or intermittent contact with people she may have had affective involvement with. Her experience of connection is considered moderate as she did not experience relations of equality, rather, pre-defined status roles, and had regular contact with people with whom she had high affection. Table 12 graphs the participation of male participants in the same way.

Table 12: Male participation graphed along two axes



The male participants exhibited high or moderate levels of action (y-axis) within the community. Participants who interacted in various parts of the community and were actively engaged in varied subject matter (e.g. Riyadh and Rushdi) demonstrated high levels of action. The other participants, Haydar, Ahmed and Hafiz are situated on the graph with moderate levels due to their good activity levels, but experience of limited, repetitive subject matter.

The male participants varied considerably in the *connection* (x-axis) that they experienced in their interactions and are graphed with high, moderate and low levels of connection. Rushdi interacted both with people with whom he was familiar and with strangers, and experienced different types of participation due to an orientation to affiliation and an ability to establish intersubjectivity, i.e., shared understanding. Others (particularly Haydar and Ahmed) exhibited little connection in their interactions due to an absence of regular contact with familiar people and a predominance of pre-defined role relations.

Thus, the participation in the local community of the Saudi Arabian international students in this study was varied, from higher levels of activity and relationships to low levels. These findings offer a more detailed understanding of participation than what existing studies have provided. Previously, international students' experience of participation has been described generally as withdrawing, separating, being excluded, or involving themselves in an enclave of co-culturals (Edgeworth & Eiseman, 2007; Paltridge & Schapper, 2012; Tran, 2009). Similarly, acculturation research labels community involvement in a general way – through the four acculturation strategies: assimilation, integration, separation and marginalisation (Sam & Berry, 2010). This study has offered a new perspective on understanding participation through its examination of the variables of linguistic texts (registers). In other words, by analysing the features of participants' English language interactions, more detailed understandings on the phenomenon of international student participation in local communities have been collected.

7.1.2 Quality of participation

This approach to viewing language learner interactions sheds light on their contribution to language learning. As a whole, participants differed in the extent to which they took part in activity in the community, reflected in Wenger's (1998) notion of *action*. The number of English language interactions that individual participants had during the six-week study ranged from 3 to 35. These interactions were often pragmatic in nature and occurred in a variety of domains: at home and out in the wider community, with friends, acquaintances and strangers, and while shopping, undertaking hobbies and leisure pursuits, and going about daily tasks involved with health and home administration. Participants who recorded low numbers of interactions had not seized many of these possible interactional situations. Furthermore, many participants failed to seek opportunities for casual conversations, which are considered as being beneficial to language development, and the construction of identity due to their length, varied subject matter, and the engagement required. Opportunities for casual conversations in this study came from involvement in a homestay program, residence in student accommodation, and friendship groups that involved English speakers. Thus, some Saudi international students took-up opportunities to interact in English afforded by being in a community of English speakers, to varying degrees.

Participants in this study also varied in the types of relationships they had with the people with whom they interacted in English. Largely, participants experienced one-off encounters with strangers, which featured predetermined and unequal role relations. The absence of more authentic role relations, affective involvement with speakers, regular contact and familiarity, and an orientation to affiliate with interlocutors denotes a lack of connection with the people with whom they interacted in English. Quality participation requires both *action* and *connection*. There were some exceptions to this tendency. One participant had a positive orientation to affiliation with Australians and was able to establish rapport and intersubjectivity (see Section 5.7.2) and to turn pragmatic interactions into meaningful casual conversations. Other participants might have had only one English speaking person with whom they had a connection. Thus, not many participants exhibited having taken-up opportunities to develop relationships with members of the community. With limited connection in their interactions, participation in the community remained quite incidental and superficial.

The discussion above, and that from Chapter 5, establishes that not all interactions contribute equally to participation in English speaking community and therefore language learning. The differences in the nature of the conversations and the role of relationships within them determine the potential for language learning. It has been shown that there are opportunities for Saudi Arabian international students to interact with members of the target language community, but that uptake of those opportunities is different for each individual, often determined by culture and identity (as discussed in the next section).

7.1.3 Sociocultural influences on participation

The study found that the participation of Saudi Arabian international students in the life of the local English speaking community in Australia is impacted by the practices and culture of their home country and the individual's sense of identity.

The following sections theorise these findings in four areas: continuity of cultural practices; identity and investment in language learning; complexity of participation; and learning trajectories.

Continuity of cultural practices

Traditional gender roles in Saudi Arabian culture appeared to bind female Saudi students to the private sphere of the home and limited the time that they had for interacting in English. The male participants, on the other hand, appeared to maintain responsibility for the public sphere and had many interactions out amongst the community. Participants also appeared to experience similar patterns of gender segregation in Australia to those they had at home. The interactions of the Saudi students were largely same-sex or did not require much engagement with the opposite sex, and socialising with other Saudis also remained same-sex. The wearing of traditional Saudi dress exposed participants to racist attitudes in the community and potentially influenced their movement in public and therefore their participation in the community.

Furthermore, the type of residential situation that students lived in emerged as influential on their participation. The maintenance of traditional family units during the sojourn supported the continuance of cultural patterns of participation, particularly traditional gender roles. However participants who resided in student accommodations were afforded opportunities to have casual conversations and interact across genders.

The move from one community of practice to another ‘can demand quite a transformation’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 103) especially when the practices of the new community of practice conflict with learners’ involvement in previous communities (Handley et al., 2006). Such is the case with Saudi Arabian international students learning English in Australia. The cultural practices and patterns of participation of Saudi students significantly differ from those of the Australian community, and they must negotiate this conflict in order to participate and learn. Hodges (1998) suggests that an individual’s historical-cultural baggage is evoked through participation in a new community of practice, and can continue, be shifted, or displaced. Mutch (2003) suggests that this is where the analytical interest lies – in the extent to which dispositions are challenged and altered by different practices in new communities, and by the extent to which they remain immune to such influences. In this vein, this

discussion considers how cultural practices and patterns of participation might continue or be disrupted for Saudi students participating in a new community of practice.

Findings showed that the cultural practices and participation patterns of Saudi Arabian international students largely continued after entering a community of English speakers. The cultural values and practices of their home, specifically gender roles, gender segregation, and traditional dress, continued to influence how they participated when in Australia. Wenger (1998) suggests that whether or not newcomers are actively trying to sustain connections between the two communities, there is the potential for continuity of practices. Mutch (2003) draws on Boudieu's concept of habitus and Bernstein's work to explain the impact of prior experience on participants' behaviour in new communities of practice. He argues that unconsciously acquired, durable dispositions to act profoundly affect subsequent performance, but that there is a place for agency (Mutch, 2003). This is evident in the findings from this study. It was evident that the previously acquired dispositions of Saudi students affected their behaviour on their study sojourn.

Identity and investment in language learning

Second language learners have variable desires to engage in social interactions and community practices which might contribute to their language learning (Norton & Toohey, 2011). Analysis of interviews with Saudi Arabian international students demonstrates that the desire to participate and invest in learning English was influenced by participants' identities.

In this study, three aspects of identity were pertinent and influential on the investment in language learning and participation of learners: maintenance of Saudi cultural identity, evolving cultural identity, and imagined identities. A strong sense of cultural identity coincided with a desire to maintain Saudi culture throughout the sojourn, even at the expense of language learning opportunities. Identification with Australians and adoption of some aspects of Australian values and practices represented an evolution to cultural identity and represented fuller participation. Imagined identities promoted investment in language learning and the take-up of opportunities for practice.

Three participants were invested in their identities as *real* Saudis and Muslims and sought to maintain their culture throughout the sojourn, even at the expense of opportunities for language learning. The participation of those participants was marked by isolation from, (Raabia) and lack of connection with (Haydar and Ahmed), English language speakers. However, two participants exhibited an evolving cultural identity evidenced by changing identifications, practices and values. During the interviews, Hafiz and Habibah revealed their appreciation for life in Australia and the adoption of aspects of Australian culture and values. Their participation was marked by separation from the Saudi community (Hafiz) and involvement in facets of Australian life (Habibah). Furthermore, the imagined identities of two participants created in them a strong desire to achieve high levels of English language proficiency. Habibah and Ahmed both imagined themselves as cosmopolitan users of English who spoke *very well* or *perfectly*, and those identities led them to invest in the language learning experience. Their participation was marked by efforts to gain language practice. In these ways, the identities of language learners influenced their participation in language learning.

Complexity of participation

The previous sections highlighted the influence of culture and identity on participation in situated language learning. However, the impact of these factors is not straightforward. Indeed, some aspects of culture and identity prevent participants from participating more fully in the community, while others draw them in. The complexity of these interconnected factors is illustrated below through close examination of the experience of one participant, Habibah, brought together here from the findings presented in Chapters 5 and 6.

Habibah resided in her traditional family unit in Australia – with her husband and son in a rented apartment. This arrangement facilitated the continuation of traditional gender roles, with Habibah being responsible for the home and family and a commitment of time to achieve this. Habibah continued to observe the veil in public, which concealed her but at the same time exposed her to racism and negativity, incidences that had made her fearful and restricted her movements. Her participation was thus somewhat limited.

However, Habibah demonstrated a motivation to break away from the restrictions placed on her in her home country, to join more fully in the Australian community. Habibah desired to learn to swim and drive a car and *do everything here*. She appreciated aspects of Australian life *I like their life* and sought to adopt aspects of it *I try to make my life like them*. This connection to Australian life resulted in her identifying with Australians *I'm like them I can do it* and adopting aspects of practice including taking on some Australian values and attitudes. Another influence on Habibah's participation in Australia was an imagined identity as a cosmopolitan and *perfect* speaker of English in the future. This identity invited her to invest in learning English and obtain opportunities to practice English.

The influence of these various factors can be seen in the analysis of Habibah's participation. Habibah had the most interactions of all the women, as many as the average male participant. It appears that her future identity created in her a desire to invest in learning English and take up opportunities to practise English. Her desire to learn new skills and enjoy her life outside her country also presented opportunities to interact in English. However, Habibah's interactions did not feature relations of equality, and she did not have regular contact with people with whom she had high affection. Thus, although Habibah identified with Australians, she had failed to develop quality friendships with them. Habibah commented on the aloofness and distance of people that she met and suggested that this was because of her veil. It could have been that Habibah's cultural dress (and deeper cultural values) was a barrier to her establishing friendships. Furthermore, Habibah did not experience significant cross-gender exchanges, indicating that patterns of gender segregation and her concealment by the veil might have been preventing her making those types of connections.

Furthermore, the influences on participation do not exist only within a community of practice. The site for the development of identities and practices is not solely within a community of practice but in the spaces between multiple communities (Handley et al., 2006, p. 650). For these Saudi participants, their participation and adoption of practice developed both within the community of practice (in their identification with Australians) and between communities (having brought with them a Saudi identity and imagining a future identity outside of Australia).

Thus participation in situated language learning is influenced by a number of different factors from inside and outside of the current context, which draw learners into the English speaking community as well as stand them apart from it. A complex mix of sociocultural factors that extend across time and communities influences learner participation in target language communities.

Learning trajectories

Often, when language learning is viewed as a process of participating in target language communities and developing identities in relation to those communities, a goal of full participation is assumed. However, not all learners seek to move from their peripheral positions to become full members of the community. Instead, our identities form trajectories within and across communities of practice that influence our participation (Wenger, 1998). Some learners are on a *peripheral trajectory* on which they seek access to the community and its practice but do not intend to stay in the community. These learners desire only peripheral participation, and their investment in language learning reflects this. Saudi Arabian international students have strong cultural identities and intend to return to their country at the end of their study sojourn. These factors suggest that such students might move through local English speaking communities on the periphery. As put by Pavlenko and Lantolf,

... those who do not become members of another culture, never set out to translate themselves in the first place, never intended to fit into new social networks, to negotiate new subjectivities The individual may feel comfortable being who he or she is and may not wish to 'become' a native of another language or culture. Thus, negotiation of new meanings and construction of new subjectivities may be irrelevant to her/his personal agenda (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000, p. 170).

Thus, Saudi students who do not adopt aspects of culture and become members of the local English speaking community, might not have intended to. Such students might be comfortable with their Saudi identity, seek to maintain it through the sojourn and so intentionally move through the community at the periphery.

Understandings about the influence of culture and identity on participation outlined in this part of this discussion have shed light on aspects of participation that were previously hidden. Armed with this information, the discussion now moves to providing a richer and deeper description of participants' experience of participation in local communities of practice.

7.1.4 Forms of participation

Chapter 5 provided a nuanced description of the extent and nature of participants' interactions in the local community. Drawing on understandings about the role of culture and identity in shaping participants' cross-cultural experience established in Chapter 6, this section now examines the nature of their participation in the broader sense proposed by Wenger (1998). Specifically, the following section discusses the forms of participation that resulted from participants' reconciliation of their identities, culture, and learning trajectories in the new English speaking community.

Peripheral participation

The variations in the nature of interactions presented in Chapter 5 relate to distinctive experiences of participation in language learning. Overall, the participation of students in this study lay on a continuum ranging from none or highly peripheral forms to fuller experiences of participation. High levels of action and connection can be linked to Wenger's (1998) notion of *fuller* participation in the practices of the community. Conversely, low levels on both of these factors indicate highly *peripheral* or even *non-participation* in the community. From this perspective it can be considered that Rushdi had established a fuller form of participation in the community, followed to a lesser extent by Habibah, Riyad and Hafiz. Another group, Medina, Aamina, Ahmed and Haydar exhibited peripheral forms of participation. The low levels of action and connection of Raabia and Jahira might indicate non-participation (Wenger, 1998).

All of the Saudi students in this study can be classified as participating peripherally (to various degrees) in the practices of the local English speaking community. Peripheral participation suggests 'multiple, varied, more- or less-engaged and inclusive' ways of participating (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 36). The participants in this study were not full

members of the community but had opportunities to access those members and their practices. Access to a community of target language speakers provides learners with opportunities to learn to act according to community norms and communicate in it (Sfard, 1998).

However, the degree of peripherality or fullness of participation differed from participant to participant, which had implications for their language learning. Rushdi exhibited richer participation in the community due to his connection with members of it. Habibah, Riyad, and Hafiz also experienced productive participation but to a lesser extent, due to the quality of the relationships formed with English speakers. Higher quality interactions afford opportunities for different types of participation (van Lier, 2000), the negotiation of identity, and language development. Thus, understanding participation in an overseas English study context is central to understanding the extent of English language learning.

Differences between home and host cultures and the comparisons that occur when entering the English speaking community of practice creates identity conflicts for Saudi international students, which influence the nature of their peripheral participation. In response to identity conflict, learners may choose to participate *marginally*, *contingently* or *not participate* (Handley et al., 2006; Wenger, 1998).

Marginal participation occurs when the learner operates at the boundaries of the community, either voluntarily or as a result of exclusion (Handley et al., 2006, p. 648). Here learners struggle to maintain previously constructed and assumed identities in a new situation (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). This can occur if learners' histories do not justify an investment in a particular language (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001). Mapping of Haydar's participation shows that he participated *marginally*, that is, he voluntarily operated at the boundary of the community in order to protect his Saudi identity. This was evidenced by his lack of identification with Australians and dis-orientation to affiliation with them (as discussed in Chapter 5).

Another participant (Ahmed) could be considered to have been participating *contingently*. The discussion in Chapter 6 showed that Ahmed desired to obtain

language learning practice and at the same time maintain his Saudi identity. Inevitably, Ahmed would have experienced conflicts of identity in his attempts to obtain practice and participate. A possibility for newcomer learners in communities of practice is to participate *contingently*, when they adapt their practice in ways which protect their identity whilst still notionally fitting in with community norms (Handley et al., 2006). Ahmed could be considered to have been participating *contingently*, that is, he fitted in (by working, seeking friendships, starting conversations, and attending conversation classes) but only in ways that did not conflict with his identity as a Saudi and Muslim.

Hafiz and Habibah's identification with Australians and adoption of their practice and values suggests that they appreciated the culture of Australians. According to Young (2008), learning as participation involves learning the preferences and theories of a new community. For these participants, appreciating and adopting the preferences and theories of the English speaking community might indicate greater participation in the English speaking community of practice. 'For newcomers, this may or may not require adopting a new subjectivity, but it does mean realising the differences and similarities between a learner's perspective (particularly feelings, beliefs, and desires) and those of members of the new community' (Young, 2008, p. 137). If this is the case, then this fuller participation might be occurring for these participants without necessarily requiring the assumption of a new identity but an evolution to it.

Non-participation

Learners who move from one community of practice to another encounter the significant challenge of reconciling their identity in the face of membership in multiple communities (Wenger, 1998). Saudi Arabian international students face such a challenge as they struggle to reconcile their familiar Saudi identity with the different identifications brought about by the new Australian environment. Identity conflict can be resolved in a number of ways, one of which is non-participation, that is, not participating in the community of practice. In this study, Raabia shared in only three conversations in English during the six-week study period (Chapter 5) an approximation of non-participation.

Raabia experienced layers of identification (Ramanathan & Pennycook, 2008): as a Saudi/ Muslim and learner of English, which she attempted to reconcile into an identity and form of participation suitable for her. Raabia identified strongly as a Saudi and Muslim, continuing to wear the veil and maintaining her traditional gender roles and patterns of participation while in Australia (Chapter 6). Raabia was heavily invested in her identity as a member of the Saudi/Islamic community and prioritised this identity over other goals such as participation in language learning. The challenge of maintaining her membership in the Saudi community and developing her English through participating in the Australian community was amplified by her strong identification as a learner of English (Chapter 4).

Raabia's layered identifications required her to achieve forms of participation in the community that were appropriate for her. 'Nonparticipation describes how a person might be participating in the contexts of grappling with possible, albeit mutable, identities' (Hodges, 1998, p. 273). Non-participation can be employed by learners to allow them to enact their preferred identities and find suitable (for them) forms of participation (Trent & Gao, 2009). This occurred for Raabia. She chose to interact in Australia in ways that she found appropriate in order to maintain her identity as a Saudi Muslim but at the same time satisfying her goals as an English language learner. The form of participation that resulted was relations with other Saudis and Muslims, and devout attention to familial and academic responsibilities. Raabia admitted having a lot of Saudi and Arabic friends, and largely participated in an enclave of people similar to her. However, although Raabia did not participate in the local English speaking community, she found a form of participation that reconciled the identities central to her and allowed her to have a positive and productive study experience.

This section has shown the complexity of identity reconciliation and how it might lead to non-participation in communities of practice. For one participant in this study, non-participation was a form of participation that allowed her to resolve conflicting identifications and achieve a positive outcome from the learning experience.

The following discussion proposes two ideas for conceptualising learner participation that arose from the findings of the study.

7.1.5 Theorising language learner participation

This section theorises significant aspects of the study revealed in the findings chapters. The first section discusses the influence of individual agency in shaping participation. The second part advances the idea that participating peripherally in a community, and even not participating, might be positive approaches given the difficulty of identity reconciliation upon entering a new community.

Agency in second language learning through participation

Ultimate attainment in second language learning relies on one's agency (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). Human agency is 'the ability of individuals to make choices and to enact them in the world, as opposed to being passively affected by deterministic processes' (Cervatiuc, 2009, p. 266). It is argued that learners of another language decide whether to undergo the process of translating themselves and reconstructing a new identity in order to learn a language and their success in language learning depends on this decision (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). This consideration is highly significant for Saudi Arabian learners of English who have substantial cultural differences from communities of English language speakers and undergo language learning within the challenging context of overseas study. For this group, their culture and identities are provoked by interactions with members of the English speaking community, and each employs agency to respond in a way in which they are comfortable.

The findings of this study showed that some participants maintained their culture and cultural identities throughout the sojourn while others shifted their identifications, values, and practices and experienced a change in their cultural identity. Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) argue that some learners are comfortable with who they are, and might not wish to adopt new ways of being in the world, but seek to preserve their identity in the new context. This was the case for a number of participants in this study – their cultural and religious customs, practices, and identities were important to them and they sought to maintain them throughout the sojourn. In this way, they decided to prioritise the preservation of culture and identity over other goals such as language learning, which had implications for their participation and language development. These participants reproduced cultural patterns of participation and interacted in repetitive,

pragmatic interactions that did not represent quality ones for the purpose of language learning. Thus, their ultimate attainment in English is dependent upon their agentic decision to prioritise their current self over a changed one.

Alternatively, the reproduction of some cultural patterns was disrupted by individuals with a desire to create language learning opportunities for themselves. Riyadh employed agency to create a residential situation for himself that afforded opportunities for interactions and language learning (Chapter 5). Likewise, Habibah acted agentially by displacing notions of women being subjected to restricted freedoms and taking-up opportunities to engage in physical activity and driving instruction (Chapter 6).

The findings from this study on a unique group of language learners, Saudi Arabian international students, contributes to answering questions posed by Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000). The authors suggested that further research was required to understand:

How and to what extent do people participate without reconstructing their identity? How successful are individuals at maintaining their original narratives and with them their L1 selves, while immersed in the second cultural milieu? (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000, p. 175).

This study found that some Saudi Arabian international students are able to maintain their original narratives and first language selves – they reproduce cultural patterns of participation and maintain strong cultural and religious identities. They participate in a peripheral way in the community – at the margins, contingently to protect their identity, or close approximations of non-participation.

On the other hand, some other participants embraced the possibilities of the sojourn and language learning experience. These participants exhibited open-mindedness and appreciation of cultural difference, willingness to modify cultural patterns of participation, shifting identifications, values and practices, and a preparedness to reconstruct their identities. These participants participated more richly and fully in the local community and had interactions that were beneficial for language learning. Thus,

for these participants, it is likely that their decision to be open to the process of self-translation would result in attainment in learning English.

Viewing participatory behaviours as choices made by agentic individuals offers a different perspective on understanding the peripherality of international students in local communities. The following section discusses another alternative perspective, that participation at the periphery is a safe space for learners and one of potential rather than discrimination and exile.

Positive peripheral participation

In some situations, learners can be denied access to community resources and their peripheral participation is the result of exclusion and marginalisation (e.g. Norton, 2000, 2001; Toohey, 1998). However, the peripheries of communities of practice can be spaces of ‘dynamic possibility’ for learners (Giroir, 2014, p. 53). For participants in this study too, peripheral participation was not necessarily a negative place, but a protected one and one of potential.

For many of the Saudi participants in this study, peripheral participation in the local English speaking community in Australia allowed them to gain English language practice, experience a new culture, and enjoy their lives outside of their country. At the same time, peripherality afforded them a safe space where they could protect and maintain their strong Saudi culture and identities. For example, Haydar did not identify with Australians and their lifestyle (Chapter 5) and exhibited a desire to preserve his Saudi identity and values through the experience (Chapter 6). As such, he spent most of his time with other Muslims and did not form connections with Australians (Chapter 5). However, comments from interviews with him indicate his enjoyment of life in Australia and valuing of opportunities to speak and listen to native English speakers offered by being in Australia (Chapter 6). Additionally, Haydar’s peripheral position allowed him to observe systems of organisation and government – alternative ways of doing things that he valued highly (Chapter 6). Thus, having had access to native English speakers and Australian culture and systems, was a positive experience for Haydar. It allowed him to develop his English-language skills, enjoy his stay, and learn about the world. In turn, participating in the local community in a peripheral way

allowed him to achieve these things without compromising his cultural and religious values and identity.

Therefore, peripheral participation for some Saudi Arabian students on a study sojourn might be the best and most comfortable outcome for them, particularly for those who seek to maintain their culture and identity throughout the experience. Evidence from the field of acculturation supports this notion. Acculturation research has established that those who are engaged in both their heritage culture and the larger society adapt better to cross-cultural experiences (Sam & Berry, 2010). This suggests that participants like Haydar who are somewhat active in the local community but maintain involvement with their culture will adapt better to a cross-cultural experience than those that choose not to participate or assimilate fully.

Non-participation too, may be a positive place for learners in new communities of practice. As discussed in Section 7.1.4 above, not participating in the community allows for the reconciliation of conflicting identifications to achieve a positive outcome from the learning experience.

7.2 Practical Implications

The English language proficiency of international students is an ongoing problem for universities and the international education sector. As long as international students express disappointment in their language development and struggle to make connections in the broader community, the quality of their experience is under threat. This study sought to further understand the nuances of this problem for a specific group of learners, Saudi Arabian international students. There is a paucity of information about this cohort and how they engage with the broader Australian community while studying in Australia. This study sought to generate information that might assist universities and communities to provide support services for them in order to meet their needs and uphold the quality of the international student experience. This section discusses the outcomes of the study as they relate to satisfying these goals.

This study sheds light on how ten Saudi international students engaged with the broader Australian community, research identified by Shepherd (2010) as being required. The

study found that Saudi Arabian international students interacted in the community in different ways: in pragmatic one-off encounters with strangers, through to personal and meaningful casual conversations with people with whom they have a connection. When individual interactions were considered in combination, they pointed to forms of participation that lay along a continuum from non- or highly-peripheral types to fuller experiences. The fullness or peripherality of participation in the community has implications for students' language development, academic achievement, and well being.

Having a detailed picture of how one group of students participated in the community forms the groundwork for understanding the research problem. This study found that these students often experienced few or low-quality interactions with members of the community which might not contribute as much to their English language development as high-quality interactions.

In response, this study developed a set of criteria (Chapter 5) that assists in understanding those interactions that might be considered quality ones for the purpose of language learning. Interactions that might be beneficial for language development can be characterised as those that have features of casual conversations: they are longer and personal, diverse, meaningful subject matter and require engagement with the topic and interactional exchange. Casual conversations allow for a process of identity negotiation through reflecting on and constituting social worlds. Highly beneficial interactions also feature connection between interlocutors, as this contributes to the broader notion of participation. Furthermore, they are those not bound by pre-defined social roles that afford different types of participation and social identity negotiation. Finally, interactions beneficial for language learning feature interlocutors with a positive orientation to affiliation, which allows for interactions to be instigated and casual conversations to evolve.

With knowledge about what constitutes quality interactions for the purpose of language learning, this study puts forward a number of strategies that might promote these types of interactions. They are, firstly, programs that encourage students' repeated regular contact with a small number of community members rather than larger mix-and-mingle

events. Homestay programs and student accommodation options are good examples of these. Work experience placements or volunteering positions also provide opportunities for regular, repeated social interaction with a small number of colleagues. Positive strategies might include the matching of international students with locals with whom they are likely to share common interests and experiences, and develop an affective involvement with. Examples of opportunities for this might be involvement in Muslim/Arabic/Middle Eastern community groups or university clubs in which members' interests and values align more closely with those of Saudi students. These might provide students with opportunities for interactions in English and the formation of connections.

Another outcome for the study was identification of aspects of Saudi culture which might come into conflict with Australian culture, an area which has been under-researched (Shepherd, 2010). The study found that the cultural identities of Saudi Arabian international students on a study sojourn could cause conflict for them as they encounter Australian and Western culture. Identity conflicts and how they were resolved had implications for the nature of their participation. Gender roles, experiences of gender segregation, and Saudi traditional dress were aspects of Saudi culture that were at odds with Australian culture and impacted students' community involvement.

Understanding the strong influence of their culture and identity on participation, and the formation of connections in the community are vital to the support of Saudi international students in Australia. With such information, universities and support services can assist Saudi students to adapt to life in Australia and support them in their studies. It might assist these groups to ensure the quality of the international student experience for this cohort. Specific opportunities for support of Saudi students might include pre-departure material that includes information about those aspects of Saudi culture that might cause conflict. Accurate and reliable information prior to departure is a strategy for international student support advocated by AEI (2012). This study suggests that detailed information related to cultural difference be included in pre-departure material. Furthermore, once in the country, where 'buddy' programs are used by institutions, 'buddies' should be matched to Saudi students based on interests, experiences, attitudes, and gender, and taught about Saudi culture, in order to promote

intercultural understanding. The University of Newcastle's *Community Connections* is an example of such a program. Having Saudi, Arabic or Muslim staff in support services roles might be helpful given the specific cultural needs of this cohort (AEI, 2012). Saudi students should be made aware of the availability and role of such support services as some international students are unaware of such facilities (AEI, 2012).

Other supportive initiatives off campus might be the establishment of 'family-friendly' English language classes, or play groups to which Saudi women could bring their children, or in which husbands and wives and children could participate with other family groups. Such programs would allow for the importance of family in Saudi culture and the unique needs that Saudi students have. Such programs would provide Saudi women with opportunities to practise English whilst continuing their child care duties.

Finally, the promotion of contingent forms of participation in which students are involved in the local community in ways that allow them to protect their Saudi identity might suit students in this cohort. Pressure on such students to conform or fit-in with community norms might create an identity conflict which is resolved through non-participation. Saudi students should be provided with safe and culturally appropriate avenues for participation (e.g. female-only swimming lessons, single-sex language classes or social activities, and events that do not involve alcohol at venues where alcohol may be consumed).

In summary, this study has achieved a number of outcomes that contribute to understanding the quality of the Saudi Arabian international student experience and point to strategies for their support. The suggestions made above might help educators of these students to successfully develop their English language during their study sojourn, thereby meeting the expectations and needs of the students and the requirements of universities to provide a quality educational experience for them. The following section discusses the significance of the study to the field of higher education and language learning, and to theory and research method.

7.3 Theoretical Contributions

This study is significant in three areas: in its contribution to knowledge, its exploration of methodology, and elaboration on theory.

Firstly, this study contributes to what is known about the participation of international students in their language learning and interactions in local communities. It contributes to the literature in the fields of both higher education and language learning. In the field of higher education, it contributes to understanding how students engage with the community during their study experience and the factors that influence their language development. In light of this, the study informs the work of universities and services that support them. Furthermore, the study contributes to the field of language learning, by exploring the nature of learner interactions in informal learning contexts and identifying aspects of those which might contribute to language development.

Secondly, reflexive work within this study allowed for the exploration of one aspect of methodology, cross-cultural interviews, which are becoming increasingly popular but of which not enough is known. Chapter 4 contributes to understandings about the phenomenon of cross-cultural interviewing and the impact of participant identity on data collection and interpretation. Furthermore, Chapter 5, an article accepted for publication as *Mapping participation in situated language learning*, presented a unique analytical framework with which to explore Wenger's (1998) notion of participation. The application of the SFL concept of *Register* provided an innovative way to determine and describe quality interactions and understand the nature of language learner interactions.

In addition, this study sought to identify international students' social interactions by collecting detailed, accurate data and triangulating it, a weakness identified in the methodologies of previous studies (as identified in Section 2.2.2). The participants in this study were required to record their interactions in a diary, which they were asked to do regularly and comprehensively (see Chapters 3 and 5 for more detail on this method of data collection). Data from the diary entries were triangulated with interview and interview conversations. These were held at regular intervals in order to potentially collect more accurate data than possible from an interview or questionnaire requiring

unprompted recall. Through this rigorous methodology, this research study contributes to what is known about the problem of international student social interaction in the local community for the purpose of language learning.

Lastly, the study probed some aspects of the theory of Communities of Practice, a popular and widely applied theory of learning. Specifically, the study explored more carefully the notion of participation, and what it might look like in interactions between learners and community members. To do so, the study defined the notions of *action* and *connection*, which comprise the broader notion of participation and employed a unique analytical framework for their analysis (see Chapter 5). The work in this study also considered the ways learners' backgrounds influence their participation in communities of practice, a professed weakness of the model and literature (Hodges, 1998; Mutch, 2003). Chapter 6 discussed how the previously acquired dispositions of learners continued or were shifted or displaced through their involvement in the new community of practice. Another aspect of the theory explored further in this study was the notion of *learning trajectory*, specifically a peripheral trajectory in which learners do not aim for full participation but seek access to the community and intend to leave. While a goal of full or fuller participation is often assumed in CoP research, this study contributed to understanding participation for learners who seek peripheral participation due to their learning trajectories.

In these ways, this study makes noteworthy contributions to the fields of knowledge, method and theory.

7.4 Concluding Remarks and Future Research

International students need opportunities to participate in casual conversation and make real connections with members of local English speaking communities in order to obtain the benefits of participation, which is essential for English language development. Academic success, general well being, inclusion, and a quality educational experience are additionally strong reasons for the support of international students' involvement in local communities. This study has made evidence-based suggestions as to how this support might occur for a specific and unique group of students.

Future research on a larger scale and over a longer time frame might be beneficial in examining how participation changes over time and the relative influence of culture and identity in students at various stages of their sojourn.

Another influence on the participation of Saudi Arabian international students in English speaking communities, which was not within the scope of this study, is that of relations of power. Miller (2000) has highlighted the difficulty of identifying whether learners of the same culture congregate through choice or through marginalisation. When English speakers do not talk, or try to talk with speakers of other languages, discriminatory, and racialising practices are implicated (Miller, 2000). The potential for racism is great for Arabic-looking or veiled Saudi students. However, as identified in this study, some students seek to maintain their culture or seek co-culturalists to prevent homesickness. As a result, future research would need to consider the attitudes and behaviours of community members towards such students, as well as the views and perspectives of the international students themselves.

At the end of this study, it would be interesting to follow the participants to find out how these students reconciled their cross-cultural experiences and identity transformations on returning home to Saudi Arabia. How have they changed as a result of their sojourn? What part does English play in their lives initially, and in the many years that follow? And how will their country have changed as a result of the experiences abroad of themselves and their contemporaries? These questions provide interesting avenues for future research.

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APPENDICES

Appendix i: Letter to Saudi Students Club of Wollongong

University of Wollongong



Faculty of Education

8th March 2011

To the President,

Saudi Students Club

University of Wollongong NSW 2500

My name is Olivia Beath and I am undertaking research as part of a Master of Education program at the University of Wollongong. I am writing to you seeking your assistance in finding potential participants for this project.

The project is entitled: Language Learning as Participation: Case Studies of Saudi Arabian Women. The research is examining the out-of-class English language interactions of female Saudi international students at UOW. I want to describe the English language interactions that these women are having and explore the factors that impact this. The aim is that the information discovered in this study will help universities and educators to teach and support Saudi students at this university and universities around the world.

I am seeking five Saudi women who are studying at UOW or are at WCA prior to commencing their university studies to participate in this project over a period of 10 weeks. Mostly the women will be helping me to gather information on an important research area but also talking with me in English will be great language practice for them.

I would be happy to attend a club meeting to provide more details of the project if it is appropriate. Alternatively I have forwarded you an email that you might pass on to

women who fit the participant criteria. Or, if the women consent to you passing on their details, I will contact them directly. I look forward to your response via email obeath@uow.edu.au or phone .

Regards,

Olivia Beath

HDR Student

Faculty of Education

University of Wollongong

Appendix ii: Recruitment email

Hi!

My name is Olivia Beath and I am undertaking research as part of a PhD program at the University of Wollongong. This email has been forwarded to you in the hope that you might like to participate in this project.

The project is entitled: Language Learning as Participation: Case Studies of Saudi Arabian International Students. The research is examining the out-of-class English language interactions of Saudi international students at UOW. I want to describe the English language interactions that these students are having and explore the factors that impact this. The aim is that the information discovered in this study will help universities and educators to teach and support Saudi students at this university and universities around the world.

I would love for you to participate in this project! Mostly, you would be helping me to gather information on an important research area but also talking with me in English will be great language practice for you.

If you might be interested, please email me on obeath@uow.edu.au or phone me on [redacted] and I can give you full details of the project and what would be required of you.

Thanks for reading and I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,

Olivia Beath

HDR Student

Faculty of Education

University of Wollongong

Appendix iii: Interview questions – female participants

Background

- Tell me about your living situation. (Are you married? How long? Do you have children? How many, ages? Plans for more? Did you have any friends or family in Australia when you arrived?)
- Tell me about your educational background? (primary, high school, University)
- Tell me about your work history (What jobs have you had? What positions held? What did you think about those positions?)

English Language Learning

- What is your English language background? e.g. when did you start, which classes/courses have you taken?
- Why did you first start studying English?
- Why do you continue to study English? Why did you come to Australia to study?
- What are your English language learning goals? What will /do you hope to use English for in the future?
- What are your plans for the future? (work, family, education) What role will English play in that future?
- What do you do to improve your English? e.g. what activities, strategies do you use? Why these?
- Are there other opportunities for you to practise/improve your English that maybe you don't use? Why don't you use these? How do you feel about these?

Attitudes

- How do you feel about learning English? What does it mean for you?
- How do you feel about English speakers or English communities? e.g. in general, Australians, local groups, individuals?
- Do you feel that you can connect with or affiliate with these people? Are you made to feel welcome?
- How do you feel about interacting with different groups of English speakers?

- Is there anything that you feel encourages/discourages you from interacting in English? (e.g. the response from English speakers? Anxiety?)

Appendix iv: Interview questions – male participants

Background

- Tell me about yourself and your living situation. (Age? Married? Children? How many, ages? Plans for more? Family in Australia?)
- Tell me about your educational background (high school, University) and your work history until now (What jobs have you had?)
- What are you studying now?
- English Language Learning
- What is your English language background? Why did you first start studying English?
- Why do you continue to study English? Why did you come to Australia to study? What are your English language learning goals?
- What do you do to improve your English? e.g. what activities, strategies do you use? Why these? Are there other opportunities for you to practise / improve your English that maybe you don't use? Why don't you use these?
- How has being in Australia impacted your language development?
- What are your plans for the future? (work, family, education) What role will English play in that future?
- How do you feel about learning English? What does it mean for you?

Interactions

- Tell me about your English speaking life now.
- What groups/people are you involved with in Australia? How often do you speak English outside the classroom?
- How do you feel about interacting with different groups of English speakers? (e.g. Teachers, other students, other international students, the general public)
- Is there anything that you feel encourages/discourages you from interacting in English? (e.g. the response from English speakers? Anxiety?)

About Australians

- How confident do you feel in your understanding of Australian culture and ways of behaving?
- How would you describe Australians?
- In what ways do you feel similar to/different from Australians?
- Do you feel like you belong here?
- How do you feel about your fellow Saudis in Australia?
- You've been in Australia for (?)yrs now; how do you feel when you go back home? (Do you feel like you belong? Is it strange? Do you feel different?)

Living in Australia

(Show list as prompt)

- Describe your experiences and perceptions of living in Australia so far. How are they different from what you thought before you arrived?
- What are your thoughts and feelings about being a Saudi international student in Australia?
- What challenges or problems have you faced since coming to Australia?
- Have you experienced any discrimination or negativity while here?

(Discuss vignettes)

- What do you think of the experiences of these men in Australia? Do you agree with their attitudes? Can you relate to their experiences?
- What Saudi cultural traditions have you let go of?
- What aspects of Australian culture have you adopted?
- How would you identify yourself?
- Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about living in Australia, and speaking and interacting in English with Australians?

Appendix v: Vignette prompt used during interviews

Latif

Latif is a single 24-year-old male from Saudi Arabia. He is studying a Bachelor of Nursing in Australia and has been in Australia for 3 years.

Latif has many Australian friends and enjoys socialising at nightclubs and bars and going out with his friends on the weekend. Latif values these friendships and likes doing things the Australian way. *I'm really happy in this town. I'm very very happy because I got everything that I wanted. Friends going out, meeting lots of friends.* When Latif went back to Saudi Arabia for a visit, he missed Australia and his Australian friends.

As well as valuing his friendships, Latif enjoys the language learning opportunities that they allow home. Latif believes that it is more important that he have friends and improve his English, even if it means having to go to nightclubs and places that sell alcohol.

Rashad

Rashad is 26, recently married and from Saudi Arabia. He is also studying a Bachelor of Nursing and has been in Australia for 3 years. Rashad does not have Australian friends, only Saudi ones. *I have Saudi people. I like to stay with them all the time.*

Even though he understands that his English would be better if he made friends with Australians, this is not a high priority for Rashad. *I think it's not really important for me to achieve 90% English. I think 70%.* Rashad feels strongly that he should maintain his religious and cultural customs and will not change them just because he is in Australia. This means that he will not change to make friends and interact with Australians.

Appendix vi: Second interview questions – female participants

About Australians

- How confident do you feel in your understanding of Australian culture and ways of behaving?
- How would you describe Australians?
- In what ways do you feel similar to/different from Australians?
- Do you feel like you belong here?
- How do you feel about your fellow Saudis in Australia?
- You've been in Australia for (?)yrs now, how do you feel when you go back home? (Do you feel like you belong? Is it strange? Do you feel different?)

Living in Australia

(Show list as prompt)

- Describe your experiences and perceptions of living in Australia so far. How are they different from what you thought before you arrived?
- What are your thoughts and feelings about being a Saudi international student in Australia?
- What challenges or problems have you faced since coming to Australia?
- Have you experienced any discrimination or negativity while here?

(Discuss vignettes)

- What do you think of the experiences of these men in Australia? Do you agree with their attitudes? Can you relate to their experiences?
- What Saudi cultural traditions have you let go of?
- What aspects of Australian culture have you adopted?
- How would you identify yourself?
- Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about living in Australia and speaking and interacting in English with Australians?

Appendix vii: Language learner diary instructions for participants

Thank you for taking part in the diary study. The purpose of the diary study is to discover exactly what interactions you are having in English.

Please record ALL interactions that you have in English. It is important that you write down EVERY conversation or meeting or discussion that you have in English every day. This includes face-to-face conversations and conversations over the phone. Also include written interactions, for example, emails or letters written in English.

Thank you for your help!

Appendix viii: Human Research Ethics Committee approval

University of Wollongong	
APPROVAL In reply please quote: HE11/092 Further Enquiries Phone: 4221 4457 28 March 2011 Ms Olivia Beath	
Dear Ms Beath,	
I am pleased to advise that the Human Research Ethics application referred to below has been approved .	
Ethics Number:	HE11/092
Project Title:	Language Learning as Participation: Case studies of Saudi Arabian women
Researchers:	Ms Olivia Beath, Dr Honglin Chen, Dr Irina Verenikina
Approval Date:	25 March 2011
Expiry Date:	24 March 2012
This certificate relates to the research protocol submitted in your original application as modified/clarified in your letter received 28 January 2011. As a condition of approval, the Human Research Ethics Committee requires that researchers immediately report:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• proposed changes to the protocol including changes to investigators involved• serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants• unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.	
You are also required to complete monitoring reports annually and at the end of your project. These reports are sent out approximately 6 weeks prior to the date your ethics approval expires. The reports must be completed, signed by the appropriate Head of School, and returned to the Research Services Office prior to the expiry date.	
Yours Sincerely,	
A/Professor Garry Hoban Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee	
cc: Dr Honglin Chen, Faculty of Education Dr Irina Verenikina, Faculty of Education	
<hr/>	
Research Services Office University of Wollongong NSW 2522 Australia Telephone: +61 2 4221 3386 Facsimile: +61 2 4221 4338 research_services@uow.edu.au www.uow.edu.au/research <small>CRICOS Provider No: 00102E</small>	

Appendix ix: Human Research Ethics Committee approval for amendments

University of Wollongong



RENEWAL & AMENDMENTS APPROVED

In reply please quote: HE11/092

Further Enquiries Phone: 4221 4457

MR:CJ

7 October 2011

Dear Ms Beath

Thank you for submitting the progress report. I am pleased to advise that renewal and amendments dated 22 September 2011 for the following Human Research Ethics application have been **approved**.

Ethics Number: HE11/092
Project Title: Language Learning as Participation: Case studies of Saudi Arabian women
Researchers: Ms Olivia Beath, Dr Honglin Chen, Dr Irina Verenikina
Amendment/s: 1. Updated protocol with 5 new participants
2. Extension of project to 30 June 2012
Date Approved: 25 March 2011
Renewed From: 6 October 2011
New Expiry Date: 30 June 2012

Please note that approvals are granted for a twelve month period. Further extension will be considered on receipt of a progress report prior to expiry date.

This certificate relates to the research protocol submitted in your original application and all approved amendments to date. Please remember that in addition to completing an annual report the Human Research Ethics Committee requires that researchers immediately report:

- proposed changes to the protocol including changes to investigators involved
- serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants
- unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

Yours sincerely

A/Professor Garry Hoban
**Chair, Social Sciences
Human Research Ethics Committee**

Cc Dr Honglin Chen & Dr Irina Verenikina - Faculty of Education

Research Services Office University of Wollongong NSW 2522 Australia
Telephone: +61 2 4221 3386 Facsimile: +61 2 4221 4338
research-services@uow.edu.au www.uow.edu.au/research

Appendix x: Human Research Ethics Committee approval for amendments 2

University of Wollongong



AMENDMENT APPROVAL

In reply please quote: HE11/092
Further Enquiries Phone: 4221 3386
WN:SH

7 March 2012

Dear Ms Beath

I am pleased to advise that the amendment requested to the following Human Research Ethics application has been approved.

Ethics Number: HE11/092
Project Title: Language Learning as Participation: Case studies of Saudi Arabian women
Researchers: Ms Olivia Beath, Dr Honglin Chen, Dr Irina Verenikina
Amendments: Change of participants from Saudi Arabian women to men, change of contact details have been noted
Approval Date: 25 March 2011
Expiry Date: 30 June 2012

Please remember that in addition to reporting proposed changes to your research protocol the HREC requires that researchers immediately report:


- serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants
- unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

The University of Wollongong/ Illawarra and Shoalhaven Local Health Network District (ISLHD) Social Science HREC is constituted and functions in accordance with the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.

A condition of approval by the HREC is the submission of a progress report annually and a final report on completion of your project. The progress report template is available at <http://www.uow.edu.au/research/rso/ethics/UOW009385.html>. This report must be completed, signed by the appropriate Head of School and returned to the Research Services Office prior to the expiry date.

If you have any queries regarding the HREC review process, please contact the Ethics Unit on phone 4221 3386 or email rso-ethics@uow.edu.au.

Yours sincerely


A/Professor Garry Hoban
Chair, Social Sciences
Human Research Ethics Committee

cc: Dr Honglin Chen, Faculty of Education, Dr Irina Verenikina, Faculty of Education

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CONSENT FORM FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Language Learning as Participation: Case Studies of Saudi Arabian Women

Olivia Beath

I have been given information about *Language Learning as Participation: Case Studies of Saudi Arabian Women* and discussed the research project with Olivia Beath who is conducting this research as part of a Master of Education supervised by Dr Honglin Chen and Dr Irina Verenikina in the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong.

I have been advised of the potential risks and burdens associated with this research, which include no risks and only the burden of the time required to participate in the data collection activities, and have had an opportunity to ask Olivia Beath any questions I may have about the research and my participation. I understand that confidentiality will be maintained through there being no personal identification connected to the data.

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary; I am free to refuse to participate and I am free to withdraw from the research at any time. My refusal to participate or withdrawal of consent will not affect my relationship with the University of Wollongong.

If I have any enquiries about the research, I can contact Olivia Beath on 4221 4178, Dr Honglin Chen on 4221 3941 or Dr Irina Verenikina on 4221 4285. Or, if I have any concerns or complaints regarding the way the research is or has been conducted, I can

contact the Ethics Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee, Office of Research, University of Wollongong on 4221 4457.

By signing below I am indicating my consent to:

- a 30-45 min interview,
- the keeping of a diary for eight weeks, and
- weekly 30 min meetings during this time.

I understand that the data collected from my participation will be used for the composition of a thesis, journal publication and conference presentation and I consent for it to be used in that manner.

Signed

Date

.....

...../...../.....

Name (please print)

.....

Appendix xii: Participant information sheet

University of Wollongong



Faculty of Education

Participant Information Sheet

Language Learning as Participation: Case Studies of Saudi Arabian Women

This is an invitation to participate in a study conducted by a student researcher at the University of Wollongong. The purpose of the research is to investigate the off campus English language interactions of female Saudi Arabian university students at UOW and the factors that influence them. This research is being undertaken by:

Olivia Beath
Faculty of Education
02 4221 4178
obeath@uow.edu.au

Supervised by: Dr Honglin Chen
Faculty of Education
02 4221 3941
honglin@uow.edu.au

Dr Irina Verenikina
Faculty of Education
02 4221 4285
irina@uow.edu.au

If you choose to be included, you will be asked to do three things: (1) participate in an interview, (2) keep a diary, and (3) attend eight weekly meetings.

First, you will be asked to participate in an interview which would last approximately 30-45min. This interview would be undertaken on campus at UOW at a time convenient to you. You would be asked questions about your educational background; your English language learning history, experiences and goals; and your attitudes towards learning English, English speakers and English language communities. This interview will be audio taped and transcribed.

After this first interview you will be asked to keep a diary for 8 weeks. This diary could be a paper one which is written in, or an audio one recorded using an iPod (which would be provided to you) depending on your preference. Each day you are asked to record your interactions in English, for example, where, with whom, under what circumstances, for what purpose, and any comments that you have about them. Copies

of the paper diary will be made and the audio diary will be transcribed. Depending on the number of interactions, this activity should take less than 15 minutes daily.

Lastly, during the eight weeks in which you are keeping the diary, you will be asked to attend a short meeting (approximately 30min) with the researcher and the other participants in which any significant or interesting diary entries are to be discussed. The meetings will be held on campus at a time convenient to you. These meetings will be audio taped and transcribed. The recordings from the three activities will be destroyed at the end of the project. Transcripts and paper documents will be stored securely.

Apart from the 30-45 minutes of your time for the interview, the time taken daily to complete the diary, and attending the weekly meetings, we can foresee no burden for you. The only potential risk in the study could be emotional distress due to discussions regarding sensitive issues. If this occurs then data gathering will cease and you will be referred to appropriate counselling.

Your involvement in the study is voluntary and you may withdraw your participation from the study at any time and withdraw any data that you have provided to that point. Refusal to participate in the study will not affect your relationship with the University of Wollongong or your studies in any way.

This study is being undertaken as part of a Master of Education research degree. This research will inform educators and staff supporting Saudi International students at this university and universities around the world. Findings from the study will be written up as a thesis and possibly published in educational journals and presented at education conferences. Confidentiality is assured, and you will not be identified in any part of the research.

This study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Social Science, Humanities and Behavioural Science) of the University of Wollongong. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the way this research has been conducted, you can contact the UoW Ethics Officer on (02) 4221 4457.

Thank you for your interest in this study. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards,

Olivia Beath



CONSENT FORM FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Language Learning as Participation: Case Studies of Saudi Arabian International Students

Olivia Beath

I have been given information about *Language Learning as Participation: Case Studies of Saudi Arabian International Students* and discussed the research project with Olivia Beath who is conducting this research as part of a PhD supervised by Dr Honglin Chen and Dr Irina Verenikina in the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong.

I have been advised of the potential risks and burdens associated with this research and have had an opportunity to ask Olivia Beath any questions I may have about the research and my participation. I understand that confidentiality will be maintained through there being no personal identification connected to the data.

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary, I am free to refuse to participate and I am free to withdraw from the research at any time. My refusal to participate or withdrawal of consent will not affect my relationship with the University of Wollongong.

If I have any enquiries about the research, I can contact Olivia Beath on 4221 4178, Dr Honglin Chen on 4221 3941 or Dr Irina Verenikina on 4221 4285. Or, if I have any concerns or complaints regarding the way the research is or has been conducted, I can contact the Ethics Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee, Office of Research, University of Wollongong on 4221 4457.

By signing below I am indicating my consent to:

a 30-45 min interview,
the keeping of a diary for six weeks, and
fortnightly 30 min meetings during this time.

I understand that the data collected from my participation will be used for the composition of a thesis, journal publication and conference presentation and I consent for it to be used in that manner.

Signed

Date

.....

...../...../.....

Name (please print)

.....

Appendix xiv: Participant information sheet amended

University of Wollongong



Faculty of Education

Participant Information Sheet

Language Learning as Participation: Case Studies of Saudi Arabian International Students

This is an invitation to participate in a study conducted by a student researcher at the University of Wollongong. The purpose of the research is to investigate the off campus English language interactions of Saudi Arabian university students at UOW and the factors that influence them. This research is being undertaken by:

Olivia Beath
Faculty of Education
02 4221 4178
obeath@uow.edu.au

Supervised by: Dr Honglin Chen
Faculty of Education
02 4221 3941
honglin@uow.edu.au

Dr Irina Verenikina
Faculty of Education
02 4221 4285
irina@uow.edu.au

If you choose to be included, you will be asked to do three things: (1) participate in an interview, (2) keep a diary, and (3) attend three fortnightly meetings.

First, you will be asked to participate in an interview which would last approximately 45-60min. This interview would be undertaken at a time and place convenient to you, which may include UOW campus or your home. You would be asked questions about your educational background; your English language learning history, experiences and goals; and your attitudes towards learning English, English speakers and English language communities. This interview will be audio taped and transcribed.

After this first interview you will be asked to keep a diary for 6 weeks. Each day you are asked to record your interactions in English, for example, where, with whom, under what circumstances, for what purpose, and any comments that you have about them. Depending on the number of interactions, this activity should take less than 10 minutes daily.

Lastly, during the six weeks in which you are keeping the diary, you will be asked to attend a short meeting (approximately 20min) with the researcher every two weeks in which any significant or interesting diary entries will be discussed. The meetings will be held on campus at a time convenient to you. These meetings will be audio taped and transcribed. The recordings from the three activities will be destroyed at the end of the project. Transcripts and paper documents will be stored securely.

Apart from the 45-60 minutes of your time for the interview, the time taken daily to complete the diary, and attending the fortnightly meetings, we can foresee no burden for you. The only potential risk in the study could be emotional distress due to discussions regarding sensitive issues. If this occurs then data gathering will cease and you will be referred to appropriate counselling.

Your involvement in the study is voluntary and you may withdraw your participation from the study at any time and withdraw any data that you have provided to that point. Refusal to participate in the study will not affect your relationship with the University of Wollongong or your studies in any way.

This study is being undertaken as part of a PhD research degree. This research will inform educators and staff supporting Saudi International students at this university and universities around the world. Findings from the study will be written up as a thesis, published in educational journals and presented at education conferences. Confidentiality is assured, and you will not be identified in any part of the research.

This study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Social Science, Humanities and Behavioural Science) of the University of Wollongong. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the way this research has been conducted, you can contact the UoW Ethics Officer on (02) 4221 4457 or rso-ethics@uow.edu.au.

Thank you for your interest in this study. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards,

Olivia Beath