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University of Southampton

Faculty of Humanities

Modern Languages

The Effect of Social and Cultural Interaction on L2 Learning in Study Abroad Programmes

by

Hassna Mohammed Ali Alfayez

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

March 2016

University of Southampton

ABSTRACT

Faculty of Modern Languages

School of Humanities

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL INTERACTION ON L2 LEARNING IN STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMMES

The aim of this study is to explore the impacts of social and cultural interactions on the process of foreign language learning during study abroad (SA). The empirical study focuses on female Saudi Arabian SA participants who underwent English as a second language studies in English Language speaking countries. It is known from literature that participants' ability to become proficient in a second language is affected by the extent to which such participants are able to use that language in their socio-cultural settings. At the same time, female Saudi Arabian participants have been identified in the literature as a marginalised group of learners in terms of the extent to which they are able to interact with their social and cultural settings. A major factor making these students' experience different relates to the prohibition for female Saudis to travel without a male relative accompanying them. Hence, most of these SA participants travelled with one or several members of their families, creating more complex networks of established and new connections.

As such, this study focused on determining whether or not female Saudi Arabian SA participants who have had more social and/or cultural interactions while they were studying abroad gained more in language proficiency development from the SA programme than participants who did not have as much interaction.

This study developed a mixed method research design that employed both quantitative and qualitative data gathering and analysis protocols. For the quantitative part of the study, surveys and tests were used to gather data on English language confidence and proficiency at different points in time, as well as on the extent of their social and cultural interactions while they were in English Language speaking countries. These data were used to determine if participants were able to gain significantly in English language confidence and proficiency from their SA programme and if there were significant correlations and

associations between such gains and their levels of social and cultural interactivity. Qualitative data gathering was carried out using semi-structured interviews which sought to examine participants' experiences while they were studying abroad in greater depth and detail in order to explain how social and cultural interactions may have affected their ability to learn the language effectively. Findings suggest complex levels of interplay between social and cultural interactions and language development, which are partly in line with those of other SA students and partly appear to be unique to this cohort of learners due to their specific circumstances. More specifically, it was found that various aspects of English language proficiency, such as general proficiency, complexity, accuracy, and fluency, improved among the respondents following their undertaking of the study abroad program. The differences between individual participants in this improvement were linked mainly to the levels of social interaction they engaged in. Findings suggest that participants who engaged in high levels of social interaction were able to utilize these as a means for improving their proficiency in English. However, no sufficient evidence was found to indicate that social interaction in the SA setting was indispensable to achieving significant gains in L2 proficiency. This was because there were some participants who were observed to have gained considerably in their L2 proficiency but engaged in little social interaction with L1 speakers. On the other hand, it was found that all of the participants engaged in various instances of cultural interaction across the program, which made it difficult to determine the actual impact of cultural interaction on L2 gains. . Thus, social interaction in the SA setting was established as having a positive effect on second language learning while results on the impact of cultural interaction on the same were inconclusive.

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Hassna Mohammed Ali Alfayez, declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

“The effect of social and cultural interaction on L2 learning in study abroad programmes”

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
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7. None of this work has been published before submission.

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I'd like to thank ALLAH almighty, the most merciful and compassionate, for his support, help and generosity.

Second, I would like to express my special appreciation to my supervisor Dr Julia Huettnner, for her valuable guidance, critical comments, support, and kind understanding throughout the writing process of this thesis.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to my advisor Professor Rosamond Mitchell; who has been a tremendous mentor for me. I would like to thank her for encouraging my research and for allowing me to grow as a research scientist.

I am also very grateful to all participants who devoted their time to be interviewed and provided useful data for this study.

A special thanks to my family. Words cannot express how grateful I am to my father for all of the sacrifices that he has made on my behalf. His love and support were the driving forces that sustained me thus far.

At the end I would like to express my appreciation to my beloved children whose love, patience and encouragement allowed me to complete this challenging journey.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

In today's globalised society, learning a second language is becoming ever more important for both individuals and entire nations to stay competitive at various socioeconomic and geopolitical levels. As such, it is a typical concern of many countries to develop, among members of their population, the ability to communicate in languages commonly used in international forums. The most dominant of these is the English language, and one country that has been taking considerable efforts in order to develop English communication skills among their people is Saudi Arabia.

There is continuing debate in the field of second language learning concerning the value of Study Abroad (SA) programmes in helping people to develop proficiency in a second language. The common argument is that since SA programmes expose learners to social and cultural settings where the target language is dominant, they should be more likely to become proficient in the language than if they studied it only in their native countries where the target language is not commonly spoken. Considerable studies across different contexts and settings have been conducted in relation to this debate (reviewed e.g. by Collentine 2009, Kinginger 2011, Llanes 2011). Overall these studies have shown considerable benefit for language learning from SA, for at least some aspects of L2. However there is considerable variability in students' learning success, and in spite of growing attempts to explain this variability through the influence of individual, cultural and social factors, there remains a gap in literature on this matter, regarding what particular factors in a foreign setting influence the effectiveness of second language learning. This is one of the gaps that are addressed in this study. Furthermore, as shown in succeeding sections, female members of Saudi Arabian society are a disadvantaged minority when it comes to second language learning abroad. It was felt that focusing on this subgroup could shed fresh light on the impact of specific factors on effective second language learning when studying abroad.

This study seeks to investigate the L2 learning of female Saudi Arabian SA participants who undertook English as a second language studies in an English Language speaking country, the social and cultural interactions they experienced, and the relationship

between the two. In terms of what is presently known about SA programmes, this research intends to add more information in two major aspects. First, it explores the nature of L2 learning among a new group of SA participants, who have not previously been studied. Secondly, it documents the cultural and social interactions experienced by the SA participants, and explores how these positively affect the ability of participants to learn the second language.

By social interaction, this study refers to the participants' contact with L1 speakers; it refers to activities involving participants' communication with different people in the new environment where English is predominantly spoken. In studying abroad, participants are thrust into an environment where hardly anyone outside in the wider community that they live and study in speaks their native tongue. Nonetheless, the participants still need to be able to interact with people from this community for both academic and personal reasons, everything from discussing lessons with classmates and teachers to ordering meals for themselves at restaurants. As such, the environment presents a challenge for participants to learn the target L2 in order for them to be able to engage in social interaction effectively. An important element of social interaction, as explained by Ewert (2009), which sets it apart from the other type of interaction that is of interest in this study is the presence of two-way communication dynamic. Ewert (2009) discussed that in order for two individuals to socially interact with one another, they must have some means of communicating with each other, in a way that each individual is able to receive and respond to information provided by the other individual. Thus, in order for social interaction to occur for study abroad students from Saudi Arabia studying in the United States, there must be an exchange of input between them and people around them.

Similar to this, cultural interaction refers to participants' contact with cultural artefacts in the L1 environment. A cultural artefact is anything that is part of the local culture of the SA environment, from movies shown in the theatres, to street signs and posters that participants encounter while going around the environment. As in the case of social interaction, these artefacts make use of the target language and will be impossible for participants to understand and appreciate without them having developed sufficient proficiency in the target language.. However, unlike in the case of social interaction, a two-way communication dynamic is not necessary for cultural interaction. That is, the participant is able to receive information from the cultural artefact, for example, from the newspaper that she is reading or the television show that she is watching, but these

artefacts are not able to receive any information from the participant. Still, there are some situations of cultural interaction that may be considered to overlap with social interaction. For example, an individual speaking with a waiter at a restaurant may be engaging in social interaction but at the same time, she is experiencing the culture of eating at a restaurant in a foreign country. Nonetheless, a distinction can still be made between the conversation of the participant with the waiter (social interaction) and the overall experience of the participant at the restaurant (cultural interaction). As such, there remains an acceptable distinction between the two where their functional definitions in this study are concerned.

Overall, the study sets out to explore the idea that studying abroad provides an inherent advantage to participants seeking to learn a second language, and to document how this advantage is experienced by a distinctive participant group, i.e. by females from a restricting Saudi Arabian society.

1.2 Research Questions and Rationales

In line with the purpose of this study, the following research questions were formulated.

1.) To what extent were female Saudi Arabian SA participants able to develop proficiency and confidence in the use of the English language?

This question is important as it establishes the baseline for this study. That is, it shows to what extent the participants who underwent L2 learning programmes abroad were able to achieve the second language proficiency that they sought to obtain.

2.) What are the cultural and social interactions experienced by female Saudi Arabian participants while studying abroad?

This question is relevant as it establishes what the participants encountered while they were in an English Language speaking country. As well as examining the general social and cultural experiences of this special group, this research question also presupposes the need to differentiate among and possibly categorise female Saudi Arabian SA participants based on their individual social and cultural experiences while they were studying abroad.

3.) Can any variations in the gains in English language proficiency among female Saudi Arabian SA participants be explained with reference to different social and cultural interaction experiences?

The third research question seeks to find out in what way the experiences of the participants while they were abroad, that are beyond the learning experiences that they encountered in their English as a second language classes, contributed to their development of proficiency in the English language.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Overview

In this chapter, extant literature on various themes that are relevant to the study is explored in order to develop an understanding of what is presently known in the area, identify gaps in the literature and develop a theoretical framework for the study. Firstly, there is a brief presentation of the origins of SA programmes and their current significance (Section 2.2). Next, it is important for the study to gain an understanding of what impact social and cultural interactions have been shown to have on second language learning. This theme supports the premise of the study concerning the general importance of both social and cultural interactions in developing genuinely proficient L2 speakers (Sections 2.3-2.6). Secondly, this study explores literature on the linguistic and non-linguistic development of SA participants (Sections 2.7). The succeeding two themes are focused on the nature of SA L2 learning settings, in terms of factors known to affect the success of participants in such settings (Sections 2.8). Finally, the last two themes are focused on the Saudi Arabian context which forms the background to this study, as the home country of the participants. In particular, these final themes examine literature on the development of ESL learning in Saudi Arabia, and among Saudi Arabian females (Section 2.9), and the nature of social and cultural interaction for Saudi Arabian females in SA settings (Section 2.10). The chapter concludes with a synthesis of extant literature, as well as the identification of existing gaps that this study can address.

2.2 Development of SA Programmes for Second Language Learning

The concept of the SA programme is at the core of this study. As explained by Anderson (2007), SA is a concept that has been in existence since ancient times, and its origins are deeply interconnected with those of higher education itself. There are innumerable examples throughout history of notable men and women seeking higher education beyond the borders of their homeland, either because of the lack of opportunity to do so in their locality, or because of the prospect of studying in a prestigious institution

or with a prestigious professor (Anderson, 2007). However, the formalised structure of SA within wider university programmes did not materialise until the early 20th century, with the establishment of the Institute of International Education in the United States, a non-governmental organisation that sought to address international education as a necessary “component of higher education” (Anderson, 2007, p. 17). Following the Second World War, there began a massive boom of SA activity throughout the world (Anderson, 2007). It was at this point that various nations in the East also began to substantially acknowledge the importance of having participants in SA. Many students travelled across countries in order to attend institutions that are renowned in their respective areas of study (Anderson, 2007). Learning a second language was one of the many motivations that students had for studying abroad, and many people from the west would travel e.g. to Japan (Ishida, 2010) or France (Wilkinson, 1998) in order to learn the native languages of those countries. As such, SA has a long history with complex origins that cannot be attributed to the use of English only. However, as the English language secured its place as the dominant world language in this period, the need for the people of countries all over the world to learn the language became apparent. It is from this that the use of SA as a means for learning English as a second language was conceived (Brewer, 2011).

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2011), about 3.7 million participants were studying abroad in 2009, a dramatic jump from less than 1 million in 1975. Of these participants, Asian participants constitute over 50%, and learning English as a second language is one of the primary reasons why these participants pursue studies in English-speaking countries (OECD, 2011). At present, there are innumerable institutions and government programmes that support SA, and some of them, such as ESL (2012) or Study Abroad UK (2005) are either specifically focused on or have departments that are focused on enabling participants to become proficient in a second language through studying in a country that mainly speaks that language.

Given the extensive development of SA programmes for L2 learning in previous decades, it is necessary to inquire into the different impacts or perceived impacts that these programmes have on L2 learners that undertake them. Different aspects of impact are examined in succeeding sections.

2.3 Interaction and Second Language Learning

For the purposes of this study, it is important to differentiate between what is meant by social interaction and cultural interaction in the L2 learning context. This section deals with the general role of interaction in second language learning. According to Mitchell, Myles & Marsden (2013, pp. 160-163), the “interaction hypothesis” in second language learning was first proposed by Michael Long, who forwarded the idea that development of proficiency in the target language is promoted by the learner’s face-to-face interactions in that language (Long, 1991). That is, in order for a participant to learn a language effectively, the learning setting must promote his or her interaction with other people in that language as opposed to the “input hypothesis” of Stephen Krashen, which argues that comprehensible input alone, is sufficient for successful L2 acquisition (Krashen, 1991). The interaction hypothesis led to the inference that it is important to examine the type and quality of educational interactions that participants encounter in the language learning setting in order to see their impact on the participants’ second language proficiency (Mackey & Goo, 2007; Lafford, 2004; Magnan & Back, 2007).

Much research on the Interaction Hypothesis has been psycholinguistic in nature, examining the impact on L2 acquisition of local interactional features such as negotiation of meaning or different types of feedback (Mackey & Goo 2007). However, other interaction research has been broader and has examined the role of social interaction in motivating and building the resilience of L2 classroom learners. For example, Jiang and Ramsay (2005) focused on the role of social interaction in building rapport among L2 learners of Chinese. According to Jiang and Ramsay (2005), social interaction lies at the heart of learning Chinese as a second language, particularly because of the language’s characteristic as a tonal language, where many words can mean completely different things when said in different tones. In line with this, building rapport between L2 learners and their teachers and classmates was considered to have significant influence in enabling effective learning of the language, and it was found that one of the best ways by which rapport can be established is through enough social interactivity. Social interaction between participants and with the teacher enabled L2 learners to share more of themselves with other members of the class, and this led them to be more comfortable in undertaking some of the more complex lessons in their language learning course (Jiang & Ramsay, 2005). It was also found that learners experienced a decreased level of anxiety after becoming comfortable with their classmates and teacher, and that they become more motivated to learn the

language and share conversations with one another using the target language (Jiang & Ramsay, 2005).

Lin and Yang (2011) also explored the impact of social interaction in L2 writing courses, particularly in the context of participants' perceptions about utilizing wiki technology and peer feedback. As explained by their study, wiki technology is a type of online social interactive facility in which participants can interact and collaborate in building written works. On the other hand, the peer feedback system used is a private messaging system in which participants can voluntarily provide feedback to work provided by other participants, which only those participants will be able to view and respond to. Using a socio-cultural framework where participants were asked to answer questions about an environment that they were immersed in, the study found from 32 participants in an English-as-a-foreign-language (L2) course that the wiki and feedback systems that the course adopted in order to foster greater social interaction were positive additions to the learning environment. Participants generally expressed that the features enabled them to communicate with one another and inform one another about the strengths and weakness of one another's contributions. This led Lin and Yang (2011) to infer that "meaningful social interaction" does have a "significant role with regard to participants' perceived benefits of this collaborative writing process" (p. 88) in a second language. However, the study also found that the newness of a medium used for achieving this meaningful social interaction in the L2 class is an important consideration, since some of the participants did report difficulty in being able to communicate effectively with their classmates through the use of wikis and felt that they should have been more thoroughly briefed.

Similarly, Ewert (2009) also focused on the impact of social interaction on the writing ability of L2 learners. According to Ewert (2009), there is strong theoretical basis for the role that conversational activities play in helping L2 learners to formulate ideas, understand the dynamics of particular rhetorical devices, and create a sense of appeal to the audience of their writing. These were tested in a study that considered how the interactions of participants among one another and with their teacher contributed to opportunities for scaffolding and negotiation in writing activities. The study found that through interaction, the L2 learners were able to identify specific contexts that made their ideas regarding what they wanted to write clearer, and allowed them to select expressions that more accurately captured what their intended meaning was and was more appropriate to the audience that they sought to address. In another study, Villamil and De Guerrero (1996) found that social

interaction also contributed to the refinement of participant learning outcomes in L2 writing course settings. The study conducted a quasi-experiment in which some L2 learners working on written pieces were paired together and asked to discuss one another's work with each other and provide feedback. Based on the observations taken during the interactive session, it was found that interaction activated cognitive processes that enabled the participants to improve upon their respective learning outcomes (Villamil and De Guerrero, 1996). It was suggested that this finding can be explained as the mediating effect of social interaction to social-cognitive processes, in which the mind tries to make sense of a new perspective and apply this perspective to known information. By interacting with one another, the participants were able to stimulate this process in another's mind, which led them to pick out details about their works that they had failed to see when they were writing them.

The interaction research just discussed is potentially relevant to the participants in this study, given that when abroad, they were attending regular English classes as an important element of their total experience. However, SA research from an SLA perspective also makes the assumption that rich input and interaction opportunities will be available to SA participants, in informal settings. In this study, social and cultural interaction are a focus of interest alongside educational (classroom) interaction, with the difference that social and cultural interactions are defined here as interactions that the participant engages in when she is outside of the formal learning environment. That is, when the participant is not in the classroom, it is expected that she will still have to interact with other people in the target second language since she is in a country where that language is the native language, and these interactions are of interest for this research. The following sections review studies on the impact of social interaction on informal L2 learning (2.5) and on the impact of cultural interaction on the same (2.6).

2.4 Impact of Social Interaction on L2 Learning

Research that focuses on informal social interaction mainly consists of investigations of communication between L2 learners and L1 speakers (e.g. Archangeli, 1999; Ishida, 2010; Holmes and Riddiford, 2011; Hutchinson, 2009; Bacon, 2002). This social interaction can happen face to face in various settings outside the classroom and can be examined for its effect in both spoken and written L2 learning; the fundamental element

is simply that there must be some communication made between L2 learners and other people outside the classroom using the target language.

Archangeli (1999) argued that there is, at best, only a mixed rather than absolute effect of interaction with native speakers in L2 learning with respect to technical aspects (referring to elements of the language system such as syntax, vocabulary etc.) of language learning. However, the study conducted by Archangeli (1999) also established that interactions with the native setting in SA contexts have an undeniably positive effect on non-technical aspects (fluency, likelihood of usage, pragmatics) of language learning; these are examined in greater detail later on.

Ishida (2010) presents an example of SA research involving social interaction. This study examined how social interaction affected the pragmatic behaviour of L2 learners of Japanese studying in Japan. Specifically, it investigated the shift commonly observed among learners who initially used only the statement “soodesuka” in acknowledging receipt of new conversational information, but came to use other expressions later on. Through an analysis of conversations made with such learners, it was found that social interaction provided various affordances that led to the diversification of L2 learners’ expressions in responding to the receipt of new information. In particular, social interaction that the L2 learners in Japan were able to have with people in the community where they lived enabled them to see the different ways in which expressions that they had encountered in class were used, and the variations of usage which were not discussed in their classes. Over time, they were able to model their own responses after those that they encountered in the open environment. This study found that social interaction enabled the learners to develop high competence in negotiating conversations in which they express their opinions with L1 and other L2 speakers.

In a study of skilled migrants in New Zealand, Holmes and Riddiford (2011) examined the role of workplace social interaction in helping L2 learners develop pragmatically in their target second language (English). As found from their review of literature, socio-pragmatic skills are considered as critical components of communication ability, but little research has been conducted on the impact that social interaction in controlled classroom settings has on this component of language learning. Tracking the interactions of skilled migrants in an L2 class and comparing these with interactions they reported in their workplace settings for 12 weeks, the study found that the L2 learners were

able to parallel social interactions that they had with classmates in their L2 learning class with interactions that they had with workmates in their workplace settings. In particular, workers were able to negotiate workplace requests more effectively by utilising interaction techniques with the language that they learned in interactive practice with their classmates.

Studies of social interaction have also started to focus on interactions that L2 learners are able to make in virtual settings. One review examined how the use of social software addresses some pragmatics issues faced by L2 learners (Hutchinson, 2009). As explained by Hutchinson (2009), current technological developments have enabled settings wherein L2 learners can interact socially with L1 speakers and fellow L2 learners of a given language without needing to move. The interaction that L2 learners are able to gain from this medium has significantly increased their understanding of contexts in which particular L2 expressions are used (Hutchinson, 2009). In addition to this, L2 learners are exposed to a wide variation of language use when they interact through social software. According to Hutchinson (2009), this characteristic is unique to this setting because of the wider domain of online speakers in comparison with that of localised L1 speaker communities. Hutchinson (2009) did not make formal quantitatively supported claims on the impact of social interaction in the virtual setting to L2 learning; but the study did present the argument that social interaction with native speakers is possible through virtual learning environments. However, Hutchinson (2009) also considered that this wide variability may also be a source of confusion for L2 learners. That is, since social interaction online is largely uncontrolled by instructional oversight, L2 learners may end up learning the “wrong things” from their interactions.

Bacon (2002) conducted a case study of one participant in a SA setting learning Spanish as a second language in Mexico. From interviews conducted with the participant, it was established that the SA setting provided her with informal lessons in terms of interacting with the locals that enabled her to learn the societal and cultural rules in different aspects of language use. While the participant claimed to have learned more about the language from these informal lessons than in formal classroom lessons, the researcher found a strong dynamic interplay between formal and informal experiences as shown by the improvement of the participant’s writing samples over time (Bacon, 2002). It was inferred that an essential characteristic of the SA context which made it more effective than domestic L2 learning contexts was that the SA setting enabled, or even forced participants to make use of the language outside of the classroom, and in so doing learn more about the

language and then apply those informal lessons in refining their formal knowledge and competence with the language (Bacon, 2002).

In a contrasting, large scale study, Dewey et al. (2012) analysed the relationship between self-reported social network development, language use, and speaking development of 204 L2 learners of Japanese who went to study in Japan, and found that perceived technical and non-technical gains in the language could be modelled as a function of the number of social groups in which the learner participated and of time spent speaking Japanese with native-speaker friends along with other variables (Dewey et al., 2012). On the other hand, the use of English when speaking with Japanese friends was found to be a negative predictor. As such, Dewey et al. (2012) found that social interaction was an important factor in considering how students develop in their L2 learning in a SA setting.

The idea of SA programmes is to expose the participants to a different setting, where they are expected to have various social interactions that can potentially increase the quantity and quality of knowledge and skills gained. Specifically in the context of second language learning, SA programmes seek to expose participants to a setting where the participant can have more interactions with people who speak the target language as their local language, an environment where there are rich opportunities for using the language in practical situations. This premise seems well supported in extant literature, especially with respect to the development of pragmatic competence (Archangeli, 1999; Ishida, 2010; Holmes and Riddiford, 2011; Hutchinson, 2009; Bacon, 2002, Dewey et al., 2012). Yet at the same time; similar benefits seem to be afforded to participants who interact with native and second language speakers through virtual instead of physical settings (Hutchinson, 2009). That is, even participants who are not studying abroad are able to have social interactions that may contribute to their second language learning. As such, the role of social interaction in language learning seems extensively established in literature. These studies generally emphasized the role of SA programmes in increasing the consistency or quality of opportunities for social interactions that enable language learning. However, these studies have so far been restricted to particular contexts and target L2s, such as Japanese in the case of Dewey et al. (2012). No studies were found that focused specifically on the impact of informal social interaction on the language learning of female Saudi Arabian students.

2.5 Cultural Interaction

Various definitions for the concept of culture have been developed over time. In this study, the adopted definition of culture is that it is the collection of all knowledge, experiences, beliefs, and perspectives as well as the artefacts derived from such which have been developed by a specific group of people. It is the sum total of learned behaviour accumulated by people and dynamically passed on from generation to generation. Culture is manifested in various ways and through various levels. The culture of a society can be observed from different aspects, from their art forms, cuisine, and architecture, to their social habits, rituals, and language (Choudhury, 2003). Each of these aspects is a part of the cultural identity of a society. It must be acknowledged that this selected definition of culture for this study is only one among many. At present, there is a common argument that culture is much more fluid and is constantly reconstructed, which implies that it cannot be bounded within fixed geographical settings (see for example discussion in James & Szeman, 2010). While this perspective is also appreciated and respected in this study, it is important for this study to establish a definite description of culture in the SA environment that it focused on. Of course, the culture in this setting may be changing, but what is important to this study is what this culture is at present, that the students who participated in this study were exposed to. It is the assumption of the author that at present, for young females from Saudi Arabia, the home culture and the 'abroad' culture of the host country (the United States) remain sufficiently distinctive for the perspective of Choudhury (2003) to apply. That is, there is enough reason to believe that when the participants are placed in the American setting, they will experience a social and cultural environment that is far different from that in Saudi Arabia. This is supported by the fact that until now, women in Saudi Arabia are restricted from certain activities that women in the United States are at liberty to do, such as travelling on their own (Moores-Abdool et al., 2011). It is also a cultural taboo for women in Saudi Arabia to openly interact with males that they are not related to or to dress fashionably in their presence (Moores-Abdool et al., 2011), both of which are common practices in the United States.

There are other language learning researchers who continue to adopt a relatively 'bounded' view of cultures, and discuss cultural interaction from this perspective. Thus for Byram (2012), cultural interaction is defined as any contact made by a member of one culture with aspects of a different culture. For example, whenever a Chinese local sees an American television show or listens to American music, or eats a hamburger, that person is

being exposed to American culture. Hinkel (2011) discussed the importance of cultural interaction to second language learning. According to Hinkel (2011), language is the fundamental tool through which culture is communicated between people from different societies. That is, one of the functions of language is to enable such communication. Therefore, a learner cannot fully appreciate and understand the language of another society without interacting with the different elements to which that language pertains (Hinkel, 2011). That is, the Chinese local will not be able to completely understand the English word “hamburger,” without actually seeing and tasting that element of American culture. On the other hand, Schmidt et al. (1996) considered that cultural aspects can actually be absorbed by a learner even if the learner does not experience such aspects first hand, so long as the learner could connect the cultural aspect with what he or she knows within his or her own cultural context. Based on this reasoning, a Chinese local will still be able to understand the English word “hamburger” even if he or she does not experience the sight, smell, or taste of this item, if the item is described to him or her in terms of items that he or she can understand based on his or her own culture. For example, it can be explained to the Chinese local that a hamburger is actually like a Chinese deli sandwich, except that the bread and meat used are different. (The Chinese term is Cua pao which is basically folding a sweet bun over some meaty filling.) These specifications can give the local an idea at least of what the hamburger must look like

Admittedly, social and cultural interactions as they are defined in this study have some overlaps. Specifically, there are some interactions that involve both social and cultural aspects, such as ordering at a restaurant, which involves social interaction in speaking to the waiter and cultural interaction when interfacing with the restaurant’s menu and experiencing the ambiance. However, given the cultural distance between Saudi Arabia and the USA, as experienced by the young female participants, this study needed to be able to differentiate between these two types of interactions as much as possible. As such, for purposes of this study, social interaction is focused on interactions that involve face to face communication between or among people, whereas cultural interactions specifically refer to a person’s engagement with cultural artefacts. Thus, the interaction at a restaurant (for example) can be broken down into its social interaction and cultural interaction aspects.

2.6 The Impact of Cultural Interaction on L2 Learning

With regard to cultural interactions, Gu et al. (2010) provide a fundamental theoretical discussion on the importance of connecting with cultural components of the target language for L2 learners. They argue that the cultural setting provides the overall context in which the language can be most extensively utilised. Various elements of language utilisation can remain hidden to L2 learners despite them having mastered the rules and structures of the language, such as figurative language, or colloquial usage. Understanding these elements of language requires exposure to the culture in which they are most relevant (Gu et al., 2010). Byram (2012) also focuses on developing a theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between language learning and culture. According to Byram (2012), every culture can be considered as an alternative perspective to conceptualising the world, and language is one of the primary components of that perspective that is the key to opening everything else. However, by virtue of this nature of language, many aspects of a language may not make sense if taken outside of the culture where it belongs (Byram, 2012). That is, some expressions or words only have a meaning within the context of the culture where the language comes from. This means that the learner of any second language must strive to understand the target language within its cultural context, lest their effort misses key nuances that are linked to particular elements of the culture.

Practical explorations of the impact of cultural interaction on L2 learning have also been found. Shiffman (1991) examined the use of literature, another element of culture, in teaching Asian L2 learners. Specifically, the study examined the use of Aesop's fables, a western cultural artefact, to improve L2 learners' communication skills. The findings revealed that the use of the artefact enabled the participants to apply their understanding of their own cultures to the culture of the target language through making parallels between narratives in Aesop's fables and narratives in their native culture. The fables acted as devices through which learners were able to improve both their fluency and accuracy in deriving meaning from written works in the target language. A similar study was conducted by Choi and Yi (2012), which utilised elements of popular culture in order to help teach advanced second language in the classroom. Based on qualitative analysis of interviews with advanced L2 learners of Korean, the exposure to popular culture artefacts, such as music videos or posters, was useful in helping them make the transition from literate to proficient levels in the language (Choi & Yi, 2012).

McQuillan and Tse (1995) conducted another study which examined how L2 learning children developed the ability to “broker” language for their parents. The study found that the children, having been earlier exposed to the cultural elements of the environment, were able to adapt more effectively in comparison to their parents. The children understood cultural nuances better than their parents did since their parents have been immersed in the culture of their home country through being born and raised there. While the families where the participants of the study belonged to also spoke their native language at home and in their immediate community, the children born and raised in the host country were able to absorb more of the host country culture than their parents, and this cultural immersion of these second generation migrants led to a greater ability to understand the language and transfer this understanding to their parents.

Similar to McQuillan and Tse (1995), Park (2007) more recently conducted a conversational analysis study examining taped conversations in English by non-native speakers, to determine how cross-cultural interactions led to the development of the learner’s speaker identity. The findings suggested that the extent of interactions that speakers have experienced with cultural elements, such as literature or popular media, influenced their grasp of the language. Those who had greater exposure to culture were able to bring out more elaborated discursive behaviours in their conversation (Park, 2007). That is, their contributions contained more opinionated responses and were generally more sophisticated than those who had less exposure to the culture.

The findings of McQuillan and Tse (1995) and Park (2007) can be related to the work of Baker (2012), which examined the impact of cultural awareness in the L2 learning process. As explained by Baker (2012), cultural awareness has become an important aspect of language learning and teaching. While this initially meant that teachers ought to be aware of the cultural background of their participants and somehow incorporate this in their instructional methods to facilitate more effective learning outcomes, it has since developed into the corresponding need for L2 learners to understand that learning a second language is a “cultural process” (p. 62). This means that they have to be aware of how their native culture influences their ability to understand the target language, and how the culture of other L2 learners affects the way that they are able to communicate with them in the target language (Baker, 2012). For Baker (2012), this perspective is a more acceptable, “non-essentialist” (p. 63) view of the relationship between language and culture that is better able to capture the dynamic nature of this relationship. That is, the role of the teacher

is not to match instructional methods with the cultural backgrounds of their students, but rather to expose the students to the cultural environment corresponding to the target L2 and have them absorb this environment alongside language learning activities. Students can thus learn a language better when they are exposed to the cultural environments where that language is predominantly used (Baker, 2012). This implies the value of SA settings to L2 learning, since in such settings students have a real opportunity to be immersed in the local cultural environment where the use of the target L2 is dominant.

Looking further into the context of SA, some relevant studies were found from the works of Heggins and Jackson (2003) and Pellegrino-Aveni (2005). Heggins and Jackson (2003) discussed the importance of the local environment in influencing language use among L2 learners. Exposure to local print media, for example, was an important aspect of learning for some learners, particularly those who have already developed a habit for consuming print media in their native language back in their country. This habit followed them in the SA setting, where the language used in the cultural artefacts that they wanted to read were in the target L2. As such, they were motivated to learn their target L2 better so that they can engage in cultural interactions more effectively (Heggins & Jackson, 2003). A similar discussion was provided by Pellegrino-Aveni (2005), which focused on the L2 learner's construction of the self while developing proficiency in the target L2. As explained by Pellegrino-Aveni (2005), a significant part of this development is being able to appreciate cultural artefacts, such as local theatres, television shows, and reading materials, through the use of the target L2.

The importance of actually engaging in cultural interaction in order to get the most out of the SA experience was presented by Wilkinson (1998). The study examined the progress of 7 women who participated in a SA programme to learn French as a second language. From interactional and ethnographic data collected across eight months, the study found that the traditional perspective of SA programmes being beneficial for L2 learning was not always evident in the case of the participants. The participants generally complained that they had ended their programmes with "unfulfilled aspirations" about learning French sufficiently to be able to use it effectively (Wilkinson, 1998). Some of the participants revealed experiences such as staying for a month in France without needing to actually speak French often, despite the language being predominantly used in the country. Many of the participants narrated attempts to interact with native speakers that were unsuccessful, and identified problems such as unresponsiveness that discouraged them

from making further attempts to interact (Wilkinson, 1998). Some of the participants also expressed how their cultural interactions with the French did not lead to cultural understanding, but actually resulted in stereotyping which alienated participants from the French language and from interacting with French people even further (Wilkinson, 1998). From this, Wilkinson (1998) concluded that clearly, simply being in a SA programme cannot be expected to lead to effective cultural interaction (and associated L2 learning). According to Wilkinson (1998), it is important to not just immerse oneself in the setting, but to be familiar with what to expect from the setting based on available information about the culture of the people in that setting. The participants in the study were negatively influenced by the cultural environment in part because what they found was contrary to their expectations. They had expected the environment that they interacted with to at least be accommodating and hospitable, but this was not what they encountered, and this led to their discouragement in accessing cultural artefacts in order to further their L2 proficiency. The study of Wilkinson (1998) alerted this study to consider such factors when orienting participants who are going to go to a foreign environment with a culture that can be considered as very different from their own.

Similar to the studies on social interactions, research on the impact of interactions with culture in learning the language of that culture seems to lead to important conclusions. Gu et al. (2010), Byram (2012), and Baker (2012), have shown the relevance of cultural experience to language learning, both in terms of understanding elements of the target language that only have meaning in the context of the culture and in terms of understanding how communication itself is carried out by native as well as non-native speakers of the language based on their cultural background. From this theoretical grounding, these authors discuss the need for a second language learner to connect his or her cultural background with the culture of the language that he or she intends to learn, and argue that only when he or she understands the culture of the target language can he or she fully master the language. While it is possible for the learner to learn a second language without being exposed to the culture of that language, there will remain a significant portion of that language that the learner would not be able to understand or use effectively, due to the lack of cultural connection. This theoretical grounding is supported by the various empirical investigations reviewed above (Shiffman, 1991; Choi and Yi; 2012; McQuillan & Tse, 1995; Park, 2007). Yet again, as in the section on social interaction, while there were some studies that were found that considered the impact of cultural

interaction on language learning in the SA setting, the treatment of this has not been very explicit or systematic. The evidence also points in different directions, with some empirical studies showing beneficial effects from engagement in cultural interaction, but other studies (e.g. Wilkinson 1998) showing that this can be problematic and an obstacle to learning. More specifically, no studies were found that focused on the context of cultural interactions of female SA students from Saudi Arabia seeking to learn English as a second language. Clearly, the SA context is different from other contexts used in the empirical studies reviewed, such as McQuillan & Tse (1995) which made use of an immigration context or Shiffman (1991) which considered a classroom context. None of the contexts considered in existing studies captured the unique characteristics of the SA participant considered in this study, i.e. those of a sojourner from a distinctively different cultural background, who is thrust into a foreign setting for a limited time with the goal of learning a language effectively by the end of the allocated time.

2.7 Overlapping Impacts of Social and Cultural Interactions

As previously discussed, there is some overlap between the concepts of social and cultural interactions in this study. The main difference between social and cultural interaction, as operationally defined in this study, is that the former is focused on the occurrence of actual exchange of communication between the study abroad student and locals of the study abroad environment. Social interaction occurs when the student talks with people in her classroom, it also occurs when she places an order at a restaurant, or asks a salesman at a department store about a certain item. On the other hand, cultural interaction in this study is meant to encompass all of the contact that the study abroad students make with any and all facets of culture in the host environment. It includes students' experiences in watching television shows, reading newspapers, and sightseeing while in the foreign country. However, this very broad definition of cultural interaction leads some situations that can be classified as social interaction to also be classifiable as cultural interaction. For example, going to the movies includes the aspect of paying for the ticket at the ticket booth, which involves speaking to the booth cashier. This can be social interaction, but it is also cultural interaction.

However, the previous two sections of this review were able to show that a good demarcation can be placed between social and cultural interactions at least for the purpose of this study. For studies that have to do with developing language proficiency, the works of Dewey (2012) and Bacon (2002) were classified under impacts of social interaction alongside many others, because they directly examine the result of having students learning a foreign language interact socially with native speakers of that language. On the other hand, the works of Shiffman (1991) and Choi and Yi (2012) were classified under impacts of cultural interaction to language learning, because each of them focused on some facets of culture as a means for helping students develop stronger language proficiency. Shiffman (1991) focused on exposing learners to fables in the tradition of the target language while Choi and Yi (2012) focused on music videos and television shows. Thus, sufficient distinction can be made between social and cultural interactions for the purpose of this study. However, it is accepted in this study that there may be a number of activities that a participant can engage in which involve both communication with locals and exposure to cultural artefacts, and that there may be no way to delineate the impact of one and the other on the respondents' second language learning. This implies that there may be some interactions that cannot be classified as belonging to a distinct category (social or cultural interaction) for purposes of determining its impact on the participant's second language learning. This is accepted as a limitation of this study.

2.8 Development of Linguistic Aspects of Language Proficiency by SA L2 Learners

This section is concerned with examining the language learning benefits that were found from the literature with regard to L2 learners engaging in SA programmes. It includes both studies that focused only on actual and perceived gains of L2 learners in SA settings and studies that sought to compare the performance of comparable groups in SA and local L2 learning settings. First, a historical framework for the developing academic consensus regarding the inherent value of SA settings in learning L2 is provided. This is followed by a review of studies that focused on specific aspects of language learning in the SA setting.

Important early work on the gains of L2 learners in SA programmes was provided by Carroll (1967), considering a large sample of almost 2800 college-level American English

L1 participants diversely majoring in various second languages. Carroll (1967) compared the test scores of participants with SA experience and participants without, in the respective languages that the participants were majoring in. The study found that those with SA experience generated scores that were statistically superior to those who did not have SA experience. Various smaller studies conducted thereafter confirmed the results by Carroll (1967). Each of these studies ((Willis et al. 1977; Dyson, 1988; Viguez, 1984; Liskin-Gasparro, 1984; Milleret, 1991; Foltz, 1991) compared the language proficiency gains measured through testing of those who participated in SA programmes with those who did not, and found that those who had SA experience were more proficient than their locally schooled peers. Many of these studies attributed the perceived gains to the assumed greater interactional and cultural exposures of participants in SA settings (Dyson, 1988; Viguez, 1984; Liskin-Gasparro, 1984; Milleret, 1991). Across time, more studies were conducted that focused on making comparisons between the gains of SA and local L2 learners (see reviews by Collentine, 2009; Kinginger, 2011; Llanes, 2011). Segalowitz and Freed (2004) concisely summarised the current state of literature with regard to comparing L2 learning gains between SA and “at home” (p. 173) settings. As explained by Segalowitz and Freed (2004), SA settings have been found to be superior in some aspects of L2 acquisition, but not in others, and the relationship between gains and settings is not as intuitive as initially considered. On the other hand, Kinginger (2011) argued that SA does impact different language competence domains positively. Kinginger (2011) identified four areas of communicative competence which had been considered in the study of SA L2 learning; these are grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic areas. In the first area, Kinginger (2011) illustrated how the progression of research began with findings showing significant differences between the grammatical gains of SA L2 learners when compared to home country learners. However, these gains were observed in various studies that have claimed to show anywhere from modest to insignificant grammatical gains in the SA setting, with some even claiming that the home setting resulted in stronger grammatical gains. In terms of the sociolinguistic, discourse, and pragmatic areas, which are mainly concerned with how well learners are able to understand the social context in which language is used and act and react accordingly, Kinginger (2011) claimed that there was more consistency in the literature in favour of the SA setting. Overall, Kinginger (2011) discussed different studies which found that the exposure inherent in the SA setting considerably increases learners’ grasp of the language to “native like” (p.62) levels.

However, during the 1990s there seemed to be a shift in the findings of studies that similarly examined the general language proficiency gains of participants in SA contexts versus those in home country study contexts. One of the first of these studies was by Meara (1994), who argued that previous studies on the impact of SA in second language learning had overly relied upon the use of standardised tests to measure gains in proficiency, whereas such tests have been proven to be unable to measure differences between groups belonging to higher levels of language proficiency. That is, at such levels, differences between scores that may be deemed statistically significant may no longer be practically significant. In place of such tests, Meara (1994) utilised a self-report, attitudinal questionnaire that measured participants' confidence in various technical aspects of language use, and found that while a majority of the participants perceived their oral skills to have increased significantly from their SA experience, only a small number believed the same to be the case for their writing and reading proficiencies. As such, Meara (1994) made one of the earliest arguments to doubt the natural superiority of SA programmes for L2 acquisition. These findings were supported by the later works of Freed et al. (1998) and Freed and Lazar (1999), which studied written proficiency in terms of constructing essays in a foreign language. These studies found that there were no significant differences in the grammatical accuracy, lexical density, sentence structure complexity, and coherence between the works of participants who had one semester of SA experience and those who had none (Freed, 1995; Freed and Lazar, 1999). Likewise, Huebner (1995) found no statistical difference in the matched fluency comparison of American participants studying Japanese in Japan and at home. Dewey (2004) focused on reading development in comparing SA learners and home country learners of Japanese as a second language. Comparing 15 SA learners and 15 domestic learners in the United States, the study found a significant difference in the gains in reading comprehension only on the self-assessment level in favour of the SA learners. On the other hand, measures on more objective reading comprehension variables as examined through free-recall and vocabulary knowledge tests revealed statistically similar results between the two settings.

Nonetheless, there are still studies that continued to support the superiority of the SA setting in developing proficiency in a second language, such as studies by Lafford (1995) which compared the communication strategies of participants who studied Spanish in SA programmes and those who studied it in home country classrooms and found through the use of role-play activities that participants who experienced SA programmes

had a “broader repertoire” (p. 97) of strategies in handling diverse communicative situations than those who did not have SA experience. More recently, Sasaki (2007) compared the English language writing ability of participants in a 4-9 month SA programmes in the United States and those who were studying in American or British universities located in Japan. Sasaki (2007) found that while both groups significantly improved in general English proficiency, it was only the group that studied abroad that significantly improved their written language proficiency. Segalowitz et al. (2004) compared the linguistic gains made by English L1 participants studying Spanish in Colorado and in Alicante, Spain, and found that various linguistic variables such as oral proficiency and fluency were directly affected by the learning setting. The SA group were superior in oral proficiency, in oral fluency, and in narrative ability, though not in grammar. In a review conducted by Klapper and Rees (2012), it was established based on outcomes from previous studies that foreign language students who undertake studies abroad experience strong linguistic gains based on a number of academic measures taken in these studies. However, at the same time, studies were showing highly differentiated rates of progress, indicating that some SA students tend to fare better in the foreign environment than others. Klapper and Rees (2012) pointed out some potential sociocultural explanations behind these outcomes, and consider the need to explore this diversity in outcomes more deeply in further studies set in particular sociocultural contexts. This trend has continued in various recent studies which continue to explore different aspects of language acquisition. Fitzpatrick (2012) attempted to track changes in the foreign language vocabulary of participants who engaged in SA programmes across the duration of their respective programmes. The study was based on the principle that exposure to SA enables the widening of one’s global vocabulary, a principle that is similar to that adopted by the present study, but focused on the wider context of global literacy. Fitzpatrick (2012) had participants complete word association tasks weekly for six weeks and found that participants gradually improved in some aspects of the task across the six weeks. However, the study failed to consider the effect of repeated test taking on the ability of participants to improve their scores. As such, the study failed to conclude that SA definitely impacted participants’ ability to expand their global vocabulary, and instead the author inferred that global lexical acquisition was a “complex and multi-dimensional” process (Fitzpatrick, 2012, p. 81).

Taguchi (2011a) examined the effect of SA experience for participants' pragmatic comprehension of English as a foreign language. This quasi-experiment compared a group of native English speakers, a group of Japanese participants of English with low L2 proficiency, a group of Japanese participants of English with intermediate L2 proficiency, and a group of Japanese participants of English with intermediate L2 proficiency and SA experience in an English Language speaking country. Each group took a pragmatic listening test that simulated typical and non-typical implicatures in practical conversation settings (Taguchi, 2011a). Each participant was tested based on their ability to comprehend different facets of the conversation (Taguchi, 2011a). The outcomes found that participants with SA experience were more likely to comprehend non-typical implicatures than participants from the other two Japanese groups, and that their ability to comprehend matched that of native speakers (Taguchi, 2011a). This meant that participants from SA programmes were on a par with native speakers in terms of understanding suggested meanings in conversations that are not explicitly stated nor definitely implied. That is, they were better at "reading between the lines" than other groups of participants who did not have SA experience. However, the study did not find any statistical difference in the overall accuracy of the groups in comprehending typical implicatures, those which have only one conventionally accepted meaning. However, in another study by Taguchi (2011b), SA was not found to be a significant factor for other aspects of the groups' pragmatic speech, specifically in terms of making requests or giving opinions. Masuda (2011) similarly examined the interactional competence of participants learning Japanese as a foreign language in the classroom setting of a SA programme, specifically by focusing on their use of the item, "ne," a significant particle for interaction in the Japanese language. The study found that although the general proficiency development of the SA participants varied widely, they were collectively able to enhance their ability to interact with local speakers through greater use of the particle "ne" across time, which was argued to indicate such participants' "accelerated acquisition of interactional competence" (p. 519), which is contrary to the position of Taguchi (2011b). This further shows that the outcomes from more recent and more specific studies on L2 gains in SA settings are more diverse, and have a greater tendency to diverge than those from earlier studies. In another study, Rubio (2003) compared heritage speakers, SA participants who just recently returned from 2 years in a Spanish Language speaking country and participants who learned Spanish in a regular American classroom setting in terms of the structure and syntactic complexity of

their oral narratives. The study found that those who recently returned from Spanish speaking countries were able to express more complex narratives than the other groups.

In another study, Kinginger (2008) dug deeper into the nature of the SA setting in the context of Americans learning French as a second language. The research documented time-on-task of participants in different language learning activities in the classroom and correlated these with language gains. Based on the outcomes of this study, Kinginger (2008) affirmed results of previous investigations that the SA setting is a comparably productive context in gaining competence in a second language. Specifically, the study found that SA learners were able to show greater academic proficiency, pragmatic competence, and language awareness than home-based peers when comparing group statistics. However, Kinginger (2008) acknowledged that this setting remains not perfectly understood, as there was considerable variability within the SA group. That is, while it can be generally stated that a group of participants in a SA L2 learning setting will collectively outperform a similar group in a domestic setting, this does not imply that individual participants who are randomly selected from the SA group will more often than not, outperform individual participants selected from the domestic group.

Based on literature reviewed in this section, it can be conjectured that the impact of the SA setting on technical aspects (referring to the language system such as syntax, vocabulary etc.) of oral and written second language proficiency does not involve a simple relationship. That is, it is not the case that simply being in a SA L2 learning setting leads a participant to become more proficient in the target L2 than a comparable participant who is studying the same L2 in his or her home country. While there were various studies that identified specific linguistic gains of those in SA settings (Ringer-Hilfinger, 2012; Fitzpatrick, 2012; Taguchi, 2011a; Taguchi, 2011b; Masuda, 2011; Rubio, 2003) they are careful not to imply that there is a direct relationship in the general case of L2 proficiency, and there remains conflicting evidence in several studies from the past two decades (e.g. Lafford, 1995; Sasaki, 2007; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004; Freed, 1995; Freed and Lazar, 1999; Segalowitz et al., 2004; Meara, 1994).

Other studies investigating the impact of SA programmes on L2 acquisition have considered the long term stability of learning gains. For example, Llanes (2012) examined the difference between L2 proficiency of children prior to leaving their home country, upon returning after a 2-month long SA programme, and 12 months after the first post-test

(Llanes, 2012). The study found that the participants were able to score significantly higher in their first post-test than in their pre-test, showing that the SA programme did have the short-term effect of improving L2 proficiency. In addition to this, results of the second post-test were found to not differ significantly from the first post-test. This established that the participants were able to retain their proficiency in the second language despite the 1 year gap between tests, implying that the SA programme also had a long term effect on the participants' proficiency. These outcomes are in line with those found in an earlier study by Coleman (1997), which examined the progress of SA participants in developing language proficiency upon their return from the programme. However, Coleman (1997) also found that the participants' development in their target L2 slowed significantly upon their return. That is, while they were able to maintain the proficiency that they gained in the SA setting, they were unable to match the progress that they made in the language while they were still studying it abroad.

Finally, Ringer-Hilfinger (2012) examined the ability of native English-speaking participants studying Spanish in Spain to acquire a little studied aspect of the target language, i.e. dialect variation, both in terms of detecting such variation and applying it in their own use of the language. The results showed that while SA participants were able to recognise Spanish native speakers' use of dialect variation, something that they were not able to do prior to studying in Madrid for one semester; they were not able to apply this in their own use of the language (Ringer-Hilfinger, 2012).

In the past 25 years of research into SA settings' benefits to L2 learning, the landscape of findings has changed considerably. In the following years after the initial studies that supposedly established definitive gains from SA settings came critical research that challenged those earlier findings and presented the relationship between SA settings and L2 learning gains as more complex and diverse. Some studies continued to support the inherent value of SA in L2 learning, while others have shown evidence that challenged this with respect to some linguistic variables (notably grammar). Some of the studies reported in the literature are more solid than others, utilising wider sample sizes and extensive empirical protocols, while others had smaller sample sizes; some even being based on single case studies. But overall, these studies support the premise of the present research that there must be some mediating variables that affect the relationship between the setting of L2 learning and learning outcomes. The implication is that these potential mediating variables have not yet been fully explored in extant literature, which reveals one of the

gaps in literature that this present study finds of interest. That is, this study seeks to contribute to the clarification of the complex relationship between SA settings and L2 learning by considering potential variables that may better explain how some participants learn a second language better in the SA context. Specifically, this study considers social and cultural interaction as those potential mediating variables that can help explain the wide variability of outcomes found in literature regarding the actual gains from learning L2 in SA settings. In addition to this, these studies also show an extensive range of important proficiency variables from which this study has selected in developing the linguistic variables to be investigated. Studies such as Meara (1994) have cautioned against dependence on the use of standardised tests that have been employed in early works (Carroll, 1967; Willis et al. 1977; Dyson, 1988; Veguez, 1984; Liskin-Gasparro, 1984; Milleret, 1991; Foltz, 1991), as these do not capture differences in gains between advanced level participants. Accordingly, measures of linguistic development have been specially developed for this study and these are described in Chapter 3 below.

2.9 Factors that Affect SA L2 Learning Success

As discussed in the previous sections, one of the main gaps that this present study seeks to address is concerned with the identification of different mediating factors that may impact the learning success of SA second language learners. Specifically, this study considers two possible variables, which are social interaction and cultural interaction. Given this, it is important to review previous attempts that have endeavoured to identify different factors that affected SA L2 learning success in order to more precisely determine the expected contribution of the present study.

Various factors have been identified in the literature as having some effect on learning success of L2 learners in SA contexts. One of the most commonly considered factors is the type of lodging selected by participants in SA settings. From a large sample of 2500 participants, Rivers (1998) compared the progress of L2 learners who stayed in a dormitory and those who stayed with a family, and found that those who stayed in the dormitories experienced statistically higher L2 learning gains. Similarly, Wilkinson (1998) conducted a qualitative study into the experiences of participants who stayed in a dormitory and those who stayed with relatives who were already living in the SA setting, finding that those who stayed in dormitories were able to interact more with others using

their second language and as a consequence were able to build their proficiency in the language better.

Another factor that has been examined in the literature is the amount of time spent abroad. Sasaki (2007) focused on the varying lengths of SA experience with respect to Japanese L2 participants' success in writing ability and learning motivation. From a longitudinal study that followed the progress of 28 participants who spent 1.5 to 11 months learning English in an English speaking country, the study found that while the writing ability of the participants did improve, it did not do so in a linear fashion. That is, gains were not found to be linearly related with time. However, Sasaki (2007) was able to establish evidence on statistically different writing ability between participants who spent less than or equal to 4 months in their SA programme and participants who spent more than 4 months. In addition to this, Sasaki (2007) found that participants who spent more than 8 months in their SA programme "became intrinsically motivated" (p. 81) to practice their English language writing whereas those who spent less time abroad did not. The outcomes of Sasaki (2007) are somewhat consistent with those in an earlier study by Rees and Klapper (2007), which also considered the impact of time spent abroad in foreign language proficiency although they did not only focus on that variable. According to Rees and Klapper (2007), participants' gains from spending longer times in the foreign setting were essentially larger than those who spent less time, but gains varied tremendously across individuals and were not proportional with length of stay. In the study of Dwyer (2004), which examined the impact of programme duration on, among other variables, foreign language commitment and use, a survey questionnaire was administered to over 3000 participants who completed diverse SA programmes. The study found that the length of the programme significantly correlated with the participants' commitment and use of the foreign language locally spoken in their SA setting (Dwyer, 2004). Implicitly, this meant that participants who stayed longer in the foreign setting were able to establish both greater confidence and proficiency in their target L2.

Personality of the learners was also found to be an important factor. Dörnyei (2003) conducted a systematic review that revealed that motivation of participants to learn L2 and express themselves in that language is dependent on individual differences in their personalities, which in turn are grounded in cultural perspectives and norms that such participants have been exposed to for the majority of their lifetime. Studies reviewed by Dörnyei (2003) point out that the key to teaching L2 effectively does not just lie in finding

the cognitive preferences of participants, but also their affective preferences. Foreign participants in ESL classes need to feel comfortable enough in terms of their emotions in the second language classroom setting so that they would be sufficiently encouraged to participate and pay attention. Without such considerations for affective factors, educators may be missing out on an essential aspect of effective ESL instruction. Of course, it is important to consider that Dörnyei (2003) did not actually carry out an empirical study supporting this, but rather just systematically compiled researches that were previously conducted and inferred based on the outcomes of those studies. Nonetheless, the input of Dörnyei (2003) is very important in considering different factors that were found to have effects on L2 learning in SA settings.

This leads to the work of Llanes et al. (2012), which was focused specifically on the variability of L2 learning outcomes deriving from participants' individual differences. Using written and oral data from 24 participants, Llanes (2012) found that while SA participants did experience positive development in learning a second language, various individual difference variables were found to significantly affect this development. Participants who already had a university degree from their home country were found to be able to experience greater gains in their L2 development; so did participants who had positive attitudes about the country they were visiting, and those who felt confident about their language skills and about meeting other people (Llanes, 2012). This study supports research from an earlier review by Llanes (2011) on individual factors that affected L2 learning in SA contexts. In this review, Llanes (2011) pointed out several studies that found age, length of stay in the foreign country, cognitive skills, and initial proficiency in the language as significant factors to consider in measuring the gains of SA to L2 learners. However, Wang (2010) pointed out that despite considerable research in this area, consensus on the actual impact of different variables has yet to be established. Studies reviewed by Wang (2010) revealed wide inconsistencies in the outcomes of SA L2 learning in relation to individual differences and quantity and quality of L2 learning experiences in the SA setting. Nonetheless, Wang (2010) pointed out that social interaction seems to be an important overall variable to consider. According to Wang (2010), reviewed studies on learning L2 in SA contexts uniformly support the idea that increased social interaction with speakers of the target L2 from SA contexts is a major factor in determining L2 gains. This shows that one of the foci of this study, social interaction, has already been deeply investigated in literature as a mediating variable of L2 gains in SA

contexts and has been consistently found to have a significant impact. However, no studies were found that specifically considered the presence of such an impact in the sub-context of Saudi Arabian female participants studying English in an English-speaking foreign country. The factors that have been found to be significant in L2 learning success from literature may also be important for this group of learners. As such, this section of the review consider the gathering of data about the respondents' language level prior to joining the SA programme, personality traits such as confidence and attitudes towards other people, and propensity to engage in social interactions. The nature of this sub-context is examined in greater detail in the next section.

2.10 ESL Learning among Saudi Arabian Females

This section of the review focuses on the need to consider how Saudi Arabian participants and Saudi Arabian females in particular developed as ESL learners for the past few decades. Here, it is important to consider even older sources in order to be able to track the progress of research in L2 learning specifically for this subpopulation of students. This is because it is generally accepted in the field of second language learning that not all people learn a second language in the same way. The way that second languages are learned by a group of people is typically affected by a number of factors. Therefore, effective ESL experience requires for such factors to be identified, and this would help ensure that learners are provided with a learning environment that maximises their potential to learn and does not impede them from learning in any way. This is supported by inputs such as those from Dörnyei and Skehan (1989) on individual and group differences in second language learning. As explained in their work, which reviewed several decades' worth of literature on the matter, research has been able to show consistently that participants from different countries do vary in terms of how they assimilate English as a second language. There are differences, both in the individual level, and in the group level, which educators need to consider in order to be able to develop the best instructional plan for particular individuals or groups of participants. Among other differences discussed (in particular aptitude and motivation), these writers also argue that differences in culture lead to differences in how motivated some participants are over others in learning a new language (Dörnyei & Skehan, 1989).

This is echoed by Gavriilidou & Psaltou-Joycey (2010), who found that among the central issues that affect second language learning instruction is the adequate preparation

of participants for the peculiarities of a specific target language with respect to such participants' own cultural and linguistic backgrounds. As explained by Gavriilidou & Psaltou-Joycey (2010), second language teachers often wonder why some of their participants were able to pick up lessons faster and more effectively than others. Gavriilidou & Psaltou-Joycey (2010) discussed that the reason behind this could not simply be that those participants who were not learning were not making enough effort to learn, but rather that the conditions of learning set by the instructor may be more favourable to some participants than others, and so those others are not able to maximise the learning setting and its resources as much as some of their peers. As pointed out in a study conducted by Anderson (2005), there are indeed, perceptive international learners who, either by nature of their individual talent or cultural upbringing, are able to follow foreign language classes well and are able to exercise resourcefulness and ingenuity in finding ways to learn the language more effectively. Based on interviews conducted in the study, some of these participants were found to have had considerable experience with cultural artefacts that were consistent with the foreign language that they were attempting to learn, such as having been exposed to English language comic books when they were younger, or being able to watch English language shows on television (Anderson, 2005). Some participants were well-versed in the use of computers, and therefore had considerable experience surfing the web and interacting with other people who spoke the target language. There were also some participants who had lived with relatives who spoke the target language. Other participants were found to have high levels of cognitive skills with respect to connecting symbols and words with their meanings, and were therefore able to translate words from one language to another better than their peers. There were also participants who were very diligent and despite the lack of other advantages, practised consistently and continuously to learn their foreign language lessons. Unfortunately, not all learners are like this, and it falls upon the responsibility of the educator to find ways to ensure that those who do not have the natural talent to learn a second language would still have the opportunity and means to do so in their classes (Anderson, 2005).

As such, Anderson (2005) emphasised the role of developing L2-specific strategies that consider individual differences among learners and aim to impart L2 proficiency to different types of L2 learners. Schmitt and Schmitt (1993) compiled different L2 learning strategies that can be selected from in terms of the needs of specific participants or groups. By using different methods in the L2 classroom, Schmitt and Schmitt (1993), surmised that

individual differences of participants in the class in terms of learning strategies would be addressed accordingly.

In general, a number of studies have pointed out that L2 learners are often faced with performance problems in their English as a second language classes, and so the teaching of specific communication strategies may prove to be beneficial for these participants. While the study of Dörnyei (1995) did not focus on Saudi Arabian participants in particular, it was able to show evidence that specific instruction in communication strategies did lead to improvements in such variables as speech rate, quality of circumlocutions and the frequency of fillers and circumlocutions.

Having acknowledged in general terms the cross-cultural challenges of language learning, two important areas of literature relevant to the participants in this particular study need to be considered. First of these are the studies that have dealt with ESL learning among Saudi Arabian participants in general; the second consists of studies that have investigated differences between male and female Saudi Arabian learners. With regards to the first area, Safadi and Valentine (1985) found that there are considerable differences in the paralinguistic strategies inherent in Arabic and Western cultures, and argue that these make it more difficult for members of one culture to learn the language of the other. In particular, Safadi and Valentine (1985) discussed how many verbal and non-verbal expressions in Arabic and English language and culture tend to have contrary meanings, which affects the perspective of people trying to learn the language from their native perspective. For example, the non-verbal expression of a thumb touching the index finger and forming a circle is common in western and westernised countries as a sign for “ok” or “good.” However, this same expression is offensive in Arabic countries (Safadi & Valentine, 1985). In terms of writing, Arabic writing conventions are very different from English conventions. For example, texts are read from right to left in Arabic, while they are read from left to right in English. There are many more vowel sounds in the English language than there are in the Arabic language, which are represented differently in writing, and there are also differences in the way that verbs are tensed in either language. This means that Arabic participants learning ESL would need to get used to an entire convention of reading and writing, not just learning about how words in one language translate in another language. This establishes the need to focus on the potentially very specific needs of Saudi Arabian participants with regard to learning English as a second language. This is a study in the general framework of contrastive analysis (Safadi &

Valentine, 1985). That is, it shows that for Saudi Arabians, learning the English language in particular as a second language has historically been difficult because of differences between the structure and syntax of the English language vis-à-vis the native language of Saudi Arabians. Of course, the linguistic differences between English and Arabic are also made more complex by variations in the cultural and social interactions engaged in by members of the population of interest. With regards to the second area of concern which focuses on female Saudi Arabians in particular, two early studies by Abu-Rabia (1995) and Suleiman (1996) both found considerable differences in both the second language learning strategies and motivation of male and female Saudi Arabians. Specifically, while males were found to prefer more interactive strategies in learning ESL such as practising conversations, females preferred less interactive strategies such as reading or practising by answering short questions (Abu-Rabia, 1995), which could be attributed to the social restrictions imposed on females in Arab culture in which any social interaction without the approval of the parents or society is frowned upon. Consistent with this, males were found to have a more positive attitude about learning ESL than females (Suleiman, 1996). The existence and nature of these identified differences justify the need to conduct research on learning ESL specifically for Saudi Arabian women, or at a larger scale, females with Middle Eastern cultural heritage. While these studies were conducted around two decades ago, no more recent comparative study was found that was able to show that the difference between genders in Saudi Arabia with respect to English language learning needs and strategies has already diminished. However studies of Saudi Arabian and other Middle Eastern students are now becoming more numerous, though these are typically single-gender studies. Here, we are concentrating on the female group mainly because it can be considered to be the more marginalised group in Saudi Arabia. Females in Saudi Arabia are not provided with as much freedom as males in the society. This implies that between males and females in the country, females are less likely to be exposed to western culture and the English language. They are more likely to be the group that would need closer attention in ESL instruction than Saudi Arabian males. Implicitly, they are the group that can benefit most from a focused investigation of dynamics in learning ESL. It is for these reasons that they were selected as the focus of this study.

Studies focusing on female Saudi Arabian/ Middle Eastern students as learners of English as a second language are still relatively few in number. Here we have primarily identified studies dealing with the learning strategy preferences of such students.

One such study which was recently conducted by Fazeli (2012) looked at relationships between English language learning strategies and personality traits of Middle-Eastern females learning English as their major at a university in Iran. The findings of this study showed that participants with more outgoing personalities tended to choose learning strategies that exposed them to greater social interactivity, while those with more introverted personalities preferred strategies that limited the need to interact with others and focused on the examination and appreciation of cultural artefacts of the target language, such as books and other reading materials. This is in line with other findings on speaking anxiety, where it was found that individual differences grounded in cultural characteristics played an important role in determining how confident people were with speaking to an open crowd (Dörnyei, 2003).

These differences show that there is some variance within the subgroup of female Middle-Eastern ESL learners, which is in contrast to the initial classification of Abu-Rabia (1995). That is, it cannot be assumed that all female Middle-Eastern ESL learners would prefer the same learning strategies for ESL instruction. At the same time, the study of Fazeli (2012) reflected how both social interaction and cultural interaction helps female Middle-Eastern participants. Specifically, it was found that some of the females in the study learned better when they interacted with others in the use of the language and practised with them, while others learned better when they were exposed to different cultural artefacts and practised interpreting those artefacts, through reading and writing about them (Fazeli, 2012). While Fazeli (2012) did not provide any explanation as to why this could happen, it can be considered from earlier sections of the review that a possible reason behind this may be differences in the backgrounds of the participants in the study. As explained by studies such as Ishida (2010) or Ewert (2009), people who were extroverted typically appreciated social interaction as a means to learn a second language. It may be that some of the participants in the study were more extroverted than the typical Arabic female, and as such, were able to appreciate ESL teaching and learning dynamics that involved considerable social interactions. On the other hand, there may have been other participants in the study who were more introverted, and as such were not able to appreciate social interaction as an instrument for ESL instruction as much as others. As explained by Byram (2012) and Gu et al. (2010), cultural interaction does not necessarily require social contact for second language learning. Rather, it merely requires participants to come into contact with cultural artefacts. This may have been the preferred learning

strategy of those in the study of Fazeli (2012) who were more introverted. There is therefore, likely to be variance in the preferred strategies of Saudi Arabian females, contrary to the initial premise that they may all prefer just one set of strategies.

The results of Fazeli (2012) generally provide support for the argument that the variables of social interaction and cultural interaction are relevant to ESL learning where female Middle-Eastern participants are concerned. However, the study did not focus on exactly the same group as this study, since its focus was on Middle-Eastern participants studying English in Iran. The importance of this difference is that the culture and social structure of Iran can be easily argued to be much more similar to Saudi Arabia than United States, the country where this present study is focused. This implies that the study of Fazeli (2012) did not really take into account a radical change in the social and cultural environment of its subjects. In addition to this, the research subjects of Fazeli (2012) were majoring in English, and not in English Translation. This difference matters because participants who are majoring in English Translation (as in the present study) may be typically more interested in the social aspect of second language learning than the cultural aspect, while those majoring in English per se could be equally interested, if not more interested in the cultural aspect of learning the language. Those majoring in English Translation can be argued to be more interested in learning about how to best apply the language in different practical situations.

In a further study, Riazi (2007) examined the learning strategy perceptions of Saudi Arabian females who were also English majors. The study was conducted with 120 female participants who had Arabic as their first language and a Saudi Arabian cultural heritage. Results again showed that there was considerable diversity in the learning strategies employed by this group of ESL learners. The most common strategies employed were metacognitive and cognitive while the least common employed were social, memory, and affective. These outcomes are consistent with those of Abu-Rabia (1995) about the learning strategy preferences of Saudi Arabian female ESL learners. This study shows that students do have preferences about how they can learn their L2 best and so generic strategies cannot be assumed to reflect the preferences of all of the students in a specific class.

A very similar study to the one conducted by Riazi (2007) was conducted by Aljuaid (2010), which also produced some similar results. Specifically, Aljuaid (2010)

found that metacognitive strategies were also the most popular English learning strategies employed by Saudi Arabian female participants. As explained by Aljuaid (2010), these strategies are typically used by participants in Asia, as well as those in the Middle East, since they are parallel to the strategies that they are traditionally trained to develop in their other academic endeavours. Metacognitive strategies, as explained by Aljuaid (2010), are strategies that involve personal reflection upon one's choice of learning strategies and how such choices affect one's learning outcomes. Learners that use these strategies in learning a foreign language actively also consider how the current learning environment affects them; i.e. what elements of that environment tend to hinder or encourage their learning. That it was found that this strategy is evident among the target subpopulation in this study implies that Saudi Arabian female participants are consciously attempting to identify what particular strategy helps them learn English as a second language best. This shows the opportunity for this study to gather information about such metacognitive processes from a sample of Saudi Arabian females. That is, these studies show that it may be possible to extract information about how cultural and social interactions affect female Saudi Arabian participants' ESL learning from their metacognitive inputs. Most importantly, it establishes that the study may utilise self-assessing instruments such as surveys or interviews since its population of interest is allegedly capable of metacognition about the general variable of interest.

Since educational systems in the east have traditionally been more structured and teacher-centred than those in the west, participants are expected to learn from the teacher instead of with the teacher or from interacting with one another. However, contrary to Riazi (2007), social strategies were found by Aljuaid (2010) to be the second most popular choice of learning strategy among Saudi Arabian female participants. In the discussion, Aljuaid (2010) acknowledged that previous studies have pointed out the lack of popularity of social strategies for Asian females in general, but stated that the outcomes of their study reflected the changing nature of L2 teaching in Saudi Arabia. As explained by Aljuaid (2010), while in the past, teaching of English in Saudi Arabian schools was conducted in a very rote-like fashion, with little use of the language in practical simulations, Aljuaid (2010) considered that more and more institutions in the country were shifting to more interactive means of teaching L2. In their study, Aljuaid (2010) described that the female Saudi Arabian participants often used social strategies as a means to compensate their listening ability when they were unable to comprehend what they were told. That is, they

interacted socially with other members of the class and with other people outside of class in order to find out the meaning of specific words that they were not able to understand clearly in class, or determine when and how best to use a specific expression in a given context.

In another recent study, Moores-Abdool et al. (2011) examined different instructional and environmental preferences of female Saudi Arabian students studying English at a university in Saudi Arabia. From a survey of 310 students, it was found that the students preferred that concepts be explained to them in their native language rather than in English so that they could better understand such concepts. The students were also found to prefer having greater structure in their classroom activities, compared to being asked to work independently. While they exhibited positive perspectives towards student-centred learning, their conceptualization of this was more about the teacher trying to find the best tools for the students to use, rather than the students taking control of their own learning. With regard to language learning, a majority of the respondents believed that memorization was still the most effective tool for learning (Moores-Abdool et al., 2011). Nonetheless, the students believed that class activities involving social interactions were also effective in helping them learn English, since they allowed them to practise what they were taught. This study illustrates the complex nature of students' views on learning, but clearly shows students' recognition of the need to have an avenue where they can practise English as a second language, which is one of the advantages that SA programmes set out to provide.

Palfreyman (2006) conducted a study on the social context and resources for language learning that focused specifically on a group of female Arabic participants studying in the UAE. The objective of the study was to determine what social contexts and resources affected language learning in the group, which bears some similarity to the purpose of the present study. As explained by Palfreyman (2006), there is a need for second language learning research to move beyond the context of the classroom laboratory and frame the learning of the participants in the context where they are located, which is likewise consistent with the theoretical framework of the present study. In Palfreyman (2006), the participants were interviewed and reported making use of various resources outside the classroom in order to develop their English language proficiency. The participants made use of opportunities such as interactions with friends and family to practise their English language skills. They also inquired about word meaning and word

use from these resources. It was also found that online social networks played an important role in accessing resources, since such innovations enabled some members of the group to have more access to interactions and, implicitly, more opportunities for ESL development than others (Palfreyman, 2006). This finding is consistent with those of Bunts-Anderson and Campos (2010), who found that female participants in Gulf-based universities have been using technological resources such as mobile phones and social networking sites more frequently and extensively in the last few years as resources with which to practise their English. Furthermore, the study of Palfreyman (2006) found that participants were expected to be resources of English proficiency themselves for members of their family who spoke less English than they did. They were expected to share their knowledge of the language with these people, and act as interpreters for them. This also contributed to learning opportunities for these participants. Overall, Palfreyman (2006) presents a strong case for the role of social interaction in the ESL learning of female Arabic participants. While the home countries of the people in Palfreyman (2006) may differ, they all came from Arabic cultural backgrounds and were studying in an Arabic university, unlike the SA context of the present study.

Other studies were found that focused on the effectiveness of different strategies for the ESL learning development of female Arabian participants. Al-Shafie (1990) examined the progress of one ESL writing class where 6 female Arab participants were taught using a process writing approach where there was considerable interaction between the teacher and the participants and among the participants. In these interactions, previous written drafts by the participants were analysed and critiqued by their peers and the outcomes of these analyses were discussed. Results of the study showed consistent improvement in the English writing ability of all 6 participants, establishing the effectiveness of classroom interaction in improving ESL writing proficiency. Following an iteration of the interactive process, participants indicated their increased competence and confidence in writing in English (Al-Shafie, 1990). That is, as they discussed what they had written with their teachers and fellow participants more, they gained greater insights on how they could improve and feel more comfortable about effecting more changes in their work (Al-Shafie, 1990). This outcome is in line with those found in Aljuaid (2010) where Saudi Arabian participants typically made use of social interactions as a means of correcting and improving their language use.

The dissertation of Madkhali (2005) examined training in ESL reading strategies provided for Saudi female participants. The outcomes of this study are not specifically relevant to this research, since the strategies employed were mainly cognitive and metacognitive and did not involve cultural or social interaction. Nonetheless, the outcomes of Madkhali (2005) showed that the participants responded well to the strategies and were able to progress in their ESL development significantly based on comparisons between pre and post-tests. This is consistent with the outcomes of Riazi (2007) that cognitive and metacognitive strategies were preferred by Middle-Eastern females in general when learning ESL. A similar study was more recently conducted by Alarfaj and Alshumaimeri (2012) which focused specifically on reading speed and comprehension of Saudi Arabian female participants. As with Madkhali (2005), the strategies used did not involve social or cultural interaction aspects, but were shown to be effective for Saudi Arabian female participants studying in an at home setting.

This section of the literature review has illustrated the state of research in the area that is focused on in this study. First and foremost, the novelty of the present research is clearly established in this section, since despite considerable effort to search for literature, few studies were found that were specifically concerned with the ESL learning development of Saudi Arabian female participants. The few that there are do indicate that this is a distinct group and of research interest. Among those found, some were focused on testing the effectiveness of different classroom-based instructional strategies (Alarfaj & Alshumaimeri, 2012; Madkhali, 2005), while others were interested in determining what resources participants used in developing their proficiency in the language outside the classroom (Palfreyman, 2006; Bunts-Anderson and Campos, 2010). There were also several studies that considered students' learning preferences (Riazi, 2007; Abu-Rabia, 1995; Fazeli, 2012; Moores-Abdool et al., 2011). The variables of social interaction and cultural interaction were addressed to some degree in some of the studies (Palfreyman, 2006; Fazeli, 2012; Riazi, 2007), but none of them dealt with the SA setting for this group of participants.

This shows that investigating the impact of social and cultural interactions on the ESL learning development of female Saudi Arabian participants undertaking SA is fresh ground in the research field. There are a few studies examined later in this review, particularly Kampman (2011), that involve elements of social and cultural interactions in the context of L2 learning in SA settings for female Saudi Arabian students, but this study

was focused more on the lived experiences of students and the difficulties that they encountered in the SA setting rather than the impact of their social and cultural interactions on their L2 learning. In addition to this, this section of the review also established some expectations of learning style preferences that Saudi Arabian females may have, and how social and cultural interaction may play to these preferences. Specifically, it was shown that the more extroverted members of the group tend to prefer more socially interactive learning strategies while the more introverted would prefer more cultural exposure. Nonetheless, considerable variability in preferred strategies was found not just within the outcomes of specific studies, but also across the outcomes from different studies, with more recent studies indicating that more Saudi Arabian females were making use of social strategies than was found in earlier studies. While this diversity may be due to differences in sampling or data gathering protocols across different studies, it may also be implicative of on-going change in both the nature of Saudi Arabian female participants and in the nature of teaching institutions in the Middle East where the teaching of English as a second language is concerned. As such, these conjectures necessarily lead this review to examine studies on social and cultural interactivity among Saudi Arabian females in general, which is addressed in the succeeding section.

Overall, despite a thorough search, I was not able to find much literature on Saudi Arabian females learning English as a second language. However, what was found suggested some significant themes. The first theme is that of diversity. Results of past studies suggest that Saudi Arabian females cannot be haphazardly grouped together in terms of preferred learning strategies and environments in learning English as a second language. Studies are required to explain this variance within specific contexts. The second theme is the relevance of cultural and social interaction. Some support from studies was found for these variables being potentially significant in determining how well Saudi Arabian females learn a foreign language. This further establishes the rationale of this study to focus on one such subgroup of ESL learners, specifically those who are engaged in a SA environment.

2.11 Social and Cultural Interaction of Saudi Arabian Females

As explained in the previous section, it is important in this study to have sufficient understanding of the nature of Saudi Arabian female English learners in their home setting, which will in turn help the study explain their reactions to the SA setting.

As confirmed by various studies (Wikan, 1995; Roald, 2003; Megahed& Lack, 2011), Arab societies have tended to view women as having complementary but subordinate roles to males in the society. Hamdan (2005) narrated that during the boom of Saudi Arabian higher education in the middle of the 1980s, while women in higher education institutions were typically allowed to enter most course programmes, they were prohibited from taking courses that may lead them to interact with males. Hamdan (2005) emphasised that while the government did recognize the need to educate its entire population, cultural restrictions still prevented it from enabling its women to participate as much in society as its men, and limited their social interaction. In this study, this can be considered to be one reason behind differences between males and females in terms of learning a second language; Saudi Arabian males' greater exposure to the outside world could be expected to motivate them to learn a second language better than Saudi Arabian females. These existing social differences between males and females in Saudi Arabia may affect how Saudi Arabian females behave even when they are not in their own country.

Wikan (1995) claims that not much has changed in Arab social and cultural norms during past centuries, so that Arab society can be considered as one of the most resilient cultures. Even among other women, adult Arab women do not easily associate with non-Arabs in part out of fear that interacting with such people will influence them negatively (Roald, 2003). Furthermore, the study of Taleb (2010) which focused on management styles of Arab women in academe, found that consistent with socio-cultural expectations, female administrators preferred to use less confrontational and authoritative styles of leadership in their work.

An important consideration in examining the nature of social and cultural interaction of Saudi Arabian females is gender segregation. As discussed by Alhazmi and Nyland (2013), gender segregation has long been a cultural norm in Saudi Arabia, and is imposed across both public and private domains. As such, for students studying abroad,

being in co-educational settings where they are free to interact with the opposite gender is a new experience that requires transition (Alhazmi & Nyland, 2013). Alhazmi and Nyland (2013) examined the experiences of Saudi Arabian students in this transition. While the study involved both male and female students, findings revealed that female Saudi students were generally less likely to engage in interactions with male students. However, changes in their views about gender segregation were observed over time, showing that the students were gradually influenced by their environment and began to assimilate the local culture (Alhazmi & Nyland, 2013).

Other studies provide evidence of change among Saudi Arabian females in relation to the socio-cultural norms in their communities where they live, study and work. For example, Lindsey (2012) examined how women reacted to discrimination that they continued to face in response to decisions with regard to their personal and work life. Some participants in Lindsey's study completely understood the value of being able to do what they wanted with their lives and having control over decisions to start a family or pursue a career, but they reported that they were often discriminated against for choosing to build careers rather than getting married and starting families. The relevance of Lindsey's work for the present study is that while it is focused on Saudi Arabian females who undertook SA, these women generally returned, or expected to return to their country at the end of their scholarship. As such, it illustrates the long-term influence of the socio-cultural doctrine of their society, and the likelihood that this will govern decisions about social interaction and the formation of relationships even when temporarily in the SA setting.

Similarly, Al-Yousef (2009) examined the influence of parents on their daughters' choices in relation to entering higher education. According to the findings of the study, many of the young women interviewed believed that their parents had little understanding of what it meant to study in higher education, and did not consider its value from the same perspective as the participants did. In particular, the participants said that when they discussed the topic with their parents, their achievement of a higher education degree simply meant that they could be considered as more educated than other women in their communities, and therefore could make more suitable wives to better prospective husbands. On the other hand, the young women in the study themselves generally considered their higher education degrees as a means for acquiring independence and being able to support themselves and their families without the need of marriage. As noted by Al-Yousef (2009), many of the participants expressed considerably liberal ideals that were not

supposed to be typical of the Saudi Arabian female. However, at the same time, participants were found to hold conservative values with regard to engaging in social relationships, especially with the opposite gender. That is, while they understood the value of being free to make decisions and wanted to have that for themselves, they were also wary about the abuse that they claimed some people in the west make of such liberal freedom. That is, Saudi Arabian women remained conservative about the appropriateness of interaction with members of the opposite sex, and claimed that even if they had the ability to interact, they would not do so because they did not believe that such interactions were right (Al-Yousef, 2009). They were able to hold on to that part of their values while maintaining that they deserved to be given a choice on whether or not to pursue a professional career and whether or not to get married. This study shows that these women can exercise considerable interactivity and express their views when prompted.

The research of Kampman (2011) is one of very few studies to date concerning Saudi Arabian female students undertaking SA, and it provided a good source of documentation on their experiences. This was a qualitative study comprising case studies of 5 students. Kampman accompanied the students during a summer business programme in the USA, as their chaperone and representative of the home university. She undertook classroom observation and also interviewed the participants regularly. One conclusion that was drawn by Kampman (2011) was that female Saudi Arabian participants continued to rely on routines that they experienced in their home setting. In particular, participants did not bring any notes to class and did not participate in discussion or ask questions because they believed that, as in their experience in Saudi Arabia, the teachers would email the presentations, sample exam questions, and answers for them to study. This is a problematic characteristic, given the likely characteristics of the SA setting. Secondly, the study of Kampman (2011) inferred that female participants from Saudi Arabia typically did not appreciate “small talk” (p. 35) made by teachers to the class. As explained by the study’s participants, they were more used to teachers simply providing the content that participants needed to absorb, and as such did not know how to gauge the value of input from the teacher that did not seem to be in line with the subject matter. The participants also expressed frustration over the participant-centred approach that was employed by some of their teachers, which as they described, required them to research and work on their own. The participants also expressed discomfort in being in co-ed classrooms and interacting with males and females from different cultures. While they were confident in interacting

with other Saudi Arabian females, they felt less so when needing to interact with non-Saudi Arabians, especially males. The participants believed that the setting made them less confident and that they were not prepared to handle the socio-cultural interaction that the setting seemed to expect from them. These findings of Kampman (2011) clearly show that when female participants from Saudi Arabia are introduced into the SA setting, some difficulty in the transition should be expected. While it should be acknowledged that the students in the Kampman study were eventually able to adapt to the new environment, their experiences regarding difficulties in living in a foreign environment was one of the major themes that were extracted from their interviews (Kampman, 2011). This is particularly the case where the SA setting is western in nature, which is far different from the culture that the female participants were used to. Despite the strengthening liberal nature of females in Saudi Arabia, they remain hard-pressed in being able to interact effectively with other people. The practice of their culture of secluding its women clearly continues to have a significant impact on these women's ability to interact even when they are outside of their home country. However, the study of Kampman (2011) did not focus on examining the actual impacts that the social and cultural experiences of the female Saudi Arabian have had on their learning. While it may already be known that western SA settings present a transitional challenge to female Saudi Arabian students, what this present study seeks to determine is how far this setting also provides valuable learning opportunities for this subpopulation, as they negotiate their way through the new setting and experiences.

2.12 Synthesis and Gaps

The perspective on language learning adopted for this study assumes interactivity to be a significant area in L2 learning, in and out of the classroom. Extant literature shows evidence that both social interaction and cultural interaction play significant roles in L2 learning, beyond the classroom setting. Social interaction facilitates practice of the L2 in its natural settings, while cultural interaction enables the synthesis of L2 with relevant contexts. These ideas suggest that the SA setting should be an optimal setting for L2 learning. However, wider SA research shows that there are actually mixed outcomes concerning L2 development, and also concerning access to both social and cultural interaction. What seems definite from this research field is that the SA setting in itself is not a sufficient condition for getting the best possible outcomes in L2 learning. Instead, it

is necessary to study both linguistic and social aspects of SA and their interrelationships, in order to better determine how L2 learners in SA settings are able to learn best.

While a considerable number of studies have been conducted on L2 learning in SA, very limited literature was found specifically on ESL learning of Saudi Arabian females in the SA context, the main concern of this study. Saudi Arabian females have been established in literature to be different from their male counterparts in terms of learning, including in terms of learning English as a second language. Furthermore, it has been suggested that Saudi Arabian females may have particular difficulty with social interaction in the SA context, particularly because of the influence of their home culture with regard to interacting with other people, especially non-Saudi Arabian males. As such, it is important for research to examine how social and cultural interaction are utilised by this group of ESL learners in the SA setting, how effective such utilisation is for them and how such utilisation can be improved in order to maximise their learning potential.

From the literature review, it can be hypothesised that while males and females in Saudi Arabia share the same culture, the perspective that this culture creates for each gender group with regard to learning a second language is different. For females in particular, who are the focus of this study, it can be hypothesised that they are more inclined to learn in a setting that is more structured, and may be more comfortable with cultural artefacts than social interaction. They can be expected to appreciate instructional materials that show them exactly what needs to be done and how to do it, rather than materials with which they are expected to work independently and without direct supervision or guidance from the teacher. However, this expectation is not absolute, since the literature was also able to show that considerable individual differences may exist among the different members of the same group of learners, and that pedagogic culture within Saudi Arabia itself may be changing. There may be other factors, aside from gender or cultural background that may affect the learning preferences of the participants, and the way that cultural and social factors influence their learning of English as a second language. These are the gaps in literature that this study seeks to fill.

This study aims to develop a thorough, accurate and relevant understanding of female Saudi Arabian ESL learners' experiences with social and cultural interaction in the SA L2 learning setting. Having completed the review of extant literature and identified the gaps that the study seeks to address, the dissertation proceeds to the description and

justification of the methodology that was selected in order to undertake the task of filling the identified gaps.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A mixed method research design was considered most appropriate for this study. In a mixed method design, both quantitative and qualitative data collection and data analysis procedures are used (Creswell & Clark, 2010). As discussed by Creswell and Clark (2010), the selection of a mixed method research design can be brought about by one of three situations. Firstly, since quantitative and qualitative methods operate under different sets of assumptions that are usually seen as contrasting, using both to examine the same research questions, when possible, can serve to increase the validity of the conclusions of the study. This is particularly so, when both quantitative and qualitative designs yield similar outcomes. Secondly, one of the methods employed can be used to complement the other one. For example, quantitative designs can identify important factors that affect the measure of some variable of interest, but the reason behind the emergence of these factors may be better explained using qualitative methods. Thirdly, it is possible for a study to have such a diverse set of research questions that some must be investigated using a quantitative methodology while others need to be examined using a qualitative one. It is this third theoretical perspective about the mixed method design that applies to this study. The present study broadly covers three aspects of SA L2 learners, social interaction, linguistic development and cultural interaction. The research questions (see section 1.2) relating to those aspects call for particular types of quantitative or qualitative methods. The selection of particular protocols is justified as follows.

Firstly, for social interaction, the three research questions (see section 1.2) consider the impact of time spent speaking with other people (native speakers, non-native speakers from other countries, and Arabic speakers) on students' L2 learning. These are research questions that require a quantitative approach. Among the different quantitative approaches detailed by Spector (1981) Mis (2012), and Martin & Bridgmon (2012), that which is most suitable for these research questions is an ex-post-facto, non-experimental research design. In this design, the independent variable of interest, time spent speaking with a certain group of people, is an uncontrollable variable that is embedded in the environment of different subjects. This is true for this study, since it is not possible to group the different respondents randomly and then limit the respective times that each group spends with

native speakers. As such, a true experiment cannot be performed. Instead, a non-experimental design where both the amount of time spent and the L2 learning of the respondents are measured and then compared with one another is used. This enables the study to draw inferences on the nature of the relationship between the two variables, although it does not enable the study to infer the direction of causality where that relationship is concerned. That is, even if the study were able to find that participants who spend more time speaking with native speakers gain more in their L2 learning, it would not mean that it was speaking with native speakers that caused participants to learn more.

The research question under social interaction focuses on the diversity of the conversations that participants were exposed to in their different social interactions while in a foreign country. This question cannot be adequately answered through quantitative means because of the sheer diversity of data contributed by the respondents. As such, a qualitative design is more appropriate. Among the approaches to qualitative study considered by Creswell (2012), there are two, namely case study and ethnography, which inform the qualitative part of the current study. The main guiding principle is that of case study research, as the researcher chose the collective case study approach to study the nine participants. Their cases are real life ones which are bounded by a certain time of 8 months, and a certain place which is a university in the US. This case study is instrumental in nature (Stake, 1995) with the intent of going beyond the cases to understand the effect of social and cultural interaction on English Language learning in a SA context. Because of the sheer diversity of data that could be contributed by the respondents and the fact that one participant's interactions can be completely different from another's, a case study report will be done for each participant in order to try to fully understand and analyse their experience with L2 in the SA setting.

Stake (1995) defines a case study report as "a summary of what has been done to try to get answers, what assertions can be made with some confidence, and what more needs to be studied (p. 14)." The case study approach was considered as more appropriate for this study mainly because of the fact that the study involved an external observer looking into the experiences of the participants rather than the researcher being immersed in the setting with the participants and experiencing it with them, for which an ethnographic approach would have been more suitable. Furthermore, the ethnographic approach is more useful in examining established customs and traditions of certain peoples, whereas case studies are more suitable when the focus is on the lived experiences of individuals within limited

periods of time (Creswell, 2012). The case selected for this study, a group of SA scholars who left Saudi Arabia to study in the United States during the same period of time, is relevant as they are able to capture the unique experiences of their subpopulation in the SA setting.

Secondly, under the aspect of linguistic development, both of the research questions require ex-post facto non-experimental quantitative protocols, such as the ones selected for the first research questions under the social interaction aspect. The difference is that for this aspect, the independent variables of interest are the previous academic performance of the participants in terms of their academic evaluation and their initial proficiency in the target language. Measurements for linguistic development are provided in sections 3.6 to 3.7. For the aspect of cultural interaction, the research question can best be addressed using a qualitative case study approach, for similar reasons to those for the last research question under the social interaction aspect. The three questions under the cultural interaction aspect can be best addressed using the ex-post facto non-experimental approach, with time spent with cultural artefacts, stress and anxiety from experiencing foreign culture, and the presence or absence of an escort treated as independent variables that are to be tested for their respective impacts on participants' L2 learning.

As outlined above, the methodological framework of this study encompasses both quantitative and qualitative methods in the analysis of data from a purposively sampled group of participants. It is technically a mixed method study and not a multi-method study, as both quantitative and qualitative methods were used in order to verify if the findings in one approach coincided with or diverged from the findings of the other approach. As mentioned above, for the quantitative aspect of the study, a one-group quasi-experimental approach was used, where data was collected and analysed only from an experimental group (no control group). Instruments used to measure relevant variables in the study (social interaction, cultural interaction, and L2 proficiency) were conducted in both pre, during and post settings. The intention was to determine whether or not there were significant changes in the group over a given period of time. Appropriate statistical tests were used to analyse the data for this purpose. For the qualitative study, semi-structured interviews were used in order to explore the experiences and realisations of the respondents throughout their SA. In the construction of this interview, core questions were formulated which were directly relevant to the research questions. Follow-up questions were determined at the time of each interview, and depended on the answers of the

participants to the core questions. Analysis of the data was conducted using a multi-level, thematic coding approach.

3.2 Choice of Group

The case study participants were the first cohort of female Saudi students to be sent on a SA programme. Thus, the exact selection criteria for the participants had to coincide with those that College of Languages and Translation (COLT) in Saudi Arabia used in order to select participants for its SA programme. That is, the study selected the same people that were approved as one group of participants to be sent abroad to study. This approach of sample selection was preferred for a number of reasons. Firstly, the cohort of Saudi Arabian female participants clearly fit the overall purpose of the study to investigate the social and cultural experiences of Saudi Arabian females studying abroad and is part of the target population of this study. Secondly, the choice of one specific cohort of participants over sampling across multiple groups over an extended period of time was preferred for consistency and convenience. Selecting only one group enables the study to minimise sources of variability that are not relevant to the study. Under each cohort, there may be differences in the criteria used by COLT which would lead to undeterminable differences between members of the sample. This can make the internal validity of quantitative analyses conducted questionable. By confining the study to one cohort it can be assumed that the members of the sample are similar enough to one another in terms of their initial characteristics and the process that they underwent in order to qualify for the scholarship programme. A number of studies were also found to have likewise focused on an existing group of pre-selected participants for their study (Kampman, 2011; Al-Yousef, 2009), indicating that this present research follows typical academic conventions in its field of study. In addition, this study lacked the time and resources needed to use a sample that covers multiple groups of participants. This would entail tracking down participants who may still be studying abroad or who are back in Saudi Arabia already. Furthermore, the choice of a single group also allows the study to utilise the pre- and post-tests approach to determining changes in L2 proficiency, something that cannot be done if participants from different cohorts are selected, since pre-tests could no longer be given to participants who have already completed their studies. In addition to this, including only a single cohort of respondents allowed the study to gather more in-depth data from participants. Had the study aimed to select a wider sampling frame that included several groups of participants,

it would only be limited to making use of simpler data- gathering instruments such as surveys, since many of the respondents selected from such a sampling frame would not be likely to be available for more focused and prolonged data gathering such as semi-structured interviews.

Another important consideration in selecting a single group is that the group is viewed as a case study. This allows more focused data gathering and enables higher internal validity in making inferences about the group. Of course, the consequence of this is that the external validity of the study is decreased. That is, the extent to which findings of the study may be used to make broader generalisations about Saudi Arabian SA participants may be limited. This is an important concern for the quantitative part of this study. However, this study may nonetheless serve as an initial investigation from which broader studies utilising more extensive resources may be based. Finally, restricting the study to a single group enables the investigation of not just individual experiences of respondents, but also interactions of respondents within the group, which is as well a matter of relevance in this study. From the interviews conducted, it will be possible to examine the perspectives of the participants with respect to their interactions with other Saudi Arabian participants with whom they were in the programme and the ways in which these interactions may have affected their social and cultural interactions with non-Saudi Arabian people and with the foreign environment where they were sent.

3.3 Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to select participants for the study. For the complete cohort of Saudi females from COLT in Riyadh enrolled in the SA programme, the institutional criteria included GPA level of at least 4.0, although this criterion was relaxed in favour of the second criterion, which was that the participants must have parental consent and be accompanied by a male relative. Further details about the participants can be found in section 3.8. As explained by Creswell (2012), purposive sampling is preferred in qualitative studies as it allows the research to create a diverse sample that can reflect the diversity of the population. In quantitative studies, purposive sampling is still suitable for non-experimental designs (Spector, 1981), so long as potential biases that can emerge from the purposive selection have been accounted for. In this study, such biases exist. For example, only participants over a certain GPA range were accepted for the study. As such,

the study cannot be used to generalise over all female Saudi Arabian participants doing L2 studies abroad.

Based on the sampling conducted, a total of 13 participants were selected. All of these participants were English translation majors at The COLT in Riyadh. Their ages ranged from 18 to 22 years and their GPAs ranged from 3.2 to 4.9. In the course of the study, four of the participants dropped out. As a result, only the complete data sets from the remaining nine participants were included in this study.

3.4 Instruments

Since a mixed methodology was adopted for the design, different types of instrumentation were applied in this study. Table 1 summarizes the instruments that were used.

Table 1 Instruments of data collection

Quantitative Instruments		Qualitative Instruments
Surveys	Tests	Semi-structured interviews
Language engagement questionnaire (LEQ)	Elicited imitation (EI)	Oral proficiency interview (OPI)
Social networking questionnaire (SNQ)	Picture description test	
	Paragraph writing test	

The instruments were used to collect data at various points of time during the SA programme. Table 2 presents the times and locations of the administration of the tests.

Table 2 Test administration times and locations

Time	EI	Writing	Interview	OPI	Picture	LEQ	SNQ
1 st data collection: December 2011, Pre-SA-KSA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2 nd data collection: June 2012, During-SA-USA	X	✓	✓	X	X	✓	✓
3 rd data collection: December 2012, Post-SA-KSA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X

3.5 Data Collection

3.5.1 Quantitative Instruments

3.5.1.1 Survey

For quantitative instruments, this study made use of both surveys and tests. Under surveys, I include the language engagement questionnaire (see Appendix E) and the social networking questionnaire (see Appendix F). The LEQ is a survey instrument that seeks to determine the extent to which a respondent uses a second language in a specific environment. It is a behavioural questionnaire, in that it asks the respondent to identify behaviours that he or she does or does not do, and based on this determines the extent of engagement that the respondent has with the language. The participants are presented with a list of 26 activities and are asked to indicate how often they use English in doing a certain activity in a certain setting, for instance how often they watch an English movie in Saudi and in USA. The LEQ has a 5-point scale ranging from: every day, several times a week, a few times a week, rarely, never. Figure 1 presents an extract from the language engagement questionnaire.

Figure 1 Extract from the LEQ

How often do you do the following in *English in USA*?

	Everyday	Several times a week	A few times a week	A couple times a month	Rarely	Never
Watch TV						
Watch films						
Browse the internet (e.g. Read news, etc.)						
Use social networking sites (e.g. Facebook/ Twitter)						

The Social Networks Questionnaire (SNQ) examines both the behaviour and the experiences of the participants with a given socio-cultural environment. What is examined here is the extent to which the participant has made contact with other people in a new environment, measured by such indicators as the number of friends that the participant has been able to make, their nationalities, whom she spent the most time with, which language she used with that person in various social contexts and so on. The SNQ covers five social contexts which are: university, home, organised free time, general free time, and virtual social activities. Before starting the SNQ it was made clear to the participants that it was expected that some persons would appear in more than one social context. This instrument was developed for the LANGSNAP Project, "Social networks, target language interaction, and second language acquisition during the year abroad: A longitudinal study" (<http://langsnap.soton.ac.uk>). Figure 2 is an extract from the social network questionnaire.

Figure 2 Extract from the SNQ

Participant: _____

Work/University Context

Person _____

1. Here tick the box next to the appropriate description of the time you spend together.

	How often do you interact with this person?
	Everyday
	Several times a week
	Couple times a week
	Few times a month

2. What language do you use when together?

- Arabic
- English
- Mixture

3. What's your relationship to this person?

4. How did you first meet? (e.g., through a mutual friend, at work, etc. -- just a brief response)

Test-retest conducted in McManus et al. (2013) revealed that the instrument was externally reliable; while internal reliability analysis revealed a Cronbach's alpha greater than 0.70, which implied that the instrument was internally reliable as well. Concurrent validity was established by comparing the outcomes of the questionnaire with actual observations of the participants. Findings revealed a significant correlation ($p < 0.05$), which meant that the instruments can be considered as valid.

These instruments were adapted from the LANGSNAP project and used in this study in order to measure variables for quantitative analysis from the self-reported perspectives of the participants.¹ One problem with self-reported instruments, such as the surveys used in this study, is that they typically lack any mechanism for external verification (Kim et al., 2013; Henry et al., 2014; Taylor et al., 2014). In some cases,

¹ The author is grateful to be granted access to this instrument for use in this study

participants may also be motivated to answer survey instruments contrary to their actual experience. For example, in this study, a participant may choose to hide the fact that she did not use English so much in her interactions while in the SA programme because of the concern of how this would reflect on her performance as a student. However, the risk of this is minimized in this study by assuring the participants that the entirety of their participation in the study is made anonymous. Also, they are motivated to provide accurate accounts of their experiences by informing them that their inputs would be useful for the improvement of the SA programme for future groups of scholars. Through closely working with the participants, the researcher was able to establish strong rapport, thereby also improving the likelihood that the participants would be honest in providing information to the researcher. Furthermore, the only other alternative to this mode of data gathering is the direct observation of participants as they interact in the SA environment. This alternative is not feasible because of the logistics involved in needing to follow multiple individuals across an extended period of time. Even if it was possible, this approach is also prone to observation bias. That is, research participants can behave differently from their normal behaviour when they are being observed by the researcher (Taylor et al., 2014). In addition, such an approach needs to be agreed to by the participants, which many may not agree to because of the invasive nature of the approach to their everyday lives.

Furthermore, even if the researcher had the resources to follow each of the participants over an extended period of time, it is far less likely that participants would give consent to having a researcher follow her around in and out of campus than to simply completing a survey questionnaire. There is also the concern that the observation itself can affect the actions of the subject being observed, thereby generating bias in the study. The participants may act differently while being observed than they would if no one was observing. It may be easier to make participants comfortable and safe enough to answer a survey honestly than to act honestly while being observed. Given this situation, the survey instrument would have to be preferred to actual observation as the data-gathering instrument for this part of the study. In line with this, it must be assumed that participants are able to honestly and accurately report their experiences in the instruments. The risk that some of the participants may not answer honestly would just need to be absorbed by the study.

3.5.1.2 Language Tests

Tests were also used for the quantitative part of the study. These consisted of the elicited imitation test, the picture description test, the story picture description test, and the paragraph writing test.

3.5.1.2.1 Elicited Imitation

The elicited imitation test as a second language learning assessment tool was developed by Ortega (2002). The test consists of reading out an utterance to the subject, and asking them to repeat it orally as exactly as possible. If the participant produces more or less a correct repetition we can deduce that the participant has processed the utterance and encoded it using the grammar available to her. This repetition indicates the participant's linguistic proficiency (Vinther, 2002, p: 54-55). The steps of the elicited imitation test are shown below:

- a- 30 sentences are played to the participants
- b- The sentences range between 10 – 17 syllables
- c- There is a space of 3 seconds between the sentence and the repetition then a ringing sound is heard.
- d- The instruction is Listen – Wait for the ring- Repeat as much as you can

The elicited imitation tests language proficiency, it provides indirect information on it by determining whether or not the respondent is already capable of pronouncing different words in a specific language, or saying expressions with the intonation that they are supposed to have, such as knowing to differentiate between a question and a request from the tone of the sentence. These are essential L2 learning aspects that cannot be easily measured through pen and paper examinations, making the elicited response test an essential instrument for measuring L2 learning (Tracy-Ventura et al., 2013). Contrary to this, the elicited imitation test was described by Wu and Ortega (2013) as operating under the hypothesis that the participants will not be able to repeat the complex sentences if they do not have enough grammatical and vocabulary knowledge in the target language (Wu & Ortega, 2013). The test thus works as a measure of general proficiency. While the inputs from Tracy-Ventura et al. (2013) are acknowledged, the perspective of Wu and Ortega (2013) were considered more appropriate for this study.

3.5.1.2.2 Picture Description

Another instrument used in this study is the picture description task. The picture description task measures the diversity of a student's vocabulary, the participants' fluency in the language, the participants' ability to communicate ideas in a new language, and the participants' grammatical and phonetic accuracy within the structure of describing a given image. As in educational settings, the examiner provides a pre-constructed picture (see Appendix G) to the respondent and gives the respondent freedom to describe the picture in the target language. The instructions may be limited to just describing the picture, but may also include giving opinions about the picture. Typically, the evaluation of picture description tests includes determining if the participant was able to describe places, items, people, and actions, and give impressions and ideas that are consistent with the collection of elements in the picture (Cristina, 2011). The researcher examines the descriptions that were made by the respondent and makes inferences regarding the levels of proficiency of the respondent in different aspects of language learning, such as in the diversity and accuracy of the participant's vocabulary. The picture description test is a versatile instrument for determining how able the participant is in actually making use of a language when called upon to do so. This is better than simple pen and paper tests that examine participant's knowledge of different grammatical rules or determine whether or not a respondent would be able to pick out or give appropriate synonyms or antonyms to a word. As discussed by Cristina (2011), picture description tests are useful in language learning research as they enable the researcher to examine not just the knowledge of the respondent of the language but also the extent to which the respondent is able to apply that knowledge to a specific task. Furthermore, this test allows the researcher to examine the diversity of the proficiency of the respondents in the cohort. Different participants can be expected to answer the same picture description test in different ways, each reflecting different inputs that they were able to absorb. The choice of vocabulary of one participant may be different from that of another participant but nonetheless appropriate. However, it is helpful in this study to be able to capture such differences so that different factors may be examined to determine the cause of such differences.

3.5.1.2.3 Paragraph Writing

Finally, the paragraph writing task is a measure of the participants' ability to develop an idea in the target language. Unlike the picture description where the participant

is provided with considerable material to describe, the participant in the paragraph writing test is only given a short, general topic. In this study, the topic that was given was as follows:

If there is a book you're currently reading or a favourite television programme you watch, we're interested in that information. Also, if the television (or radio) is always on in your house in English but you're not actively watching it, you can tell us that too.

This topic was selected as it provided the study with two-fold information. Firstly, the response of the participant could be analysed for various levels of language proficiency. Secondly, the response could also be examined to determine the extent of cultural interaction of the respondent with local media and literature. The participant is expected to build on this topic and write a paragraph of 200 words in twenty minutes. The paragraph writing test measures not just the proficiency of the participant in the target language, but the participant's overall writing proficiency, since it is possible that a participant would be able to translate from one language into another easily but would not be able to generate ideas for a paragraph on his or her own. The participant is only given limited time to write this paragraph which is then assessed on the content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics (Bacha, 2001).

3.5.1.2.4 Oral Proficiency Interview

The final proficiency-related test instrument used was the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), where each participant was asked questions by the researcher and their responses were checked for accuracy in the use of error free grammatical structure and for complexity in the use of dependent clauses. The OPI is a standardized test meant to provide a holistic measurement of a respondent's conversational language proficiency (Breiner-Sanders et al., 2000). These tests seek to measure the L2 proficiency of the respondents at any given time. They may be given as pre-or post-tests and the difference between pre-and post-test scores can reflect the learning achieved by the student in the SA setting. Parallel questions were asked in each interview about the participants' activities and vacation periods in the United States and Saudi (See Appendix L).

3.5.2 Academic Documents

In addition to these tests, documentary evidence was also used in this study. This included evaluation reports, and academic transcripts from their local university in Saudi before the participants left for the SA programme, as well as academic evaluation reports and transcripts from their SA institution after they returned from the programme.

3.5.3 Qualitative Instruments

3.5.3.1 Interviews

One qualitative instrument used in this study was semi-structured interviews (Dörnyei, 2007, Ch. 6), which were conducted in Arabic. These interviews were conducted by the researcher personally at three intervals, pre-, during- and post-SA programme. A set of questions was asked of all participants and they were asked in a similar order and format to make it possible to compare answers. However, there was also space and room for following new and relevant information, if provided by the interviewee. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes and were preceded by small talk to make the participants feel comfortable. The interviews were conducted in Arabic to make it easier for the participants to express themselves.

The interview done prior to the SA programme focused on the following themes: previous academic performance of the participants, travelling experience, reasons for joining the SA programme, feelings regarding the upcoming SA programme and expectations of social interaction with English native speakers, non-native speakers, and Arabs in the US. The interview done during the SA programme focused on the following themes: experience in the English centre, accommodation and escorts, social interaction with English native speakers, non-native speakers, and Arabs in the US, and cultural interaction with local media and artefact and cultural interaction with the local environment. The interview done after the SA programme focused on the following themes: effect of social interaction with native speakers, non-native speakers, and Arabic speakers on L2 learning, and the effect of cultural interaction with local media and artefacts and cultural interaction with the local environment on L2 learning, re-entry feelings and plans for the future. Those interviews provided ample information on the participants' experience and activities during their SA programme in the US. They also provided an insight into the personal development of each individual in term of

independence, confidence, and self-reliance and so on. The first three themes are focused on social interaction, with questions that seek to draw out the extent to which respondents in the foreign setting were able to interact with people from different cultures, including their own. This aspect of the interview sought to expand on what the participants had stated in the surveys regarding contact with native, as well as non-native, speakers of English from different cultural backgrounds. The interviews also addressed the extent to which the respondents were able to make use of their knowledge of the English language in interacting with these different people, and what challenges they faced in doing so. This took place, for example, through determining what topics the participants engaged in with native speakers regularly, and the extent to which they felt they were able to comfortably communicate with them. The last two themes focus on the participants' experiences with cultural artefacts while they were in the foreign country. This level of the interview sought to determine the extent to which participants were exposed to different artefacts, as well as the nature of the interactions that they were able to engage in with such artefacts. For example, this level sought to examine not just whether or not the participant watched local television while they were studying abroad, but also what they watched and the extent to which they understood or enjoyed what they watched. All of these themes are directly relevant to the research questions of this study. As explained by Creswell (2012), interviews consist of some of the most suitable qualitative instruments as they are able to conveniently and deeply capture the perspective of the respondent. By conducting the interviews in English and Arabic, both languages in which the researcher is highly proficient, any potential language effect or language barrier could be limited so as not to affect the outcomes of the study.

3.6 Data Analysis

The entire study lasted from December 2011 to December 2012. The empirical part of this study lasted eight months, starting in January 2012 and ending in August 2012, with three data collection points, before, during and after SA. The pre-tests took place December 2011. During the programme the participants were visited once in the US on June 2012, at the end of five months after the start of the programme. The post-tests were done in Saudi on December 2012, approximately 5 months after the 2nd data collection.

3.6.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Under the quantitative aspect of the study, descriptive measures in terms of frequencies, measures of central tendencies, and measures of variability were computed for appropriate variables. Corresponding statistical tests were used for each of the research questions. For determining whether or not participants in the SA programme were able to learn their target L2 language effectively, paired t-tests were conducted that compared their pre-tests in the different instruments described in the previous section to their post-tests in the same instruments. SPSS v17 was used to conduct each of the tests.

3.6.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

For the qualitative aspect of the study, the interviews were firstly transcribed using MAXQDA 11 and then the content was analysed using data analysis software MAXQDA 11, and coded thematically. This involved identifying all mention of natives, non-natives, Arabs, friends, class mates, home, social activities, cultural, free time, personality and so on (Appendix M). Those details are used to provide a more complete understanding of the results obtained from quantitative data analysis.

3.7 Measures

There will be different measures that will be used in the study. There will be three batches of data to be analysed. These are data from the analysis of the writing test (27 texts), data from the picture description test (18 texts), data from the Elicited Imitation test (18 texts), and data from the OPI section of the interview (18 texts). As the study employs a mixed method design, both quantitative and qualitative measures of data will be used. The following table summarizes the measures used in this study in relation to the research questions for which they were used.

Table 3 Summary of measures

Research Question	Data Collection Instruments	Data Analysis
1.) To what extent were female Saudi Arabian SA participants able to develop proficiency in the use of the English language?	Elicited Imitation Writing test Picture description	Descriptive statistics ANOVA T-Test

	OPI	
2.) What are the cultural and social interactions experienced by female Saudi Arabian participants while studying abroad?	LEQ SNQ Semi-structured interviews	Descriptive Statistics T-test MAXQDA
3.) Can any variations in the gains in English language proficiency among female Saudi Arabian SA participants be explained with reference to different social and cultural interaction experiences?	Based on information gathered from instruments above	Comparison and grouping of individual profiles

Under the quantitative part of the analysis, there are four major variables of interest, which are general proficiency, fluency, accuracy, and complexity. Data for each of these variables were collected using a writing test and a picture description test. The results were analysed using t-tests and ANOVA in order to determine if there were significant differences in the variables measured before the participants went to the United States for the SA programme, during the time that they were in the US, and after their return from the US.

For the second research question, there were two variables of interest, which were social networking and cultural interaction; these were measured using survey and a semi-structured interview, both of which were administered to the participants. These aspects will be scored accordingly in order to determine the level of social and cultural interaction that each participant engages in. The survey was analysed using t-tests in order to determine differences in the interactions that the participants' made in English and in Arabic while in the SA setting. On the other hand, the MAXQDA was used in analysing the interviews qualitatively. This was selected because it is known that MAXQDA is suitable for qualitative research designs that make use of traditional methods such as grounded theory qualitative content analysis, and discourse analysis. It is also suitable for this study because it works with Arabic scripts which form a major part of the interviews. The use of MAXQDA is expected to provide sufficient structure for data analysis in the qualitative part of the study and avoid the occurrence of researcher bias. Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS version 17. A significance level of 0.05 will be adopted for each test.

3.8 The Participants

The following section provides details on the participants of the study, as well as on the details of the programme that the participants are undertaking. As this study is to be conducted on a sample from a vulnerable population, it is important for the procedures by which the members of the sample are recruited and the details of those members to be thoroughly documented. As found in the review of literature, female Arabs in Saudi Arabia represent a marginalized minority; there are many cultural restrictions imposed upon their freedom to travel or express themselves. It is important to take these into consideration in collecting data from a sample of this population. In line with this, all of the names used in the study are pseudonyms, including those of places that the participants refer to in interviews. This is done in order to provide protection to the participants from being criticized for their inputs which may run contrary to cultural norms in their country.

The participants in the study are 9 female undergraduate Saudi English translation majors at COLT. In their second year, they were given the opportunity to enrol in the SA programme and study English for Academic Purposes (EAP) at an International English Centre at a university in the US. Upon their return they enrolled in their 3rd year at the university and embarked on translation courses. Their ages range between 18 and 22 years while their Grade Point Averages (GPA) range from 3.3 - 4.9/5. The programme lasted 8 months from January 2012 until August 2012. All the participants spent 8 months in USA. The following table shows some details of each participant.

Table 4 Overview of participants

	Name	Age	GPA / 5.00	Length of Stay	Escort
1	Basma	19	4.64	8 months	Father for the 1 st week.
2	Fahda	20	4.72	8 months	Father for the 1 st week, then mother for a week later on.
3	Ferdos	19	3.31	8 months	Father- for the first 4 months
4	Majd	20	3.89	8 months	Parents
5	Ranem	19	4.53	8 months	Parents + 3 sisters and 1 brother.
6	Reem	18	4.93	8 months	Father- for the first 3 months

7	Sara	19	4.25	8 months	Parents
8	Shahd	21	4.7	8 months	Brother
9	Shatha	20	4.28	8 months	Father for the 1 st week.

3.9 The Setting

The participants are students in COLT at a Saudi University. They are enrolled in the English Translation department. The department focus is on “providing participants with four semesters of language training as well as introducing them to the culture of the target language and equipping them with the skills and strategies necessary to the translator”(<http://colt.ksu.edu.sa/en/englishdeparment/message>). The participants are given a choice between studying the other two semesters in the department or joining a programme to SA and continue their language courses in the US. The table below outlines the college curriculum.

Table 5 Saudi ESL programme details

First Semester		Second Semester	
Course Title	Weekly Hours	Course Title	Weekly Hours
Listening 1	3	Listening 2	3
Reading 1	4	Reading 2	4
Vocabulary 1	3	Vocabulary 2	2
Grammar 1	2	Grammar 2	2
Writing 1	4	Writing 2	4
Speaking 1	4	Speaking 2	3
		Dictionary Skills	2

3.10 SA Programme for Females at (COLT)

Saudi universities are looking to develop higher education in the kingdom through a partnership with universities of distinction worldwide.² This partnership, the Twinning Programme, was launched in 2007 with the aim of allowing members of higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia to benefit from international experiences. One of the functions of the programme is to send participants to SA for one year as part of their degree. COLT in Riyadh applied the Twinning Programme to most languages studied at the college. Participants were encouraged to spend an academic year in the country of their chosen language. Male participants have since then travelled to the USA, Canada, Spain, Italy, France, Japan and China. Females were excluded due to cultural and social restrictions including the legal requirement to have a male escort. However, in 2011, COLT started sending 2nd year female participants to a university in Canada and to a University in the USA. COLT also established a partnership with a university in France. This is a new programme and only a small group from the French department went to France in February 2011; so far no participants from the English department have joined the programme. The participants in this study are the first group of female participants from the English Translation department to join the programme, which is voluntary as sending female participants abroad alone to study, is a huge step that has generated much opposition across society. There are many reasons for this anxiety against providing educational opportunities in other countries for females in Saudi Arabia. One is that females are considered the weaker gender, and may be unable to protect themselves in a foreign land. Another reason is the belief that exposing women to western ideologies is considered potentially harmful if they were to come back and influence others, such as their children, in these ideologies. In addition to this, most Saudi men typically shy away from marrying women who are known to have travelled alone. Finally, there is still the social mind-set in some parts of Saudi Arabia that the rightful place of a woman is in her parents', and eventually, her husband's house, and so there is no need for her to have advanced formal education outside the kingdom.

2-<http://ksu.edu.sa/Administration/RectorDeputies/UDB/Programs/itp/Pages/default.aspx>

Anyone wishing to join is assessed by interview and successful applicants may travel, provided all other requirements are fulfilled. The SA programme for female participants majoring in English Translation at COLT specifies that:

- 1- The female participants are sent to Canada, America or Australia to study English for one year. The college was interested in including the UK in the programme but the Ministry of Higher Education in KSA refused, arguing that the high number of Saudi participants already in the UK would not benefit the language development of participants on the programme. COLT is, however, continuing to lobby to include the UK, as its relative proximity to Saudi Arabia is thought to potentially alleviate the fears of some parents.
- 2- The female participants are abroad from 11 January – 11 August (8 months). These dates correspond to the academic calendar in both KSA and USA. Once they had completed the course the participants returned to KSA to enrol in their 3rd year, which began in September 2012.
- 3- The participants are second year participants at COLT. Based on initial interviews, some studied English for one year at the Foundation Centre and then enrolled in COLT; others studied English for one year at COLT itself.

3.11 Selection Procedures for SA Programme

In order to decide on which female participants to send abroad, COLT developed a set of criteria for inclusion in the SA programme, which encompass the following points: First, their GPAs were required to be at least 4.0 out of 5.0. Second, interviews were held by a committee from the college. The focus was not only on evaluating the candidate's L2 fluency and ability in vocabulary, grammar and structure, but in addition, the interview covered personal, academic and social aspects. Through the interviews the committee was also able to evaluate the appearance, poise, attitude and confidence of the participants. The participants' reactions to criticism, appraisal, personal comments, etc. were also deemed important. The interviews for the cohort under investigation here were conducted in November 2011 by the dean of the college and three further senior academics. The researcher was permitted to be a silent observer at most of the interviews and so could gain valuable insights into the selection process. The evaluation of the committee was an important part of the process, resulting in some participants being eliminated from

selection. The elimination was due to a variety of reasons, ranging from a very weak grasp of the L2 to strong reaction against criticism.

Following this, the 3rd part of the process entailed a trip taken by the participants wishing to join the SA programme to the educational section of the American embassy. The researcher accompanied the participants on this trip to know first-hand what information the participants were being given and how they reacted to it. They were given a two-hour introductory talk about American universities, the importance of orientation days, information on visa regulations and cultural and safety tips. Any queries were answered by staff. Most questions concerned visa matters. They were shown a video about various American universities, buildings and classes. Also they were shown interviews done with Saudi participants, males and females, studying in various American universities talking about their experiences and encouraging others to participate in the experience of studying abroad.

The GPA requirement was changed subsequently and lowered to 3.75 out of 5 and sometimes to 3 out of 5 due to culturally-based problems in recruiting participants. These centred on two features: firstly, family objections to the idea of their daughters travelling alone outside the KSA, and secondly, the availability of a male escort as per the requirement posted by the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education that no female should travel without being accompanied by a male relative. This has resulted in the need for family members to uproot and join their female relative in her SA programme. Many female participants had to withdraw from the programme even though they were qualified for it, because of their father, brother or husband were not granted a leave of absence from work and were unable to accompany the young women.

3.12 SA Placement in L2 Country

3.12.1 The English Language Centre

COLT in Saudi was looking for a quiet, small town, which would provide a peaceful environment for the participants in order to minimise the cultural shock and make them feel safe. The chosen University was the first to respond to the emails sent out regarding the SA female participants and was thought to meet the requirements. Classes at the English Language International Centre at the University in the US were held from 8am to

3pm with a lunch hour in between. The course offered was Academic English and participants took language skills courses in reading, writing, grammar, listening and speaking. Some also took optional courses that focused on American culture. The following table shows details of these courses.

Table 6 Optional courses taken by some participants in USA

	Name	First Session	Second Session	Third Session
1	Fahda	American culture	Hiking	Volunteering with a go green project (farming)
2	Ranem	American culture		
3	Sara	American culture	Hiking	Volunteering with a go green project (farming)

The English Language International Centre at the US University operates an arrangement involving a conversation partner. The university's English centre encourages undergraduate native speakers to partner international participants for a one-hour-per-week conversation session on campus, while they are learning English at the institution. The native speakers do it voluntarily without getting any credits for it; some of them were interested in understanding foreign cultures and some were interested in learning Arabic through interaction. Consequently, each participant had her own native English-speaking friend. While some of the participants were content to interact with their conversation partner inside the university only, others went beyond meeting on campus to visiting restaurants or the cinema and taking trips to the mountains together. Some participants formed a group of SA participants and partners and went out together. The participants exchanged emails; Facebook, WhatsApp and Blackberry messenger with their partners and chatted in English.

Table 7 Participants' conversation partners

participant	Conversation partner	Activities
Basma	✓	Cafes, restaurants and shopping
Fahda	✓	Restaurants, shopping, bowling.
Ferdos	✓	Restaurants and coffee shops
Majd	X	
Ranem	✓	Restaurants and sightseeing

Reem	X	
Sara	X	
Shahd	X	
Shatha	Applied twice but no volunteers left	

3.12.2 Participants' Living Arrangements

It was important for participants in the study to have appropriate living conditions in their host country. The female participants lived in apartments with one male relative and/or other members of their family. In some cases both parents accompanied the participant, in others, siblings and indeed the whole family moved to the L2 country. In these situations they did not live in dorms or with host families. Some participants were visited by their families during the holidays, although this led to a reduction of immersion in the L2 culture due to the influence of the L1 at home. The following Table shows the details of the accommodations for each participant.

Table 8 Accommodations

Name	Duration	Accommodation and Escorts
Basma	8 months	Flat. Father first week to help her settle then left. Shares with her close friends Shatha+ Fahda
Fahda	8 months	Flat. Father first week to help her settle then left. Shares with her close friends Basma+Shatha
Ferdos	8 months	Flat with her father for the first 4 months then lived alone.
Majd	8 months	Flat. Father at first, went back and mother came. Father returned and both parents stayed till the end.
Ranem	8 months	Flat. Parents are always there but siblings alternate during the holidays.
Reem	8 months	Flat. Father for the first 3 months then she lived alone.
Sara	8 months	Flat with parents the whole time
Shahd	8 months	Flat with younger brother the whole time
Shatha	8 months	Flat. Father first week to help her settle then left. Shares with her close friends Basma+ Fahda

As shown in Table 8, the cultural requirement previously described of always having a male relative to accompany the female family member when travelling was not always followed. In many cases, the parent of the student accompanied the student to the foreign country and stayed for a while, but eventually left the student either to live alone or with other female participants. While having parents or male guardians is preferred, it is obvious that there are circumstances when this does not become possible. Instead of sending the student back, Table 8 shows that some compromise is made, indicating that the culture-based rules may not be absolute for people in Saudi Arabia. There were some issues that were raised in relation to this experience; first among these was the protection of the physical wellbeing of the participants, who were alone in a new environment. In this regard, it was important to find accommodation for the participants where they can live together. This way, they would be able to look after one another during the programme. Another important concern is the protection of the identity of the participants. This was done by using pseudonyms when referring to the participants in the text of this research, including the interview transcripts.

3.13 Ethical Considerations

Given the cultural sensitivities surrounding women travelling outside Saudi Arabia, ethical considerations related to protecting participants are of utmost importance. The study adheres to the requirements laid out by the University of Southampton for the conduct of research with human participant (http://www.southampton.ac.uk/gradschools/graddev/research_ethics.html) approved by the Ethics and Research Governance Office in October 2011(ERGO number 8355). It was explained to the participants participating in this study that the data would be protected by passwords and codes and would remain solely with the researcher. Since the study was conducted in a specific college where only 2nd year participants are eligible for SA programmes, maintaining participants' anonymity is a challenge and cannot be guaranteed fully by the use of pseudonyms. Thus, the publication of the dissertation will be put on hold until all participants have graduated. By the time this PhD has been completed, the participants will have all graduated. Participants were made fully aware of this and agreed to this practice.

It should be emphasised that this study is concerned with the effectiveness of social and cultural interaction on language learning in the SA programme and the results could in

no way be harmful to the participants at a personal level. However, as some inferences can be drawn from the personal living circumstances, which are not always in accordance with Saudi law, the researcher is conscious of the need to take care with regard to which type of information, is available publicly.

A Student Research Project Ethics Checklist and a participant information sheet were completed in October 2011 and ethical approval granted for this piece of research (ERGO8355). On Wednesday, 30 November 2011, an introductory meeting was held between the researcher and the participants. The ethical points were covered in this meeting. The researcher explained her PhD topic in detail including the instruments to be used to collect the data. In addition, the participant information sheet was read and explained to the participants in Arabic and they were given the opportunity to ask questions. Consent forms were signed and dated, and participants were given the researcher's contact details in the UK and Saudi Arabia.

3.14 Pilot Study

On 20 August 2011 the researcher met with three volunteers to conduct a pilot of the interviews. The volunteers were female Saudi participants in the UK who were given consent forms and participation information sheets, which were explained in Arabic. The interview was repeated on 30 September 2011 to check the validity of the questions. Findings of these pilot interviews showed that volunteer participants did not have any major issues with the questions that were asked by the researcher. In some instances, the volunteers needed the researcher to clarify certain questions, which led to these questions having to undergo some minor revisions in structure for the actual study. Specifically, the participants were initially confused about the differences between social interaction and cultural interaction. While this was explained to them, some confusion remained. As such, it was decided that it was better for neither of these terms to be mentioned directly to the participants. Instead, the participants were asked whether or not they engaged in particular social or cultural interaction activities, without explicitly mentioning these terminologies. For example, instead of asking what cultural interactions the respondents made while in the SA programme, they were instead asked how they spent their free time at the SA setting, what activities they did, who they did them with, and so on. These questions were found to be able to more naturally elicit information about social and cultural interactions engaged in by the participants. The volunteers believed that the questions were appropriate, and did

not express any concerns with regard to any adverse effects that asking such questions may have on female Saudi Arabian SA participants.

3.15 Outline of Data Analysis

This section describes how the data collected for this study will be analysed. The average scores of the respondents in their pre-tests and in their post-tests under each of the tests will be used in the study. These statistics are important because they describe the performance of the respondents at two different points in time, which means that from these scores, it would be possible to have an idea of whether or not the respondents' English language proficiency improved between the times that they started and finished the SA programme.

Specifically, if it is shown that the post-test scores are higher than the pre-test scores in a particular assessment, then it can be considered that the respondents may have improved in that aspect of English language proficiency. Furthermore, the standard deviation of the participants' scores within each of the tests will also be included in order to account for variability. The standard deviation (SD) is important because it is a strong measure of variability of the participants' scores. High standard deviation would indicate that the participants in the study vary widely in terms of their performance in a specific English language proficiency assessment at a specific time. High variability would imply that the data is not very stable, which may affect the reliability of the results of formal testing.

A bare comparison of the participants' Elicited Imitation pre-and post-SA scores cannot be used to determine if the respondents significantly improved their English language proficiency during their time studying abroad. A paired sample t-tests will be used to further analyse the paired sample data. It was selected as an appropriate test for determining whether or not the respondents improved in their English language proficiency since the scores for the assessment are of ratio-scale, and since the nature of the data is paired; that is, the interest is not just to compare the averages of the groups before and after the SA programme but to compare the score of each member of the sample before they underwent the programme with the same member's score after completing the programme.

For all of the various tests, elicited imitation, writing and story description, a mean difference score, which is the average of the differences between the scores of each

respondent in the pre-test and the post-test, will be calculated. If this mean is positive, it will be interpreted as the post-test scores of the respondents being higher than the pre-test scores. This would mean that there is an improvement in the respondents' English language proficiency between the times that they started and completed the SA programme. On the other hand, if this statistic is negative, then it means that the pre-test scores are higher than the post-test scores, which would mean that the respondents' English proficiency did not improve.

The standard deviation will also be taken into account. If this value is high, it will be interpreted as the difference in the respondents' outcomes being very varied. That is, some of the participants may have improved greatly, while others may not have improved at all. The size of the difference and variability between the pre-and post-test scores may also be considered using the confidence interval, which shows the range in which another sample of similar respondents may produce another set of means. A wide confidence interval will be interpreted as likewise indicating a high variability in the performance of the participants. The most important parts of these results are the t-statistic and the sig, which is actually the p-value corresponding to the t-statistic. The t-statistic shows the standardised size of the difference between the pre and post-test scores. This is translated to the p-value, which shows the exact probability that the difference found may be attributed to normal randomness. That is, the p-value shows how likely it is that the difference found between the two groups was just incidental. If the p-value is high, specifically higher than 0.05, then the corresponding interpretation is that the difference between the pre-and post-test is just the result of randomness and is thereby not statistically significant. On the other hand, if the p-value is lower than 0.05, and then it will be interpreted as the difference not being just due to randomness, which would mean that there is a significant difference between the pre-and post-test scores. If the post-test scores are higher than the pre-test scores based on a positive mean, then this will be interpreted as indicating a significant improvement in the English language proficiency of the respondents after undertaking the SA programme.

In order to describe the outcomes of the language engagement and social networking questionnaires, I will interpret the response with the highest frequency percentage as being the most popular response from among the participants. This will enable me to describe specific characteristics of the sample's experiences in the foreign

setting with regard to their engagement with the English language, with people speaking the English language, and with artefacts that are linked to American culture.

Under the qualitative portion of the study, interviews and content analysis will be used. A coding system (Appendix M) is used in order to identify the dominant themes that can be drawn from the interview transcripts. Preliminary analyses from the first transcripts indicate that there is general positive feedback on participants' experiences with the SA programme. There are also marked differences between the reported experiences of participants in the foreign setting and their experiences in the educational system from where they came from. There were also indications that participants regarded social and cultural interactions that they experienced as having positive impacts on the development of their English language proficiency.

Chapter 4: Quantitative Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides details on the outcomes of the different analyses conducted on the data gathered in the study. It begins with a comparison of the general proficiency of the research participants before and after they experienced the SA setting, then moves on to proficiency in writing composition. Parallel comparative results are then presented for accuracy, complexity, and fluency in the use of the English language. Afterwards, the chapter proceeds to the results of the language engagement questionnaire, which measured how much use the participants made of the English language in comparison to the Arabic language before and during their SA programme. This is followed by the results of the social networks questionnaire, which sought to determine the distribution of participants' interaction before and during their stay abroad for the SA programme. The inputs in this chapter provide evidences to support the research questions of this study in terms of establishing L2 gains of participants while in the L2 setting and comparing their use of English with their use of Arabic while in SA environment.

4.2 General Proficiency

The objective of this analysis was to determine whether the general English proficiency of the nine participants significantly improved or not after the time they spent on a SA programme in the US in order to begin to answer research question one: "To what extent were female Saudi Arabian SA participants able to develop proficiency in the use of the English language?" Their English general proficiency was measured using the Elicited Imitation test. Each girl has taken the same test twice, pre-SA programme and post-SA programme. The test was administered as part of a general test battery at these times (Ch.3, section 5) to measure development in language proficiency as stated in RQ1. The Elicited imitation test, as described in chapter 3 section 5, requires the participants to listen to 30 sentences varying in length and complexity and to repeat as much as they can of each one. There is a slight period of waiting before the participants are asked to repeat each sentence. The hypothesis behind this test is that the participants will not be able to repeat the complex sentences if they do not have enough grammatical

and vocabulary knowledge in the target language (Wu & Ortega, 2013). The test thus works as a measure of general proficiency.

According to the scoring guidelines for elicited imitation tasks (Iwashita & Ortega, 2002), each utterance is scored on a scale of 0-4, as defined below:

Table 9 Elicited imitation score rubric

Score Category	Description
Score 0	The participant said nothing (silence), minimal repetition or unintelligible utterance.
Score 1	When only about half of idea units are represented in the string but a lot of important information is left out, unrelated or opposite to the original stimulus. Or when the string does not in itself constitute a meaningful sentence.
Score 2	When content of string preserves at least more than half of the idea units in the original stimulus; string is meaningful, and the meaning is close or related to original, but it departs from it in some slight changes in content, which makes content inexact, incomplete, or ambiguous
Score 3	Original, complete meaning is preserved as in the stimulus. Strings which are quite ungrammatical can get a 3 score, as long as exact meaning is preserved. Some synonymous substitutions are acceptable.
Score 4	Exact repetition: String matches stimulus exactly. Both form and meaning are correct without exception or doubt.

The scoring was done twice by the researcher following the above mentioned guideline with a time difference of one month to check if the same results were reached both times. Also the help of a colleague with knowledge in Elicited imitation tests and an interest in SA programmes was solicited on both times and the results of both raters were compared and discussed to sort out any discrepancies. The raters were generally consistent with their marking. While some discrepancies were initially identified, all of the issues concerning marking were resolved after the raters consulted with each other. This makes the scoring highly reliable, since it was verified by one other person with sufficient background in the use of the instrument.

Paired-samples *t* tests of difference were conducted to determine differences in the English general proficiency of the participants' pre-SA and post-SA. Individual differences between the pre-and post-test scores were also investigated to determine who among the participants improved the most and who improved the least.

The results of the paired t-test are summarized in Table 10. The paired sample t-test showed that the total pre-and post-test scores were significantly different ($t(8) = -18.111$; $p = 0.006$). The comparison of the mean difference showed that total post-test scores were significantly higher than the total pre-test scores, with a 95% confidence interval for the difference ranging between 6.66 to 29.55 points. The results indicated that the participants' levels of English improved based on the total scores after the SA programme.

Table 10 General proficiency T-Test results

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-SA	69.56	9	23.912	7.971
	Post-SA	87.67	9	12.530	4.177

Paired Samples t-Test

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pre-SA Post-SA	-18.111	14.887	4.962	-29.554	-6.668	-3.650	8	.006

Table 11 shows the individual scores for each of the female participants. This table is organized in an ascending manner starting with the participants that gained the most. The table shows that Ranem and Basma have the greatest improvement in their levels of English after undergoing the SA programme with an improvement of at least 35 points when comparing the total pre-test and post-test scores. Reem already had very high pre-SA scores, and so these scores did not improve any further in the post-SA assessment. Fahda started with a very high score in the pre-SA test but her score declined by 9 points in the post-test score, never the less her post test score is considered above average in relation to the group. The rest

of the participants in the study were also able to improve their scores in the post-SA assessment.

Table 11 Individual scores

Name	Pre-SA	Post-SA	Gain +/-Loss -
Ranem	54	91	37
Basma	46	81	35
Shahd	54	78	24
Ferdos	45	68	23
Majd	63	83	20
Sara	77	94	17
Shatha	74	90	16
Reem	113	113	0
Fahda	100	91	-9
Average	70%	88%	18%

4.3 Writing Proficiency

The objective of this section is to determine whether the participants' level of composition in English improved or declined after the time they spent in USA on a SA programme. This particular composition task was administered as part of a general test battery at these times (Ch.3,section 5) to measure development in language proficiency as stated in research question one that asks "To what extent were female Saudi Arabian SA participants able to develop proficiency and confidence in the use of the English language?". Each participant took the same writing test three times, before, during and after the SA programme. The writing samples were evaluated by two raters using Jacobs'et.al (1981) ESL composition profile. There was an interval of one week between the researcher's evaluation and the second rater's evaluation. The evaluation was done by the researcher and a second rater who is a native speaker English teacher. The second rater is familiar with Jacobs' composition profile and uses it sometimes as part of her grading scheme in her work as an English Language instructor. The two raters evaluated the participants work separately, then they met to compare both evaluations and to discuss the

differences. There was an interval of one month and then the whole process was repeated and a comparison between both sets of evaluations was done to reach a unified evaluation which is the base of the present analysis. The participants were assessed on the content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics (Bacha, 2001).

Table 12 provides descriptive statistics for the three sets of scores, including mean, standard deviation, and minimum and maximum values. The mean scores comparison showed gains being made from the first test ($M = 65.66$) to the third test ($M = 84.66$). Also, the scores on the second test ($M = 79.66$) were higher as compared to the first test ($M = 65.66$). The result of the mean comparison indicated that the participants' level of English composition improved substantially during their time on the SA programme and that the improvement was sustained through to the post-test. The mean scores for test 2 and test 3 shows that the gained improvement in English composition did not diminish after the end of the SA programme but rather seems to have increased.

Table 12 Descriptive statistics of English test score

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Test.1 Pre-SA	9	40	84	65.66	12.75
Test.2 During-SA	9	68	95	79.66	11.11
Test.3 Post-SA	9	74	95	84.66	7.9

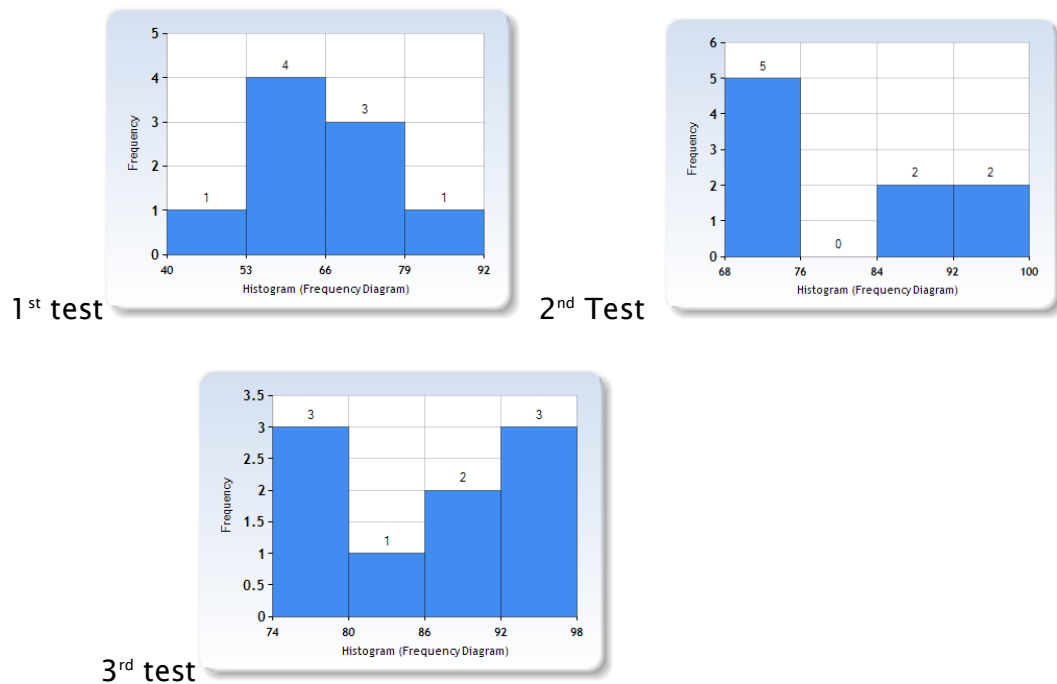
Prior to conducting the statistical analysis of multivariate repeated measures ANOVA to address the research question, preliminary screening of the data was conducted to ensure the integrity of the findings from the analysis, and in particular to check for normality of distribution which is a required assumption of ANOVA. Normality testing was conducted on the three sets of writing test scores by investigating the skewness, and kurtosis statistics. To determine whether the data follows normal distribution, skewness statistics greater than three indicate non-normality while a kurtosis statistic above three would also indicate non-normality (Kline, 2005). The skewness and kurtosis statistics of all study variables fell within the criteria enumerated by Kline (2005) indicating that all the data of the three English test scores were normally distributed.

Table 13 Skewness and kurtosis statistics of English test scores

	N	Mean	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
1 st Test (pre-SA)	9	65.67	-.820	.717	1.206	1.400
2 nd Test (during-SA)	9	79.67	.329	.717	-2.055	1.400
3 rd Test (Post-SA)	9	84.67	.035	.717	-1.765	1.400

The reason for the imperfect representation of test scores in figure 3 is because of the limited sample size of nine. Given that the skewness and kurtosis statistics of the data sets were within the criteria of normal distribution, the imperfect representation of the data is acceptable. Thus, the ANOVA can be conducted since the data of the study variables exhibited normal distribution.

Figure 3 Histogram of test scores



Mauchly's Test of Sphericity in

Table 14 is essential to determine whether the sample data satisfied one of the assumptions of the Repeated Measures ANOVA. The p-value (Approx. Chi-Square) of the statistics should be above the level of significance value of 0.05 to ensure that the data satisfied the assumption of sphericity. The result of Mauchly's Test of Sphericity showed that the p-value ($p = 0.55$) was greater than the level of significance of 0.05 indicating that the assumption of sphericity was not violated.

Table 14 Mauchly's test of sphericity

Within Subjects Effect	Mauchly's W	Approx. Chi-Square	df	Sig.	Epsilon ^b		
					Greenhouse-Geisser	Huynh-Feldt	Lower-bound
Time	0.84	1.21	2	0.55	0.86	1	0.50

The main analysis aimed to determine the difference of Within-Subjects effects over time, i.e. whether there was any significant difference in the writing scores over the testing period. The results were summarised in Table 15. The statistics in the sphericity-assumed row will be investigated since the data set exhibited the assumption of sphericity. There was a significant effect for time ($F(2) = 16.71$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the mean scores of the three English tests were significantly different.

Table 15 Tests of within-subjects effects results

Source		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Time	Sphericity Assumed	1132.52	2	566.26	16.71	0.00	0.68
	Greenhouse-Geisser	1132.52	1.73	656.26	16.71	0.00	0.68
	Huynh-Feldt	1132.52	2	566.26	16.71	0.00	0.68
	Lower-bound	1132.52	1	1132.52	16.71	0.00	0.68

A multivariate repeated measure ANOVA was conducted to compare and determine whether there was any significant difference in the scores in the three periods that is to determine whether the participants' levels of English improved or declined after their time on SA programme. The independent variable in the multivariate repeated measures ANOVA was the testing periods, while the

dependent variable is the writing test score. The levels of the multivariate repeated measures were the first, second and third test scores.

The results of the statistical test multivariate repeated measure ANOVA indicated that there is a difference between the overall mean writing scores among the three periods. The result is presented in Table 16. Looking at Wilks' Lambda row of the group table, the p-value ($p < .002$) was less than the level of significance value of 0.05. This suggested that there was a statistically significant difference on the overall scores in the different testing periods.

Table 16 Multivariate test results

Multivariate Tests						
Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
scores	Pillai's Trace	.841	18.474 ^b	2.000	7.000	.002
	Wilks' Lambda	.159	18.474 ^b	2.000	7.000	.002
	Hotelling's Trace	5.278	18.474 ^b	2.000	7.000	.002
	Roy's Largest Root	5.278	18.474 ^b	2.000	7.000	.002
a. Design: Intercept Within Subjects Design: scores						
b. Exact statistic						

A comparison was conducted to determine which among the nine participants improved the most and which one improved the least in terms of writing test scores. The comparative analysis used the three testing scores of each participant to determine gains and losses by individuals over time. The raw score differences are presented in Table 17.

Table 17 Raw score differences

Name	1 st Test Pre-SA	2 nd Test During-SA	3 rd Test Post-SA
Basma	84	95	92
Fahda	65	72	86
Ferdos	40	68	80
Majd	62	68	77

Ranem	74	93	95
Reem	72	87	87
Sara	74	89	94
Shahd	65	72	77
Shatha	55	73	74
Average	66	80	85

Table 17 shows that all of the nine participants improved their English writing skill during their SA programme in the US, the scores from first and second test shows an improvement. Ferdos had the highest improvement with gain score of 28 points. Ranem had the second highest improvement with a gain score of 19 points while Majd had the lowest improvement with a gain score of 6 points.

The comparison between the 2nd and 3rd test scores showed that seven out of the nine participants continued to improve their English skills after they went back home to Saudi. Fahda had the highest improvement with gain score of 14 points while Ferdos had the second highest improvement with a score increase of 12. On the other hand, the scores of Reem stayed the same, neither an increase nor decrease in her writing skills, whereas Basma declined by 3 points.

The comparison of the 1st and 3rd test scores showed that all of the participants improved their English writing skills when compared to their scores at the start of the SA programme. Ferdos had the highest improvement with score increase of 40 points, followed by Fahda and Ranem with a gain score of 21 points, while Basma came in last with a gain score of 8 points.

The repeated measures ANOVA showed that there is a difference between the overall mean writing scores among the three periods. The mean score comparison showed that the female Saudi Arabian SA participants were able to develop proficiency in the use of the English language since their scores significantly improved in the last testing period ($M = 84.66$), which is the period 4 months after they went back home to Saudi and enrolled on their third year at their local university when compared to the time they first took the test ($M = 65.66$), the period before the participants joined the SA programme. Table 18 presents the participants in descending order from highest to lowest gains.

Table 18 Participants' writing gain scores

Name	1 st test / Pre-SA	3 rd test / Post-SA	Gain
Ferdos	40	80	40
Fahda	65	86	21
Ranem	74	95	21
Sara	74	94	20
Shatha	55	74	19
Majd	62	77	15
Reem	72	87	15
Shahd	65	77	12
Basma	84	92	8

4.4 Accuracy in Oral Production

As described in the methodology chapter (section 3.5) the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) was used by the researcher to check for accuracy in the use of error-free grammatical structure and for complexity in the use of dependent clauses. The OPI is a standardized test meant to provide a holistic measurement of a participant's conversational language proficiency (Breiner-Sanders et al., 2000). These tests seek to measure the L2 proficiency of the participant at any given time. They were given before the participants went to the United States and after they had come back and the difference between pre-and post-test scores reflect the learning achieved by the participant in the L2 setting.

Parallel questions were asked in each interview about the participants' activities and vacation periods in the United States and Saudi (See Appendix L). Consistent with protocols used in Polat & Kim (2014) and Foster et al. (2000), accuracy was measured by determining the proportion of clauses expressed by the participant that contained no errors. In this study, a clause was considered as the smallest grammatical unit that can contain a complete proposition. This can be a sentence (independent clause) or a non-sentence (dependent clause). Sub-clausal elements were incorporated in neighboring clauses. For example, in the following truncated transcript from one of the participants, there are six clauses detected. An error was found in the last clause, which is italicized, and which

meant that the accuracy of this block is computed as 5/6 or 83.33%. Of course, in the actual analysis, a single score was computed per participant per interview, and so the numerator (number of clauses without error) and denominator (total number of clauses) of the accuracy percentage are much larger.

Next weekend I'm travelling, hopefully, to LA. My brother will be there, and my cousin. So I booked a flight, alone; this time alone, without my friends. So [pause] I'm afraid a little bit, *but I'll try my best to finish my stuff by my own.*

This measurement has been shown to provide a valid perspective on the developing ability of the participants to use the English language correctly, relative to the participant's fluency as determined by the quantity of clauses that the participant is able to produce (Wu & Ortega, 2013). Paired t-tests at $\alpha=0.05$ were conducted in order to determine whether or not there were significant differences in accuracy of the participants' English language use in the pre-and post-SA settings.

Table 19 below shows the outcomes of the measurements for accuracy for the nine individual participants. It can be seen that each of the participants improved their accuracy in the English language after their SA experience; the proportion of error free clauses for each participant increased in the post-SA measurement. This is consistent with Table 20, which shows the number of clauses and the proportion of error-free clauses for the group overall. As can be seen from Table 20 while there were a higher average number of clauses in the pre-SA measurement than in the post-SA measurement, the proportion of error-free clauses was higher in the post-SA measurement than in the pre-SA measurement.

The results of paired t-tests conducted on both the number of clauses in each time period and the proportion of error-free clauses are also shown in Table 20. The difference between the number of clauses in each period was found to be significant ($p<0.05$), indicating that the participants' post-SA interviews were significantly shorter than their pre-SA interviews. This means that the participants' quantity of expression generally did not change after the SA experience. The difference in the percentage of error-free clauses was also found to be significant ($p<0.05$), showing that the participants committed significantly fewer English language errors in their post-SA interviews. Based on the confidence interval, there was a mean error reduction of about 2%-8%.

Table 19 Individual statistics for clause level accuracy in OPI

	Accuracy pre-SA				Accuracy post-SA			
	Total clauses	w/ Error	Error Percentage	Error-free Percentage	Total clauses	w/ Error	w/error Percentage	Error-free Percentage
Basma	55	12	21.82%	78.18%	43	4	9.30%	90.70%
Fahda	62	15	24.19%	75.81%	53	11	20.75%	79.25%
Ferdos	28	10	35.71%	64.29%	25	8	32.00%	68.00%
Majid	48	26	54.17%	45.83%	41	19	46.34%	53.66%
Ranem	32	4	12.50%	87.50%	38	4	10.53%	89.47%
Reem	57	11	19.30%	80.70%	41	4	9.76%	90.24%
Sara	50	3	6.00%	94.00%	38	2	5.26%	94.74%
Shahd	66	13	19.70%	80.30%	39	6	15.38%	84.62%
Shatha	42	7	16.67%	83.33%	45	7	15.56%	84.44%

Table 20 Paired T-Test results for clause level accuracy in OPI

	Paired Sample Statistic	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Clauses (Before SA)	48.89	9	12.937	4.312
	Clauses (After SA)	40.33	9	7.399	2.466
Pair 2	Error Free (Before SA)	.766606	9	.1413671	.0471224
	Error Free (After SA)	.816795	9	.1313589	.0437863

Paired Samples Test

Paired Samples Test								
	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			
Clauses (Before SA) - Clauses (After SA)	8.556	9.989	3.330	.877	16.234	2.570	8	.033
Error Free (Before SA) - Error Free (After SA)	- .0501892	.0406383	.0135461	-.0814266	-.0189519	- 3.705	8	.006

Thus, it can be inferred that participants who participated in the SA programme were able to improve their accuracy in L2. Table 21 presents the scores of the participants in a descending order from highest to lowest gains.

Table 21 Error free individual gain scores

Name	Pre-SA error free percentage	Post-SA error free percentage	Gain score
Basma	78.18%	90.70%	12.52%
Reem	80.70%	90.24%	9.54%
Majd	45.83%	53.66%	7.83%
Shahd	80.30%	84.62%	4.32%
Ferdos	64.29%	68.00%	3.71%
Fahda	75.81%	79.25%	3.44%
Raneem	87.50%	89.47%	1.97%
Shatha	83.33%	84.44%	1.11%
Sara	94.00%	94.74%	0.74%
Average	76.66%	81.68%	5.02%

4.5 Complexity in Oral Production

Complexity is another important aspect of English language proficiency that is of interest in this study. Polat and Kim (2014) define complexity as the quality of the learner's sentences in terms of types of clauses used in them. As discussed in the previous section, expressions in the English language can be measured in clauses, which may be dependent or independent. People with low levels of complexity in English tend to make use of mostly simple sentences in their expressions, while those with high levels of complexity tend to make use of more intricate sentence structures, though it is acknowledged that complexity can be affected by genre and style choices, e.g. in speech versus writing. In this study, three types of expression were considered, which were simple sentences, compound sentences made up of two independent clauses, and complex sentences made up of an independent clause and a dependent clause. This section analysed the proportions of these three types of sentences in the participants' expressions in the pre-SA and post-SA settings.

As in the previous section, the measurement of complexity made use of data from the oral proficiency interviews conducted with the participants before and after their SA programme. For complexity, the main focus is to determine the diversity of the participants' expression in terms of clausal combinations (Polat & Kim, 2014). As such, each clause expressed by the participant was classified as either a dependent or independent clause. Sub-clauses were identified as dependent clauses. Following this, the number of simple sentences and compound sentences were identified, as well as the types of compound sentences based on the types of clauses that were combined to express them. The reliability of this procedure is based on the ability of the researcher to categorize dependent and independent clauses and the help of an English grammar teacher with knowledge and expertise was solicited. The results of both raters were compared and discussed to sort out any discrepancies. That is, raters compared scoring after initially marking the papers and discussed items that they scored differently. The process was repeated a month later and through the discussion, consensus between the raters on what the score should be was reached. This makes the scoring reliable, since it was verified by one other person with sufficient background in the grammar and structure of the English language. Furthermore, it is possible that the participants' expressions during the interview may be affected by the researcher's own expressions. As such, in order for the comparison of the two settings to not be affected, the researcher's expressions in asking questions in

the two settings were kept consistent. Paired t-tests at $\alpha=0.05$ were conducted in order to determine whether or not there were significant differences in the complexity of the participants' expressions from transcripts of interviews conducted before and after the participants experienced the SA programme.

Table 22 shows one aspect of the outcomes of measurements for complexity, for individual participants. Specifically, it shows the percentage of dependent clauses used by the participants in the pre-and post-SA settings. Eight of the participants used more dependent clauses in the post-SA interview while Sara used the same number of dependent clauses in the pre- and post-SA interview.

Table 22 Individual results (dependent clauses)

	Pre-SA			Post-SA		
	Total clauses	Dependent Clauses	Dependent %	Total clauses	Dependent clauses	Dependent %
Basma	61	13	21.0%	48	14	29.0%
Fahda	63	11	17.0%	62	17	27.0%
Ferdos	29	4	13.0%	32	8	25.0%
Majd	57	8	14.0%	48	13	27.0%
Rane m	40	7	17.0%	42	13	31.0%
Reem	70	9	13.0%	44	14	32.0%
Sara	68	10	18.0%	44	10	23.0%
Shahd	79	12	15.0%	44	16	36.0%
Shatha	59	10	20.0%	52	14	30.0%
Average	58	9	16.44%	46	13	28.89%

Table 23 identifies types of dependent clauses and their numbers, such as main-main indicating two main clauses and main-sub indicating a main clause and a dependent clause structure which could be identified in participants' utterances.

Table 23 Types of dependent clauses in OPI

	Pre- SA			Post-SA		
	Dependent total	Main-Main	Main-Sub	Dependent total	Main-Main	Main-Sub
Basma	13	9	4	14	8	6
Fahda	11	6	5	17	10	7
Ferdos	4	3	1	8	5	3
Majd	8	6	2	13	5	8
Ranem	7	5	2	13	7	6
Reem	9	5	4	14	5	9
Sara	10	8	2	10	4	6
Shahd	12	4	8	16	6	10
Shatha	10	8	2	14	8	6
Average	9	6	3	13	6	7

Table 24 shows some relevant descriptive statistics for the group as a whole, while Table 25 shows paired t-test analyses between pre-and-post SA performances for the group. The outcomes show that the mean of dependent clauses was higher in the post SA measurement (13.22) than in the pre SA measurement (9.33), indicating that the participants made use of dependent clauses more after they had been exposed to the study abroad environment. A 95% confidence interval for the mean difference was found to be between 2.28 to 5.49, indicating that participants made use of 2 to 5 more dependent clauses during the post SA measurement than in the pre SA measurement. This difference was found to be statistically significant ($p < 0.01$), which is evidence that the complexity of their use of the English language increased.

Furthermore, results also show that the main-subordinate type of clausal combination produced by the participants increased significantly in the post-SA interview ($p < 0.05$), further indicating improvement in the complexity of the participants' English output. On the other hand, it was found that the number of main-main type of clausal combination produced by participants remained the same in the pre and post SA interviews

($p=0.586$). Since the main-sub combination was considered as more complex than the main-main combination, this outcome is still in line with the inference that the students did indeed become more capable of producing complex sentence structures after undertaking the SA program.

Table 24 Paired descriptive for complexity

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Dependent clauses (Before SA)	9.33	9	2.739	.913
	Dependent clauses (After SA)	13.22	9	2.774	.925
Pair 2	Main-Main (Before SA)	6.00	9	2.000	.667
	Main-Main (After SA)	6.44	9	1.944	.648
Pair 3	Main-Sub (Before SA)	3.33	9	2.179	.726
	Main-Sub (After SA)	6.78	9	2.048	.683

Table 25 Paired tests for complexity

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Dependent pre-SA – Dependent post-SA	- 3.889	2.088	.696	-5.494	-2.284	- 5.587	8	.001
Pair 2	Main-Main (pre-SA)- Main-Main (post-SA)	-.444	2.351	.784	-2.252	-1.363	-.567	8	.586
Pair 3	Main-Sub (pre-SA)- Main-Sub (post-SA)	- 3.444	1.509	.503	-4.605	-2.284	- 6.847	8	.000

4.6 Fluency

One important concern of this study is to determine whether or not the English language skills of the study participants improved after undertaking the SA programme. In line with this, a number of tests were used. The following paragraphs show outcomes from picture description tasks conducted before and after the participants went on the SA programme. Two fluency evaluation protocols were used to assess the outcomes, syllables per minute (SPM) and mean length run syllables (MLRS) (Ch.3, section 5). SPM is a popular protocol for measuring fluency (Kormos & Dénes, 2004), and was used in a similar study that examined the effect of SA programmes on second language learning (Llanes & Muñoz, 2009). The procedure entails counting the number of syllables uttered by the participant within the length of time in which the participant was describing the picture. This number is divided by the amount of time (in minutes) that was used by the participant. Repetitions are only counted once; this same principle is applied to false starts

and rephrases (Llanes & Muñoz, 2009). This protocol was selected since it was straightforward to perform with the data available to the study.

Mean length run for syllables (MLRS) is another valid test of fluency that is used as an assessment instrument for foreign language learning research (Muñoz, 2006; Long, 2012). As discussed by Muñoz (2006), this test is more sensitive than SPM since MLRS considers the average length of time in which an individual is able to speak in a language fluently, whereas SPM is only concerned with the number of syllables that the individual is able to speak per minute. Short pauses and fillers between words can greatly decrease MLRS but may not affect SPM as much (Morley & Truscott, 2006). MLRS was computed as instructed in Muñoz (2006): the number of syllables was counted between pauses of at least 0.4 seconds or the articulation of fillers such as 'err'. The resulting series of numbers were averaged to get the MLRS.

Two SPM and two MLRS scores were computed for each participant by the researcher and a second rater on two occasions with an interval of one month in between. The results of both raters were compared and discussed to sort out any discrepancies and a consensus between the raters was reached. Each pair of tests for SPM and MLRS, a pre-test and a post-test, was analysed using paired t-tests, which tests if there is a statistical difference between two groups of paired scores. For each t-test, a 0.05 level of significance was used for the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the pre-and post-test scores.

Table 26 shows the results of analysis for the sample's SPM scores. At the start of the programme, the participants had an average SPM of 92.57 whereas by the end of the programme, the participants had an average of 91.79. That is, the average decreased by less than 1 syllable per minute by the end of the programme. This is contrary to the expectation that the SPM of the participants should improve after they undertake the SA programme. The subsequent results of the t-test analysis conducted on the scores show that a 95% confidence interval of the difference in the pre- and post-test is between -26.02 to 24.46. The p-value was found to be 0.945 which is higher than the significance level of 0.05. Thus, there is no sufficient evidence to suggest that there was significant change between the pre-and post- SA SPM scores of the participants.

Table 26 Results for paired t-test SPM

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	SPM Pre-test	92.57	9	33.44	11.14
	SPM Post-test	91.78	9	29.47	9.82

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	SPM Pre-test – SPM Post-test	-.782	32.84	10.94	-26.02	24.46	-.071	8	.945

Examining the individual scores of the participants in Table 27, it is noted that 4 out of 9 of the participants had improved their SPM after the programme, whereas the rest of the participants had lower SPM at the end of the programme. This means that the sample is divided where improvement of SPM is concerned. The table is arranged in a descending order from highest achiever to lowest.

Table 27 Individual SPM scores

Name	Pre-test	Post-test	gain
Basma	61	130	69
shatha	83	99	16
Sara	116	128	12
Ferdos	52	59	7
Ranem	71	64	-7
Fahda	75	67	-8

Majd	136	108	-28
Shahd	88	58	-30
Reem	147	108	-39

Table 28 shows a summary of the results for MLRS. Consistent with the SPM analysis, it is shown that the participants have a slightly higher MLRS average in their pre-tests than in their post-tests. A 95% confidence interval of the difference between the pre and post-test MLRS scores was found to range between -1.27 to 2.843. The p-value of the test was found to be 0.40, which is still higher than the significance level of 0.05. This means that there is no sufficient evidence present to indicate that there is a significant difference between participants' pre-and post-test MLRS scores. This indicates that results are consistent with initial outcomes from the SPM analysis.

Table 28 Paired t-test results MLRS

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	MLRS Pre-test	9.00	9	3.315	1.105
	MLRS Post-test	8.22	9	2.128	.709

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	MLRS Pre-test – MLRS post-test	.786	2.676	.892	-1.271	2.843	.881	8	.404

In the raw data in Table 29, it was found that only 3 out of 9 participants improved their MLRS in their post- test. The table is arranged in a descending order from highest progresser to lowest.

Table 29 Individual MLRS scores

Subject	Pre-test	Post-test	Gain
Ferdos	5	9	4
Basma	4	7	3
Fahda	9	10	1
Ranem	8	7	-1
Reem	12	11	-1
Shahd	5	4	-1
Sara	9	7	-2
Majd	10	6	-4
shatha	14	9	-5

Table 30 compares the participants' raw data. Of the three that improved in MLRS, two were the same people who improved their SPM. As such, among the four participants who had improved their SPM, two were not able to improve their MLRS, whereas 1 of the participants who was not able to improve her SPM was able to improve her MLRS.

Table 30 Comparing individual SPM and MLRS scores

Name	SPM Gain	MLRS Gain
Basma	69	3
Fahda	-8	1
Ferdos	7	4
Majd	-28	-4
Ranem	-7	-1
Reem	-39	-1
Sara	12	-2
Shahd	-30	-1
Shatha	16	-5

4.7 Language Engagement Questionnaire (LEQ)

This section addresses Research Question 2: what are the cultural and social interactions experienced by female Saudi Arabian participants while studying abroad? As a partial answer to this question, the section reports findings from the language use questionnaire, concerning participants' use of the English language as well as of their native Arabic language during their participation in the SA programme, and across various activities.

The survey instrument is a language engagement questionnaire (Appendix E) administered to the participants twice, before and during SA programmes (Ch. 3, section 5). Frequency was indicated based on a 6-point Likert Scale (5- Everyday 4- Several times a week 3- A few times a week, 2 – A couple of times a month, 1- Rarely, 0- Never). Descriptive measures of the scores were taken. Scores were combined (by activity and by individual) by taking the average. Significant differences between English and Arabic use were determined using paired-t-tests. For the analysis of individual scores, in order to meaningfully gauge the difference in participants' use of each language for the same activity, the differences in their responses to each pair of activity were obtained.

Table 31 shows the frequency distribution of participants' activities where they reported making use of the Arabic language within the SA setting in USA. Among the different activities, the top 10 based on the average scores were identified as the most popular activities and highlighted on the table; these were found to be engaging in small talk, engaging in long conversations, reading text messages, reading emails, having short or long phone conversations, writing text messages, browsing the internet, using instant messaging, and using social networking.

Table 31 Use of Arabic during SA

	Every day (5)	Several times a week (4)	A few times a week (3)	A couple of times a month (2)	Rare (1)	Never (0)	Wt. Average
Engage in Small Talk	8	1	0	0	0	0	4.89
Engage in Long Casual Conversation	5	3	0	1	0	0	4.33

Read Text Messages	6	0	0	1	2	0	3.78
Read Emails	2	3	3	0	1	0	3.56
Have Short Phone Conversation	5	0	1	1	2	0	3.56
Have Long Phone Conversation	2	2	4	0	0	1	3.33
Write Text Messages	4	0	0	3	2	0	3.11
Browse the Internet	1	3	0	3	2	0	2.78
Use Instant Messaging	2	2	1	1	2	1	2.78
Use Social Networking Sites	2	2	1	1	1	2	2.67
Listen to Music	2	2	1	1	1	2	2.67
Write Emails	1	0	2	4	2	0	2.33
Organised Social Activities	1	1	2	2	0	3	2.11
Watch TV	0	0	3	0	0	6	1
Service Encounter	0	1	0	0	2	6	0.67
Read Magazines	0	0	0	1	3	5	0.56
Watch Films	0	0	0	1	2	6	0.44
Read academic texts	0	0	0	1	2	6	0.44
Read Literature	0	0	0	0	3	6	0.33
Read newspaper	0	0	0	0	3	6	0.33
Write Reports (Academic)	0	0	0	0	3	6	0.33
Participate in Seminars	0	0	0	0	2	7	0.22
Write for Leisure (Journal)	0	0	0	0	2	7	0.22
Listen to Talk Radio	0	0	0	0	1	8	0.11

Listen to lectures	0	0	0	0	1	8	0.11
Attend Classes	0	0	0	0	1	8	0.11
Teach a Class	0	0	0	0	0	9	0

Table 32 shows the frequency distribution of activities of the participants, where they made use of the English language in USA. As in the previous table, the top 10 most popular activities were highlighted and found to be attending class, using social networking sites, reading emails, reading text messages, writing text messages, listening to music, engaging in small talk, browsing the internet, using instant messaging, and engaging in long casual conversation.

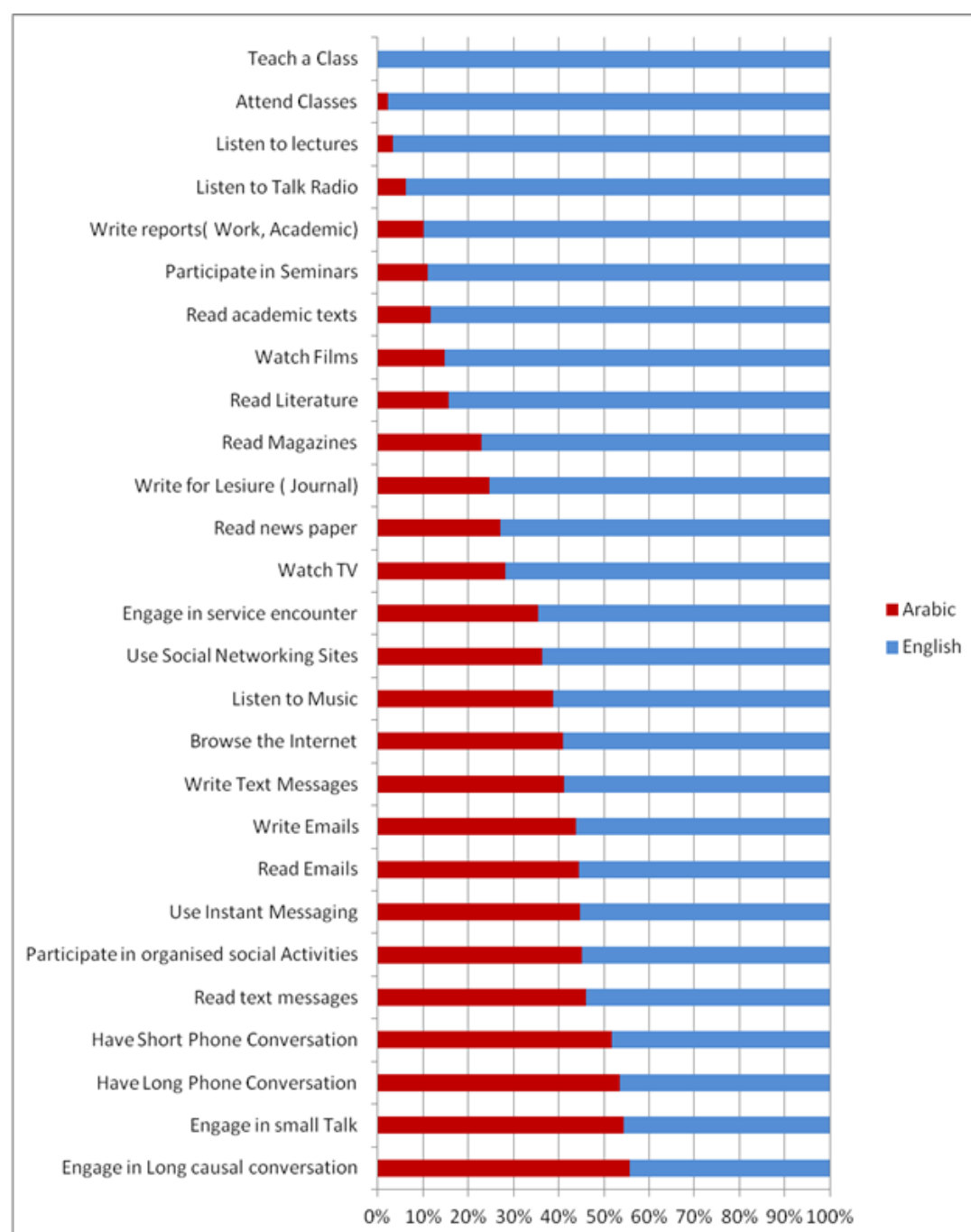
Table 32 Use of English during SA

	Every day (5)	Several times a week (4)	A few times a week (3)	A couple of times a month (2)	Rar ely (1)	Ne ver (0)	Wt. Averag e
Attend Classes	8	1	0	0	0	0	4.89
Use Social Networking Sites	6	3	0	0	0	0	4.67
Read Emails	7	1	0	0	1	0	4.44
Read text messages	6	2	0	1	0	0	4.44
write Text Messages	6	2	0	1	0	0	4.44
Listen to Music	7	0	1	0	0	1	4.22
Engage in small Talk	3	5	0	1	0	0	4.11
Browse the Internet	6	1	0	1	0	1	4
Use Instant Messaging	4	1	2	0	1	1	3.44
Engage in Long casual conversation	3	3	0	1	2	0	3.44
Read academic texts	1	5	1	0	2	0	3.33
Have Short Phone Conversation	2	3	2	0	2	0	3.33
Listen to lectures	1	4	2	0	2	0	3.22

Write Emails	2	1	2	3	1	0	3
Write reports (Academic)	1	2	1	5	0	0	2.89
Have Long Phone Conversation	3	1	1	2	0	2	2.89
Watch TV	1	1	3	2	1	1	2.56
Watch Films	0	2	2	4	1	0	2.56
Organised social Activities	1	2	2	1	2	1	2.56
Read Magazines	0	2	2	0	3	2	1.89
Participate in Seminars	0	1	1	3	3	1	1.78
Read Literature	0	1	1	2	5	0	1.78
Listen to Talk Radio	0	1	1	1	6	0	1.67
Service encounter	0	1	1	0	4	3	1.22
Read newspaper	0	1	0	1	2	5	0.89
Write for Leisure	0	0	1	0	3	5	0.67
Teach a Class	0	0	0	1	2	6	0.44

A comparison of English and Arabic use in both Table 31 and Table 32 shows that the participants still made use of Arabic more often when engaging in oral communication, except in the formal school environment, that is, their classes, where they made use of English. In engaging in written communication, such as through email or chat, both English and Arabic were used. However, overall, a comparison of these two tables indicate that participants make use of English more frequently than Arabic, since the average scores for English are noticeably higher than those for Arabic.

Figure 4 Comparison of English and Arabic use



Comparison of English and Arabic use in each activity can be made from Figure 4. English language use dominated across most of the activities, except for having long or short phone conversations, engaging in small talk, or having long conversations, where Arabic use remained dominant, but only slightly. Of course, the frequency in which participants engaged in each activity could not be taken into account; it is likely that the participants engaged in long conversations more often than taught a class. Nonetheless, the

wide range of activities included should provide good insights into the extent of participants' use of English compared to their use of Arabic.

Table 33 shows each individual percentage use of English and Arabic in the SA setting. It is done by dividing the individual total in English by 135 (which is Likert scale score for everyday= 5 X 27) then we multiply it by 100. The table is arranged in a descending order according to the English scores.

Table 33 Individual use of Arabic and English in SA setting

Name	English in SA setting	Arabic in SA setting
Shatha	71.851	33.33
Reem	70.37%	31.85%
Sara	68.88%	30.37%
Shahd	62.96%	50.37%
Fahda	61.48%	40.74%
Majd	57.77%	28.88%
Basma	54.81%	28.14%
Ferdos	51.85%	37.03%
Ranem	25.18%	31.11

Table 34 shows the results of individual analysis of language use among the 9 participants. Each individual has a column that shows whether she used English only, Arabic only or a mixture of both for each activity. Also it shows the frequency of each language used for a certain activity, for instance the activity of browsing the internet, Basma's result was E4+A2 which means she used English several times a week and Arabic a couple of times a month according to the 6-point Likert Scale (5- Everyday 4- Several times a week 3- A few times a week, 2 – A couple of times a month, 1- Rarely, 0- Never) that is used in this survey. The sign (X) is used where the participant did not take part in the mentioned activity. In line with this, Table 34 shows that Majd made use of English for nearly all activities except for having long phone conversations and engaging in service encounters. This is peculiar since it is expected that most service encounters that participants would have in the SA setting would require them to speak in English. All of

the other participants either used English more often or just as much as Arabic for service encounters or did not report service encounters at all. All of the participants used the English language to immerse themselves in the culture of their SA environment such as in watching television or films, except for Ranem who preferred to watch television in Arabic, as well as in browsing the internet, reading and writing emails, reading text messages, engaging in conversations, and organised social activities. Among the group, Ranem seems to make most diverse use of Arabic in the activities included in the survey. No other peculiarities from individual analysis were found. As shown from Table 34, most of the participants preferred to make use of Arabic in engaging in short or long phone or personal conversations, which is consistent with the summarized results from Table 31.

Table 34 Individual analysis of English versus Arabic use across activities

	Bas ma	Fahd a	Ferd os	Maj d	Ran em	Ree m	Sara	Sha hd	Shat ha
Watch TV	E 3	E3+ A3	X	E 5	E2+ A3	E 2	E 4	E3+ A3	E 1
Watch Films	E 2	E3+ A1	E 4	E 3	E 1	E 4	E 2	E2+ A2	E2+ A1
Browse the Internet	E4+ A2	E5+ A2	E2+ A1	E5+ A4	A 1	E5+ A4	E5+ A4	E5+ A5	E5+ A2
Use Social Networking Sites	E 5	E4+ A3	E4+ A4	E5+ A1	E4+ A4	E5+ A2	E5+ A5	E5+ A5	E 5
Read Emails	E5+ A3	E5+ A3	E4+ A1	E5+ A4	E1+ A4	E5+ A3	E5+ A4	E5+ A5	E5+ A5
Write Emails	E2+ A1	E2+ A2	E4+ A2	E2+ A1	E1+ A2	E3+ A3	E5+ A2	E5+ A5	E3+ A3
Listen to Music	E5+ A3	E5+ A4	E5+ A2	E3+ A1	X	E5+ A4	E 5	E5+ A5	E5+ A5
Listen to Talk Radio	E 1	E1+ A1	E 3	E 1	E 2	E 1	E 1	E 1	E 4
Listen to lectures	E 4	E3+ A1	E 5	E 3	E 1	E 4	E 4	E 1	E 4
Participate in Seminars	E 1	E2+ A1	E 1	E 3	X	E 2	E 4	E1+ A1	E 2
Read Literature	E 1	E1+	E1+	E 1	E 2	E 2	E 3	E1+	E 4

		A1	A1					A1	
Read Magazines	E 3	E4+ A2	E1+ A1	E 1	X	X	E 3	E1+ A1	E4+ A1
Read newspaper	X	E1+ A1	E2+ A1	X	X	X	X	E1+ A1	E 4
Read academic texts	E 4	E4+ A2	E1+ A1	E 1	E 4	E 4	E 4	E3+ A1	E 5
Read text messages	E5+ A5	E4+ A1	E4+ A5	E5+ A2	E2+ A5	E5+ A1	E5+ A5	E5+ A5	E5+ A5
Write Text Messages	E5+ A5	E 4+A 2	E4+ A5	E5+ A2	E2+ A2	E5+ A1	E5+ A5	E5+ A5	E5+ A1
Write reports (Academic)	E 2	E3+ A1	E4+ A1	E 2	E 2	E 5	E 2	E4+ A1	E 2
Write for Leisure (Journal)	E 1	E1+ A1	X	X	X	X	X	E3+ A1	E 1
Use Instant Messaging	E4+ A4	E5+ A3	E3+ A5	E5+ A5	X	E5+ A1	E1+ A4	E3+ A2	E5+ A1
Have Short Phone Conversation	E1+ A2	E4+ A5	E3+ A3	E3+ A1	E1+ A5	E5+ A5	E4+ A1	E4+ A5	E5+ A5
Have Long Phone Conversation	A 3	E3+ A4	E2+ A3	E2+ A3	A 3	E5+ A4	E 5	E5+ A5	E4+ A5
Attend Classes	E 5	E5+ A 1	E 5	E 5	E 5	E 4	E 5	E 5	E 5
Teach a Class	E 2	X	X	X	X	X	E 1	E 1	X
Engage in service encounter	X	E 1+A 1	X	E1+ A4	X	E 4	E 1	E 1	E3+ A1
Engage in small Talk	E5+ A5	E4+ A 5	E4+ A5	E4+ A4	E2+ A5	E5+ A5	E5+ A5	E4+ A5	E4+ A5
Engage in Long casual conversation	E4+ A5	E2+ A2	E1+ A5	E5+ A4	E1+ A5	E5+ A5	E5+ A4	E4+ A4	E4+ A5
Participate in organised social Activities	X	E4+ A 2	E3+ A4	E3+ A3	E1+ A3	E5+ A5	E4+ A2	E 2	E 1

4.8 Social Networking Questionnaire (SNQ)

Further analyses on changes in the English language use of the participants who undertook the SA programme are presented in this section. Specifically, this section examined the English language use of the participants per activity type, which were categorized into university, home, organised free time, general free time and virtual interactions. Data for this was gathered from the social networking questionnaire described in Chapter 3 and found in (Appendix F). Under each of these categories, participants indicated the people that they interacted with and the rate at which they interacted with these people (everyday 4, several times a week 3, couple times a week 2 and a few times a month 1), and the language that they used in interacting with these people. Analysis was conducted both by group and by individual participant. In addition to this, further analysis was conducted on virtual conversations that the participants conducted. Virtual conversations refer to all communication that transpired through online media, such as via email, social networking sites or instant messaging. These analyses categorized the people that participants interacted with through virtual channels as relative, non-relative Arabic, and foreign and then identified what language the participants used to interact with people from each of these groups.

In order to obtain a measure of how much a participant makes use of English for conversations under particular categories, the ratios of the total number of conversations that the participant engaged in (represented by the sum of ranks that the student indicated in the survey) to the total number of conversations that the participant engaged in using the English language was obtained. For example, let's say participant X talked to 3 people at the university. One ranked 4 (everyday) in English and the other two ranked 2 each (couple times a week) in Arabic. Computation for English use is as follows:

$$\text{Total Ranks} = 4 \times 1 + 2 \times 2 = 8$$

$$\text{English Ranks} = 4 \times 1 = 4$$

$$\text{English use percentage} = 4/8 = 50\%$$

The more people the participant engages with using the English language at greater frequency based on the scale used, the higher this ratio is computed to be. However, an important caveat in relation to the treatment of data for this purpose is that cases where the participant claimed to have conversed with a person using both English and Arabic were

noted but were not included in the statistical analysis per group, as there was no way to determine how much the participant spoke to such persons in Arabic and how much in English. Thus, these results only compare two cases, those where the students used English exclusively during a conversation and those where they used Arabic exclusively. A score of 50% for example means that in conversations where the student used only one language, half of them were conversations conducted entirely in English and the other half were conducted entirely in Arabic. Paired t-tests were used to determine if there was a significant change in the percentage of conversations that students had using the English language pre-SA and during-SA settings under each of the categories. This caveat is very important in relation to the use of this test because, essentially, the test can only determine how much the respondents improved in relation to speaking completely in English versus speaking completely in Arabic; this measurement cannot gauge if the respondent improved her frequency of speaking in English in general, as this includes times where she spoke in English and Arabic. It may be the case that in those situations, the proportion of the conversation where the respondent made use of English changed, but this change could not be measured in this study.

Figure 5 compares the proportion of English language use of participants before and during the SA programme under each of the categories considered. In the pre-SA setting, students made use of the English language most in virtual conversations (29.63%) and least in conversations during general free time where English as an exclusive medium was not used at all (0%). During SA, there were increases in students' proportion of exclusive English language use across all the settings. The home remained the place where students made use of English the least at 16.67%, but this was still found to be higher than in the pre-SA setting (11.96%).

Figure 5 Proportion of English language use per activity

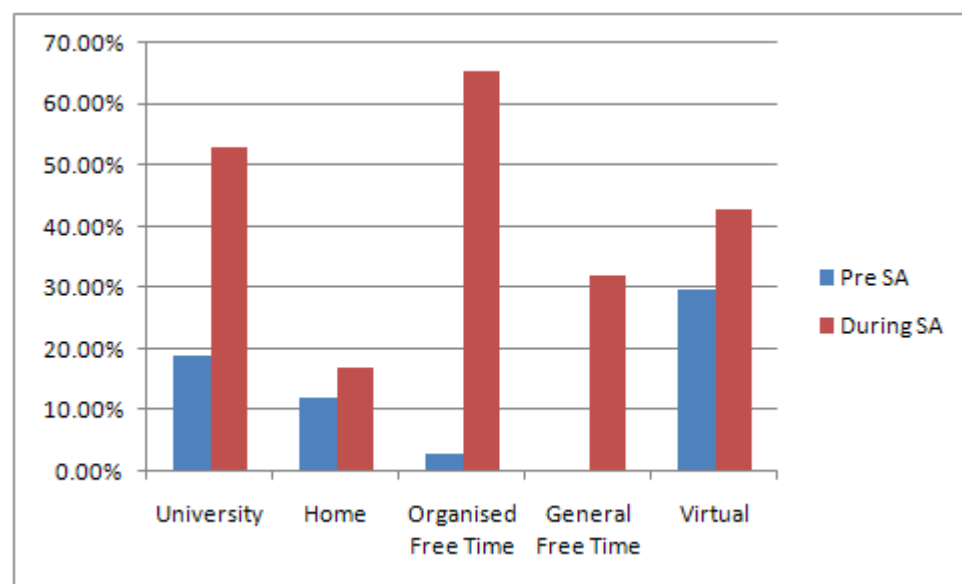


Table 35 shows the results of paired-tests conducted to compare pre-and during-SA English language percentage under each category. Results from Table 35 show that while the proportions of English language use increased across all of the categories during the SA setting, there were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) increases only for university, organized free time, and general free time. The students made use of English prominently in virtual conversations that they made in both the pre-SA and during-SA settings, indicating that their use of English on the internet was already moderately high even before their immersion in the SA environment. On the other hand, the students' use of English at home remained relatively low in the during-SA setting, indicating that the students continued to talk with people at home in Arabic and not in English even when they were abroad.

Table 35 Paired t-test English use per category

Paired Sample Test		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			
	During SA	.34192	.34231	.11410	.07880	.60504	2.997	8	.017

	University – Pre SA University								
	During SA Home - Pre SA Home	.04709	.27874	.09291	- .16717	.26135	.507	8	.626
	During SA Organised Free Time - Pre SA Organised Free Time	.62668	.42231	.14077	.30206	.95130	4.452	8	.002
	During SA General Free Time - Pre SA General Free Time	.31815	.34072	.11357	.05625	.58005	2.801	8	.023
	During SA Virtual - Pre SA Virtual	.13161	.52518	.17506	- .27208	.53530	.752	8	.474

Table 36 shows the average for use of English and Arabic before SA and during - SA for the group across the different categories.

Table 36 Average use of English before and during SA

	University	Home	Organised	General	Virtual
Pre-SA	18.74%	11.96%	2.78%	0.00%	30.95%
During-SA	52.93%	22.22%	65.45%	26.07%	50.35%

Table 37 illustrates the use of English was most prominent in the students' university and least prominent during general free time. Sara was found to be the respondent who used English the most during this setting. However, looking at her individual raw data, it is found that she only used English exclusively during 3 conversations and a mix of English and Arabic during 25 other instances of conversation that she noted.

Table 37 Use of English across settings per individual (pre-SA)

	Pre -SA University	Pre-SA Home	Pre-SA Organised	Pre-SA General	Pre-SA Virtual
Basma	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Fahda	10.34%	14.29%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Ferdous	8.33%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	50.00%
Majd	0.00%	33.33%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Raneem	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Reem	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	0.00%	66.67%
Sara	100%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Shahd	21.43%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Shatha	28.57%	60.00%	0.00%	0.00%	50.00%

Table 38 shows individual results in the during-SA setting. As previously discussed, conversations that the students carried out in both Arabic and English were removed from the analysis since there was no way to determine what proportion of such conversations were conducted in Arabic and in English. Thus, these results show a dichotomy of participants' conversations that were conducted either entirely in English or entirely in Arabic. Thus, a score of 100% indicates that the participant never used Arabic exclusively in that setting, while a score of 0% indicates that the respondent never used English exclusively in that setting.

Table 38 Use of English across settings per individual (during-SA)

	During-SA University	During-SA Home	During-SA Organised	During-SA General	During-SA Virtual
Basma	36.84%	0.00%	57.14%	16.67%	0.00%
Fahda	30.43%	0.00%	26.32%	28%	14.29%
Ferdos	0.00%	50%	100%	31.25%	100%

Majd	78.57%	0.00%	100%	66.67%	100%
Ranem	0.00%	0.00%	5.56%	0.00%	8.33%
Reem	75%	50%	100%	0.00%	0.00%
Sara	100%	0.00%	100%	100%	100%
Shahd	55.56%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	62.50%
Shatha	100%	100%	100%	66%	68%

Figure 6 illustrates that students talked most frequently online with non-relative Arabic-speaking acquaintances or friends in the pre-SA setting, which is also true in the during-SA setting. However, the share of English-speaking foreigners during SA setting increased considerably from 4.44% to 26.65%. This indicates that students interacted more with foreigners online when they were immersed in the SA setting.

Figure 6 Distribution of virtual conversations

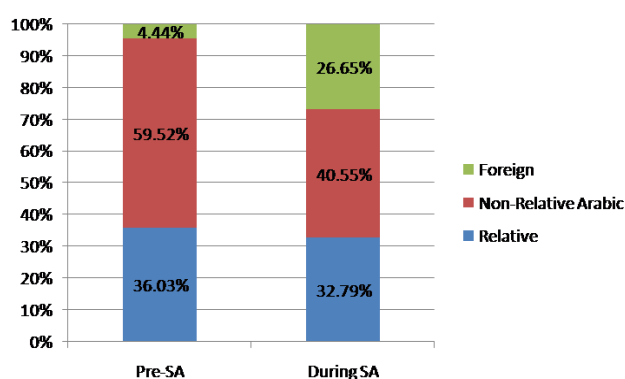


Table 39 shows the participants' use of the English language during virtual conversations with different people. In both pre-and during-settings, it is shown that the participants conversed with foreigners completely in the English language. Students increased in their English language use when interacting with non-relative Arabic-speaking acquaintances during SA, but decreased in their use of English when speaking with relatives. A logical explanation for this is that in the pre-SA setting, participants' virtual conversations were with relatives abroad so they were more likely to use English. On the other hand, virtual conversations that they had with relatives during-SA were likely to have

been with their families back home who, as was found from previous results, spoke in Arabic.

Table 39 Use of English in virtual settings

	Pre-SA	During-SA
Relative	61.11%	30%
Non-Relative Arabic	54.81%	71%
Foreign	100%	100%

4.9 Summary

Overall, there were considerable changes in the participants' proficiency and use of the English language following their experience of the SA programme. General proficiency of the participants improved, except for those who already had high proficiency in the language prior to engaging in the SA programme. While no sufficient evidence was found to indicate that the participants improved in their fluency, as measured from their SPM and MLRS, participants were found to commit significantly fewer errors in their speech and used more complex sentences in interviews conducted in the during-SA setting compared to parallel interviews conducted prior to their experience of the SA environment. Furthermore, respondents were found to make use of English significantly more frequently than Arabic during their stay abroad.

Chapter 5: Qualitative Data Analysis

5.1 Introduction

The qualitative dimension is an important aspect considered in this study across all of its research questions. As discussed in the methodology chapter, qualitative data gathering and analysis was conducted in order to help triangulate the outcomes from quantitative analysis on the development of the participants' English language proficiency while in the SA programme (Research Question 1) as well as in order to provide input on the extent to which the participants' social and cultural interaction while in the SA setting helped them in developing different aspects of their English language proficiency (Research Question 2). In this chapter, the results of analysis conducted on data from interviews conducted with each of the research participants are presented. In line with the methodology, results under this chapter were organized according to themes that emerged from multi-level coding (Appendix M). First, themes with respect to participants' perceptions about how much they have developed in their English language fluency are presented in Section 5.2, in order to help verify the gains that were discovered in the quantitative evidence presented in the previous chapter. Second, the reported reasons behind the improvement of the participants' fluency are examined in Section 5.3, as a way to link the improvement of participants' proficiency with their circumstance of being in a SA programme. Sections 5.3.3-5.3.5 explore the reported social interactions of participants while in the SA setting, and examine the impact of these interactions on the development of their English language proficiency. Section 5.3.4 explores the cultural interactions reported by participants while in the foreign setting and draws out the perceived impact of these interactions on the development of their English proficiency as well.

5.2 Perception of L2 Development

In second language acquisition research, fluency has acquired many definitions. Among them is Skehan's "if fluency is the ability to speak or read quickly, accurately, and without undue hesitation, then automatic execution of certain aspects of L2 performance such as pronunciation, grammatical processing, and word recognition would, by definition, promote fluency" (1998). Faerch et al. include fluency as a component of communicative competence, and define it as 'the speaker's ability to make use of whatever linguistic and

pragmatic competence they have” (1984). In this section the interest is on oral fluency which is defined by Faerch et al. as the” ability a learner has to express his or her thoughts freely and easily” (1984).

When the participants were asked in the second interview, which took place during their SA programme, whether or not they had noticed any change in their English in relation to their SA programme, their answers varied, corresponding to each one’s individual experience. The interviews were done in Arabic which was later transcribed and the relevant parts translated into English (Section 3.6.2).

Two participants based their observations on the grades they were receiving in the USA. So, one of the participants indicated that there was an improvement in her English , based on the fact that she was getting better grades in USA than she did in Saudi:

“My English language was very poor. I came to the university [in Saudi] straight from high school, my grades were poor but here [in USA] they are getting better” (Ferdos, 2nd Interview)

Another participant complained only about the strictness of the writing teacher. When asked whether she noticed any change in her English, she said:

“Yes, there’s a difference. Some things are better here [in USA] and some things are better there [in Saudi]. Here [in USA], the writing teacher for Level 3 said he rarely gives an excellent mark. With other teachers I got good grades but he was very strict” (Ranem, 2nd Interview).

More generally, the participants stated that their speaking skill has improved. Even though the question did not specify a certain skill, the participants’ answers focused mostly on speaking. They observed that they are able now to speak more spontaneously and with more confidence, without hesitation or pausing to think about the grammar and structure of the sentences. Sample comments follow:

“In Saudi I was confident and I used to talk but I had to think before I talk. But here [in USA] I feel more spontaneous. I am not saying that I am perfect now, but there is an improvement”. (Sara, 2nd Interview).

“When I spoke English over there [Saudi] I’d first think about what I am going to say, but here [USA] I just talk. When I review what I said, I feel that it came out naturally and it came out right. I don’t think beforehand”. (Majd, 2nd Interview).

“When someone speaks to me in English, I understand much faster than before. I have more fluency and more confidence when I speak than before. When you discuss topics, you feel like you just talk without thinking. Before, I would think of the grammar; “I saw”, “I see” or whatever, this is past tense or present, but not anymore, the words just come out” (Basma, 2nd Interview).

“When it comes to speaking, communicating with people, I’m way better. Because you’re forced to talk and explain what you want to get across, so you even think a little in English. Sometimes I think in English now, not in Arabic“(Fahda, 2nd Interview).

When participants were asked again after the SA programme, whether or not they had noticed any change in their English after participating in the programme, all their answers revolved around speaking and confidence. All maintained that they had gained the most in speaking with regard to speed and fluency, and that even now after returning to Saudi they still felt more confident and bolder in speaking than they did before their SA programme. One of the participants commented that there was a decline in her L2 after coming back to Saudi; however what she had retained was still an improvement over what she started with in terms of confidence and fluency. The following quote exemplifies this position:

“Speaking skill is the one that benefitted the most, but when I came home the hesitation before speaking started to come back because I’m not practising and I don’t have an opportunity to speak here [Saudi] like I did there [USA]. Then again, if I’d stayed here [Saudi] I wouldn’t have benefited as much as I did over there [USA]” (Majd, 3rd Interview).

In this third interview which was done in Saudi after the SA programme ended, the participants were also asked to rate their individual English skills according to improvement. They were asked to start with the skill that they thought had improved the most and end with the skill that they thought had improved the least.

Table 40 shows the participants' ranking of their personal improvement in individual skills, and we can see here that speaking was perceived by the participants to be most improved. The participants here based their judgement on their increased ability to talk without hesitation and without pausing to think about grammar. According to one participant, what they say could be full of mistakes, but the important thing to them is being understood:

“When I receive a question, the answer comes out boldly and with confidence. I used to be afraid of answering and of making a mistakes but now I just answer and I don't worry if there are mistakes, I just get the message across” (Shahd, 3rd Interview)

In contrast, grammar was considered as a strong area of improvement by three of the participants, but was at the bottom of the other participants' assessments. This observation may be linked to the participants' scores in the quantitative portion of the study, particularly in Table 21 where Basma was found to have had the largest improvement in the aspect of accuracy, measured in terms of the percentage of her phrases that contained grammatical errors. Both Majd and Reem were also found to have had marked improvement in accuracy, from Table 21, while participants such as Sara, Shatha, and Ranem were found to have had only minimal increase in their accuracy scores following the SA programme. As such, it seems there is no clear pattern for their improvement if we take into consideration their background in English grammar. The first three highest achievers Basma and Reem were above average participants (Ch. 4, Table 21) whereas Majd was a below average one. As for Sara, Shatha and Ranem even though they had above average background in English they did not improve much following the SA programme.

By looking at Table 40 we see that the participants varied in their ratings in regard to reading, writing and listening. The skills were spread across as the second, third and fourth skill to have improved with no apparent pattern.

Table 40 Participants' skill rating

	1	2	3	4	5
Basma	Speaking	Grammar	Writing	Listening	Reading
Fahda	Speaking	Grammar	Listening	Writing	Reading
Ferdos	Speaking	Grammar	Reading	Writing	Listening
Majd	Speaking	Reading	Listening	writing	Grammar
Ranem	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing	Grammar
Reem	Speaking	Writing	Grammar	Listening	Reading
Sara	Speaking	Writing	Reading	Listening	Grammar
Shahd	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Listening	Grammar
Shatha	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Listening	Grammar

When the participants were asked how they knew that there was an improvement in their language skills, some related this improvement to the fact that their vocabulary and grammar had improved, i.e. to gains in their underlying language knowledge, while others were aware how different skills supported each other. The following quotes exemplify this:

“I feel there’s a difference, my vocabulary has improved a lot, now I know lots of things. When I spoke before I’d have to pause a moment and think before speaking and I used to get mixed up a lot. I still do but not as much as before. I’m much better than before and my accent has improved too. (Reem, 2nd Interview).

“In reading there was only a slight change because I’ve been reading English since I was in school. But I noticed a big change in my vocabulary; there was a big improvement” (Basma, 3rd interview).

“Everything changed, even reading, because when you acquire new vocabulary and learn how to speak easily, you’ll be able to write easily, when you read you understand the passage better” (Shatha, 3rd interview).

“When I first went there [USA] my language was weak but it has improved. My grammar improved and I became more confident in talking. I learned new words because I used to read a book and write an essay every week, so my reading and writing improved too” (Ferdos, 3rd interview).

“It wasn’t just a grammar lesson. Any word he heard, he’d tell you the best way to say it, the tenses, the synonyms, opposites, even the slang of it. He was really great” (Majd, 2nd interview).

“I think my spelling has improved, at first I was a failure at spelling but it has improved now; the teacher made me read a lot and come up and write things” (Sara, 3rd interview).

“The pieces they gave us in reading were very difficult. It was beneficial to write summaries on them because we had to understand all the words then summarize them and I gained a lot from that” (Ranem, 3rd interview).

5.3 Perceived Reasons for L2 Fluency Improvement

The participants provided various explanations, when they were asked what they thought the reason was for the change in their English language. Among the identified explanations were living among native speakers, using the L2 on a daily basis, using L2 in the academic setting, social interaction and cultural interaction. These themes reflect the focus of the study on the relationship between the social and cultural settings that participants experience while in the SA programme and development of their English language proficiency.

5.3.1 Use of L2 in Service Encounters and Daily Routine

When the participants were asked what they thought the reason was for their improvement in English they attributed it first of all to living in a country where their native language is English and interacting with Americans and other English speakers. Firstly, living among native speakers obliged the participants to use L2 on a daily basis to get their errands done:

“When you listen to foreigners speaking all the time, you’re forced to speak to them in their language. We did this for 7 months so of course that’ll make a big

difference. You don't speak English just at the [English] Centre but everywhere you go, the grocery store or on the bus, for example if somebody is sitting next to you and asks where you from and what you're doing here"(Basma, 2nd interview)

"I met a lot of people outside the centre who speak only English; they're native speakers. So when I'm with them, I'm forced to speak English so they can understand me and I can understand them" (Shatha, 2nd interview).

"One of the benefits I got out of speaking with Americans is that when you discuss topics, you feel like you just talk without thinking. Before, I would think of the grammar but not anymore. The words just come out and that's one of the benefits I got out of speaking with Americans. We learn the language through dealing with people and that is much better than we had back home [Saudi]" (Basma, 2nd interview).

Also the fact that the girls are far away from their extended families and/or with escorts that do not speak English forced them to depend on themselves and to take care of themselves and of those travelling with them. That meant dealing with everyday tasks using L2 in order to understand and be understood. Shahd, who was escorted by her younger brother who does not speak English, said:

"Here [USA] I am responsible for myself; I had to rent an apartment on my own, communicated with the owner on my own, called the company for internet and TV. All my communications was by phone and nobody did anything for me. All that helped me pick up speed in talking. I make mistakes, I won't say I don't but I'm much faster than before" (Shahd, 2nd interview).

Similarly Ranem was escorted by her mother and two siblings on her SA programme and none of them could speak English. She was obliged to take care of herself and of those accompanying her.

"My mother and brothers don't speak English so I'm the one who sees to things if we go out. For example at restaurants I talk to the waiter, or if we go to a store or something I do all the talking" (Ranem, 2nd interview).

Ranem was an outgoing young lady and even initiated social interaction with native speakers,

“I met this guy at Starbucks, he was old. He’d come to Starbucks just talk to the employees; that’s all he did. I had a homework topic and I thought he might know about it. And he did, he explained a lot of things about it; I learned a lot” (Ranem 3rd interview).

“I met a woman who lived in my friend’s building. Each week we’d set a date where she’s come and speak with us about a topic” (Ranem, 3rd interview).

Sara sums it up nicely by saying:

“Because I got used to talking in English all the time, even in small incidents like sneezing and saying “bless you”, it became spontaneous for me to think in English. Even when I am talking to myself I talk in English” (2nd interview).

These results are related quantitatively to the total ranks of English language use that was recorded from the results of the social networking questionnaire in Figure 5. The SNQ was used in order to provide a measure for the extent to which participants made use of English when conversing with different people in different settings. Participants who engaged in more conversations in English relative to Arabic scored higher in the SNQ than participants that used Arabic more often. As found from Figure 5, the participants have significantly higher SNQ scores during the study abroad program than before participating in the program for all but one of the settings considered. During their stay in the United States, participants spoke a much greater proportion of their conversations in English at the university, during both organised and general free time, and during virtual communications. The only setting where the increase in English language used was not found to be significant was at home. Results from the interview suggest that this increased use of English in everyday settings, as evidenced by the SNQ scores, was considered by many of the participants as being one of the reasons for their improvement in fluency. They believe that their constant practice with the language which they recognized as a necessity in order for them to be able to function in many everyday tasks in the study abroad environment, led them to develop a stronger grasp of the language in the way that it is used by the locals. Thus, these comments confirm that in the SA setting, the environment has a natural tendency to push the participants towards using the language. Amidst native speakers of English, the participants have little choice but to also make use of English on a regular basis in order for them to be able to interact effectively with other people in their environment.

5.3.2 Use of L2 in Academic Setting

Another reason given by the participants to account for their improvement in English was the extensive use of English in the academic setting. This reason could be divided into two points.

Firstly, one reason the participants gave as a major contributor to their L2 learning was that they spoke only English in the English Centre because their teachers were all L2 native speakers who did not understand Arabic or allow side conversations in Arabic in the classroom. Sample comments follow:

“Here [USA] I don’t have to speak Arabic. When I give my opinion, I certainly speak English otherwise the teacher will not understand, but back home [Saudi], if you can’t express yourself in English, you can switch to Arabic, and the teachers there usually don’t mind. But here [USA] I am forced, whether I’m understood or not, to express myself in English even though most of my classmates are Arabs” (Shahd, 2nd interview).

“The teachers here [USA] are native speakers. Learning the language from a native speaker is different from learning it from a Saudi or an Indian. Back home [Saudi] we had some teachers who didn’t speak English all the time. Sometimes most of the lecture would be in Arabic, unlike here” (Shatha, 2nd interview).

“I benefited more here [USA] because the teachers are native speakers and we speak English with them all the time and not Arabic” (Ferdos, 2nd interview).

The second point had to do with the small number of participants in the classroom which made it easier for the teacher to engage all of the participants and encourage them to participate in class discussions. Also the small number of participants boosted the participants’ self-confidence and they participated willingly in the classroom even though it was a co-ed environment, which they were not used to. This was in contrast to the reported situation in these participants’ Saudi classes, where they shied away from participating because they feared the negative evaluation or ridicule of other participants if they made mistakes. At the English Centre, on the other hand, where the number of participants was small, such fear was removed. Here are some examples of the participants’ comments on this:

“Back home [Saudi] there are many participants in class so the teacher cannot focus on each participant. She just explains the lecture and that’s it. Here [USA], because we are not many in a class they take time to focus on each participant. We have to participate in class; it’s not an option” (Fahda, 2nd interview).

“The number of participants is large in our classes in Saudi. Here [USA] there are no more than 10 participants, so it’s easy to communicate and to talk. I’m much bolder here, and I communicate more in class despite the fact that there are male participants. I gain more here than I do back home [Saudi]” (Shahd, 2nd interview).

“Here [USA] the focus is on a small number of participants. The teacher listens to everyone, plus we have two hours. She can hear everyone out and you get a better chance to express yourself” (Basma, 2nd interview).

“The number of participants is smaller here [USA] so you learn better. The teacher has more time to talk to participants. There at Saudi we had 30, 40, and 50 participants per class; the teacher does not have time for all of us” (Majd, 2nd interview).

The small number of participants, and the fact that the majority of the learners at the centre were from Arabic-speaking countries, led the researcher to ask about the language used by the participants between themselves inside the classroom during the SA experience. The participants said they used Arabic mostly when they chat in class, but also reported regular code switching. The following quotes exemplify this:

“Because it’s faster when I want to ask or request something. But with the foreigners I speak English because they don’t speak Arabic” (Ferdos, 2nd interview).

“I always speak in Arabic when I am with Arabs but I use a lot of English words. With everyone I talk to, I always use a little bit of English” (Fahda, 2nd interview).

“I speak both English and Arabic with my classmates. I try to speak in English more, but sometimes when I speak in English; they answer in Arabic so I switch to Arabic with them” (Sara, 2nd interview).

But if the teacher was within earshot then the participants changed to English for a range of reasons:

“It upsets the teacher when we talk in a language she can’t understand. The first thing that will come to mind is that we are talking about her. So when I reply to my classmate in English, she will understand what’s going on” (Basma, 2nd interview).

“Side conversations were in Arabic. But I avoided that because if the teacher heard me speaking Arabic, perhaps she wouldn’t say anything but she takes off marks. She takes that into account” (Shahd, 2nd interview).

Majd acknowledged the existence of peer pressure. She said that inside the classroom when addressed by an Arab she had to reply in Arabic, or she would be shunned by the Arabs:

“I tried not to speak Arabic as much as possible but there was a rule at the Centre that Arabs should speak Arabic with each other. So you either speak English and are shunned by the rest of the Arabs, or speak Arabic and be accepted by them. It is enough that I was avoided because I preferred to sit with foreigners, I did not want to do another thing that would get me isolated from the rest of the Arabs” (Majd, 2nd interview).

5.3.3 L2 in Social Interaction with Native Speakers

The third cluster of reasons given by participants for their improvement was their social interaction with native speakers. This gave the Arab participants a chance to practise their English in an informal setting. Some of the girls had conversation partners, provided through an English Centre project. Usually these conversation partners were native speakers interested in learning about foreign cultures or foreign languages. So the girls teamed up and spent some time at school talking formally in English. But some of the girls developed their relations with their conversation partner into friendship which allowed them to practise their L2 more. The following quotes exemplify this:

“I have an American partner from IEC. According to IEC we are supposed to meet one hour a week but my friendship with her is more than that. We meet sometimes twice a week and we spend 2 to 3 hours. She is on Facebook and we exchange messages to arrange for meetings” (Ferdos, 2nd interview).

“I’ve applied and I met a girl about a week ago. She took me to the mountains; we talk together, I ask her things” (Ranem, 2nd interview).

“I have a conversation partner, and we go out to cafes, restaurants or shopping I try to go out with her as much as I can so I can practice speaking”(Basma, 2nd interview).

In addition to that, some of the girls formed friendships with their friend's conversation partners and the whole group, SA participants and their various conversation partners would go out to restaurants and outings together. Sample comments follow:

“My friend has a conversation partner. We meet and talk and go out together some times” (Ranem, 3rd interview).

“I spend my free time with Fahda and Shatha mostly. Sometimes we go out with my conversation partner, and sometimes with Fahda's conversation partner” (Basma, 2nd interview).

The participants did not limit their social interaction to people from the English Centre but they also formed friendships with native speakers they encountered outside the centre on their daily activities.

“We also met another girl in the building and she volunteered to speak with us. We went to see her last week. She sat and talked with us for an hour and we made arrangement to meet next week. We're going to meet each week and more if we can” (Ranem, 2nd interview).

“We met this guy called Nick who worked in a store. He asked us about our country and why we were here and so on. We exchanged numbers and kept in touch and went out several times” (Basma, 2nd interview).

“I met Josh, Brett and Ethan through an Arab classmate, they were his roommates and he introduced us to them. We spend time together and have to speak English all the time when we are with them. Josh is British but his mom's American and he lives here. Brett is from France and she's Josh's girlfriend so she speaks good English, and Ethan's American”(Shatha, 2nd interview).

“The Americans took us shooting and on picnics and show us around the town” (Fahda, 2nd interview).

“The roommate of one of my friends is American who works for Avon Company and we sat with her more than two hours where she explained to us about the products she sells”(Ferdos, 2nd interview).

One of the participants put extra effort into forming relationships with native speakers in order to practise her L2. She did not confine herself to forming friendships with people closer to her own age but she also socialised with ladies from an older age range:

“There’s an American lady called Johanna. We went to her place, my classmates and I, to practise. I also met a friend of hers and we went to her place too twice to practise English. We brought our traditional Arabic coffee and dates and went to visit her; we enjoyed each other’s company. They’re older in age but we gained a lot from them” (Shahd, 3rd interview).

Shahd also developed her relation with teachers at the English Centre. Her contact with them was not limited to classes or to organized activities:

“There’s a teacher at the Centre with whom I have a good relationship. She taught me last session. When she’s free I go and sit with her. Once we sat and talked for an hour and a half, our relationship is great” (Shahd, 2nd interview).

Majd was the only one who did not try to form any relationships with Americans and preferred to interact with persons from other nationalities. Her reason was the following:

“It is hard to be friends with Americans, they don’t respect that you have different principles. I met someone and they said, “Oh, we’re having a party tonight”, I could not go because there is drinking which is against my religion so they stopped inviting me to other outings. It is like there is a rule, do everything they do or don’t be with them” (Majd, 3rd interview).

The participants formed various types of relationships with native speakers. Some considered them as friends to talk and hang out with, and their relationships were maintained after the SA programme. Below are some of their comments when asked what happened to friendships formed with native speakers:

“We still keep in touch through WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram. We ask about each other every once in a while, like for instance how are you and how are you doing” (Shatha, 3rd interview).

“I am still in touch with Johanna by cell phone. I have her number and all of our communication is by cell phone” (Shahd, 3rd interview).

“I met a girl at Starbucks there [USA]. We talked and got to know each other. We are friends on Facebook and we keep in touch by email” (Ranem, 3rd interview).

“They’re all on my Facebook. I keep in touch with some but not as frequently as when we were there [USA], where every day we see them. But from time to time we ask each other how’s life and they ask me about my life here [Saudi] and what I’m doing” (Fhada, 3rd interview).

“I am still in touch with my conversation partner. She’s on Skype and I have seen her just few times, it is difficult because of the time difference” (Basma, 3rd interview).

Other participants considered native speakers only as acquaintances during the SA programme. They would talk with them but not hang out as friends do, and the relationship ended by the end of the programme. Sample comments follow:

“I do not have actual friendship but I had communications with Americans I went out with one of my friends and their American friend and we talked and hung out but it’s not real friendship. Since I came back I did not chat with any one of them, but I do chat with my Arab friends on BlackBerry and Facebook” (Ferdos, 3rd interview).

“I do not know anything about the Americans since I came back but I am still in touch with the others. The Asians are my friends but the native speakers are just people I knew” (Sara, 3rd interview).

5.3.3.1 Effect of Social Interaction with Native Speakers on L2 Learning

Participants answered positively when asked whether or not their social interaction with native speakers affected their L2 learning. Here are some examples of the participants’ comments on the help with their English which they both sought and received from their American friends:

“I used to be afraid of talking in English and making mistakes but it is different now, the words come out without hesitation and if I made mistakes my American

friends would correct me. I still make mistakes, I won't say I don't but I'm much faster than before and my accent has improved" (Shahd, 3rd interview).

"I've noticed that I became more confident when I speak, but apart from speaking I don't think I gained much except maybe for the accent or some big words that I'd ask my friends about and try to write down, things like that" (Ranem, 3rd interview).

"My conversation partner added to my language, I would ask her to correct my English and she does sometimes, especially the vocabulary, she would tell me to use that word instead of this. My grammar also improved and I became more confident in talking and my accent also improved" (Ferdos, 3rd interview).

"Yes, I feel there's a difference, my accent and vocabulary has improved a lot, now I know lots of things. When I spoke before I'd have to pause a moment and think before speaking and I used to get mixed up a lot, I still do but not as much as before" (Reem, 3rd interview).

"Speaking was the skill that has improved because I used to hang out a lot with my American friends. I also asked them to correct me if I made grammatical mistakes so that I can learn, and they did. If I don't understand something and ask, they would try to explain. That has really benefitted me" (Shatha, 3rd interview).

5.3.4 Social Interaction with Non-Native Speakers in SA Programme

The participants were asked whether or not they had social interaction with non-native speakers of English during their SA programme. According to the participants the majority of the participants in the centre were Arabs so it was hard to find other nationalities. But whenever there are non-Arab learners in the classroom some participants tried to interact with them. The following quotes exemplify this:

"In our first session there was a girl from Salvador but she left because she had to work. I still have her on Facebook and she is the one person from the Centre I hang out with. There was Juan from Venezuela, he was really friendly and I have him on my Blackberry. He was the only one at the Centre with whom I spoke English" (Fahda, 2nd interview).

“I had two Korean friends and one from Salvador. I met the Salvadorian for the first time at the bowling centre, and then we were together in class for one semester. The Koreans were my classmates” (Majd, 2nd interview).

“I am interested in forming friendships with Asians and I spend most of my time with them. I know how to speak Japanese and I want to improve myself by learning a second and a third Asian language” (Sara, 2nd interview).

On the other hand, we have participants who limited their interaction with other learners from Japan, Korea, China, and Salvador to the English Centre and social media. Those are their comments:

“There’s a Korean girl in my class but we do not really understand each other’s accent so there was nothing to gain from that, frankly. But our relationship’s good And I have her on Facebook and I comment, in English on the things that she posts” (Shahd, 2nd interview).

This experience did not deter Shahd from trying again with different nationalities,

“The next class there was three foreigners and I always sat beside them so I’d be forced to talk to them and be in their group when we were divided up” (Shahd, 2nd interview).

“We met people inside the centre, Chinese, Japanese, and Salvador, and I have to speak to them in English. Of course, each has a different accent, so when you talk to them you hear more than one accent and you try to understand all the accents” (Shatha, 2nd interview).

“My friends at the university and my classmates are from Japan and Korea. We meet in class and I have them on Facebook” (Ferdos, 2nd interview).

“The girl from South Korea gave me a birthday card on my birthday” (Reem, 2nd interview).

“There was Brazilians in the class; they’re not really friends but just classmates” (Basma, 2nd interaction).

Ranem on the other hand was not really interested in forming relationships with other nationalities,

“At the Centre there are only Saudis and Koreans and people from East Asia. In our level 1 class there was just one girl from East Asia. I never talked to her” (Ranem, 2nd interview).

The only interaction she had with them was through her friend Sara, who was really interested in international students

“Most of her (Sara) friends are East Asian so when I’m with them she makes me speak English” (Ranem, 2nd interview).

The participants formed various types of relationships with non-native speakers. Some considered them as acquaintances during the programme while others considered them as friends and the relation was maintained after the SA programme. When asked, in the post SA interview, what happened to the friendship they formed with non-native speakers after they returned to Saudi, the participants answered as follows:

“There’s a Korean girl from the Centre; I’m still in touch with her but I don’t call her. We talk on WhatsApp” (Shahd, 3rd interview).

“The friendships continue. Just yesterday I was talking to one of them. She wanted my advice on whether to break up with her fiancé or not. Sometimes we chat on WhatsApp and sometimes on Skype” (Sara, 3rd interview).

“My two Korean friends are back in Korea but the one from Salvador hasn’t gone home yet. We communicate through Twitter and WhatsApp but mostly through Facebook” (Majd, 3rd interview).

“Some of them are Native speakers and some are Chinese and Mexicans. We communicate on Facebook. I try to keep in touch but not as frequently as when we were there [USA], where every day we see each other” (Fahda, 3rd interview).

5.3.4.1 Effect of Social Interaction with Non-Natives on L2 Learning

When asked whether or not their social interaction with non-native speakers affected their L2 learning the answers varied. The following comments exemplify the matter:

“Yes, because I speak with them. It’s my first time to have friends from several countries, Mexico, Venezuela, and Korea. I have to speak to them in English” (Fahda, 3rd interview).

“Sometimes they know vocabularies that are new to me because they are studying TOEFL. They ask me a lot about grammar because their grammar is weak but their vocab is good, not like mine. I am good at grammar but weak at vocab. Some of them are similar to my English level, some are higher and some are lower. We write a lot of English sms to each other” (Sara, 3rd interview).

In particular, this input from Sara reflects her awareness of different strengths and weaknesses among non-native speakers of English. She noticed that some of the non-native speakers that she interacted with were stronger in aspects of the English language where she was weak, and their interaction generated opportunity for her to learn from other people in the class with different learning backgrounds. Once again, this experience is only naturally available in the SA context, as in the local setting, participants typically interact with non-native speakers who have similar educational backgrounds. By exposing participants to other non-native speaking participants with diverse backgrounds, they are able to share learning with one another based on the strengths that their individual backgrounds afford them in learning English.

“I was influenced by the Salvadorian because her language was very strong; she was the best language-wise. Her phrases were very American and I learned a lot of slang from her so that was really good. The Korean was very clever; she would use every new word she learned” (Majd, 2nd interview).

“It did not add anything, but it’s more like practising English. Sometimes we correct for each other. I am sure I benefited from the communication with them; at least I was speaking English instead of Arabic” (Ferdos, 3rd interview).

“Yes, I have to speak to them in English so it is like practising speaking. Of course, each has a different accent, so when you talk to them you hear more than one accent and you try to understand all the accents” (Shatha, 2nd interview).

“I practise speaking with them” (Basma, 2nd interview).

As for Shahd however when asked the same question her answer was simply:” No” (2nd interview).

5.3.5 Social Interaction with Arabic Speakers in SA Programme

The participants were asked whether or not they had social interaction with Arabic speakers during their SA programme and some replied that it was unavoidable because the majority of the participants in the centre were Arabs. Almost all of the participants regarded the presence of a large number of Arabs in the classroom and the Centre a negative side of the SA experience. Here are some of their comments:

“The problem was that the whole Centre was full of participants from the Gulf area. The participants from Korea, Spain and other countries were very few “(Fahda, 2nd interview).

“The problem was that there were a large number of Arabs in the programme and in the English Centre” (Shahd, 2nd interview)

“I met a lot of people at the Centre but the problem is that the majority of the participants at the Centre are Arabs, and you have to talk to them” (Shatha, 2nd interview)

“The problem is with the programme for sending a large number of Arab participants to the same place. The whole centre is full of them, 90% of the centre is Arabs and 10% are foreigners. It’s natural that I’ll communicate with the Arabs” (Shahad, 2nd interview).

All participants found this negative, except Reem,

“It’s a good atmosphere. The class is full of Arabs but everyone has a different culture, experiences and background. So when we participate in the classroom discussion, you learn from those other cultures” (2nd interview).

However, while they may have disapproved in principle, the participants generally reported regular social interaction with Arabs during the SA programme:

“I met some Saudi girls at the English Centre and I visited them in their homes” (Majd, 2nd interview).

“Ferdos, Nada, Shahd and there’s the girl whose dad became friends with my dad – Sheikha” (Reem, 2nd interview).

“I met a lot of people at the Centre but the problem is that the majority of them are Arabs. I met a lot of girls and boys in the Centre, and also meet them by chance outside the Centre. The town is small, so you can run into anyone anywhere” (Shatha, 2nd interview).

“I try as best as I can not to go out with Arabs but at the same time I want to go out with them sometimes. I do not want to be like Majd who does not go out at all with Arabs and all the girls are surprised by her behaviour. As for myself, I am mostly with foreigners but I still have time for Arabs” (Sara, 2nd interview).

“It’s a must. We have to go out with Arabs every day” (Fahda, 2nd interview).

When the participants were asked about their free time, the participants gave further details about their activities with other Arab friends:

“When I first came to the US I preferred to stay home with my brother and watch TV. I still do the same but the difference is that I watch a lot of English programmes now. On weekends, I go out with my Arab girlfriends on Fridays and Saturdays but usually not on Sundays” (Shahd, 2nd interview).

”I spend my free time with Ferdos, Nada, Shahd and Sheikha” (Reem, 2nd interview).

“I go to the movies, restaurants and shopping with Fahda and Basma. We also go out with Hussein and Abdellatif a lot. We plan day by day; we don’t plan ahead. We do something different every day” (Shatha, 2nd interview).

“I spend my free time mostly with Basma and Shatha” (Fahda, 2nd interview).

“With my Arab friends we go shopping, or to the movies, and sometimes we go to down town of the state’s capital” (Ferdos, 2nd interview).

“My free time is spent mostly with my friends from Saudis, Kuwaitis and some Americans” (Basma, 2nd interview).

“I spend it mostly with Felwa, Sara and Bayan. We go to restaurants, for walks somewhere quiet or to the downtown shops” (Ranem, 2nd interview).

5.3.5.1 Effect of Social Interaction with Arabic Speakers on L2 Learning

As for the effect of social interaction with Arabic speakers on L2 learning in SA, some said it did not improve their learning but rather affected it negatively:

“If I hadn’t mixed with them at all during these months, I would have gained more” (Fahda, 2nd interview).

“It bothered me because I came here [USA] to learn English and go home fluent in the language. We tried to stick to speaking English for one hour when we are together but we couldn’t, when we are together it is all in Arabic” (Basma, 2nd interview).

“The problem is that if the time I spent talking in Arabic was spent talking in English, it would have made a greater difference” (Reem, 2nd interview).

However, in answer to the same question on the effect of social interaction with Arabs on their English learning during the SA programme, some other participants said it had no effect at all. Sample comments follow:

“With regards to English there was no influence at all to my English learning. We’d go out to movies so we didn’t really talk a lot” (Majd, 2nd interview).

“It did not affect it either positively or negatively. It did not add to my English and it did not take from it” (Sara, 2nd interview).

Some participants expressed a mixed viewpoint, acknowledging that there was a limited positive effect on their English learning, but reflecting that it would have been better without Arabs at all.

“They added to my English, but not much. If they weren’t here [USA] it would have been better because you can’t speak English all the time with Arabs, but if they were all foreigners I would have to speak English all the time” (Ferdos, 2nd interview).

“No doubt they had an effect on my English development. I’m not saying I haven’t improved, I have, but if they weren’t around I would have improved more” (Shahd, 2nd interview).

“Sometimes when I speak English with my friends it has a positive influence, but we spend all the breaks together and I think that’s negative because we speak Arabic” (Ranem, 2nd interview).

“We as a group do not speak completely in Arabic and forget all about English. We speak in both languages, a bit of this and a bit of that. Also, if I say something wrong or they say something wrong we correct each other” (Shatha, 2nd interview).

5.4 Cultural Interactions in SA Programme

In this study, culture is seen as the traditions, beliefs, norms and way of thinking and behaving that are associated with diverse societies. As described in section 2.5, it is the collection of knowledge, experiences, beliefs, and perspectives as well as the artefacts derived from such which are valued by a specific group of people. It is the sum total of learned behaviour accumulated within society and dynamically passed on from generation to generation. Culture is manifested in various ways and through various levels. The culture of a society can be observed from aspects ranging from their art forms, cuisine, and architecture, to their social habits, rituals, and language (Choudhury, 2003). Despite globalization and increasing cultural awareness, being in a foreign country and amidst a foreign culture for the first time is intimidating to most people, and could form a barrier for communication and interacting with the host culture.

The participants’ experience with American culture was a varied one. Before travelling, the top two worries for some participants were missing their families and facing an unknown culture. The feelings of Ranem, Shatha, Basma, Reem, Ferdos and Fahda were best expressed by Ranem and Basma when asked about their biggest fear:

“How can I go to another country? How can I interact with people? I am afraid that if I go alone with just my father, I will miss my family. I’m also afraid that other people will not treat me well” (Ranem, 1st interview).

“Of course there’s a bit of fear which is normal. The society, the customs, the people and the language are different. What might help is that I’m going with

friends who are my classmates here [Saudi]. But I'm a bit scared, how will I make relationships with Americans? What will the communication be like?" (Basma, 1st interview) .

"When we are on tours the American on the tours are friendly and easy to talk to but I am really afraid that they will not be as friendly as I expect" (Majd, 1st interview).

Sara did not express any fear of missing her family because both of her parents were with her and she is an only child. She was not afraid of the culture but she was worried about the curriculum:

"I am afraid their level is much higher than mine and that would affect my studies in a bad way. I am not afraid of the society and I am not afraid of being labelled a terrorist. I am sure their society is open-minded" (Sara, 1st interview).

On the other hand we have Shahd claimed she was not afraid of anything at all:

"Honestly I am not scared of anything over there [USA]. People keep asking me how come you are not afraid, but I am not, I feel I will be ok and I will be able to take care of myself" (1st interview).

The participants were asked in the third interview, which took place in Saudi after the end of the SA programme, about how far they managed to adapt and interact with the American culture. Most participants found their experience with the American culture in their SA town itself to be interesting and positive. The following quotes exemplify this:

"They respect your ideas and beliefs. Before I came here [USA] I was worried that the American people will not respect my beliefs and religion, but I didn't get that feeling because of the state itself; it's different from state to state"(Shahd, 3rd interview).

"The city itself was nice with its environment and people. When I first arrived, I felt that I was different from them but what surprised me was that they didn't treat me as a stranger at all. People I didn't even know would just come up say " hi "and start talking" (Sara, 3rd interview).

“I didn’t feel like a foreigner because the people there were friendly. They interact easily with you and never make you feel like you were a stranger” (Fahda, 3rd interview).

“American people are really friendly and easy going. My fear was that because I wear hijab they might look at me or treat me in a negative way, but I was wrong. Sometimes strangers approached me and said, ‘I like your scarf; the way you cover your hair.’ It’s easy to make American friends here [USA]” (Basma, 3rd interview).

“They didn’t treat me differently at all; I never felt that they treated us like foreigners. On the contrary, we received the best treatment, always a smile, always coming up to ask where we were from and starting a conversation and getting to know you. They were so friendly” (Shatha, 3rd interview).

“The Americans there were nice. I never went anywhere except the town of the university I was in and the capital of that state, but they were nice” (Reem, 3rd interview).

“At first, I was scared that I’d say or do something wrong because the culture is so different. I was very, very cautious and I always felt that I was at risk. Later on I took things easier because the people were friendly and easygoing and they always give you the benefit of the doubt. They never get the wrong impression” (Majd, 3rd interview).

“They accept people with their good points and failings. So I never felt like a stranger in a foreign society. On the contrary, they were interested to learn about our culture, to take a lot from us just as we took a lot from them. It was more of an exchange rather than being a stranger amongst them” (Basma, 3rd interview).

On the other hand while Ferdos shared some of her friends’ positive experience with interaction with the culture in their state she differed with regard to religion. She noticed that while the people at their town mostly respect every one and respect the rules, some of them do not respect the religion of others.

“I liked the people themselves because they are so friendly and they respect every one and respect the law and the rules. But I think some of them don’t respect all religions. They asked my friend a lot: ‘why do you wear Abaya?’ and ‘why do you

cover your face?’, and once when she was walking in the street someone threw something at her. I don’t like this” (Ferdos, 3rd interview).

Some participants distinguished between their small university town, and other locations in the USA, where they felt less welcome:

“The people in the town were friendly. I thought that if they saw you were a Muslim or different from them, they’d pull away and not want to talk, but they weren’t like that at all. I never felt like a stranger in here [their university town] but in Orlando I did” (Fahda, 3rd interview).

“When I was at the airport in Chicago many people stared at me but here [their university town] no-one looks at me” (Ranem, 3rd interview).

5.4.1 Effect of Cultural Interaction on L2 Learning

The impacts of cultural interactions experienced by the participants in the SA programme on L2 learning are evident from various inputs drawn from the interviews. First, the fact that many of the media and other organised cultural activities that the participants experience involve the use of English implies greater exposure to the language in the SA setting.

“We watched movies in the cinema a few times. It was great fun for me even though all of the movies were in English and there were no subtitles. So we had to use what we know in order to be able to understand the movie” (Sara, 3rd interview).

“I went to a conference where we had President Obama as the speaker. It was really a new experience for me; there were so many people. I was happy about being able to understand the speech. I understood most of it I think. The president is a very good speaker” (Reem, 2nd interview).

“I used to watch Arabic talk shows on television a lot at home. When I first came to the US, I found it very difficult because I could not find anything in Arabic. However, as time passed by, I was able to learn and understand American talk shows better. Many of them are very funny; some are also very good, like they were movies” (Fahda, 3rd interview).

“They asked us to read a book every week. We were free to choose whatever book we wanted as long as it was in English. I read some short titles that were available for reading at a coffee shop that I went to. They were very good” (Majd, 3rd interview).

These inputs show that the participants had a wide range of organized cultural experiences where the use of the English language was involved. In these experiences, they needed to be able to apply their knowledge of the English language in order for them to be able to maximize their understanding of the cultural experience. While these cultural experiences could also be experienced in their home country; that is, they can also watch English movies and read books while in Saudi Arabia, the opportunity to do so is higher and more frequent in the SA setting. This is evidenced from the statement of Fahda, who admitted that she watched only Arabic-language shows regularly in Saudi Arabia. Without such shows in her television coverage while in the United States, she was forced to watch English shows instead.

According to many of the participants, as well as providing rich English language input, their cultural experiences proved to be good opportunities to learn more about the language.

“When I did not understand something (in the movies), I would ask my friend what it meant. We had to be quiet though because other people were also watching, but she would help me and I would understand the movie better” (Sara, 2nd interview).

“There were some words in the (President Obama’s) speech that I did not understand. But I discussed it with my teacher and she explained it to me” (Reem, 3rd interview).

“I think watching television is a good way for me to learn new words. I can see how some of the words and phrases that we learn at ELC are actually used in natural conversations” (Fahda, 3rd interview).

“There (USA), I was forced to listen and watch programmes without subtitles and now I can understand most of the words” (Ranem, 3rd interview).

These inputs show that through their cultural interactions, the participants were able to learn more about the English language, develop stronger comprehension skills and

broaden their vocabulary. These cultural interactions served as opportunities for them to be exposed to the language more in the typical settings where the language is used, which provides a complementary platform for informal learning alongside formal classroom instruction that they also engage in.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter examined the outcomes from the interviews conducted with the participants, and found that, consistent with the quantitative results, the participants also perceived themselves to have substantially improved their proficiency in the English language through the SA programme. Furthermore, the data allowed for a deeper exploration of the social and cultural interactions that the participants engaged in while in the United States, and it was found that these interactions did indeed play some important roles in their development of L2 proficiency. In particular, the participants reported social interactions and it was found that social interactions allowed the participants to be exposed not just to native speakers of English but also fellow second language speakers who have different national backgrounds than them. This exposure was important in getting them to see not just how English is used by native speakers, but also by non-native speakers from other countries, who have their own strengths and weaknesses in using the language compared to the participants. Understanding these differences helped them improve their own grasp of the language. Furthermore, being exposed to the local culture, watching television and movies, reading books and attending events, were also found to supplement the participants' learning of English as a second language, thereby supporting the hypothesis posed in this study regarding the importance of social and cultural interactions for gains in L2 learning experienced in the SA setting. The succeeding chapter utilizes the results from this and the last chapter in order to develop respondents' individual profiles. These profiles are then used in order to compare L2 gains of participants with different levels of social and cultural interactions.

Chapter 6: Individual Profiles

6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the individual profiles of the research participants. This chapter adds to research question three: "Can any variations in the gains in English language proficiency among female Saudi Arabian SA participants be explained with reference to different social and cultural interaction experiences?", by providing the details of the analysis per individual, which shows the extent of research that has been conducted. For each participant, a summary of the results of different quantitative measures taken from the previous chapters is provided, plus a qualitative portrait which draws additionally from her interview responses.

Each profile includes tables summarizing the available quantitative information for that individual. The academic performance table shows the participant's grades in English language courses taken before and after undertaking the SA programme. Two outcomes tables are included. The first outcomes table shows the development of the participant's English proficiency before and after the SA programme, according to the project's own measures, previously reported in Chapter 4 for the group overall. Within this table, General refers to the score of the participant in the general proficiency instrument used (Elicited Imitation); Accuracy refers to the percentage of error-free clauses (oral interviews); Complexity refers to the percentage of dependent clauses versus independent clauses used (oral interviews); and Writing refers to the score of the participants in the writing test used. Finally, results of the fluency tests in terms of Fluency/SPM and Fluency/MLRS are also reported (picture description task).

Another outcome table shows individual participants' level of English usage in Social Networks Questionnaire, also previously reported for the group in chapter 4, section 8. It is important to note that the percentages displayed here are related to the number of times English was used, and is not compared against the times that Arabic was used. Thus, a percentage of 100% means that the participant reported making use of English in conversing with all people in this setting, but she may have also used Arabic in conversing with at least some people in this setting. Then we have a table which shows the individual

participant's use of English and Arabic across different activities (Language Use Questionnaire).

Table 41 is a summary of the average scores achieved by the group; it shows the gain scores made by the group as a whole in the administered quantitative tests. This table will be used as a focal point of comparison for each individual participant.

Table 41 group gain scores in quantitative tests

Selected tests	Group Pre-SA Average	Group Post-SA Average	Mean gain score
Elicited Imitation/ General Proficiency	70	88	+18
Writing /	66	85	+19
Fluency/SPM	92	91	-1
Fluency/MLRS	8	8	+0
Complexity/ Dependent Clauses	33%	40%	+7%
Accuracy/ clauses without errors	80%	84%	+4%

6.2 Basma

There were four different grouping categories that were identified based on quantitative and qualitative outcomes collected. These categories were L2 development (Improved, Declined or Same), grades (Improved, Declined, or Same), social interaction (High or Low), and cultural interaction (High or Low). The presence of Basma in each of these categories is inferred at the end of this profile.

Table 42 is a summary of the average scores achieved by Basma and their relation to the group average in Table 41. The “low”, “high” and “med” labels in brackets refer to Basma’s scores in relation to the group average, i.e. whether they are above (high), corresponding to (med) or below (low) the group average scores. Next to the brackets the participant’s actual marks are given, and in the final column her mean gain score.

Table 42 Basma's gain scores in quantitative tests

Selected tests	Pre-SA Average	Post-SA Average	Mean gain score
Elicited Imitation/ General Proficiency	(Low) 46	(Low)81	+35
Writing	(High) 84	(High)92	+ 8
Fluency/SPM	(Low) 61	(High)130	+69
Fluency/MLRS	(Low) 4	(Low)7	+3
Complexity/ Dependent Clauses	(High) 21%	(Med)29%	+8%
Accuracy/ clauses without errors	(Low) 78%	(High)91%	+13%

As shown from Table 42, Basma improved in each of the different proficiency tests conducted, although her gains in some tests were found to be much higher than in others. Basma gained considerably higher scores in the post SA assessment for both general proficiency and fluency based on the SPM test. However, in relation to the rest of the participants, her scores in general proficiency remained low. That is, the scores of other participants were higher than Basma’s in both the pre and post-SA measurements taken. Overall, Basma’s score in two measures in the post-SA setting (General Proficiency and MLRS) were found to be lower than the group average, while her scores in another three measures (Writing, SPM, Accuracy) were found to be higher than the group average. Thus,

Basma can be considered as one of the students who improved more than the others in the group.

Table 43 provides information on the academic performance of Basma in terms of her initial grades at her local university in Saudi and subsequent proficiency evaluation in the target language from her English centre in the US.

Table 43 Basma's Academic performance

	Pre-SA			Post-SA	
	1 st Test	2 nd Test		1 st Test	2 nd Test
Reading	B	A		A	A
Grammar	A	A		A	A
Writing	B	A		A	B
Listening	A	B		A	A
Speaking	A	A		A	A

Table 44 shows the results of individual analysis of language, whether Basma used English only, Arabic only or a mixture of both for each activity. Also it shows the frequency of each language used for a certain activity, for instance the activity of browsing the internet, Basma's result was E 4+A 2 which means she used English several times a week and Arabic a couple of times a month according to the 6-point Likert Scale (5- Everyday 4- Several times a week 3- A few times a week, 2 – A couple of times a month, 1- Rarely, 0- Never) that is used in this survey. The sign (X) is used where the participant did not take part in the mentioned activity (Appendix E).

Table 44 Basma's LEQ results

Activity	English/Arabic ratio	Activity	English /Arabic ratio
Watch TV	E 3	write Text Messages	E 5+A5
Watch Films	E 2	Write reports (Academic)	E 2
Surf the Internet	E 4+A 2	Write for Leisure (Journal)	E 1
Networking Sites	E 5	Use Instant Messaging	E 4+A 4
Read Emails	E 5+A 3	Have Short Phone chat	E 1+A 2

Write Emails	E 2+A1	Have Long Phone chat	A 3
Listen to Music	E 5+A3	Attend Classes	E 5
Listen to Talk Radio	E 1	Teach a Class	E 2
Listen to lectures	E 4	Service encounter	X
Join in Seminars	E 1	Engage in small Talk	E 5+A 5
Read Literature	E 1	Engage in Long casual chat	E 4+A 5
Read Magazines	E 3	Organised social Activities	X
Read newspaper	X		
Read academic texts	E 4	Percentage use of English	54.81%
Read text messages	E 5+A 5	Percentage use of Arabic	28.14%

Table 45 shows Basma's usage of English before and during-SA in five various contexts; university, home, organised free time, general free time and virtual networks (Appendix F).

Table 45 Basma's SNQ results

Location	Group Pre-SA Average	Basma Pre-SA Average	Group During-SA Average	Basma During-SA Average
University	18.74%	0.00%	52.93%	36.84%
Home	11.96%	0.00%	22.22%	0.00%
Organised	2.78%	0.00%	65.45%	57.14%
General	0.00%	0.00%	26.07%	16.67%
Virtual	30.95%	0.00%	50.35%	0.00%

Table 46 Basma's average compared to group average across all tests

	Post-SA General Proficiency	Post- SA Writing	Post-SA Fluency/ SPM	Post-SA Fluency/ MLRS	Post-SA Complexity	Post –SA Accuracy	Arabic in SA	English in SA
Basma	81	92	130	7	29%	91%	28.14%	54.81%
Group	88	85	91	8	40%	84%	46.77%	78.77%

Table 47 shows Basma's social interaction in terms of the friendships she formed in her SA setting. It also shows her pattern of interaction with the host culture and her views on it. Those details were obtained from the during-SA interview and the post-SA interview (Appendix J & K).

Table 47 Basma's social and cultural interactions

CP	They went to cafes, restaurants, and shopping.
NS friends	Three American friends, two boys and one girl.
NNS	No
Arabic Friends	Fahda, Shatha, Munera and Eman
Free time	- Spent her free time going out with a group that consisted of her roommates, CP, three American friends, and Fahda's CP - She also went out with a group of Arabic friends. cmv
Social and Cultural interaction	- Volunteered with a farming project to help people. - Did not like American food and considered their fast food unhealthy because she gained weight in the US. - Participated in various activities such as hiking, shooting, indoor climbing, biking, snowboarding, ice skating, basketball games, bowling, and cheerleading events. - Engages in service encounter in restaurant, supermarkets, shops and the bank when she pays her bills. - Went to the movies a couple of times a month. - Read English magazines few times a week. - Listened to English songs every day. - Watched American TV few times a week. - Rarely read English literature. - Rarely Listened to American radio.
Cultural awareness	Developed cultural awareness and empathy to foreigners in Saudi: "Before going to the US, I felt that foreigners here (Saudi) were taking advantage of the country, getting all the big positions and benefits and so on. Now I see that they've left their homes and family and are suffering because of that" ("3 rd interview).
Accommodation	Shared a flat with two Saudi girls from the SA programme

Table 48 Basma's top five people talked to and language used

Pre-SA	Sara (A)	Maha (A)	Waad (A)	Shatha (A)	Nada (A)
During-SA	Noura (A)	Lama (A)	Hussain (A)	Kristen (E)	Laura (E)

6.2.1 Profile Details

Basma is a 19-year-old participant who described herself as ambitious, interested in photography and values friendship. She has never travelled to the US before but she travelled to Italy and Egypt on vacations. She arrived at the SA setting with her father who served as her escort for one week and helped her settle in the new environment. During the SA programme, she lived with two fellow research participants, Fahda and Shatha. She claimed to have made both Arab and non-Arab friends during the SA experience, but interacted mostly with native speaker friends.

Basma is an above-average participant with a pre-SA grade point average (GPA) of 4.64 /5, with the group average being 4.36/5.

In Table 40 (Ch.5, section 2) Basma rated speaking, grammar and writing as the first, second and third skills that had improved the most and by looking at Table 42 we see that her claim is supported. Based on quantitative analyses conducted, Basma's English proficiency improved during the SA experience. She committed considerably fewer errors in making use of English and used more complex sentences.

Basma made use of English more than Arabic during the SA programme across a wide range of activities, both those related to her studies and those that are not related, such as watching television, films, and so on. Her use of English increased extensively during the SA programme, particularly with regard to her use of English at the University, and during organized and general activities.

Basma interacted with the culture of the host country and she went the extra mile at the English Centre and enrolled in optional classes that centred on American culture, hiking and indoor rock climbing, all of which were sports that she was not familiar with in Saudi. She also joined a volunteering programme and was really excited about it.

Basma claimed to have made both Arab and non-Arab friends during the SA experience. She socialized the most with both Americans and Arabs but she did not form any relation with non-native speakers from other nationalities. She considered the Americans and the Arabs to be her friends but as for other nationalities she saw them as classmates only.

In the interview, Basma discussed the utility of her ability to speak in English when taking care of herself and of being independent. She discussed how her English language skills became critically important in doing such things as renting an apartment, paying utility bills, ordering at a restaurant, grocery shopping, and other daily activities.

Basma belongs to the high social interaction and the high cultural interaction groups, indicating that Basma was able to absorb the society and culture at the SA environment considerably. As such, she is an exemplar of the research hypothesis forwarded in this study, which is that students who are able to engage in social and cultural interactions more in the SA setting can benefit more from the programme in terms of developing their proficiency in English as a foreign language. . The changes experienced by Basma is consistent with the outcomes from different studies (Ishida, 2010; Holmes and Riddiford, 2011; Hutchinson, 2009; Bacon, 2002, Dewey et al., 2012). Each of these studies were able to show that when a student attempting to learn a second language is placed in environments where he or she is free or in some cases, have no choice but to communicate native speakers of the language on a regular basis, his or her proficiency in the language inevitably improves. As raised by Hutchinson (2009), the necessity to communicate drives people in a foreign country to learn its language in order for them to be able to function effectively in their everyday lives. This can precisely be related to some of Basma's inputs during the interview, where she discussed the need for her to learn English so that she can communicate effectively with English speaking people.

Basma belongs to the "improved L2 "development group indicating that she benefitted considerably from the SA programme in terms of developing her English language proficiency. She also belongs to the "improved grades" group which means that her grades improved following her immersion in the SA environment compared to her grades back in Saudi Arabia.

Table 49 Basma's categories

Social interaction	Cultural interaction	L2 development	Academic grades
High	High	Improved	Improved

6.3 Fahda

There were four different grouping categories that were identified based on quantitative and qualitative outcomes collected. These categories were L2 development (Improved, Declined, or Same), grades (Improved, Declined, or Same), social interaction (High or Low), and cultural interaction (High or Low). The presence of Fahda in each of these categories is inferred at the end of this profile.

Table 50 is a summary of the average scores achieved by Fahda and their relation to the group average in Table 41. The “low”, “high” and “med” labels in brackets refer to Fahda’s scores in relation to the group average, i.e. whether they are above (high), corresponding to (med) or below (low) the group average scores. Next to the brackets the participant’s actual marks are given, and in the final column her mean gain score.

Table 50 Fahda’s gain scores in quantitative tests

Selected tests	Pre-SA Average	Post-SA Average	Mean gain score
Elicited Imitation/ General Proficiency	(High) 100	(High) 91	-9
Writing	(Low) 65	(High) 86	+ 21
Fluency/SPM	(Low) 75	(Low) 67	-8
Fluency/MLRS	(High) 9	(High) 10	+ 1
Complexity/ Dependent Clauses	(Low)17%	(Low)27%	+ 10%
Accuracy/ clauses without errors	(Low)76%	(Low) 79%	+ 3%

As shown from Table 50, Fahda gained the most in the writing aspect of her L2 proficiency. In the pre-SA measurement, Fahda’s writing score was only 65, which was assessed as being lower than the group average. In contrast to this, Fahda’s post SA writing score was found to be 86, which translating to a 21-point gain. In addition to this, the score was found to be higher than the group average. This implies that while Fahda was among the weakest in the group in terms of writing in English at the start of the program, she became one of the strongest in writing by the end of the program.

Table 51 provides the academic performance of Fahda in terms of her initial and subsequent proficiency in the target language.

Table 51 Fahda's Academic performance

	Pre-SA			Post-SA	
	1 st Test	2 nd Test		1 st Test	2 nd Test
Reading	A	C		A	B
Grammar	A	A		A	A
Writing	A	A		A	A
Listening	A	A		A	B
Speaking	A	A		A	B

Table 52 shows the results of individual analysis of language, whether Fahda used English only, Arabic only or a mixture of both for each activity. Also it shows the frequency of each language used for a certain activity, for instance the activity of browsing the internet, Fahda's result was E 5 + A 2 which means she used English every day and Arabic a couple of times a month according to the 6-point Likert Scale (5- Everyday 4- Several times a week 3- A few times a week, 2 – A couple of times a month, 1- Rarely, 0- Never) that is used in this survey. The sign (X) is used where the participant did not take part in the mentioned activity (Appendix E)

Table 52 Fahda's LEQ results

Activity	English/Arabic ratio	Activity	English /Arabic ratio
Watch TV	E 3 + A 3	write Text Messages	E 4 + A 2
Watch Films	E 3 + A 1	Write reports (Academic)	E 3 + A 1
Surf the Internet	E 5 + A 2	Write for Leisure (Journal)	E 1 + A 1
Networking Sites	E 4 + A 3	Use Instant Messaging	E 5 + A 3
Read Emails	E 5 + A 3	Have Short Phone Chat	E 4 + A 5
Write Emails	E 2 + A 2	Have Long Phone Chat	E 3 + A 4
Listen to Music	E 5 + A 4	Attend Classes	E 5 + A 1
Listen to Radio	E 1 + A 1	Teach a Class	X

Listen to lectures	E 3 + A 1	Service Encounter	E 1 + A 1
Join in Seminars	E 2 + A 1	Engage in Small Talk	E 4 + A 5
Read Literature	E 1 + A 1	Engage Long Causal Chat	E 2 + A 2
Read Magazines	E 4 + A 2	Organised social Activities	E4+A2
Read news paper	E 1 + A 1		
Read academic texts	E 4 + A 2	Percentage of English use	61.48%
Read text messages	E 4 + A 1	Percentage of Arabic use	40.74%

Table 53 shows Fahda's usage of English before and during SA in five various contexts; university, home, organised free time, general free time and virtual networks (Appendix F).

Table 53 Fahda's SNQ results

Location	Group Pre-SA Average	Fahda pre-SA Average	Group During-SA Average	Fahda During SA Average
University	18.74%	10.34%	52.93%	30.43%
Home	11.96%	14.29%	22.22%	0.00%
Organised	2.78%	0.00%	65.45%	26.32%
General	0.00%	0.00%	26.07%	28.00%
Virtual	30.95%	0.00%	50.35%	14.29%

Table 54 Fahda's average compared to group average across all tests

	Post-SA General Proficiency	Post-SA Writing	Post-SA Fluency/SPM	Post-SA Fluency/MLRS	Post-Sa Complexity	Post –SA Accuracy	Arabic-SA	English-SA
Fahda	91	86	67	10	27%	79%	40.74%	61.48%
Group	88	85	91	8	40%	84%	46.77%	78.77%

Table 55 shows Fahda's social interaction in terms of the friendships she formed in her SA setting. It also shows her pattern of interaction with the host culture and her views

on it. Those details were obtained from the during-SA interview and the post-SA interview (Appendix J & K).

Table 55 Fahda's social and cultural interactions

CP	They go out together once a week
NS	Three American friends.
NNS	One from Mexico and one from Venezuela. Interacts with them inside the centre.
Arabic Friends	Basma, Shatha, Hussien ,Abdulatif. Mariam, Munera, and Eman.
Free time	- Spent SOME of her free time going out with a group that consisted of her roommates, conversation partner, three American friends, and Basma's conversation partner. They went shooting, picnics and sightseeing. - Spent MOST of her free time with her Arabs friends at the movies, barbecue and biking.
Social and Cultural interaction	- Volunteered with a farming project to help people. - Participated in various activities such as hiking, shooting, indoor climbing, biking, snowboarding, ice skating, basketball games, bowling, and cheerleading events. - Engages in service encounter in restaurant, supermarkets, shops and the bank when she pays her bills. - Went to the movies a few times a week. - Read English magazines several times a week. - Listened to English songs every day. - Watched American TV few times a week. - Rarely read English literature. - Rarely read English newspapers. - Rarely Listened to American radio.
Cultural awareness	- She considered Americans as very friendly and she did not feel like a stranger. - Developed cultural awareness and empathy to foreigners in Saudi: "After I returned I became more merciful towards them. It's not because I thought it out, I just feel more... when I see one of them I'm I think of them, I sympathize with them – after going to America (3rd interview).
Accommodation	Shared a flat with two Saudi girls from the SA programme

Table 56 Fahda's top five people talked to and language used

Pre-SA	Bedour (A)	Najla (A)	Deena (A)	Hana (A)	Mother (A)
During SA	Shatha (A)	Basma (A)	Hussain (A)	William (E)	Mesheel (E)

6.3.1 Profile Details

Fahda is 20-year-old participant who described herself as sensitive, timid, and claimed that she did not socialize with people that she did not know very well. Her interests include reading and skating. Fahda has never travelled to the US before, but she did travel to Turkey, France, Switzerland and Lebanon on vacations. She arrived at the SA setting with her father who served as her escort for one week and helped her settle in the new environment. During the SA programme, she lived with two fellow research participants, Basma and Shatha.

Fahda is an above-average participant with a pre-SA grade point average (GPA) of 4.72 /5, with the group average being 4.36/5.

In Table 40 (Ch.5,section 2) Fahda rated Speaking, Grammar, and Listening as the first, second and third skills that had improved the most and by looking at Table 50 we see that her claim is not supported. She gained the most in writing, grammar and declined in listening. Fahda already had excellent proficiency in English prior to engaging in the SA programme. As such, results from the different tests conducted showed that her English language skills did not improve, except in terms of complexity, where it was found that she used much more complex sentences in conversations recorded during her stay in the SA setting.

Fahda used both English and Arabic across different activities. A general preference for using one language over the other was not detected. During the interviews she expressed her desire to make use of English more during conversations. However, she also expressed the importance of using Arabic when speaking to Arab friends. Her use of English increased extensively during the SA programme, particularly with regard to her use of English at organized activities, general activities and the University.

Fahda interacted with the culture of the host country and she went the extra mile at the English Centre and enrolled in optional classes that centred on American culture, hiking and indoor rock climbing, all of which were sports that she was not familiar with in Saudi. She also joined a farming volunteering programme and was really excited about it.

In the interview, Fahda discussed the utility of her ability to speak in English when taking care of herself and of being independent. She discussed how her English language

skills became critically important in doing such things as renting an apartment, paying utility bills, ordering at a restaurant, grocery shopping, and other daily activities.

Fahda claimed to have made both Arab and non-Arab friends during the SA experience, but interacted mostly with Arab friends. However, she considered the Americans and the Arabs to be her friends but as for other nationalities she interacted with them inside the centre.

Fahda belongs to the high social and cultural interaction group, which means that her interaction with western society during the SA programme was unlimited. This contradicts the hypothesis of this study; students who are able to engage in social and cultural interactions more in the SA setting can benefit more from the programme in terms of developing their proficiency in English as a foreign language.

Fahda belongs to the “declined L2 development” which means that her general proficiency went down compared to what it was in pre-SA. Her decline in general proficiency could be the result of having an above average GPA before she joined the SA program, there might have been no more room for development. As indicated in some studies, some second language learners enter a programme with much higher target language proficiency than other learners (Mackey & Goo, 2007; Magnan & Back, 2007). These learners may not be able to improve their language proficiency as well as other people in the same programme mainly because their level of proficiency is already high from the beginning of the program. As such, their proficiency may stay the same, or even slightly drop (Magnan & Back, 2007), which is exactly what happened in the case of Fahda. It also could be attributed to her timid, sensitive personality and her dislike to socializing with people she did not know well. This could mean that even though she participated in many cultural activities, and was a member of a mixed group of Arab and NS in her free time, she did not always engage in conversation with NS at those settings. This is also in line with the literature reviewed regarding the expected impact of study abroad programs. As explained in Bacon (2002), the effect of study abroad programs may not be experienced to the maximum of its potential if the student does not engage in sufficient interaction with native speakers in the foreign environment. As such, Fahda’s timidity may have stunted the growth of her language proficiency in the study abroad environment.

Fahda also belong to the “declined grades” group, which means that her academic grades went down compared to what they were in Saudi Arabia. That could be the result of various reasons among them are a different academic setting, testing system and grading criteria than she is used to in Saudi Arabia. . As explained by Anderson (2007), changes in the school systems which may be starkly different from what a student has been used to can lead to negative impacts on the students’ performance.

Table 57 Fahda's categories

Social interaction	Cultural interaction	L2 development	Academic grades
High	High	Declined	Declined

6.4 Ferdos

There were four different grouping categories that were identified based on quantitative and qualitative outcomes collected. These categories were L2 development (Improved, Declined or Same), grades (Improved, Declined, or Same), social interaction (High or Low), and cultural interaction (High or Low). The presence of Ferdos in each of these categories is inferred at the end of this profile.

Table 58 is a summary of the average scores achieved by Ferdos and their relation to the group average in Table 41. The “low”, “high” and “med” labels in brackets refer to Ferdos’s scores in relation to the group average, i.e. whether they are above (high), corresponding to (med) or below (low) the group average scores. Next to the brackets the participant’s actual marks are given, and in the final column her mean gain score.

Table 58 Ferdos’s gain scores in quantitative tests

Selected tests	Pre-SA Average	Post-SA Average	Mean gain score
Elicited Imitation/ General Proficiency	(Low) 45	(Low) 68	+ 23
Writing	(Low) 40	(Low) 80	+ 40
Fluency/SPM	(Low) 52	(Low) 59	+ 7
Fluency/MLRS	(Low) 5	(High) 9	+ 4
Complexity/ Dependent Clauses	(Low) 13%	(Low) 25%	+ 12%
Accuracy/ clauses without errors	(Low) 64%	(Low) 68%	+ 4%

From Table 58, it can be seen that Ferdos improved in each of the aspects of proficiency tested. Among the different aspects, the highest improvements were found in general proficiency and writing, where she gained 23 and 40 points respectively in the post SA measurements. However, these improvements did not put Ferdos at a higher level of proficiency than the other participants. In fact, out of the six aspects, Ferdos was found to have scores below the average of the group in all but one (MLRS). Ferdos scores at the start of the program were also below average, which partially explains the relative position of her score at the end of the program. This implies that Ferdos may be classified as being one of the members of the group who have weaker proficiency in the English language

than the others by the end of the study abroad program, although her proficiency has nonetheless improved.

Table 59 provides the academic performance of Ferdos in terms of her initial and subsequent proficiency in the target language.

Table 59 Ferdos's Academic performance

	Pre-SA			Post-SA	
	1 st Test	2 nd Test		1 st Test	2 nd Test
Reading	D	C		A	B
Grammar	C	B		A	B
Writing	C	C		A	C
Listening	C	C		B	C
Speaking	D	B		B	C

Table 60 shows the results of individual analysis of language, whether Ferdos used English only, Arabic only or a mixture of both for each activity. Also, it shows the frequency of each language used for a certain activity, for instance the activity of browsing the internet, Ferdos's result was E 2+A 2 which means she used English couple of times a month and Arabic a couple of times a month according to the 6-point Likert Scale (5- Everyday 4- Several times a week 3- A few times a week, 2 – A couple of times a month, 1- Rarely, 0- Never) that is used in this survey. The sign (X) is used where the participant did not take part in the mentioned activity (Appendix E)

Table 60 Ferdos's LEQ results

Activity	English/Arabic ratio	Activity	English /Arabic ratio
Watch TV	X	write Text Messages	E4+A5
Watch Films	E 4	Write reports (Academic)	E4+A1
Browse the Internet	E2+A1	Write for Leisure	X
Social Networking Sites	E4+A4	Use Instant Messaging	E3+A5
Read Emails	E4+A1	Have Short Phone Chat	E3+A3
Write Emails	E4+A2	Have Long Phone Chat	E2+A3

Listen to Music	E5+A2	Attend Classes	E5
Listen to Radio	E3	Teach a Class	X
Listen to lectures	E5	Service encounter	X
Join in Seminars	E1	Engage in small Talk	E4+A5
Read Literature	E1+A1	Engage in Long casual chat	E1+A5
Read Magazines	E1+A1	Organised social Activities	E3+A4
Read newspaper	E2+A1		
Read academic texts	E1+A1	Percentage of English use	51.85%
Read text messages	E4+A5	Percentage of Arabic use	37.03%

Table 61 shows Ferdos's usage of English before and during-SA in five various contexts; university, home, organised free time, general free time and virtual networks (Appendix F).

Table 61 Ferdos's SNQ results

Location	Group Pre-SA Average	Ferdos Pre-SA Average	Group During-SA Average	Ferdos During-SA Average
University	18.74%	8.33%	52.93%	0.00%
Home	11.96%	0.00%	22.22%	0.00%
Organised	2.78%	0.00%	65.45%	100%
General	0.00%	0.00%	26.07%	31.25%
Virtual	30.95%	50.00%	50.35%	100%

Reviewing Table 61, it is important to note that Ferdos is considered to not have used English in conversations made at the university, which contradicts inputs from interviews with Ferdos, where she discussed how being in a classroom with students that did not share her first language forced her to speak to them regardless if they were L1 or L2 speakers of English themselves, in the said language. However, it must be remembered that the scoring only considered instances where the participant identified themselves as having engaged in interaction using English only. It does not include instances where Ferdos made use of English in combination with Arabic when speaking, which is what she indicated to have used based on raw data. As such, Ferdos did make use of English at the

university, but she always did so in combination with Arabic and never used just English on its own.

Table 62 Ferdos's average compared to group average across all tests

	Post-SA General Proficiency	Post- SA Writing	Post- SA fluency SPM	Post- SA fluency MLRS	Post-SA Complexity	Post-SA Accuracy	Average Arabic in SA	Average English in SA
Ferdos	68	80	59	9	25%	68%	37.03%	51.85%
Group	88	85	91	8	40%	84%	46.77%	78.77%

Table 63 shows Ferdos's social interaction in terms of the friendships she formed in her SA setting. It also shows her pattern of interaction with the host culture and her views on it. Those details were obtained from the during-SA interview and the post-SA interview (Appendix J & K).

Table 63 Ferdos's Social and cultural interaction

CP	Met twice a week for two to three hours. Still friends on Facebook post-SA.
NS	One American and two Mexican Americans.
NNS	From Japan and Korea. Classmates only. Still friends with them on Facebook post-SA.
Arabic Friends	Yes.
Free time	- Went out once with NS for three hours. - Spent her free time Arabic speaking friends.
Social and Cultural interaction	- Met a NS lady selling Avon products for three hours. - Engages in service encounter in restaurant, supermarkets, shops and the bank when she pays her bills. - Found accommodation through interaction with people from Craig List. - Going to the movies several times a week - Rarely reading English magazines - Listening to English music everyday - Rarely reading English literature - Listening to radio talk a few times a week - Reading English newspapers a couple of times a month
Cultural awareness	She feels that not all of them respect all religions they ask one of my friends: 'why you are covering your face?', and when she go to walk at the street some of them threw something at her"(2nd interview)

	- Americans are friendly and she never felt like a minority or a foreigner. - Developed cultural awareness and empathy to foreigners in Saudi: “My experience in the US and being alone there made me think more about how some people look at foreigners in Saudi. Being a foreigner away from your country is hard. We shouldn’t envy those foreigners the benefits they get in Saudi because they paid a high price for it already; they left their country, families and worked alone in a strange country to earn those benefits” (3rd interview)
Accommodation	Flat with her father for the first 4 months then lived alone.

Table 64 Ferdos’s top five people talked to and language used

Pre-SA	Maha (A)	Fatema (A)	Noura (A)	Bader (A)	Mother (A)
During-SA	Khlood (A)	Felwa (A)	Majd(A)	Erica (E)	Alla (A)

6.4.1 Profile Details

Ferdos is a 19-year-old participant who described herself as having a quiet personality and ambitions to complete her graduate and postgraduate studies abroad. She has never travelled outside of Saudi Arabia and was escorted by her father for four months in the SA setting, before leaving her to live alone.

Ferdos is a below average participant with a pre-SA grade point average (GPA) of 3.31 /5, with the group average being 4.36/5.

Table 40 (Ch.5,section 2) shows that Ferdos rated Speaking, Grammar, and Reading as the first, second and third skills that had improved the most and by looking at Table 58 we see that her claim is not supported. She gained the most in writing, grammar and Speaking. Even though quantitative results revealed that Ferdos’s English proficiency scores improved during the SA programme, however the rate at which she committed errors when speaking in English did not change noticeably; neither did her sentence construction become considerably more complex.

Ferdos made use of English more than Arabic across a wide range of activities, although she continued to use Arabic when speaking with her family and Arab friends.

During the interviews, Ferdos discussed that she mainly spent her free time with female Arab friends. While she did practise her English with non-Arab individuals, she claimed that she and her Arab friends also practised their English with each other a great deal. Her use of English increased extensively during the SA programme, particularly with regard to her use of English in organised activities, virtual and general activities.

Ferdos interacted with the culture of the host country and claimed to have socialised with both Arab and non-Arab individuals during her SA programme, but have interacted mostly with Arab friends. She went the extra mile by seeking out NS and initiating contact with them such as the Avon lady. She did not have NS friends but whenever the opportunity for a chat with a NS presented itself she took advantage of it. In the interview, Ferdos discussed the utility of her ability to speak in English when taking care of herself and of being independent. She discussed how her English language skills became critically important in doing such things as renting an apartment, paying utility bills, ordering at a restaurant, grocery shopping, and other daily activities.

Ferdos belongs to the high social interaction and the high cultural interaction groups, indicating that Ferdos was able to absorb the society and culture at the SA environment considerably. She also belongs to the “improved L2” group and the “same grades” group. This means that she was able to develop her proficiency in English while she was in the U.S., while still also being able to maintain her grades. As such, she is an exemplar of the research hypothesis forwarded in this study, which is that students who are able to engage in social and cultural interactions more in the SA setting can benefit more from the programme in terms of developing their proficiency in English as a foreign language. That is consistent with the findings from both studies on social interaction (Archangeli, 1999; Ishida, 2010; Holmes and Riddiford, 2011; Hutchinson, 2009; Bacon, 2002) and cultural interaction (Gu et al., 2010; Byram, 2012; Shiffman, 1991; Choi & Yi, 2012; McQuillan & Tse, 1995). As discussed by Hutchinson (2009), having language learning students’ converse with native speakers in the target language is essential to their development. Likewise, exposure to cultural artefacts was also considered by Shiffman (1991) as an important element of L2 learning. Thus, Ferdos’ fascination with American culture supported by her inquisitiveness in interacting with classmates, teachers, and other people in the local environment as shown from her interviews, may have played a vital role in enabling her to maximize the gains in L2 that she was able to get from the SA experience.

Table 65 Ferdos's categories

Social interaction	Cultural interaction	L2 development	Academic grades
High	High	Improved	Same

6.5 Majd

There were four different grouping categories that were identified based on quantitative and qualitative outcomes collected. These categories were L2 development (Improved, Declined or Same), grades (Improved, Declined, or Same), social interaction (High or Low), and cultural interaction (High or Low). The presence of Majd in each of these categories is inferred at the end of this profile.

Table 66 is a summary of the average scores achieved by Majd and their relation to the group average in Table 41. The “low”, “high” and “med” labels in brackets refer to Majd’s scores in relation to the group average, i.e. whether they are above (high), corresponding to (med) or below (low) the group average scores. Next to the brackets the participant’s actual marks are given, and in the final column her mean gain score.

Table 66 Majd’s gain scores in quantitative tests

Selected tests	Pre-SA Average	Post-SA Average	Mean gain score
Elicited Imitation/ General Proficiency	(Low) 63	(Low) 83	+20
Writing	(Low) 62	(Low) 77	+ 15
Fluency/SPM	(High) 136	(High) 108	-28
Fluency/MLRS	(High) 10	(Low) 6	-4
Complexity/ Dependent Clauses	(Low) 14%	(Low) 27%	+ 13%
Accuracy/ clauses without errors	(Low) 46%	(Low) 54%	+ 8%

Table 66 shows that Majd improved in all but one of the English language proficiency aspects, with major gains coming from general proficiency, writing, and complexity. Under fluency however, her scores were found to have decreased, both under SPM and MLRS measures. In addition to this, even though she improved in the other aspects, Majd remained to have scores that were lower than the other participants, except in SPM where she had scores above average in both the pre and post SA settings, despite the score in the post SA setting decreasing by 28 points. Overall, Majd can be classified as being among the participants who were able to gain less than others from the SA experience.

Table 67 provides the academic performance of Majd in terms of her initial and subsequent proficiency in the target language.

Table 67 Majd Academic performance

	Pre-SA			Post-SA	
	1 st Test	2 nd Test		1 st Test	2 nd Test
Reading	C	C		A	A
Grammar	B	B		A	A
Writing	C	B		A	B
Listening	A	B		A	B
Speaking	C	A		A	B

Table 68 shows the results of individual analysis of language, whether Majd used English only, Arabic only or a mixture of both for each activity. Also it shows the frequency of each language used for a certain activity, for instance the activity of browsing the internet, Majd's result was E 5+A 4 which means she used English every day and Arabic several times a week according to the 6-point Likert Scale (5- Everyday 4- Several times a week 3- A few times a week, 2 – A couple of times a month, 1- Rarely, 0- Never) that is used in this survey. The sign (X) is used where the participant did not take part in the mentioned activity (Appendix E)

Table 68 Majd's LEQ results

Activity	English/Arabic Ratio	Activity	English/Arabic Ratio
Watch TV	E 5	write Text Messages	E5+A2
Watch Films	E 3	Write reports (Academic)	E 2
Browse the Internet	E5+A4	Write for Leisure	X
Networking Sites	E5+A1	Use Instant Messaging	E5+A5
Read Emails	E5+A4	Have Short Phone chat	E3+A1
Write Emails	E2+A1	Have Long Phone chat	E2+A3
Listen to Music	E3+A1	Attend Classes	E 5

Listen to Radio	E 1	Teach a Class	X
Listen to lectures	E 3	service encounter	E1+A4
Join in Seminars	E 3	Engage in small Talk	E4+A4
Read Literature	E 1	Engage in Long casual chat	E5+A4
Read Magazines	E 1	Organised social Activities	E3+A3
Read newspaper	X		
Read academic texts	E 1	Average English usage	57.77%
Read text messages	E5+A2	Average Arabic Usage	28.88%

Table 69 shows Majd's usage of English before and during-SA in five various contexts; university, home, organised free time, general free time and virtual networks (Appendix F).

Table 69 SNQ results

Location	Group Pre-SA Average	Majd Pre-SA Average	Group During-SA Average	Majd During-SA Average
University	18.74%	0.00%	52.93%	78.57%
Home	11.96%	33.33%	22.22%	0.00%
Organised	2.78%	0.00%	65.45%	100%
General	0.00%	0.00%	26.07%	66.67%
Virtual	30.95%	0.00%	50.35%	100%

The results from Table 69 indicate that Majd made use of English considerably at the University, despite the fact that from interviews, she indicated not preferring to make social interactions with L1 classmates. This implies that Majd's communications within the university were all under formal capacities. That is, she may have made use of English when addressing people in class and answering questions from the teacher or her classmates, but still did not build social relationships with L1 speakers.

Table 70 Majd average compared to group average across all tests

	Post-SA General Proficiency	Post- SA Writing	Post-SA Fluency/ SPM	Post-SA Fluency/ MLRS	Post-SA Complexity	Post-SA Accuracy	Arabic in SA	English in SA
Majd	83	77	108	6	27%	54%	28.88%	57.77%
Group	88	85	91	8	40%	84%	46.77%	78.77%

Table 71 shows Majd's social interaction in terms of the friendships she formed in her SA setting. It also shows her pattern of interaction with the host culture and her views on it. Those details were obtained from the during-SA interview and the post-SA interview (Appendix J & K).

Table 71 Majd Social and cultural interaction

CP	No
NS	No.
NNS	Two Korean and one from Salvador.
Arabic Friends	Dana and Yasmine
Free time	Spend it with the Korean and the Salvadorian. They met once a week and they are still friends on Facebook post SA.
Social and Cultural interaction	- Casual conversation in cafés with NS who were interested in knowing where she is from and what is she doing in the US. - Sought out NNS in the classroom and sat next to them - Engages in service encounter in restaurant, supermarkets, shops and the bank when she pays her bills. - Planned a trip from A-Z to California for herself and her mother - Going to the movies a few times a week - Rarely reading English magazines - Listening to English music several times a week - Watching American TV every day - Rarely reading English literature - Rarely listening to radio talk
Cultural awareness	- It's a culture with very different , strange , wonderful new qualities :“So I acquired the skill to interact better and understand people better”(3rdinterview) “Before I went to the US, I saw Americans as a big thing, but after my experience there I feel like we credit them with more than they deserve. We put the Americans who come to work in our country on pedestal like they would never ever do anything wrong. So when I came back I began to view all foreigners in my country the same, they all deserve respect, Americans and non-Americans” (3rd interview).
Accommodation	Living with parents

Table 72 Majd's top five people talked to and language used

Pre-SA	Waeam (A)	Alla (A)	Fatema (A)	Abrar (A)	Gadeer (A)
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During-SA	Minfu (E)	Somen (E)	Florence (E)	Dana (A)	Mother (A)
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6.5.1 Profile Details

Majd is a 20-year-old participant who described herself as adaptable and tolerant of other people's cultures, and loved socialising. Majd has never travelled to the US before, but she did travel to Turkey, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia. She was initially accompanied to the SA setting by her father, who had to return home and sent her mother to accompany her for the rest of her stay in the United States.

Majd is a below average participant with a pre-SA grade point average (GPA) of 3.89 /5, with the group average being 4.36/5.

Table 40 (Ch.5,section 2) shows that Majd rated Speaking, reading and Listening as the first, second and third skills that had improved the most and by looking at Table 66 we see that her claim is not supported. From the quantitative analyses conducted, it was found that Majd's English proficiency improved moderately during the SA programme. The rate at which she committed grammatical errors did not improve, but her sentence choices became increasingly complex. As for fluency, her level declined, she had a higher level pre-SA than she did post-SA.

Majd made use of English much more than Arabic during her stay across different activities and settings, with the exception that she continued to use Arabic exclusively at home, when speaking to her parents. Her use of English increased extensively during the SA programme, particularly with regard to her use of English in organised activities, virtual and university

Majd interacted to some extent with the culture of the host country. She did not form friendships with NS but she engaged in short talks with NS that she met in cafes, service encounters and daily routines. During the interview, Majd discussed different areas where she believed her English language skills improved, including speaking and listening. She also stressed the importance of constant practice, and worried that her proficiency in

the language would suffer when she got back to Saudi Arabia because she would not practise it as much as she did in the United States.

In the interview, Majd discussed the utility of her ability to speak in English when taking care of herself and of her mother. She discussed how her English language skills became critically important in doing such things as renting an apartment, paying utility bills, ordering at a restaurant, grocery shopping, and other daily activities. Majd also commented on her newly found independence and being able to plan a trip for her and her mother to go to California.

Majd belongs to the “improved L2” group as well as to the “improved grades” group, indicating that she benefitted considerably from the SA programme in terms of developing her English language proficiency. However, contrary to the hypothesis of this study, Majd belongs to the low social interaction group, which means that even though she did not interact as extensively with external, English-speaking society in the SA setting, she was still able to gain some of the benefits of studying abroad. This is in contrast with the expectations from the works of Holmes and Riddiford (2011), Hutchinson (2009) and Bacon (2002) that regard social interaction as an essential element to maximizing L2 learning outcomes. However, this can be explained by her still belonging to the high cultural interaction group; she was able to immerse herself in the American culture through various media, which can explain how she was able to benefit from the SA programme. As explained by Choi and Yi (2012), cultural interactions help students appreciate the language in diverse forms, thereby helping them develop in its practical use. However, all of the respondents were found to belong in the high cultural interaction group, and there are some participants who did not develop significantly in their English language proficiency at all. As such, while it is surmised that cultural interaction may have played a role in Majd’s experienced development in English as a second language, this cannot be completely supported by the data in this study. Instead, the result from Majd may mean that there are other factors in the SA environment apart from those that were focused on in this study that may be important in examining the variance of second language learners’ learning outcomes.

Table 73 Majd categories

Social interaction	Cultural interaction	L2 development	Academic grades
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Low	High	Improved	Improved
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6.6 Ranem

There were four different grouping categories that were identified based on quantitative and qualitative outcomes collected. These categories were L2 development (Improved, Declined or Same), grades (Improved, Declined, or Same), social interaction (High or Low), and cultural interaction (High or Low). The presence of Ranem in each of these categories is inferred at the end of this profile.

Table 74 is a summary of the average scores achieved by Ranem and their relation to the group average in Table 41. The “low”, “high” and “med” labels in brackets refer to Ranem’s scores in relation to the group average, i.e. whether they are above (high), corresponding to (med) or below (low) the group average scores. Next to the brackets the participant’s actual marks are given, and in the final column her mean gain score.

Table 74 Ranem gain scores in quantitative tests

Selected tests	Pre-SA Average	Post-SA Average	Mean gain score
Elicited Imitation/ General Proficiency	(Low) 54	(High) 88	+37
Writing	(High) 74	(High) 95	+ 21
Fluency/SPM	(Low)71	(Low) 64	-7
Fluency/MLRS	(Med) 8	(Low) 7	-1
Complexity/ Dependent Clauses	(Low) 17%	(Low) 31%	+ 14%
Accuracy/ clauses without errors	(High) 88%	(High) 89%	+ 1%

Table 74, shows that Ranem’s scores improved from the pre and post SA measurements, except for fluency measured under MLRS which decreased by just 1 point. Most notably, Ranem’s score under general proficiency improved from being among the lowest in the pre SA measurement to being among the highest in the post SA measurement. As such, Ranem may be classified as one of the participants who were able to gain the most out of the SA program in terms of developing their proficiency in English as a second language.

Table 75 provides the academic performance of Ranem in terms of her initial and subsequent proficiency in the target language.

Table 75 Ranem Academic performance

	Pre-SA			Post-SA	
	1 st Test	2 nd Test		1 st Test	2 nd Test
Reading	B	A		A	B
Grammar	B	A		A	D
Writing	C	A		A	D
Listening	B	A		A	A
Speaking	A	A		A	A

Table 76 shows the results of individual analysis of language, whether Ranem used English only, Arabic only or a mixture of both for each activity. Also it shows the frequency of each language used for a certain activity, for instance the activity of browsing the internet, Ranem's result was E 4+A 1 which means she used English several times a week and Arabic rarely according to the 6-point Likert Scale (5- Everyday 4- Several times a week 3- A few times a week, 2 – A couple of times a month, 1- Rarely, 0- Never) that is used in this survey. The sign (X) is used where the participant did not take part in the mentioned activity (Appendix E).

Table 76 Ranem LEQ results

Activity	English/Arabic ratio	Activity	English /Arabic ratio
Watch TV	E2+A3	write Text Messages	E2+A2
Watch Films	E 1	Write reports (Academic)	E 2
Browse the Internet	A 1	Write for Leisure	X
Networking Sites	E4+A4	Use Instant Messaging	X
Read Emails	E1+A4	Have Short Phone chat	E1+A5
Write Emails	E1+A2	Have Long Phone chat	A 3

Listen to Music	X	Attend Classes	E 5
Listen to Radio	E 2	Teach a Class	X
Listen to lectures	E 1	Service encounter	X
Join in Seminars	X	Engage in small Talk	E2+A5
Read Literature	E 2	Engage in Long casual chat	E1+A5
Read Magazines	X	Organised social Activities	E1+A3
Read newspaper	X		
Read academic texts	E 4	Percentage of English use	25.18%
Read text messages	E2+A5	Percentage of Arabic use	31.11%

Table 77 shows Ranem's usage of English before and during SA in five various contexts; university, home, organised free time, general free time and virtual networks (Appendix F).

Table 77 Ranem SNQ results

Location	Group Pre-SA Average	Ranem Pre-SA Average	Group During-SA Average	Ranem During-SA Average
University	18.74%	0.00%	52.93%	0.00%
Home	11.96%	0.00%	22.22%	0.00%
Organised	2.78%	0.00%	65.45%	5.56%
General	0.00%	0.00%	26.07%	0.00%
Virtual	30.95%	0.00%	50.35%	8.33%

As in the case of Ferdos, there seems to be a contradiction between the data found in Table 77 and Ranem's inputs in the interviews regarding interactions that she made using English. As shown from Table 77, Ranem seemed to have not made use of English at all when communicating at the university or in general areas. However, it must be remembered that as in all of the parallel tables on SNQ results, the data recorded only reflects Ranem's use of English only in conversations, and does not include the times when she used English in combination of Arabic. This may be the case why she narrated making use of English in interacting with her peers and other L1 speakers while recording not

speaking English at all in the SNQ. This same reasoning may be applied to similar observations in the SNQ tables of other participants.

Table 78 Ranem average compared to group average across all tests

	Post-SA General Proficiency	Post- SA Writing	Post-SA Fluency/ SPM	Post-SA Fluency/ MLRS	Post-SA Complexity	Post-SA Accuracy	Arabic in SA	English in SA
Ranem	88	95	64	7	31%	89%	31.11%	25.18%
Group	88	85	91	8	40%	84%	46.77%	78.77%

Table 79 shows Ranem's social interaction in terms of the friendships she formed in her SA setting. It also shows her pattern of interaction with the host culture and her views on it. Those details were obtained from the during-SA interview and the post-SA interview (Appendix J & K).

Table 79 Ranem Social and cultural interaction

CP	They went to cafes, the mountains and took walks together. They are still in touch on social media post-SA.
NS	She does not consider them as friends, just as people she had met. A lady in the building she lives in, an old gentleman and a lady she met in a Café, and her friend's conversation partner
NNS	No
Arabic Friends	Yes.
Free time	- Mostly with Arabic speaking friends. They go to the Mall, restaurants, go for walks somewhere quiet, or go to downtown. - During vacations she spends her time with her sibling but during school days she is mostly with her Saudi friends. When her parents are there, she spends most of her time with them.
Social and cultural interaction	- Lady in the building she lives in, they meet for an hour weekly to practice her English. - Initiated conversation in Café with an old gentleman. - Met a girl in Starbucks and they started to meet weekly, and they are still together on Facebook post-SA - Meeting with her friend's conversation partner. - Engages in short casual conversations with NS outside the center. - Engages in service encounter in restaurant, supermarkets, shops and the bank when she pays her bills.

	• She does all the talking for her mother and siblings because they do not speak English. • Took an optional course on American culture. • Going to the movies several times a week • Listening to English music several times a week • Watching American TV a few times a week • Rarely reading English newspapers.
Cultural awareness	• Americans don't care about their look. "They wear anything"(2nd interview) • Americans respect time,"To always smile, being organized, being punctual. In Saudi Arabia, people don't care about time as much as the Americans do" (3rd interview). • Feels more tolerant of others and more open-minded. "I felt that I shouldn't judge others by appearance"(3rd interview) • "Treating people in a better way especially foreigners Respecting and helping people"(3rd interview)
Accommodation	Shared a Flat with her family. Parents are always there but siblings alternate during the holidays.

Table 80 Ranem's top five people talked to and language used

Pre-SA	Sahar (A)	Lama (A)	Abeer (A)	Hatoon (A)	Rawan (A)
During-SA	Felwa (A)	Lama (A)	Abeer (A)	Bayan (A)	Lindsey (E)

6.6.1 Profile Details

Ranem is a 19-year-old participant whose hobbies were identified as swimming and watching television. Ranem has never travelled to the US before, but she did travel to Egypt, Bahrain, Dubai, Malaysia and Jordan on vacations. She initially came to the United States for the SA programme with her father, who went back to Saudi Arabia shortly after her mother and brother took over as her escorts. They stayed with Ranem throughout the rest of the programme.

Ranem is an above average participant with a pre-SA grade point average (GPA) of 4.53 /5, with the group average being 4.36/5. She remained thus in the SA setting but suffered some academic setbacks in some of her classes. In Table 41(Ch.5,section 2) Ranem rated Speaking, Listening and Reading as the first, second and third skills that had improved the most and by looking at Table 74 we see that her claim is not supported. She gained the most in writing, grammar and declined in Speaking. From the results of quantitative analyses conducted, Ranem's general proficiency in the English language was found to have improved dramatically during the SA programme. Her use of English was

found to be grammatically strong in both the pre-and during-SA settings, but her sentence choices were found to be considerably more complex in the latter.

Ranem made use of both English and Arabic during her stay across different activities, but used Arabic more than English at home and when interacting with her friends who were composed entirely of Arabs. Her use of English increased during the SA programme, particularly with regard to her use of English in virtual and organised activities.

Ranem interacted with the culture of the host country and she went the extra mile by enrolling in an elective class on American culture at the English Centre. She also sought out native speakers and initiated contact with them such as the lady in her building and the old gentleman in the Café. Ranem also described interacting with native English speakers while in the United States, but not making friends with them. She did not have native speaker friends but whenever the opportunity for a chat with a native speaker presented itself she took advantage of it.

In the interview, Ranem discussed the utility of her ability to speak in English when taking care of herself and her family who came with her, since neither her mother nor her brothers spoke English. She discussed how her English language skills became critically important in doing such things as ordering at a restaurant, grocery shopping, paying bills and other daily activities.

Ranem belongs to the “improved L2” group indicating that she benefitted from the SA programme in terms of developing her English language proficiency. At the same time, she belongs to the high social interaction and the high cultural interaction groups, indicating that Ranem was able to absorb the society and culture at the SA environment. As such, she is an exemplar of the research hypothesis forwarded in this study, which is that students who are able to engage in social and cultural interactions more in the SA setting can benefit more from the programme in terms of developing their proficiency in English as a foreign language. Just like Basma, Ranem’s outcomes in this study are consistent with the learners from the works of Ishida (2010), Holmes and Riddiford (2011), Hutchinson (2009) and Bacon (2002). She was able to benefit significantly from the interactions that she engaged in. Her interview suggested that she was very active in interacting with native speakers while in the United States, which meant that she was able to

practice her English considerably well while in the study abroad environment. As argued by Ishida (2010), it is this experience that actually leads to an increased development of L2 proficiency among students in study abroad programs. Just being in a study abroad program does not guarantee significant gains in L2 learning (Ishida, 2010).

Ranem belongs to the “grades declined” group, which means that her academic performance in the foreign setting was comparably lower than her performance back in Saudi Arabia. This could be the result of various reasons among them are different academic setting, testing system and grading criteria than she is used to in Saudi Arabia. As explained by Anderson (2007), changes in the school systems which may be starkly different from what a student has been used to can lead to negative impacts on the students’ performance. However, there was nothing in the interview transcripts that support this, Ranem seemed very confident about her studies, and did not show any indication that she felt the new environment to have a negative impact on her learning.

Table 81 Ranem categories

Social interaction	Cultural interaction	L2 development	Academic grades
High	High	Improved	Declined

6.7 Reem

There were four different grouping categories that were identified based on quantitative and qualitative outcomes collected. These categories were L2 development (Improved, Declined or Same), grades (Improved, Declined, or Same), social interaction (High or Low), and cultural interaction (High or Low). The presence of Reem in each of these categories is inferred at the end of this profile.

Table 82 is a summary of the average scores achieved by Reem and their relation to the group average in Table 41. The “low”, “high” and “med” labels in brackets refer to Reem’s scores in relation to the group average, i.e. whether they are above (high), corresponding to (med) or below (low) the group average scores. Next to the brackets the participant’s actual marks are given, and in the final column her mean gain score.

Table 82 Reem gain scores in quantitative tests

Selected tests	Pre-SA Average	Post-SA Average	Mean gain score
Elicited Imitation/ General Proficiency	(High) 113	(High) 113	0
Writing	(High) 72	(High) 87	+ 15
Fluency/SPM	(High) 147	(High) 108	-39
Fluency/MLRS	(High) 12	(High) 11	-1
Complexity/ Dependent Clauses	(Low) 13%	(Low) 32%	+ 19
Accuracy/ clauses without errors	(High) 81%	(High) 90%	+ 9

Based on Table 81, Reem is one of the strongest participants in the group in terms of proficiency in the English language. Her scores at the start of the SA program were among the highest across all levels except complexity. By the end of the program, Reem was found to have significant gains in the areas of writing and complexity, but produced a score under fluency (SPM) that was lower than her original score by 39 points. Despite of this, the score was still found to be higher than the group average. These outcomes imply that Reem may not have been able to gain as much from the SA programs as her peers, due to her being more advanced than in terms of English language proficiency from the start.

Table 82 provides the academic performance of Reem in terms of her initial and subsequent proficiency in the target language.

Table 83 Reem's Academic performance

	Pre-SA			Post-SA	
	1 st Test	2 nd Test		1 st Test	2 nd Test
Reading	A	A		A	B
Grammar	A	A		A	D
Writing	A	A		A	D
Listening	B	A		A	A
Speaking	A	A		A	A

Table 84 shows the results of individual analysis of language, whether Reem used English only, Arabic only or a mixture of both for each activity. Also it shows the frequency of each language used for a certain activity, for instance the activity of browsing the internet, Reem's result was E 5+A 4 which means she used English every day and Arabic several times a week according to the 6-point Likert Scale (5- Everyday 4- Several times a week 3- A few times a week, 2 – A couple of times a month, 1- Rarely, 0- Never) that is used in this survey. The sign (X) is used where the participant did not take part in the mentioned activity (Appendix E).

Table 84 Reem LEQ results

Activity	English/Arabic ratio	Activity	English /Arabic ratio
Watch TV	E 2	write Text Messages	E5+A1
Watch Films	E 4	Write reports (Academic)	E 5
Browse the Internet	E5+A4	Write for Leisure (Journal)	X
Networking Sites	E5+A2	Use Instant Messaging	E5+A1
Read Emails	E5+A3	Have Short Phone chat	E5+A5
Write Emails	E3+A3	Have Long Phone chat	E5+A4

Listen to Music	E5+A4	Attend Classes	E 4
Listen to Radio	E 1	Teach a Class	X
Listen to lectures	E 4	Service encounter	E 4
Join in Seminars	E 2	Engage in small Talk	E5+A5
Read Literature	E 2	Engage in Long casual chat	E5+A5
Read Magazines	X	Organised social Activities	E5+A5
Read newspaper	X		
Read academic texts	E 4	Percentage of English use	70.37%
Read text messages	E5+A1	Percentage of Arabic use	31.85%

Table 85 shows Reem's usage of English before and during –SA in five various contexts; university, home, organised free time, general free time and virtual networks (Appendix F).

Table 85 Reem SNQ results

Location	Group Pre-SA Average	Reem Pre-SA Average	Group During-SA Average	Reem During-SA Average
University	18.74%	0.00%	52.93%	75%
Home	11.96%	0.00%	22.22%	0.00%
Organised	2.78%	25.00%	65.45%	100%
General	0.00%	0.00%	26.07%	0.00%
Virtual	30.95%	66.67%	50.35%	0.00%

Table 86 Reem average compared to group average across all tests

	Post-SA General Proficiency	Post- SA Writing	Post-SA Fluency/ SPM	Post-SA Fluency/ MLRS	Post-SA Complexity	Post –SA Accuracy	Arabic in SA	English in SA
Reem	113	87	108	11	32%	90%	31.85%	70.37%
Group	88	85	91	8	40%	84%	46.77%	78.77%

Table 87 shows Reem's social interaction in terms of the friendships she formed in her SA setting. It also shows her pattern of interaction with the host culture and her views on it. Those details were obtained from the during-SA interview and the post-SA interview (Appendix J & K).

Table 87 Reem Social and cultural interaction

CP	No
NS	No
NNS	A girl from New Mexico and a girl from South Korea. They talk in the English Centre sometimes.
Arabic Friends	Ferdos, Nada, Shahd ,and Sheikha
Free time	She spends it with her Arabic speaking friends. They go to cafes, restaurants and shopping together.
Social and cultural interaction	• She attended a speech by Barak Obama at the university hall and she loved the experience. • Attended a hiking class at the centre. • Engages in service encounter in restaurant, supermarkets, shops and the bank when she pays her bills. • Going to the movies several times a week • Listening to English music everyday • Watching American TV a few times a week • Reading English literature a couple of times a month • Rarely Listening to Radio.
Cultural awareness	• Americans are friendly but they cannot be your best friend. • Cultural awareness: "I'd feel like, too bad, they're far away from their homes and families, But many of the minorities stay together and form group together. That's what I noticed. They don't feel that homesick" (3rd interview).
Accommodation	Flat. Father for the first 3 months then she lived alone.

Table 88 Reem's top five people talked to and language used pre-SA

Pre-SA	Lujain(A)	Hamed (A)	Fay (A)	Dania (A)	Atheer(A)
During-SA	Ferdos(A)	Sana (A)	Nada (A)	Salim (A)	Yousif (A)

6.7.1 Profile Details

Reem is an 18-year-old participant who is interested in state of the art electronics gadgets and watching television. She described herself as being independent and a loner who loves spending time alone. Reem has never travelled to the US before, but she did travel to Bahrain and Dubai on vacations. She was escorted by her father to the United States for the first three months but left to live on her own shortly after.

Reem is an above average participant with a pre-SA grade point average (GPA) of 4.93 /5, with the group average being 4.36/5. In Table 41(Ch.5, section 2) Reem rated Speaking, writing, and Grammar as the first, second and third skills that had improved the most and by looking at Table 82 we see that her claim is not supported. She gained the most in grammar, writing and declined in speaking. Based on the results of the quantitative analyses conducted, Reem had excellent English language proficiency in both the pre-and during-SA settings. The accuracy of her grammar was discovered to have further improved in the SA setting, as did the complexity of her sentence structures.

She made use of English considerably more than Arabic across a wide range of activities and settings. Her use of English increased during the SA programme, particularly with regard to her use of English at the university and organised activities. Reem interacted with the culture of the host country and she went the extra mile by enrolling in an elective class on Hiking at the English Centre and she attended a speech by Barak Obama at the university hall. However, she claimed that her interactions with non-Arabs were limited and that she mostly considers them as classmates rather than friends. During the interview, Reem claimed that her vocabulary had improved much from the SA experience. She discussed the utility of her ability to speak in English when taking care of herself in a foreign society. Her English language skills became critically important in doing such things as ordering at a restaurant, grocery shopping, paying bills and other daily activities.

Reem belongs to the “same L2 development” group, she was already found to have a strong L2 background prior to engaging in the SA programme. This background was not significantly further developed during the study period. This is similar to the experience of Fahda, and is consistent with explanations from Mackey and Goo (2007) on why some students no longer benefit significantly from study abroad experiences. Reem was already good and there was no room for extra improvement. As shown from her interview, Reem was already very confident about her ability to communicate with other people in English.

At the same time, Reem belongs to the low social interaction group, which makes the results consistent with the hypothesis that improvement in English language proficiency can be best observed if the participant engaged in high levels of social interaction while in the SA setting. Thus, as argued by Ishida (2010), students like Reem may not have been able to take full advantage of the study abroad setting because of her lack of interaction with locals in the environment. However, as with the other participants, Reem was found to belong to the high cultural interaction group, which means that while she may not have engaged in social interactions considerably, she was still exposed to western culture while in the SA environment. This makes the result contradictory with the premises raised in the studies of Byram (2012) and Gu et al. (2010). These studies, alongside others in the review, supported the effect of cultural interaction on second language development. This result was not apparent from the experience of Reem, who was found to be very interested in American culture based on her interview. However, this may indicate that social interaction just plays a more important role in second language learning than cultural interaction.

Reem belongs to the “grades declined” group, which means that her academic performance in the foreign setting was comparably lower than her performance back in Saudi Arabia. This could be the result of various reasons among them are different academic setting, testing system and grading criteria than she is used to in Saudi Arabia. This reasoning is supported by the work of Anderson (2007) on the potential impacts of differences in educational systems between host and home environments for study abroad students, and is similar to what was experienced by Ranem.

Table 89 Reem Categories

Social interaction	Cultural interaction	L2 development	Academic grades
Low	High	Same	Declined

6.8 Sara

There were four different grouping categories that were identified based on quantitative and qualitative outcomes collected. These categories were L2 development (Improved, Declined or Same), grades (Improved, Declined, or Same), social interaction (High or Low), and cultural interaction (High or Low). The presence of Sara in each of these categories is inferred at the end of this profile.

Table 90 is a summary of the average scores achieved by Sara and their relation to the group average in Table 41. The “low”, “high” and “med” labels in brackets refer to Sara’s scores in relation to the group average, i.e. whether they are above (high), corresponding to (med) or below (low) the group average scores. Next to the brackets the participant’s actual marks are given, and in the final column her mean gain score.

Table 90 Sara’s gain scores in quantitative tests

Selected tests	Pre-SA Average	Post-SA Average	Mean gain score
Elicited Imitation/ General Proficiency	(High) 77	(High) 94	+17
Writing	(High) 74	(High) 94	+ 20
Fluency/SPM	(High) 116	(High) 128	+12
Fluency/MLRS	(High) 9	(Low) 7	-2
Complexity/ Dependent Clauses	(Low) 18%	(Low) 23%	+ 5%
Accuracy/ clauses without errors	(High) 94%	(High) 95%	+ 1%

Similar to Reem, Sara was also found to have high proficiency scores even prior to engaging in the SA program. Also similar to Reem, all of her scores nonetheless improved except for MLRS, which decreased by 2 points. Sara’s scores indicate that she likewise belongs to the group who were not able to gain as much from the SA experience than others, although it must be understood that she already had considerable proficiency in the English language to begin with.

Table 91 provides the academic performance of Sara in terms of her initial and subsequent proficiency in the target language.

Table 91 Sara's Academic performance

	Pre-SA			Post-SA	
	1 st Test	2 nd Test		1 st Test	2 nd Test
Reading	B	A		B	U
Grammar	B	C		B	D
Writing	B	C		A	D
Listening	A	A		B	B
Speaking	A	A		B	B

Table 92 shows the results of individual analysis of language, whether Sara used English only, Arabic only or a mixture of both for each activity. Also it shows the frequency of each language used for a certain activity, for instance the activity of browsing the internet, Sara's result was E5+A4 which means she used English every day and Arabic several times a week according to the 6-point Likert Scale (5- Everyday 4- Several times a week 3- A few times a week, 2 – A couple of times a month, 1- Rarely, 0- Never) that is used in this survey. The sign (X) is used where the participant did not take part in the mentioned activity (Appendix E).

Table 92 Sara's LEQ results

Activity	English/Arabic ratio	Activity	English/Arabic ratio
Watch TV	E 4	write Text Messages	E5+A5
Watch Films	E 2	Write reports (Academic)	E 2
Browse the Internet	E5+A4	Write for Leisure	X
Networking Sites	E5+A5	Use Instant Messaging	E1+A4
Read Emails	E5+A4	Have Short Phone Chat	E4+A1
Write Emails	E5+A2	Have Long Phone Chat	E 5
Listen to Music	E 5	Attend Classes	E 5

Listen to Radio	E 1	Teach a Class	E 1
Listen to lectures	E 4	Service encounter	E 1
Join in Seminars	E 4	Engage in small Talk	E5+A5
Read Literature	E 3	Engage long casual chat	E5+A4
Read Magazines	E 3	Organised Activities	E4+A2
Read newspaper	X	English in SA setting	68.88%
Read academic texts	E 4	Arabic in SA setting	30.37%
Read text messages	E5+A5		

Table 93 shows Sara's usage of English before and during-SA in five various contexts; university, home, organised free time, general free time and virtual networks (Appendix F).

Table 93 Sara's SNQ results

Location	Group Pre-SA Average	Sara pre-SA Average	Group During-SA Average	Sara During-SA Average
University	18.74%	100%	52.93%	100%
Home	11.96%	0.00%	22.22%	0.00%
Organised	2.78%	0.00%	65.45%	100%
General	0.00%	0.00%	26.07%	100%
Virtual	30.95%	100%	50.35%	100%

Table 94 Sara's average compared to group average across all tests

	Post-SA General Proficiency	Post-SA Writing	Post-SA Fluency/ SPM	Post-SA Fluency/ MLRS	Post-SA Complexity	Post-SA Accuracy	Arabic in SA	English in SA
Sara	94	94	128	7	23%	95%	30.37%	68.88%
Group	88	85	91	8	40%	84%	46.77%	78.77%

Table 95 shows Sara's social interaction in terms of the friendships she formed in her SA setting. It also shows her pattern of interaction with the host culture and her views on it. Those details were obtained from the during-SA interview and the post-SA interview (Appendix J & K).

Table 95 Sara's Social and cultural interaction

CP	No
NS	One American friend whose mother is from Japan and his father is American. Still on Facebook post-SA
NNS	• Many Asian students especially Japan and Korean. • She considers Asians as her friends but the native speakers are just people she knows. The friendship continues post-SA.
Arabic Friends	Some Arabic friend.
Free time	• Spent it with her NS and NNS friends going to Denver, SeaWorld and to downtown. • She goes for a walk or shopping with her mom. • Goes out sometimes with her Arab friends but not much.
Social and cultural interaction	• Volunteering with a farming project to help people. • Engages in service encounter in restaurant, supermarkets, shops and the bank when she pays her bills. • She does all the talking for her parents because they do not speak English. • Casual short chats with NS at downtown Boulder. • Going to the movies couple of times • Reading English magazines a few times a week • Listening to English music every day • Watching American TV several times a week • Reading English literature a few times a week • Rarely listening to radio talk
Cultural awareness	• Americans are friendly and easy going and did not make her feel like a stranger in the SA setting. • Cultural awareness: "When I'm walking in the street now in Saudi and see a foreigner, I think, "Does he feel like a stranger here? Does he feel lonely? I try to interact with them normally" (3rd interview).
Accommodation	Living with parents in a flat

Table 96 Sara's top five people talked to and language used

Pre-SA	Munera(A)	Noor (A)	Maha (A)	Reem (A)	Nada (A)
During-SA	Zack (E)	Hisami (E)	Chang (E)	Taki (E)	Bayan (A)

6.8.1 Profile Details

Sara is 19-year-old and is interested in languages, photography, and digital imagery. She claimed to be able to speak Japanese well. Sara has never travelled to the US before, but she did travel to Qatar, UAE, Bahrain, Oman and Syria on vacations. She was escorted by her parents throughout her stay in the programme.

Sara is a below average participant with a pre-SA grade point average (GPA) of 4.25 /5, with the group average being 4.36/5. In Table 41(Ch.5, section 2) Sara rated Speaking, Writing, and Reading as the first, second and third skills that had improved the most and by looking at Table 90 we see that her claim is not supported. She gained the most in writing, speaking and grammar. Based on quantitative analysis, Sara's English language proficiency improved during the SA programme, she displayed accurate use of the language in both pre-and during-SA settings, but her sentence structures became more complex during SA.

She used English constantly across different settings and more than Arabic in a wide range of activities. During her interview, she discussed that she needed to improve her vocabulary while in the SA setting, as this seemed to be where she was weakest. Her use of English increased during the SA programme, particularly with regard to her use of English at the university, general activities, organised activities and virtual but she used Arabic exclusively at home with her parents. Sara interacted with the culture of the host country and she went the extra mile by participating in a volunteering program and by initiating contact whenever she goes down town with her mother. She had an American friend and non-native friends and she went out with them in a group. She claimed that she interacted with both Arabs and non-Arabs but she befriended non-native speakers and native speakers. In the interview, Sara discussed the usefulness of her ability to speak in English when taking care of her family who came with her, since neither her mother nor her father spoke English. She discussed how her English language skills became critically

important in doing such things as renting an apartment, paying utility bills, ordering at a restaurant, grocery shopping, and other activities.

Sara belongs to the “improved L2” group indicating that she benefitted from the SA programme in terms of developing her English language proficiency. At the same time, she belongs to the high social interaction and the high cultural interaction groups, indicating that Sara was able to absorb the society and culture at the SA environment considerably. As such, she is an exemplar of the research hypothesis forwarded in this study, which is that students who are able to engage in social and cultural interactions more in the SA setting can benefit more from the programme in terms of developing their proficiency in English as a foreign language.

Like Basma and Ranem, Sara’s outcomes are consistent with the expectation of the impact of social interaction as drawn from the results of different studies (Ishida, 2010; Holmes and Riddiford, 2011; Hutchinson, 2009; Bacon, 2002). As previously explained in the profiles of Basma and Ranem, these studies support the idea that what adds value to study abroad programs in helping students develop stronger proficiency in target L2s are the opportunities for frequent interaction with native speakers of the target language which can be experienced in study abroad settings.

Sara belongs to the “grades declined” group, which means that her academic performance in the foreign setting was comparably lower than her performance back in Saudi Arabia. This could be the result of various reasons among them are a different academic setting, testing system and grading criteria than she is used to in Saudi Arabia, as supported in the work of Anderson (2007) and as similarly experienced by Ranem and Reem.

Table 97 Sara's categories

Social interaction	Cultural interaction	L2 development	Academic grades
High	High	Improved	Declined

6.9 Shahd

There were four different grouping categories that were identified based on quantitative and qualitative outcomes collected. These categories were L2 development (Improved, Declined or Same), grades (Improved, Declined, or Same), social interaction (High or Low), and cultural interaction (High or Low). The presence of Shahd in each of these categories is inferred at the end of this profile.

Table 98 is a summary of the average scores achieved by Shahd and their relation to the group average in Table 41. The “low”, “high” and “med” labels in brackets refer to Shahd’s scores in relation to the group average, i.e. whether they are above (high), corresponding to (med) or below (low) the group average scores. Next to the brackets the participant’s actual marks are given, and in the final column her mean gain score.

Table 98 Shahd’s gain scores in quantitative tests

Selected tests	Pre-SA Average	Post -SA Average	Mean gain score
Elicited Imitation/ General Proficiency	(Low) 54	(Low) 78	+ 24
Writing	(Low) 65	(Low) 77	+12
Fluency/SPM	(Low) 88	(Low) 58	-30
Fluency/MLRS	(Low) 5	(Low) 4	-1
Complexity/ Dependent Clauses	(Low) 15%	(Low) 36%	+21%
Accuracy/ clauses without errors	(Med) 80%	(High) 85%	+5%

Shahd’s scores based on Table 98 were classified as being lower than the group average across all but the accuracy aspect, where it was found that she scores similarly with the average in the pre SA measurement and higher than average in the post SA measurement. Like Basma, Shahd’s scores indicate that she was able to gain from the SA experience, but her gains did not enable her to overtake the proficiency of her peers in the program.

Table 99 provides the academic performance of Shahd in terms of her initial and subsequent proficiency in the target language.

Table 99 Shahd Academic performance

	Pre-SA			Post-SA	
	1 st Test	2 nd Test		1 st Test	2 nd Test
Reading	A	A		A	A
Grammar	A	B		A	A
Writing	A	A		A	B
Listening	A	B		B	B
Speaking	A	A		B	B

Table 100 shows the results of individual analysis of language, whether Shahd used English only, Arabic only or a mixture of both for each activity. Also it shows the frequency of each language used for a certain activity, for instance the activity of browsing the internet, Shahd's result was E5+A5 which means she used English every day and Arabic everyday according to the 6-point Likert Scale (5- Everyday 4- Several times a week 3- A few times a week, 2 – A couple of times a month, 1- Rarely, 0- Never) that is used in this survey. The sign (X) is used where the participant did not take part in the mentioned activity (Appendix E).

Table 100 Shahd's LEQ results

Activity	English/Arabic ratio	Activity	English /Arabic ratio
Watch TV	E3+A3	write Text Messages	E5+A5
Watch Films	E2+A2	Write reports (Academic)	E4+A1
Browse the Internet	E5+A5	Write for Leisure	E3+A1
Networking Sites	E5+A5	Use Instant Messaging	E3+A2
Read Emails	E5+A5	Have Short Phone Chat	E4+A5
Write Emails	E5+A5	Have Long Phone Chat	E5+A5
Listen to Music	E5+A5	Attend Classes	E 5

Listen to Radio	E 1	Teach a Class	E 1
Listen to lectures	E 1	Service encounter	E 1
Join in Seminars	E1+A1	Engage in small Talk	E4+A5
Read Literature	E1+A1	Engage in Long casual chat	E4+A4
Read Magazines	E1+A1	Organised social Activities	E 2
Read newspaper	E1+A1		
Read academic texts	E3+A1	Percentage of English use	62.96%
Read text messages	E5+A5	Percentage of Arabic use	50.37%

Table 101 shows Shahd's usage of English before and during SA in five various contexts; university, home, organised free time, general free time and virtual networks (Appendix F).

Table 101 Shahd's SNQ results

Location	Group Pre-SA Average	Shahd Pre-SA Average	Group During-SA Average	Shahd During-SA Average
University	18.74%	21.43%	52.93%	55.56%
Home	11.96%	0.00%	22.22%	0.00%
Organised	2.78%	0.00%	65.45%	0.00%
General	0.00%	0.00%	26.07%	0.00%
Virtual	30.95%	0.00%	50.35%	62.50%

Table 102 Shahd average compared to group average in all tests

	Post-SA General Proficiency	Post-SA Writing	Post-SA Fluency/ SPM	Post-SA Fluency/ MLRS	Post-SA Complexity	Post-SA Accuracy	Arabic in SA	English in SA
Shahd	78	77	58	4	36%	85%	50.37%	62.96%
Group	88	85	91	8	40%	84%	46.77%	78.77%

Table 103 shows Shahd's social interaction in terms of the friendships she formed in her SA setting. It also shows her pattern of interaction with the host

culture and her views on it. Those details were obtained from the during-SA interview and the post-SA interview (Appendix J & K).

Table 103 Shahd's Social and cultural interaction

CP	No
NS	Three older American ladies. • She visited Joanna at her house with her friends. And they till communicate via social media and phone post-SA • Initiated contact with Heidi, a lady in her building, and visited her and brought Arabic coffee. • Formed a friendship with a teacher at the center and seeks her out to talk whenever the teacher is free.
NNS	She talked to a Korean girl in her classroom.
Arabic Friends	Saudis mostly.
Free time	• Spends a lot of her free time watching American TV with her brother at home. • On weekends she goes out with her Arab friends.
Social+ cultural interaction	• Engages in service encounter in restaurant, supermarkets, shops and the bank when she pays her bills. • Looking and renting an apartment, engaging with realtors and sorting out the required paper work. • Initiate conversations with her NS neighbors. • Going to the movies couple of times a month • Rarely reading English magazines • Listening to English music every day • Watching American TV a few times a week • Rarely reading English literature • Rarely listening to radio talk • Rarely reading English news paper
Cultural awareness	• Americans are friendly and they respect the opinions of others. • Americans are not organized. • Cleanliness in public bathrooms and public places is missing. • America is country number one in the world and the poverty rate is very high and most people's income here is limited. • Cultural awareness: "I think foreigners in Saudi feel more homesick than I was in the US because I went there in comfort and returned in comfort. Perhaps I empathize with them more now because I've experiences being away from home but in the matter of respect, I've always respected them, it doesn't matter what their nationalities are"(2nd interview)
Accommodation	Flat with younger brother the whole time

Table 104 Shahd's top five people talked to and language used

Pre-SA	Ebtihal (A)	Lamya (A)	Lujan (A)	Afnan (A)	Nada (A)
During-SA	Shika (A)	Eman (A)	Monera(A)	Reem (A)	Nada (A)

6.9.1 Profile Details

Shahd is 21-year-old participant who described herself as ambitious and responsible. She has never travelled to the US before, but she did travel to Qatar, UAE, Bahrain and Egypt on vacations. She was escorted by her younger brother throughout the SA programme in the US.

Shahd is a below average participant with a pre-SA grade point average (GPA) of 4.7/5, with the group average being 4.36/5. In Table 41 (Ch.5, section 2) Shahd rated Speaking, Reading, and Writing as the first, second and third skills that had improved the most and by looking at Table 98 we see that her claim is not supported. She gained the most in Grammar, Writing and declined in Speaking. Based on the results of quantitative analysis, Shahd's English language proficiency improved during the SA programme. The rate at which she committed grammatical errors decreased, although the complexity of her sentences showed no improvement.

She made use of both English and Arabic across different activities, not having any significant preference between the two. Her use of English increased during the SA programme, particularly with regard to her use of English at the university and virtual activities but she used Arabic exclusively at home with her brother.

Shahd interacted with the culture of the host country and she went the extra mile by initiating contact with native speakers. She befriended three older ladies in her building so as to practise her English with them through mutual visits. She looked for opportunities to engage in chats with her teachers outside the classroom during the break. She claimed to have been able to make both Arab and non-Arab friends during her time abroad.

In the interview, Shahd discussed the usefulness of her ability to speak in English when taking care of herself and of her brother. She discussed how her English language skills became critically important in doing such things as renting an apartment, paying utility bills, ordering at a restaurant, grocery shopping, and other activities. Shahd discussed that having no opportunity to use Arabic was an important element in improving

her English language skills, and that if she had had nobody to talk Arabic with she believed that she could have improved her English language skills even further.

Shahd belongs to the “improved L2” group indicating that she benefitted from the SA programme in terms of developing her English language proficiency. At the same time, she belongs to the high social interaction and the high cultural interaction groups, indicating that she was able to absorb the society and culture at the SA environment considerably. As such, Shahd is an exemplar of the research hypothesis forwarded in this study, which is that students who are able to engage in social and cultural interactions more in the SA setting can benefit more from the programme in terms of developing their proficiency in English as a foreign language. Her experience is similar to those of Basma, Ranem, and Sara, and supports the conclusions drawn from the works of Ishida (2010), Holmes and Riddiford (2011), Hutchinson (2009), and Bacon (2002). That is, she was able to maximize her L2 proficiency gains in the study abroad setting through interacting with native speakers found locally in the environment. By speaking with these people on a constant basis, Shahd was able to develop a greater understanding of the English language that is geared towards practical, everyday use. This showcased the advantage that study abroad students had in learning a second language.

Shahd belongs to the “grades declined” group, which means that her academic performance in the foreign setting was slightly lower than her performance back in Saudi Arabia. This could be the result of various reasons among them is a different academic setting, testing system and grading criteria than she is used to in Saudi Arabia , and has been found to be similar to experiences of other students, such as Ranem, Reem, and Sara. The similarity in their experiences support the inferences from Anderson (2007) regarding the impact that differences in the school systems between host and home countries may have on study abroad students’ academic performance.

Table 105 Shahd categories

Social interaction	Cultural interaction	L2 development	Academic grades
High	High	Improved	Declined

Shatha

There were four different grouping categories that were identified based on quantitative and qualitative outcomes collected. These categories were L2 development (Improved, Declined or Same), grades (Improved, Declined, or Same), social interaction (High or Low), and cultural interaction (High or Low). The presence of Shatha in each of these categories is inferred at the end of this profile.

Table 106 is a summary of the average scores achieved by Shatha and their relation to the group average in Table 41. The “low”, “high” and “med” labels in brackets refer to Shatha’s scores in relation to the group average, i.e. whether they are above (high), corresponding to (med) or below (low) the group average scores. Next to the brackets the participant’s actual marks are given, and in the final column her mean gain score.

Table 106 Shatha’s gain scores in quantitative tests

Selected tests	Pre-SA Average	Post -SA Average	Mean gain score
Elicited Imitation/ General Proficiency	(High) 74	(High) 94	+17
Writing	(Low) 55	(Low) 74	+19
Fluency/SPM	(Low) 83	(High) 99	+16
Fluency/MLRS	(High) 14	(High) 9	-5
Complexity/ Dependent Clauses	(Low) 20%	(Low) 30%	+10%
Accuracy/ clauses without errors	(High) 83%	(Med) 84%	+1%

Based on Table 106, Shatha was found to have higher scores in all except one aspect of English language proficiency in the post SA measurement (MLRS). Most notably, it was found that Shatha relatively improved her SPM score in comparison with the others in the study; from having a score that was lower than the group average before the program, she was able to obtain a score that was higher than average after the program. As such, Shatha can be classified as being among the participants who were able to gain the most from the SA program.

Table 107 provides the academic performance of Shatha in terms of her initial and subsequent proficiency in the target language.

Table 107 Shatha's Academic performance

	Pre-SA			Post-SA	
	1 st Test	2 nd Test		1 st Test	2 nd Test
Reading	B	B		A	C
Grammar	A	A		B	B
Writing	B	B		A	B
Listening	A	A		B	B
Speaking	A	A		B	B

Table 108 shows the results of individual analysis of language, whether Shatha used English only, Arabic only or a mixture of both for each activity. Also it shows the frequency of each language used for a certain activity, for instance the activity of browsing the internet, Shatha's result was E5+A 2 which means she used English every day and Arabic couple of times a month according to the 6-point Likert Scale (5- Everyday 4- Several times a week 3- A few times a week, 2 – A couple of times a month, 1- Rarely, 0- Never) that is used in this survey. The sign (X) is used where the participant did not take part in the mentioned activity (Appendix E).

Table 108 Shatha's LEQ results

Activity	English/Arabic ratio	Activity	English /Arabic ratio
Watch TV	E 1	write Text Messages	E5+A1
Watch Films	E2+A1	Write reports (Academic)	E 2
surf the Internet	E5+A2	Write for Leisure (Journal)	E 1
Networking Sites	E 5	Use Instant Messaging	E5+A1
Read Emails	E5+A5	Have Short Phone Chat	E5+A5
Write Emails	E3+A3	Have Long Phone Chat	E4+A5
Listen to Music	E5+A5	Attend Classes	E 5

Listen to Radio	E 4	Teach a Class	X
Listen to lectures	E 4	Service encounter	E3+A1
Join in Seminars	E 2	Engage in small Talk	E4+A5
Read Literature	E 4	Engage in Long casual chat	E4+A5
Read Magazines	E4+A1	Organised social Activities	E 1
Read newspaper	E 4		
Read academic texts	E 5	Percentage English Use	71.85%
Read text messages	E5+A5	Percentage Arabic use	33.33%

Table 109 shows Shatha's usage of English before and during SA in five various contexts; university, home, organised free time, general free time and virtual networks (Appendix F).

Table 109 Shatha's SNQ results

Location	Group Pre-SA Average	Shatha Pre-SA Average	Group During-SA Average	Shatha During-SA Average
University	18.74%	28.57%	52.93%	100%
Home	11.96%	60.00%	22.22%	100%
Organised	2.78%	0.00%	65.45%	100%
General	0.00%	0.00%	26.07%	66.00%
Virtual	30.95%	50.00%	50.35%	68.00%

Table 110 Shatha's average compared to group's average in all tests

	Post-SA General Proficiency	Post-SA Writing	Post-SA Fluency/SPM	Post-SA Fluency/MLRS	Post-SA Complexity	Post-SA Accuracy	Arabic in SA	English in SA
Shatha	94	74	99	9	30%	84%	33.33%	71.85%
Group	88	85	91	8	40%	84%	46.77%	78.77%

Table 111 shows Shatha's social interaction in terms of the friendships she formed in her SA setting. It also shows her pattern of interaction with the host culture and her

views on it. Those details were obtained from the during-SA interview and the post-SA interview (Appendix J & K).

Table 111 Shatha's Social and cultural interaction

CP	No
NV	Four
NNS	No
Arabic Friends	Basma, Fahda, Hussein, Abdulatif. Mariam, Munera, and Eman.
Free time	• She spends time with her American friends alongside her Arabic friends. They go out together in one group and speak in English. • She spends time with her Arabic speaking friends and they go out together to movies and restaurants.
Social and cultural interaction	• Volunteered with a farming project to help people. • Participated in various activities such as hiking, shooting, indoor climbing, biking, snowboarding, ice skating, basketball games, bowling, and cheerleading events. • Engages in service encounter in restaurant, supermarkets, shops and the bank when she pays her bills. • Went to the movies a couple of times a month. • Read English magazines several times a week. • Listened to English songs every day. • Rarely Watched American TV • Read English literature several times a week • Listened to American radio several times a week. • Read English newspapers several times a week.
Cultural interaction in English during-SA	• Americans are really friendly and they really try to understand what you are trying to tell them. • Cultural awareness: "I'm doing volunteer work now in Saudi to fill my time. Also, in America there were a lot of people volunteering and that encouraged me to do the same here" (3rd interview).
Accommodation	Shared a flat with two Saudi girls from the SA programme

Table 112 Shatha's top five people talked to and language used

Pre-SA	Noura(A)	Mukhtar (A)	Noor (A)	Mother (A)	Father (A)
During-SA	Noura (A)	Hussain (A)	Rana (A)	Elena (E)	William (E)

6.9.2 Profile Details

Shatha is a 20-year-old participant whose interests include reading, watching movies, and talking about history. She described herself as a free spirit who loves socializing with other people and is a great listener. She travelled to Turkey, Dubai, Egypt, Lebanon and the US on vacations with her family. Shatha arrived at the SA setting with her father who served as her escort for one week and helped her settle in the new environment. During the SA programme, she lived with two fellow research participants, Basma and Fahda.

Shatha is a below-average participant with a pre-SA grade point average (GPA) of 4.28 /5, with the group average being 4.36/5.

Table 40 (Ch.5,section 2) shows that Shatha rated Speaking, Reading, and Writing as the first, second and third skills that had improved the most and by looking at Table 106 we see that her claim is not supported. She gained the most in Writing, Speaking and Grammar. Based on the quantitative analyses conducted, Shatha's English language proficiency improved in during the SA programme. Even before the programme, her grammatical errors were already minimal. However, the complexity of her sentence structures improved noticeably.

She made use of English more than Arabic across a wide range of activities and settings. Her use of English increased extensively during the SA programme, particularly with regard to her use of English in general activities, organised activities and university.

Shatha interacted with the culture of the host country and she went the extra mile at the English Centre and enrolled in optional classes that centred on American culture, hiking and indoor rock climbing, all of which were sports that she was not familiar with in Saudi. She also joined a farming volunteering programme and was really excited about it. Shatha claimed to have made friends with both Arabs and non-Arabs during her stay in the United States.

During her interview, she described her interaction with American people and culture as interesting, and she remarked that settings where she had to interact with native

speakers forced her to make use of her English, and this meant that she became more focused on improving her English so that she would be ready to use it when the need arose. She discussed how her English language skills became critically important in doing such things as renting an apartment, paying utility bills, ordering at a restaurant, grocery shopping, and other activities

Shatha belongs to the “improved L2” development group. At the same time, she belongs to the high social interaction and the high cultural interaction groups, indicating that Shatha was able to absorb the society and culture at the SA environment considerably. As such, she is an exemplar of the research hypothesis forwarded in this study, which is that students who are able to engage in social and cultural interactions more in the SA setting can benefit more from the programme in terms of developing their proficiency in English as a foreign language. Her experience is classified similarly as many other participants in the study, specifically Basma, Ranem, Sara, and Shahd, and further strengthens the position that social interaction can have a considerable impact on the language learning of study abroad students (Ishida, 2010; Holmes & Riddiford, 2011; Hutchinson, 2009; Bacon, 2002).

On the other hand, Shatha also belongs to the “declining grades” group, which means that her grades went down compared to her grades in Saudi Arabia. The decline could be the result of various reasons among them are a different academic setting, testing system and grading criteria than she is used to in Saudi Arabia. This result, which was similarly experienced by Ranem, Reem, Sara, and Shatha, support the perspective of Anderson (2007) on the effect that differences in school systems between home and host countries may have on study abroad students’ academic performance. These students may not have easily gotten used to the American learning environment, which was been described in their interviews as very different from what they experienced in Saudi Arabia. As such, this could have led to the decline of their grades.

Table 113 Shatha's categories

Social interaction	Cultural interaction	L2 development	Academic grades
High	High	Improved	Declined

Chapter 7: Discussion and Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This study aimed to investigate three research questions:

- 1.) To what extent were female Saudi Arabian SA participants able to develop proficiency and confidence in the use of the English language?
- 2.) What are the cultural and social interactions experienced by female Saudi Arabian participants while studying abroad?
- 3.) Can any variations in the gains in English language proficiency among female Saudi Arabian SA participants be explained with reference to different social and cultural interaction experiences?

In order to examine all three research questions, chapter one introduced the continuing debate in the field of second language learning on the value of SA programmes in helping learners develop proficiency in their target language, in most cases English (Collentine, 2009, Kinginger 2011; Llanes 2011; Anderson, 2007; Meara, 1994; Freed et al., 1998). The common argument is that since SA programmes expose learners to social and cultural settings where the target language is dominant, they will be more likely to become proficient in the target language than if they studied it only in their native countries. Considerable studies across different contexts and settings have been conducted in relation to this debate. While most studies, including e.g. Collentine (2009), Kinginger (2011), and Llanes (2011), indicate overall benefits for learners studying abroad, some studies, such as Meara (1994) and Freed et al. (1998) have put forward the argument that simply studying abroad is insufficient to ensure effective language learning. It would thus appear that despite the overall agreement on some benefits of SA, more precise information on the specific factors affecting the individual learning outcomes, which are often reported to be variable (Rivers, 1998; Wilkinson, 1998; Sasaki, 2011; Rees & Klapper, 2007), is needed. Thus, there remains a gap in literature as

to what particular factors in a foreign setting, if any, influence the effectiveness of second language learning.

In chapter two, existing literature on various themes that are relevant to the study, were explored in order to develop an understanding of what is presently known in the area and of any gaps in literature and to develop a theoretical framework for the study. These themes include the development of SA programmes for second language learning, the impact of social interactions on language learning, the impact of cultural interaction on language learning, the development of linguistic aspects of language proficiency by SA L2 Learners, a discussion of factors that affect SA L2 learning success, ESL learning among Saudi Arabian females, and the nature of social and cultural interaction for Saudi Arabian females.

Chapter three addressed the methodology and data collection used while conducting this research including a description of the fieldwork administration in both settings, KSA and USA. The three types of research methods adopted to examine the three research questions are: pre- and post-tests, interviews, and surveys. A case study approach was used, in which a specific group of SA students from Saudi Arabia, namely female language students, was considered as the case of interest in the study. All of the data gathered from the study were obtained from the members of this group. The data collected was analysed to develop answers to the three research questions in chapters 4-6.

In this chapter, the discussion chapter, I will discuss the results of the study by addressing the answers to each research question from the empirical study and relating this to extant literature. This chapter is intended to relate the outcomes of this study with results from other studies that were previously reviewed in order to identify both consistencies and inconsistencies between these outcomes and the results of previous studies. Furthermore, this chapter seeks to critically examine the strengths and weaknesses of this study, in terms of addressing its research objectives, and to identify aspects of such objectives that may not have been sufficiently addressed by the present research. This can serve as the motivation for future research, building on the outcomes that were reached in this study.

First, this chapter examines evidence of L2 learning gains that were achieved by the research participants in the SA setting. Following this, I will proceed to examine the different social and cultural interactions that the participants engaged in while being in the

programme. Finally, the last sections of this chapter examine evidence on the impacts of social and cultural interaction on students L2 learning as well as on their SA experiences in general.

7.2 L2 Learning in SA Setting

This study found considerable evidence supporting the argument that immersion in an L2 SA setting leads to improved proficiency in a second language. As such, the first research question of this study is explicitly answered by the following findings. First, statistically significant improvement was found in the students' general proficiency, accuracy, and complexity of English language use. In particular, the students were able to reduce the grammatical errors in their use of the language by 5% (see section 4.4), and were found to be able to construct more complex sentence structures following their immersion in the SA setting. These results are consistent with various studies reviewed (Taguchi, 2011a; Taguchi, 2011b; Masuda, 2011; Rubio, 2003; Fitzpatrick, 2012). In line with Taguchi (2011), this study found a gradual improvement of L2 proficiency, which is reflected by the two to three time periods in which each of the proficiency measures were conducted. Also reflected from the results of the study is the participants' improved practical ability to make use of the English language across different settings. This can be inferred from their significantly increased use of the language in different settings, as well as from their improvement in various practical speaking and writing assessments provided during the study. Specifically, students were found to make use of English almost exclusively (over 90%) when attending classes, expressing themselves in class, and listening to lectures, and used English more frequently (over 60%) than Arabic across a wide range of social and cultural activities that they engaged in while in the United States, such as listening to the radio, watching films and television, reading books and newspapers, and surfing the internet. Again, this is consistent with reviewed literature, which has emphasized the value of the SA setting in terms of providing students with an environment where they need to be able to learn the language in order for them to function effectively not just inside the educational setting, but also outside in the wider environment where the L2 that they are learning is the native language (Taguchi, 2011a; Masuda, 2011; Rubio, 2003; Fitzpatrick, 2012). Evidence of this was found not just in the quantitative element of the study, but also in the qualitative one, where the students in their interviews consistently emphasised that their development of L2 proficiency was aided by their

exposure to the English-speaking environment, and the necessity of using English to engage in various everyday activities effectively.

However, not all of the performance measures used in the study yielded significant change in the students' performance before and following their SA. Specifically, the measures of SPM and MLRS were found to be statistically similar in the pre- and the post-SA measures. As discussed in the methodology, both SPM and MLRS are popular measures of fluency (Kormos & Dénes, 2004; Muñoz, 2006; Long, 2012). Both of these measures are based on the assumption that a student who has learned the language well can typically speak faster in the language, thereby being able to utter more syllables per minute and to increase the mean number of syllables uttered per minute. In fact, many other studies have suggested that fluency is expected to improve for students immersed in the SA setting (Cadd, 2012; Tanaka & Ellis, 2003; Martinsen, 2011), making this result somewhat unexpected.

There are various possible reasons for the lack of improvement in fluency in the student cohort investigated here. Firstly, it is not completely unheard of for fluency measures to remain static in SA. In Wilkinson (1998), which, similarly to this study, involved a small number of women as participants, found that significant gains in fluency were not achieved. While a majority of studies on L2 learning in SA settings do claim improvements in fluency, it is important to consider possible reasons why such a benefit is not always achieved. As argued by Segalowitz et al. (2004), learning L2 in a SA setting is not a guarantee of successful results. In this study, the qualitative data from the students adds another dimension to these findings, since in the interviews respondents highlight their perception of improvement in their own fluency in English. Many of the respondents discussed how they felt more confident about their use of the language, and how they were able to express themselves better in it after the SA experience. They discussed how they no longer had to translate from Arabic to English in their mind before uttering what they wanted to say because the ideas formed in English more naturally. As such, this study shows that the measures used in examining L2 proficiency are very important in determining evidence of gains in L2 learning. Specifically, one consideration that can explain the lack of statistical difference in the SPM and MLRS scores taken in the pre- and post-SA setting is the effect of repetition on the length of students' responses. While SPM and MLRS are valid measures of fluency, their outputs are highly dependent on the total length of participants' output. SPM measures syllables per minute, which implies that the

more syllables a respondent is able to utter within a minute, the higher the fluency score of that respondent will be. Similarly, the mean length run in syllables also tends to be high when the participant is very talkative during its measurement. As a consequence, if the participant has low input in the first place, then both SPM and MLRS scores will also turn out low. In this study, the students were presented the same picture to be described in the pre-and post-setting, and their description became the basis of measurement for SPM and MLRS. The reasoning behind this was that after immersion in the SA setting, it is expected that the students' vocabulary in English would have increased significantly, and so they would be able to describe the picture in much greater detail than they did in the pre-SA setting. However, what was not accounted for was the possibility that the students would become too familiar with the task, that when it is presented to them a second time, they would not describe it in much greater detail because they had already provided some descriptions during the first time that they underwent the assessment and so are less likely to repeat the same descriptions. This is evidenced by comparing the total volume of syllables in the pre-and post-setting, which reveals that; overall, the students spoke fewer syllables in the post-SA setting than they did in the pre-SA setting. Thus, even if the students were able to speak faster during the post SA setting, the decrease in the volume of words that they spoke can be considered to have affected their SPM and MLRS scores.

This repetition is different from that which was observed in De Jong and Perfetti (2011), where it was found that repetition helped increase fluency. In that setting, repetition was found to improve fluency because it allowed the students to improve their spoken output, adding more dimensions to it which were not present in their previous recitations. On the other hand, in this study, the students were asked to describe the same picture for the pre-test and the post-test, without indication of how they should describe it, or of whether or not they should repeat descriptions that they had already made about it in the past. Some of the students chose not to describe the picture in greater detail or even at the same level of detail that they did in the pre-test, and one reason for this may be that they believed they had already given the same description in that pre-test so there was no need for them to repeat it.

Another possible reason for the problems encountered in using SPM and MLRS to measure fluency is that the concept of fluency itself has been subject to debate (see Luoma 2004). According to various studies, it is difficult to define fluency precisely because of the subjective element involved when asking a participant to discuss a topic with the intention

of measuring the volume of the participant's speech with respect to another variable such as time (Fulcher, 2003; Lennon, 2000). Finally, it is also important to consider that the level of fluency of any individual through measurement using SPM or MLRS must have a ceiling cap. As such, it is also possible that the participants in the study already had high SPM and MLRS to begin with, thereby not being capable of improving these in the post-SA test any longer.

Each of these factors affects the reliability of SPM and MLRS as measures of fluency in this study. While I considered these instruments as valid measures based on support from literature, I understand that the context of my research, including the nature of my respondents, may have affected the efficacy of these instruments in providing a good measure of fluency. Nonetheless, evidence gathered apart from the SPM and MLRS scores do show that the students achieved remarkable improvement in their English proficiency following their immersion in the SA setting. More importantly, the evidence showed that the students became more capable not just of using grammatical rules correctly, but in applying such rules in simulations of conversations as well as in writing. This shows that the impact of SA is evidence in the specific case of female Saudi Arabian participants learning English as a second language that adds to what is known regarding which L1 backgrounds are able to gain from studying English as a second language abroad. At the same time, it was found that the students became more confident in the use of English in the SA setting over time; as they used English more in various practical aspects outside of school, they became more used to the language, and speaking in the language became more natural for them. This covers the first research question of this study, which sought to examine the extent to which female Saudi Arabian SA participants are able to develop proficiency and confidence in the use of the English language.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that female Saudi Arabian SA participants were able to develop both significant levels of proficiency and confidence in the use of the English language while immersed in the SA environment. Thus the evidence clearly suggests that the SA environment can be considered as an ideal setting for female Saudi Arabian students to learn English as a second language.

7.3 Social and Cultural Interaction in SA Setting

This section deals with the findings of the study in relation to the second research question, which focused on identifying the cultural and social interactions experienced by Saudi Arabian female participants while studying abroad. In order to address this, I collected both quantitative and qualitative data. From the interaction surveys that were conducted I could establish that the participants engaged in social interactions with various people in the SA setting, including other Saudi Arabian students, students who were native to the SA setting, and students from other countries who were also studying English as a second language. The participants also interacted with their teachers, as well as with different people outside the school, including their parents and other relatives. The survey considered interactions that were conducted both face-to-face and in online environments while the students were still in the SA setting. In the survey, I could also find that the participants engaged in cultural interactions, such as watching local films and television, reading books, and using information and communication technologies, such as browsing the web or logging on to social networking websites. The interviews helped establish that the participants engaged in social and cultural interactions differently. Some of the participants were found to be keen on interacting with many people from other nationalities, while others interacted mainly with people who were also from Saudi Arabia. The participants discussed the different experiences they had while they were in the SA setting, talking about the places that they went to outside the school on their own time. The interviews provide evidence that the participants were able to explore the SA environment, thereby becoming acquainted with its people and its culture. The most prominent social activities included talking with their classmates, both local, native-speaker students and international students, and interacting with different people outside of school, such as ordering from waiters at restaurants with their families. The most prominent cultural interactions included watching television shows and movies in English, as well as reading books and newspapers in English. The use of the English language was mainly featured not just as a target L2, but as a necessary language for the students to be able to function in their everyday lives while in the SA environment. These findings reflect inputs from various studies on the expected experiences of SA students. As noted in these studies, one of the obvious advantages of SA programmes in learning the L2 is that the entire environment presents various opportunities for students to interact with people who use the target language (Tanaka & Ellis, 2003; Smartt & Scudder, 2004). As such, it is important

for participants to become fully immersed in the environment and sufficiently acquainted with the local culture (Byram, 2012; Gu et al., 2010; Park, 2007). However, it was found from the analysis of individual profiles of the participants that some of them engaged in more cultural and social interaction than others. This variance was expected, given that Saudi Arabian culture on the demeanour of women, as experienced by the researcher and confirmed in the literature, characterizes the ideal for women to be passive and reserved, especially when communicating with people from the opposite gender (Hamdan, 2005; Wikan, 1995). It was expected that at least some of the SA participants would bring this culture with them to the SA setting, and that this would affect their ability to take advantage of opportunities for both social and cultural interaction. In contrast to Kampman (2011), there is, however, no lack of social interaction within the entire group, providing evidence against the notion that female Saudi participants are always reserved and quiet. This was not observed in general for the participants who took part in this study. Based on the interviews that were conducted, all of the students recognized the need for them to interact with other people in the SA environment, particularly those who did not share their Saudi Arabian cultural background, and especially those who spoke English as their first language, in order for them to be able to become better at making use of the language. It was also found that many of the participants continued to engage in social interactions with the friends that they were able to make while in the SA programme even after they had returned to Saudi Arabia. In addition to this, the individual differences of the respondents, such as an outgoing nature, being adventurous, or being shy and reserved, can also be considered as an explanatory factor for the variance observed in their social and cultural interactions. Some of the students in the study were more outgoing, more interested in meeting new people and making new friends. Others were more reserved, and wanted to stay home more. These differences are reflected in how some of the respondents' cultural interactions were more concentrated on going out and watching movies with friends and family while others' were more on reading books. Their differences led them to experience the SA environment in likewise different ways.

As such, the findings with regard to the social and cultural interactions engaged in by the participants during the SA programme show that they engaged in a wide range of interactions, and that the participants had individual differences in relation to the way that engaged in social and cultural interactions while they were in the foreign country. The findings of this study somewhat dispel some of the stereotype of Saudi Arabian females as

being too timid, and shows that they are capable of engaging in social and cultural interaction in a foreign setting particularly in relation to developing proficiency in a second language. Instead, the results show that there is sufficient variability in the levels of interactions that female Saudi Arabian SA students engage in to justify using social and cultural interactions as potential explanatory variables in examining factors that affect the development of the students' L2 proficiency, which is in line with the third research question of this study.

7.4 Social Interaction and L2 Learning

The third research question of this study can be divided into two; one that is focused on the impact of social interaction, and another than is focused on the impact of cultural interaction on the development of English language proficiency among female Saudi Arabian SA students. The former of these two is considered in this section. Evidence on the importance of social interactions on learning English as a second language in the SA setting were drawn mainly from interview data, which was then linked with the students' data on their individual language proficiency gains. As such, the first part of this section covers students' perceived language gains from social interactions, as evidenced from interviews conducted with them. These interviews examined the different social interactions that the participants engaged in, and then evaluated, from the perspective of the participants, how important each of these interactions were on the progress of their L2 learning while they were in the programme. In particular, the perceived effects of different types of social interaction were examined, including social interactions with native speakers, with other Arab students, and with other non-native speaking, non-Arab students. Diverse findings emerge from these data. From this point, this study then moves towards a consideration of how social interactions actually affected respondents, gains in the SA programme, particularly by comparing the progress of different students with different levels of social interaction.

First, the students were unanimous in identifying social interactions with native speakers as being very helpful in their L2 learning. Students discussed how their interactions not only helped them identify and correct the repetitive mistakes that they made in speaking English, but also become more confident and speak much faster in the language than they did before entering the programme. They indicated that they were able to improve their vocabulary from these social interactions, as they learned words,

particularly some colloquial terms that they did not normally encounter in class. The participants believed that the more exposure they had with interacting with native speakers, the better they became in using English the way that native speakers did. These findings support the results of other studies that have examined the impact of social interaction on L2 learning. For example, Ishida (2010), which focused on learning Japanese as a second language, had similarly found that interactions with native speakers gave L2 learners a more intimate perspective of the language; allowing them to see exactly how certain words and expressions are applied which typically differ from how they are initially introduced in the formal classroom. This was discovered in the interviews that were conducted in this study, where the students felt that they were able to make use of English more naturally in their social interactions with native speakers. Jiang and Ramsay (2005) which focused on Chinese as the target L2 language found that social interactions helped boost students' confidence because they enabled them to develop rapport with native speakers, thereby making them less hesitant about applying what they learned in interacting with these speakers. This in turn led to the refinement of their use in the language, as the people that they interacted with helped them to understand the intricacies of the language as it is practically used. This was also evident in the study, as the participants discussed how they would request native speakers that they interacted with to correct them if they used the language incorrectly. In particular, one of the participants put extra effort in forming relationships with native speakers in order to practise her L2. She did not confine herself to forming friendships with people closer to her own age but she also socialized with ladies from an older age range.

“There’s an American lady called Johanna. We went to her place, my classmates and I, to practise. I also met a friend of hers and we went to her place too twice to practise English. We brought our traditional Arabic coffee and dates and went to visit her; we enjoyed each other’s company. They’re older in age but we gained a lot from them” (Shahd, 3rd interview).

The experience of this participant reflects the full advantage that students in SA programmes can have in learning L2 in a foreign setting. Not only did she take advantage of having access to native speakers in class, she also tapped into opportunities to learn in the outside environment. Furthermore, Shahd also developed her relationship with teachers

at the English Centre. Her contact with them was not limited to classes or to organized activities as shown by the following quote.

“There’s a teacher at the Centre with whom I have a good relationship. She taught me last session. When she’s free I go and sit with her. Once we sat and talked for an hour and a half, our relationship is great” (Shahd, 2nd interview).

The high social interaction that Shahd experienced while in the study abroad setting can explain why her L2 proficiency also improved significantly based on the comparison of her pre and post test scores. This is consistent with the many studies that were found which investigated the impact of social interactions between L1 and L2 speakers in improving the latter’s proficiency in the target language (Archangeli, 1999; Ishida, 2010; Holmes and Riddiford, 2011; Hutchinson, 2009; Bacon, 2002). As was collectively derived from these studies, social interaction with L1 speakers is a critical aspect of second language learning since it is in such experiences that the L2 speaker is challenged to engage another person in a conversation that typically, entirely involves the use of the target language. As such, those participants like Shahd who allowed themselves to be placed in that situation were provided with the opportunity to exercise their L2 proficiency with people who have been speaking the language all of their lives. This allowed them to listen to how words are spoken in a natural setting, and also enabled opportunities for casual correction of their use of the language by the people they were talking with. In doing so, participants like Shahd were able to learn aspects of the language as it is used in real settings that they are not as likely to have encountered in formal classroom environments. As discussed by Hutchinson (2009), the dynamic nature of a language makes it essential for students learning the language to not just be provided with technical details on proper syntax, because there are intricacies in such aspects that cannot be satisfactorily captured by lecture or even demonstration. These are things that naturally occur in conversation, which the participant needs to experience in order for them to learn.

On the other hand, there were also participants who did not access the opportunities available in the SA setting to gain further practice in the target L2 at all. This participant did not try to form any relationships with Americans and preferred to interact with persons from other nationalities. Her reason was the following.

“It is hard to be friends with Americans, they don’t respect that you have different principles. I met someone and they said, “Oh, we’re having a party tonight”. I could not go because there is drinking which is against my religion so they stopped inviting me to other outings. It is like there is a rule, do everything they do or don’t be with them” (Majd, 3rd interview).

Majd clearly has issues with the local culture, which may have prevented her from accessing opportunities for learning in the local environment. Nonetheless, Majd was still able to achieve significant gains in her L2 proficiency based on comparisons of her pre-and post-SA scores. This result implies that while high social interaction may be a factor in improving English language proficiency of L2 learners in SA settings, it is not always necessary. In the case of Majd, there may have been other aspects, such as cultural interaction which is discussed in the next section of this chapter, which could have enabled her to develop stronger L2 proficiency at the end of the program.

Nonetheless, the impact of social interaction on L2 learning is evident. In the case of Reem, she was able to engage in limited social interactions with L1 learners, preferring instead of spend her free time with her Arabic friends. Results of testing Reem’s L2 proficiency in the pre-and-post SA settings showed that her scores did not change, which indicates that while Reem also participated in the study abroad program, she did not achieve the increased proficiency in the language that her peers did. Thus, this shows evidence that while participating in social interactions may not be a prerequisite to developing stronger proficiency in the target L2, there are students such as Reem who do not engage in social interactions and are unable to develop their L2 proficiency beyond the levels that they were at before they joined the SA program.

These snapshots from the results demonstrate the diversity of the respondents experiences while in the SA setting, and substantiate the argument that simply going into an SA environment does not guarantee that participants will have similar learning experiences. Instead, it is argued based on reflections from the results discussed in this section that social interaction with L1 learners in the study abroad setting is a very important activity that students in study abroad programs should participate in order for them to be able to maximize their opportunities for learning the target L2. While these opportunities may not always be essential, given that some of the participants who did not

engage in social interaction were still able to improve their L2 proficiency, it remains to be a significant aspect of L2 learning that can be tapped by students who are enrolled in a study abroad program. For such students, the opportunity to interact with L1 speakers on the language that they want to learn is available both within and off campus, and availing of such opportunities has been shown in this study as one of the ways by which they can maximize the value of their study abroad program in terms of improving their proficiency in the target L2.

With regard to the impact of social interactions with non-native speaker, non-Arabic students on L2 learning, there were differences in the perspectives of the participants in the study. There were some who regarded such interactions as beneficial in that people from different national backgrounds tend to have differences in terms of their strengths and weaknesses in learning a common second language. As such, these differences were seen to make interactions between such people opportunities for them to help each other in their respective weaknesses. As in the case of native speakers, some of the respondents also noted the difference in overall skills that some of the non-native speakers had compared to them, and that speaking with non-native speakers who were better than them in English allowed them to improve their own abilities in making use of the language. Others discussed how the social interactions that they had with other non-native speakers allowed them to become more familiar with the accents of these people. While this was considered as a hindrance by some in learning the language, others considered it as an important challenge that can lead to a greater ability to understand the language in spite of the presence of foreign accents. Still, there was at least one participant who regarded such interactions as having no impact at all on her English language learning. Nonetheless, a majority of the outcomes in relation to this matter underscore the importance of SA programmes not just in immersing students in an environment where the target L2 is spoken natively, but in an environment where there are a host of other people from a wide range of national backgrounds who are learning the same target L2. As such, participants are exposed to the wide range of ways that a language is spoken, which as evidenced in this study can have a positive impact on their own learning.

With regard to interaction with other Arab students, the participants generally considered such interactions to have no positive impact on their L2 learning, particularly since conversations that they have with other Arab students are typically conducted in Arabic. Some of the students even considered that the volume of interactions that they had

with other Arabic students actually led to a negative impact on their L2 learning, as they were unable to engage in English language conversations during such interactions. However, these were not confirmed from the objective measures used, but remained only in the perceptions of the respondents as drawn from their interviews. Some of them were of the opinion that had they not spent so much of their time interacting with other Arabic students, they would have been able to spend more time interacting with other people in English. These outcomes underscore another argument of various studies regarding the value of SA programme, particularly that such programmes remove students from the comfort zone of their own countries so that they are able to develop the courage to make use of the language in practical settings where they would normally make use of their native language had they been learning the L2 in their own country (Rubio, 2003; Fitzpatrick, 2012; Taguchi, 2011a). Since the participants were in classes where there were many Arabic students, some of the students found the experience of the formal classes to be similar to what they had back home, and they felt that this impeded their learning since they still spoke with the other Arab students in class in Arabic instead of in English. However, it is also important to consider that while the participants considered the interactions with other Arabic students as not having any positive impact on their English language learning, many of the participants also admitted to interacting with other Arabic students the most during their stay in the SA programme. This phenomenon is not paradoxical when considering the need for people immersed in foreign settings to have an anchor to their home culture that serves as a form of emotional support for them in the foreign environment, which has been found to exist in the context of SA programmes both in general (Edmonds, 2010; Mikal and Grace, 2011), and particularly in the case of Saudi Arabian students (Alhazmi & Nyland, 2013). Another support to this outcome is that while the participants did not regard the presence of other Arabs as positively affecting their language learning, many of them did seek out other Arabs when spending leisure time. As such, it must be inferred that they are able to experience something positive from this interaction. While this may not necessarily be related to language learning; it may be related to keeping the students' morale up, which is important in helping them stay in the programme for its entire duration. Thus, this discovery supports the idea that while interactions with fellow Arabic students may not have helped participants academically in learning L2, they were important in serving a support function of enabling the students to not feel too pressured in the foreign setting. They provide essential emotional support that allowed the participants to enjoy their stay in the foreign setting better, and have people to

share experiences with who fully understand their situation since they come from the same background.

The previous paragraphs all focused only on the perceived English proficiency gains of the students from the social interactions that they engaged in based on interviews conducted with them following their completion of the SA programme. While these paragraphs mainly point towards students' positive perspective on the impact of social interactions on their L2 learning, it is important to be able to relate this perspective to quantitative measures of the students' L2 gains. This was drawn mainly from comparisons of the individual profiles of the respondents. From these comparisons, it can be shown that the students who engaged in social interactions more, also tended to be the ones who were able to gain the most from the SA experience. For example, Basma was able to achieve some of the greatest levels of improvement in both general and written proficiency in the English language among the group of SA participants in the study. At the same time, she was found to have engaged in considerable social interaction while in the SA environment. She was able to interact extensively with native-speaking classmates, as well as with people outside of campus. On the other hand, Fahda, while also being able to improve her English language proficiency based on pre- and post-SA testing, did not experience as much gain from the SA programme as her peers. Compared to the other members of the cohort, Fahda engaged in much less social interaction. Furthermore, most of her interactions were limited to fellow Saudi Arabians. As such, these findings indicate that consistent with the hypothesis of this research, social interaction does have a significant role in determining the L2 gains of students in SA programmes. Specifically, it can be inferred that female Saudi Arabian students who engage in more social interaction with more diverse people in the SA setting tend to be able to develop greater proficiency in the English language.

Overall, it was found that the hypothesis that L2 gains were affected by level of social interaction was true for five of the participants. Four of the participants were found to have contrasting experiences. However, one of these participants (Sara), was already found to have very high levels of L2 proficiency from the start of the study, and so it was understandable for her not to improve any more during the SA experience despite engaging in high levels of social interaction. As such, there is strong concurrence between the perspectives of the students with respect to the impact of social interactions on their L2 learning and the actual impact of social interaction based on comparisons of their

individual profiles. It can therefore be soundly inferred that social interactions do have a positive impact on L2 learning.

7.5 Cultural Interaction and L2 Learning

While the previous section dealt with the impacts of social interaction found on SA students' L2 gains, this section is focused more on the second part of the third research question, which considers the impact of cultural interaction on L2 gains during SA. In terms of the impacts of cultural interaction on L2 learning of the female Saudi Arabian students in the SA programme, results were, as in the case of social interaction, drawn mainly from the interviews that were conducted with the participants. In these interviews, the different cultural artefacts that the participants engaged in while they were in the SA setting were identified, and the study evaluated how interactions with these artefacts affected students in their L2 learning. As in the case of the previous section, the outcomes on the perceptions of the students regarding the impact of cultural interaction on their L2 learning is validated by examining the differences in L2 gains of students with different levels of cultural interaction as found from comparing their individual profiles.

From the interviews, it was found that the students appreciated exposure to different cultural artefacts, specifically movies, television and books as an informal part of their education in learning English as a second language. The participants discussed how going to the movies where there were no Arabic subtitles pushed them to make use of what they learned in school in order to understand what was happening in the movie. These cultural experiences were also considered by some of the students as a gauge of their progress in learning the language. As they came to appreciate television shows in English more, and watched them more often than Arabic shows that were available on their cable television, they recognized that they were becoming better at understanding not just the English language, but also the diverse contexts in which the language is used. They were able to understand humour and sarcasm when these expressions presented themselves in the shows that they watched. These outcomes are in line with the discussions of Gu et al. (2010) regarding the importance of integrating cultural components in L2 learning. As found in this study, the participants were able to make use of the cultural interactions as a means to explore various hidden components of the language that do not normally appear in formal lessons, specifically figurative language and colloquial usage. Furthermore, consistent with the theoretical framework introduced by Byram (2012), cultural interactions that the

students engaged with did show them an alternative perspective from their own culture, which they experienced through the target L2. As such, by being exposed to the cultural context of the language, the students were able to understand English expressions better and apply these to their own use of the language. These outcomes therefore add to the evidence presented by such studies as Shiffman (1991) McQuillan and Tse (1995), Park (2007), and Choi and Yi (2012) in relation to the impact of cultural interaction on L2 learning. However, in addition to supporting evidence of this impact, this study added the dimension of such cultural interaction being more likely to be encountered by students in the SA setting; in this study, some students started watching English movies and television shows because there were no Arabic shows that were available in their area. Thus, the SA setting limits the cultural interaction that students have with their own culture, while increasing the propensity for them to interact with the native culture which corresponds to the target L2.

With regard to the impact of cultural interactions on L2 learning based on comparisons of the respondents' individual profiles, it was found that all of the respondents engaged in common cultural interactions, such as reading books and newspapers in the English language and watching American television shows and movies. Unlike the case of social interaction, where there appeared to be a dichotomy between students who engaged extensively in social interactions with native speakers and international students and students who just limited their social interaction with fellow Arabs, the students seemed to have equally engaged in a wide range of cultural interactions. Thus, it is difficult to identify cultural interaction as having objectively impacted L2 learning based on comparing the outcomes of the students in different English proficiency measures, and therefore the consistency between subjective and objective evidence found from the previous section for social interactions could not be established for cultural interactions. This section can only infer that, from the participants' perspectives, engaging with cultural artefacts while they were in the SA setting was found to be helpful in strengthening their development in the practical use of English as a second language. While this inference may be subjective, as it is based only on what the participants believe they gained, it is nonetheless consistent with some of the individual outcomes found. For example, in the case of Majd, it was earlier found that her English language proficiency improved despite her having limited social interactions with L1 speakers in the study abroad setting. However, Majd was found to have high cultural interaction and in the interviews, she

showed strong interest in many cultural artefacts, such as television and radio shows. At the same time, while Majd admitted to not having considerable social interaction with L1 speakers in campus, she also narrated needing to speak English in order for her to be able to order at restaurants, understand different instructions and signage posted when shopping, paying bills or buying groceries, and many other normal activities where she would have otherwise just needed Arabic had she been in Saudi Arabia. As such, similar to the case for social interaction, students who are thrust into the study abroad setting eventually encounter cultural artefacts that they need to interact with in order for them to be able to function effectively in their daily lives at the new environment. This establishes the value of cultural interactions in at least motivating students to develop greater proficiency in their target L2, and this motivation cannot be considered as being similarly present in the participants' home country.

7.6 Limitations of the Study

While this study was able to answer each of the research questions that it posed, there were a number of limitations that were found in the conduct of data gathering and analysis. First, as noted earlier, there is an overlap between social and cultural interactions in the study. This was addressed by considering social interactions as those where participants actually spoke with people in the environment, while cultural interactions were considered as those events where participants engaged with some cultural artefact. However, there were some events, such as ordering at a restaurant or going to the movies, that were considered as having both social and cultural interactions, to the extent that it is not possible to delineate between these two in considering the impacts of the event of the students' language proficiency development. Next, the instruments that were used for measuring the fluency of the respondents, SPM and MLRS, were found to be limited by the actual volume of words that the students would express during measurement. The fact that the students did not say much during the post-SA test could not be equated to their inability to express themselves. Their familiarity with the activity may have caused them to describe the picture with fewer words during the succeeding administration of the test because they had already described it before. This partially affected the ability of this study to establish the presence of gains in respondents' L2 fluency after undertaking the SA programme. Second, the study was found limited in its ability to quantitatively establish the importance of social and cultural interactions as factors in the L2 learning of female

Saudi Arabian students in SA programmes. As can be found in the previous two sections of this chapter, the study mainly relied on qualitative input based on interviews with the respondents in order to characterize the social and cultural interactions that the students engaged in. This prevented the study from using statistical measures such as Pearson's correlation coefficient, in order to determine whether or not the level of social or cultural interactions of the respondents were directly or inversely correlated with the different English proficiency variables that were collected in the study. At the same time, having only 9 participants in the study also impaired its ability to make use of correlation tests which rely on large sample sizes.

Another limitation that was identified was drawn out of the particular features of the cohort that was used in the study. These included the selection criteria that were applied, the cultural restrictions that the participants needed to abide by, and the dominance of Arab-speaking students at the institution and program where the cohort was enrolled. With regard to the selection criteria, the study was only able to involve one batch of scholars from Saudi Arabia's study abroad program. As such, the study was only able to capture a present perspective, limited by the experiences of that batch and the characteristics of the study abroad environment that they were exposed to. Arguably, previous batches may have had different experiences, and the environmental setting may have had some differences for previous batches of scholars. While the study could have captured these differences in its data by including participants from different batches of scholars that were sent by Saudi Arabia, the logistics necessary in order to be able to contact members from previous batches was beyond the capability of this study. With regard to cultural restrictions, it was necessary for the participants, being female, to be accompanied by male chaperones in their travel to the study abroad setting. While it was later found from the interviews that the chaperones did not need to accompany the participants in campus, their presence still limited the ability of the participants to more freely interact with both the social and cultural environments of the local setting. Another limitation found was that the classes that the cohort joined also had a sizeable number of Arab-speaking students which they interacted with. This limited the expected need for them to develop proficiency in English in order for them to function effectively in interacting socially with other students in class. However, the study was limited to the observation of this cohort, and so it was

unable to determine if a different cohort in a class where they are the only Arab-speaking students would yield different outcomes.

Finally, the study was clearly limited to the information that the students volunteered based on their experiences in the SA setting. The study did not have any means of verifying some of the statements of the students, such as whether or not their social interaction with native speakers actually led these students to become more competent in the use of English either in practical or classroom settings as they claimed. Nonetheless, the study was able to collect sufficient evidence in order to successfully address each of its research questions.

7.7 Conclusion

This study provides a clear contribution to the field of SA research by investigating a cohort with specific, culturally-determined needs and demands, particularly one of which is the need to be accompanied by a male family member. Another angle that this study is able to contribute to is the enduring debate on the importance of SA programmes in helping students develop proficiency in target L2s. SA programmes require considerable resources in order to cover travel and living expenses, and with the rapid growth of technology in the past few years enabling more and more means for virtual interaction in distance education, it is important for SA programmes to be able to support their worth by showing that they are able to offer something more than what can be achieved in the local setting. In line with this, the findings of this study support the beneficial effect of SA on foreign language development, and more specifically highlight the influence of social interaction on this development. While SA programmes have been shown from a wide range of literature to have different benefits for L2 learning, this study was able to substantiate the argument that one of the reasons why SA programmes are able to produce such good results is because of the social interaction that those in the programme engage in while they are in a foreign environment. This was found to be true, specifically for a group of students that have been stereotyped as very reserved when it comes to interacting with people, especially those of the opposite gender.

The use of a series of language proficiency measurements helped to counter-act the problems encountered with two of the measures (SPM and MLR) and provide clear individual profiles of proficiency and gains patterns. Rich qualitative data enabled the

researcher to gain a clearer picture of students' patterns of language use, including the use of social media.

Both the language development data and students' perceptions of on their own learning experience provide general support for the SA programme they were involved with in the US. Some specific features of the programme were also reported as positive by the students, and among these the existence of a dedicated US "buddy" needs to be highlighted. This person provided an access point into US student groups; while some students developed close friendships with this buddy, for others they were simply a first point of contact. For all of them, however, it seemed a helpful addition to the programme. These findings can serve the Ministry of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia in terms of providing them with feedback on the aspects of the programme that are working well based on the experiences of the students. The results of the study imply that SA programmes should encourage students to engage in social interaction with diverse people while in the foreign environment, as this can help them in maximizing the benefits of L2 learning in the programme.

This study can serve as a springboard for further research into SA programmes in Saudi Arabia. Whereas this study only involved 9 participants, succeeding studies may involve a much larger sample size, such that the inferences about the relationship between social and cultural interaction and L2 gains that were drawn from comparing the profiles of the participants in this study may be confirmed using appropriate statistical tools, such as correlation tests and regression analysis.

Appendices

Appendix A



Ms Hassna Alfayez
School of Humanities
Avenue Campus
Highfield
Southampton
SO17 1BF

RGO Ref: 8355

31 October 2011

Dear Ms Alfayez

Project Title The Effects of Study Abroad Experience on Second Language Learning

This is to confirm the University of Southampton is prepared to act as Research Sponsor for this study, and the work detailed in the protocol/study outline will be covered by the University of Southampton insurance programme.

As the sponsor's representative for the University this office is tasked with:

1. Ensuring the researcher has obtained the necessary approvals for the study
2. Monitoring the conduct of the study
3. Registering and resolving any complaints arising from the study

As the researcher you are responsible for the conduct of the study and you are expected to:

1. Ensure the study is conducted as described in the protocol/study outline approved by this office
2. Advise this office of any change to the protocol, methodology, study documents, research team, participant numbers or start/end date of the study
3. Report to this office as soon as possible any concern, complaint or adverse event arising from the study

Failure to do any of the above may invalidate the insurance agreement and/or affect sponsorship of your study i.e. suspension or even withdrawal.

On receipt of this letter you may commence your research but please be aware other approvals may be required by the host organisation if your research takes place outside the University. It is your responsibility to check with the host organisation and obtain the appropriate approvals before recruitment is underway in that location.

May I take this opportunity to wish you every success for your research.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "pp Ruth Prude", written over a horizontal line.

Dr Martina Prude
Head of Research Governance

Tel: 023 8059 5058
email: rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk

Appendix B



Participants Information Sheet ((20/ 10/ 2011.Version 1)

Study Title: The Effects of Study Abroad Experience on Second Language Learning

Researcher: Hassna M. Alfayez

Ethics number: RGO Ref 8355

Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

I am a PhD candidate interested in learning about the effect of social and cultural interaction on L2 learning in study abroad programmes. The research is about language learning in a study abroad setting. You were chosen because you are a participant in a study abroad programme and you will be spending a year in the country of the language you are studying.

What will happen to me if I take part?

Before You Go:

- 1-You will take three tests to determine your English proficiency level before leaving.
- 2- You will answer a language engagement questionnaire.
- 3- You will answer a social network questionnaire.
- 4- You will have an interview with the researcher.

While You Are in USA:

- 1- You will answer a language engagement questionnaire.
- 2- You will answer a social network questionnaire.
- 3- You will have an interview with the researcher.

After you come back:

- 1-You will take three tests to determine your English proficiency level after coming back.
- 2- You will have an interview with the researcher.

I cannot offer any real benefit to you for taking part in this study other than my gratitude and my assurance that the findings of this study are intended to feed back into the ways the year abroad is organised. However, your participation will add to current knowledge about language learning, which might help improve the teaching and learning practice. I'd be very grateful for you to take the time to participate in this study.

There are no risks involved. Your participation would be confidential. All the information will be protected with codes and passwords. Also the results of the research will not be published until all of the participants had graduated.

Your participation is, of course, entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without any consequence. There will be no consequence to your education.

In the unlikely event of concern or complaint, you can contact Dr Martina Prude, University of Southampton Research Governance Manager; email: M.A.Prude@soton.ac.uk. She is an independent party and not involved in this research. If you wish to know more about this project, please contact me at hma1g10@soton.ac.uk I'd be happy to tell you more.

It is a legal requirement of the University of Southampton that you are given this information and show that you give consent to being interviewed. These forms will only be kept by me.

CONSENT FORM (Version 1)

Study title: The Effect of social and cultural interaction on L2 learning in study abroad programmes.

Researcher name: Hassna M. Alfayez

Ethics reference: RGO Ref 8355

Please initial the box (es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet (20/ 10/ 2011. Version 1)

☐

and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study

I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to

☐

be used for the purpose of this study

I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw

☐

at any time without consequence

Name of participant (print name).....

Signature of participant.....

Name of Researcher (print name)

Signature of Researcher.....

Date.....

Appendix C

Group Marks Pre & Post SA

	Pre- Study Abroad Marks											Post-Study Abroad Marks									
Na me	R		G		w		L		S			R		G		W		L		S	
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2		1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Bas ma	B	A	A	A	B	A	A	B	A	A		A	A	A	A	A	A	A	B	A	B
Fah da	A	C	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A		A	B	A	A	A	A	A	B	A	B
Fer dos	D	C	C	B	C	C	C	C	D	B		A	B	A	B	A	C	B	C	B	C
Maj d	C	C	B	B	C	B	A	B	C	A		A	A	A	A	A	B	A	B	A	B
Ran em	B	A	B	A	C	A	B	A	A	A		A	B	A	D	A	D	A	A	A	A
Ree m	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A		C	B	B	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
Sar a	B	A	B	C	B	C	A	A	A	A		B	U	B	D	A	D	B	B	B	B
Sha hd	A	A	A	B	A	A	A	B	A	A		A	A	A	A	A	B	B	B	B	B
Sha tha	B	B	A	A	B	B	A	A	A	A		A	C	B	B	A	B	B	B	B	B

Appendix D

The Elicited Imitation Test

The Participants were given 30 sentences with various lengths. They were asked to repeat as much as they can. A **ring tone** was inserted between stimulus and response to hinder complete mimicking. There is also approximately a 3-second pause between the stimulus and the repetition. The participants were given enough time to repeat the sentences and to hesitate and self-correct if they wished.

Repeat as much as you can:

- 1- I have to get a haircut.
- 2- The red book is on the table.
- 3- The streets in the city are wide.
- 4- He takes a shower every morning.
- 5- What did you say you were doing today?
- 6- I doubt that he knows how to drive that well.
- 7- After dinner, I had a long, peaceful nap.
- 8- It is possible that it will rain tomorrow.
- 9- I enjoy movies which have a happy ending.
- 10- The houses are very nice, but too expensive.
- 11- The little boy whose kitten died yesterday is sad.
- 12- That restaurant is supposed to have very good food.
- 13- I want a nice big house in which my animals can live.
- 14- You really enjoy listening to country music, don't you?
- 15- She just finished painting the inside of her apartment.
- 16- Cross the street at the light, and then just continue straight ahead.
- 17- The person I'm dating has a wonderful sense of humour.
- 18- She only orders meat dishes, and never eats vegetables.
- 19- I wish the price of town houses would become affordable.
- 20- I hope it will get warmer sooner this year than it did last year.
- 21- A good friend of mine always takes care of my neighbour's three children.
- 22- The black cat that you fed yesterday was the one chased by the dog.
- 23- Before he can go outside, he has to finish cleaning his room.
- 24- The most fun I've ever had was when we went to the opera.

- 25-The terrible thief whom the police caught was very tall and thin.
- 26-Would you be so kind as to hand me the book which is on the table?
- 27-The number of people who smoke cigars is increasing every year.
- 28- I don't know if the 11:30 train has left the station yet.
- 29- The exam wasn't nearly as difficult as you told me it would be.
- 30- There are a lot of people who don't eat anything at all in the morning.

SCORING GUIDELINES FOR ELICITED IMITATION TASK L2 ENGLISH

12/17/98

Noriko Iwashita & Lourdes Ortega

Elicited Imitation Task developed by Ortega, L., Iwashita, N., Rabie, S., & Norris, J. M. (in preparation). *A multilanguage comparison of measures of syntactic complexity*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, National Foreign Language Resource Center.

Score 0 Criteria	Examples
Nothing (Silence)	
Garbled (unintelligible, usually transcribed as XXX)	
- Minimal repetition, then item abandoned: - Only 1 word repeated - Only 1 content word plus function word(s) - Only 1 content word plus function word(s) plus extraneous words that weren't in the original stimulus - Only function word(s) repeated NOTE: with only, just, yet (meaningful adverbs), score 1	- The- the street in... in... street... hmm (16/#2) - I wish... comfta-portable (19/#1) - I watch a movie (9/#22) - You don't... don't you? (14/#1) - He just finished (15/#23) (Closed word + Adv + lexical word) (score 1)

Score 1 Criteria	Examples
When only about half of idea units are represented in the string but a lot of important information in the original stimulus is left out	- Cross the cross--cross the street ahead and. (16/#4) - I don't have nap (7/#1) - I ...the last year (20/#4) - I have to hair-haircu (1/#24) - Would you... the book on the table (26/#7)
When barely half of lexical words get repeated and meaningful content results that is unrelated (or opposed) to stimulus, frequently with hesitation markers	- I wonder... why he... drive... well (6/#9) - He just finished painting... inside the park (15/#11)

• Or when string doesn't in itself constitute a self-standing sentence with some (target like or non-target like) meaning (This may happen more often with shorter items, where if only 2 of 3 content words are repeated and no grammatical relation between them is attempted, then score 1) • Also when half of a long stimulus is left out, and the sentence produced is incomplete	- I enjoy movie what shew have a... have a (9/#3) - She only eats vegetables and have xx- never eat vegetables (18/#4) - I want to big nice house.(13/#25) - A good frien of my take a good my children (21/#25) - I wannata animalslive (13/#26) - Zu book table (2/#26) - I doubt he how to drive (6/#25) -The little boy the kitten... no.. is sad... I can't remember (11/#8) - Before... before he can go outside for (23/#11)
--	--

Score 2 Criteria	Examples
• When content of string preserves at least more than half of the idea units in the original stimulus; string in meaningful, and the meaning is close or related to original, but it departs from it in some slight changes in content, which makes content inexact, incomplete, or ambiguous	- The gooda friend take care o- chi- children (left out that it was the neighbor's children, and that they were three) (21/#1) - After dinner I have a long piece [peace?] of a nap (<a long, peaceful nap) (7/#4) - She just finished painting the seaside her apartment (<inside of) (15/#4) - The restaurant was supposed to have ve- good food (<is supposed; meaning changed to past) (12/#4) - I want to big house which... in which... animal can live (left out 'nice' 'my' and made animal into singular) (13/#4) - Would you hand me... the books which are on the table (<book; meaning changed to plural) (26/#4) - It is possible to day tomorrow (from pronunciation problem, it is ambiguous whether 'rain' has been understood, but it is possible) (8/#1)

Score 3 Criteria	Examples
• Original, complete meaning is preserved as in the stimulus. Strings which are quite ungrammatical can get a 3 score, as long as exact meaning is preserved. Some synonymous substitutions are acceptable. • Examples of acceptable substitutions (SCORE 3): hand/give/pass are acceptable synonyms for item 26. Substitutions of and & but are acceptable. A lot of = many, etc. • Anything with or without 'very' can be considered synonymous.	- It is possible... the rain tomorrow (8/#11) - That restaurant ah.... supposed to... ah... very good food (12/#14) - Would you pass me the book on the table (26/#21)(Score 3) - Would you be so kind...to bring... the book...on the table (26/#13)(Score 3) - The rest-restaurant is supposed to have good food (12/#11)(Score 3)

• Examples of unacceptable substitutions or omissions (SCORE 2): - cigar smoking> smoking - apartment >house/room - he<>she - sense of humor> humor - finished cleaning>cleaned - order> eat - nice,big > big - AUX cannot be omitted (can go> go) - a lot of Noun> 0 Noun -too Adj > 0 Adj • Changes in grammar that don't affect meaning should be scored as 3. For instance, failure to supply past tense (had>have) and missing articles should be considered grammar change only (score 3). • By contrast, cases of extra marking or more marked morphology should be considered as meaning change. For example, a present tense repeated as past or as future should be scored as meaning change (score 2). • Similarly, singular/plural differences between stimulus and repeated string change the meaning, not only the grammar (score 2). • Changes of person (he for she or she for he) change the meaning; but problems of agreement (she...her versus she...his) should be considered grammatical change, not meaning change. • Ambiguous changes in grammar that COULD be interpreted as meaning changes from a NS perspective should be scored as 2. That is, as a general principle in case of doubt about whether meaning has changed or not, score 2.	- The number of people who smoke ...um is increasing every year (27/#10)(Score 2) - He just finished painting... inside of a his house (15/#5)(Score 2) - She finished a painting... inside her apartment (15/#7)(Score 2) - The person I'm dading is ...wonderful... humour (17/#11)(Score 2) - Before he get outside...he must clean his room (23/#9)(Score 2) - She always eat...meat...nev-never eat vegetable (18/#5)(Score 2) - After dinner I have a long peaceful nap. (7/#17)(Score 3) - The restaurant was supposed to have ve- good food.(12/#24)(Score 2) - After the dinner I will have a long... sp- peaceful nap. (7/#8)(Score 2) - The street in the city is wide (3/#8)(Score 2) - She just finished painting ...his room inside (15/#14) (Score 2)(apartment is missing) - The streets on the city is wide (3/#23)(Score 2) (We can't know whether the number agreement is just a grammar problem or an interpretation problem, but string is ambiguous in meaning: (a) a generic plural statement or (b) a statement about one street (score 2).
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Score 4 Criteria	Examples
• Exact repetition: String matches stimulus exactly. Both form and meaning are correct without exception or doubt.	

Appendix E

Language Engagement Questionnaire

In this questionnaire we are interested in learning how often you do different activities in the languages you regularly use. First you will be asked to select the languages you frequently use, and then you will be asked how often you do certain activities in each of those languages. If you have comments about any of your activities, there will be space for you to write at the bottom of each page. Thank you for your participation.

Tick all the languages you use on a regular basis. If you use a language not listed there, tick the other box and write that language in.

Language	
☐	Arabic
☐	English
☐	Others _____

Participant# _____

How often do you do the following in *English*?

	Everyday	Several times a week	A few times a week	A couple times a month	Rarely	Ne
Watch TV						
Watch films						
Browse the internet						
Use social networking sites						
Read emails						
Write emails						
Listen to music						
Listen to talk radio						
Listen to lectures						
Participate in seminars						
Read literature						
Read magazines						
Read newspapers						
Read academic texts						
Read text messages						
Write text messages						
Write reports						
Write for leisure						
instant messaging						

Have short phone conversations						
	Everyday	Several times a week	A few times a week	A couple times a month	Rarely	Never
Have long phone conversations						
Attend classes						
Teach a class						
Engage in service encounters						
Engage in small talk						
Engage in long casual conversations						
Organised social activities (picnics,etc.)						

Appendix F

Social Networks Questionnaire

In this survey we want to gather information about the people you have been in **active** contact with over the past month, or in other words, people who you have interacted with regularly. We are interested in this information for people in a variety of contexts (e.g., university, home, online). Therefore, we will ask you questions about these people by context. For example, we will ask you to provide the names of people you have regular contact with at university. Then we will ask you some follow-up questions about each person. Once you've completed the university context, we will ask you questions about additional contexts such as organised free time, general free time, home life, and virtual social activities. In each section, we will provide more information about that specific context so that you understand exactly what we mean. You can add as many people as you want in each context. Please use real names (first and last). This will help us keep track, especially if you add the same person in more than one context, which is totally acceptable and highly likely. Rest assured that all the information you provide is strictly confidential and that we will never use anyone's real name. If we need to refer to a person in later work (e.g., publications, presentations), we will give them a pseudonym, just like we will for you.

Thank you for participating in our research. Please tick the boxes next to any contexts in which you regularly engage with other people.

	Context
	1.University
	2. Organised Free time (e.g. Picnic, family gatherings, parties)
	3. General Free time
	4. Home life (people you live with)
	5. Virtual Social Activity (online activities like Skype)

University Context

In this section, we will ask you to list and then describe the people you have been in active contact with over the past month at **University.** List as many people as necessary. Remember, these should be people who you interact with regularly.

Person 1: _____

Person 2: _____

Person 3: _____

Person 4: _____

Person 5: _____

University Context

Person _____

1. Here tick the box next to the appropriate description of the time you spend together.

☐	How often do you interact with this person?
☐	Everyday
☐	Several times a week
☐	Couple times a week
☐	Few times a month

2. What language do you use when together? If you use a mixture of languages, please specify what they are.
3. What's your relationship to this person?
4. How did you first meet? (e.g., through a mutual friend, at work, etc. -- just a brief response)

Organised Free Time Context

In this section, we will ask you to list and then describe the people you have been in active contact with over the past month during your **organised free time**. By this we mean structured activities such as picnics, parties, hobby groups, etc. List as many people as necessary. Remember, these should be people who you interact with regularly.

Person 1: _____

Person 2: _____

Person 3: _____

Person 4: _____

Person 5: _____

Organised Free time Context

Person _____

1. Here tick the box next to the appropriate description of the time you spend together.

☐	How often do you interact with this person?
☐	Everyday
☐	Several times a week
☐	Couple times a week
☐	Few times a month

2. In what kind of organised activity do you interact with this person? (E.g. picnics, parties, family gatherings etc.)
3. What language do you use when together? If you use a mixture of languages, please specify what they are.
4. What's your relationship to this person?
5. How did you first meet? (e.g., through a mutual friend, at work, etc. -- just a brief response)

General Free Time Context

In this section, we will ask you to list and then describe the people you have been in active contact with over the past month during your **general free time**. By this we mean unstructured activities like hanging out with friends, going on visits, etc. List as many people as necessary. Remember, these should be people who you interact with regularly.

Person 1: _____

Person 2: _____

Person 3: _____

Person 4: _____

Person 5: _____

General Free time Context

Person _____

1. Here tick the box next to the appropriate description of the time you spend together.

☐	How often do you interact with this person?
☐	Everyday
☐	Several times a week
☐	Couple times a week
☐	Few times a month

2. What language do you use when together? If you use a mixture of languages, please specify what they are.
3. What's your relationship to this person?
4. How did you first meet? (e.g., through a mutual friend, at work, etc. -- just a brief response)

Home Life Context

In this section, we will ask you to list and then describe the people you have been in active contact with over the past month **at home**. Here we refer to the people that you live with. List as many people as necessary. Remember, these should be people who you interact with regularly.

Person 1: _____

Person 2: _____

Person 3: _____

Person 4: _____

Person 5: _____

Home life Context

Person _____

1. Here tick the box next to the appropriate description of the time you spend together.

☐	How often do you interact with this person?
☐	Everyday
☐	Several times a week
☐	Couple times a week
☐	Few times a month

2. What language do you use when together? If you use a mixture of languages, please specify what they are.
3. What's your relationship to this person?
4. How did you first meet? (e.g., through a mutual friend, at work, etc. -- just a brief response)

Virtual Social Activity Context

In this section, we will ask you to list and then describe the people you have been in active contact with over the past month in **virtual social activities**. By this we mean activities that you do online such as Skype, Facebook, instant messaging, etc. and on the telephone, including texting. List as many people as necessary. Remember, these should be people who you interact with regularly.

Person 1: _____

Person 2: _____

Person 3: _____

Person 4: _____

Person 5: _____

Virtual Social Activity Context

Person _____

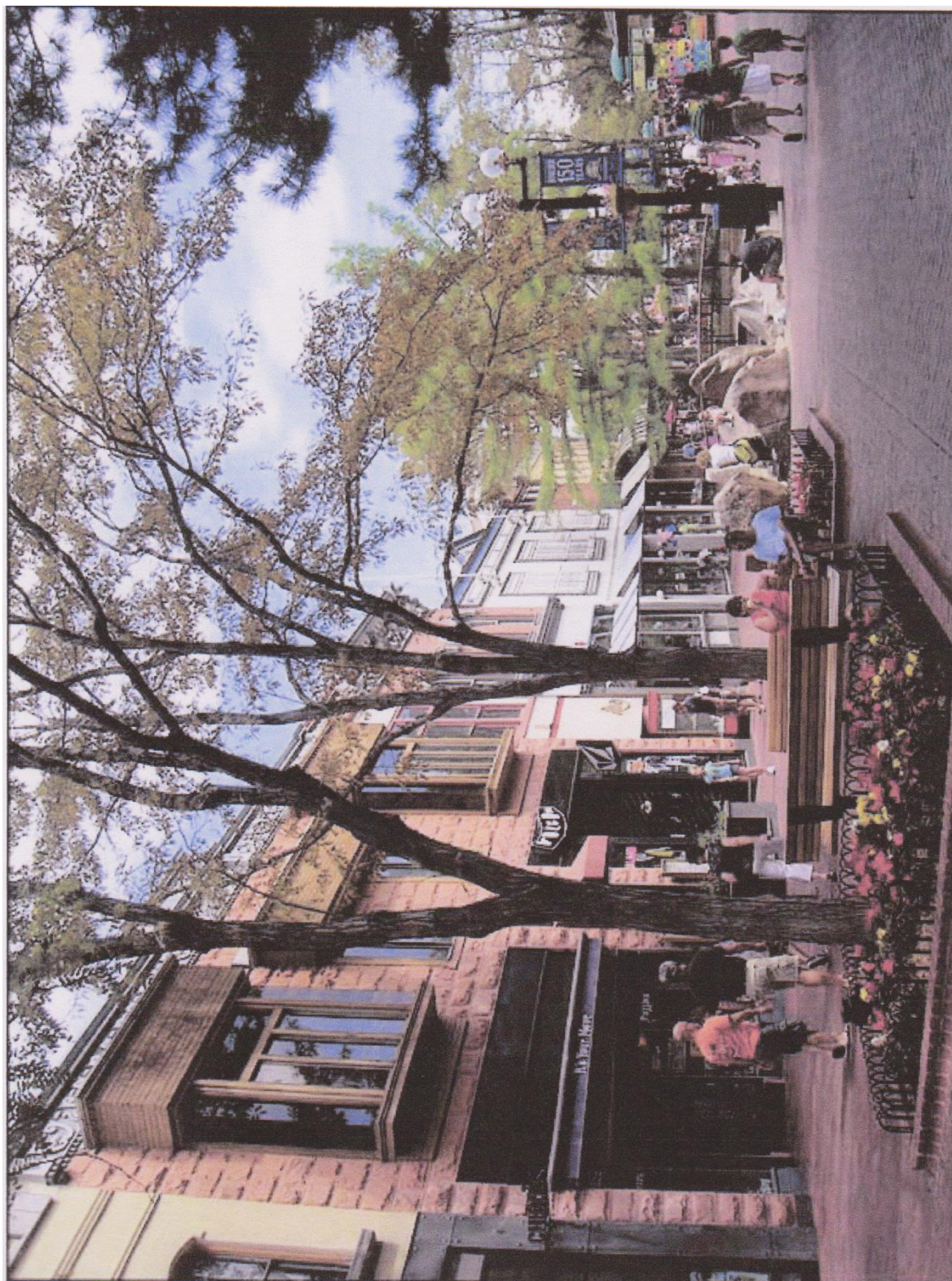
1. Here tick the box next to the appropriate description of the time you spend together.

☐	How often do you interact with this person?
☐	Everyday
☐	Several times a week
☐	Couple times a week
☐	Few times a month

2. What kind(s) of virtual social activity do you use with this person? (E.g. IM, Skype, Facebook, etc.)
3. What language do you use when together? If you use a mixture of languages, please specify what they are.
4. What's your relationship to this person?
5. How did you first meet? (e.g., through a mutual friend, at work, etc. -- just a brief response).

Appendix G

Picture Description



Appendix H

Writing Test

If there is a book you're currently reading or a favourite television programme you watch, we're interested in that information. Also, if the television (or radio) is always on in your flat but you're not actively watching it, you can tell us that too.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper appears to be a standard notebook page or a sheet of stationery designed for writing.

Appendix I

Semi Structured Interview number 1 (Pre- SA)

The Interview took place on December 2011 before the students left on their SA trip. It was done at their local college in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and it was conducted in Arabic.

General Background Information

1. How old are you?
2. What is your Academic major?
3. What level are you in?
4. What is your Cumulative grade point?
5. How many semesters did you spend studying English at the university?
6. How many years did you spend studying English at school level?
7. Have you taken English course in a private institution? (E.g. New Horizon, etc.)
- 8- What can you tell me about yourself?

Previous Travelling Experience:

- 9- Have you ever travelled outside the Kingdom?
- 10- Have you ever travelled to the United States of America or to an English speaking country?
- 11- Have you ever lived in a foreign country for a long period of time?
 - a- If yes, what was the reason?
 - b- How was the experience?
- 12- Have you ever travelled to an English speaking country just to learn the language?
 - a- If Yes, when? Where? For how long?
 - b- What can you tell me about that experience?

The escort:

13- Who is travelling with you to the states?

14- Does your escort have previous travelling experience?

15- Does your escort speak English?

16- Is the escort going to attend an English course while he is/ she is / they are in the US?

Motivation:

17- What does the term 'Study Abroad' mean to you?

18- How were you chosen as a candidate to this programme?

19- Why did you decide to join the SA programme?

20- How did your family react toward your decision?

Expectations:

21- What do you expect to benefit from joining the SA programme?

22- What do you expect the benefits of the SA programme would be to your country?

23- Based on your knowledge of your personality how do expect your interaction would be with the society there?

24- Based on your knowledge of your personality how do you see your ability to form friendships over there?

25- How do you expect a typical day will be for you there?

26- What are the things that you expect will help you in learning the language?

27- What are the things that you expect will make it difficult for you to learn the language?

Preparation:

28- What did you do to prepare yourself for this experience?

Feelings:

29- Could you describe your feelings toward this trip?

30- What is your worst fear at this moment?

Appendix J

Semi Structured Interview number 2 (During SA)

The Programme started on the 11th of January 2012. The Interview took place June 6-12, 2012, at the university in the US. (Approximately 4 months after the starts of the programme.)

1. Where do you study?
- 2- What do you think of your experience in the centre?
- 3- How do you compare this experience with your previous one in Saudi?
4. What level are you in?
- 5- Do you think the level you were placed in is suitable for you?
- 6- What do you think of your experience in American classroom?
- 7- What do you think about the classroom instructions in at the centre? (What's positive / negative about it?)
- 8- How is the classroom instructions different than Saudi?
9. How many students are there in your class? Who do you sit with? Why?
10. What language do you use with your friends in the class room? Why?
11. Do you notice any difference in your English level between here and Saudi?
 - a- why do you think there is a difference?
 - b- Why do you think there is no difference?

The escort / accommodation:

12. Who is here with you?
- 13- How is the escort spending his / her time when they are in the US?
- 14- Are you sharing any leisure activities together? Tell me about it.
- 15- Who are you living with?

16- What type of accommodation do you have? (Host family, dorm, private rental)

17- How did you find your accommodation? What can you tell me about this experience?

Social Interaction

18- You have been here nearly 4 months, what could you tell me about the friendships you have formed?

19- How did your friendship with Native speakers affect your language learning?

20- How did your friendship with other nationalities affect your language learning?

21- How did your friendship with Arabs affect language learning?

22- With whom do you spend your leisure (free) time?

Cultural Interaction

23- What part of the American culture you found interesting? (Explain)

24- What part of the American culture you found confusing? (Explain)

(My aim in question 26&27 is to see if they made the effort to understand the foreign culture & rules.)

Feelings

25- Could you describe your feelings at this point in the programme?

26- Do you remember what you said at the beginning of the programme about your biggest fear? What is your biggest fear at this point in the programme?

Appendix K

Semi Structured Interview number 3 (Post-SA)

The Interview took place on December 2012 after the students returned from their SA trip. It was done at the COLT in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. (Approximately 5 months after the 2nd interview)

- 1- How do you evaluate your experience in USA?
- 2- Which part of the experience did you like the most?
- 3- Which part of the experience did you like the least?
- 4- Did you notice any changes in your language after this experience? Explain.
- 5- Did you notice any changes in yourself after this experience? (What was the effect of this experience on you?)
- 6- You had this experience and now you are back again, what did you bring back to Saudi with you?
- 7- Did this experience affect the way you perceived your own Society?

Social Interaction

- 8- You have been back for nearly 4 months, what could you tell me about the friendships that you have formed in USA?
 - a- Are you still in touch with anyone in the US?
 - b- Are you still in touch with your Native speakers' friends?
 - c- Are you still in touch with your Arab friends?
 - d- Are you still in touch with your other friends? (Various nationalities)
- 9- Did you go through an experience, socially or academically, that affected you or your studies in USA?
- 10- If a Saudi friend is considering joining an SA programme, what would you advise her?

11- If an American or an international friend is coming to Saudi, what would you tell her in preparation?

12- What would you do in Saudi together?

13- You were a foreigner in a foreign culture, how did this experience affect you?

Feelings

14- Could you describe your feelings at this point in the programme?

15- What are the positive things of your coming back?

16- What are the negative things about your coming back?

17- Are you planning to implement here any of the things you learned there?

18- How would you use your experience in SA to enrich your life in KSA?

Appendix L

Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI)

This part was done in English to assess the participants' English proficiency. The interview was done twice, before the participants went to the United States and after they had come back to Saudi.

- 1- Tell me in detail about a typical Day for you here? (Present Tense)
- 2- How did you spend your last vacation? (Past Tense) (Where, how, why)
- 3- How do you spend your leisure (free) time?
- 4- How do you spend your weekends?
- 5- What are your plans for next weekend? (Future Tense)

Appendix M

MAXQDA

24/04/2015

Code System [1069]

- Motivation [0]
 - Why join SA [13]
 - meaning of SA [4]
- background [0]
 - Travelling [9]
 - GPA [6]
 - self description [9]
- Feelings [0]
 - post SA program [0]
 - middle of Sa program [0]
 - pre start of SA [8]
- Typical day [0]
 - Actual typical day USA [5]
 - Expectant typical day USA [5]
- Expectations Pre Sa [0]
 - benefits from SA [16]
 - reason2 not improve L2 [5]
 - reason 2 improve L2 [9]
 - friendship [6]
 - social interaction [6]
- Biggest Fear [0]
 - Fear pre-SA [15]
 - Fear mid SA [13]
 - Re-entry ksa [45]
- Culture [0]
 - south western university [43]
 - negative culture [9]
 - positive culture [20]
 - culture awareness [64]
- Social [0]
 - freetime [23]
 - Friends [0]
 - Conversation P [19]
 - arabs ksa [6]
 - arabs usa [27]
 - non-native ksa [11]
 - non-native usa [23]
 - natives usa [38]
 - natives ksa [14]
- Academic [0]
 - peer pressure [6]
 - Seat [15]
 - Co-ed [4]
 - Grades [5]
 - nationalities [9]
 - classroom chat [22]
 - Teaching methods [27]
 - size [13]
 - Teachers [29]
 - Courses [20]
- Feedback on SA [0]
 - Reason for joining [3]
 - neutral [0]
 - negative [5]
 - positive [18]
- Reason L2L [0]
 - Academic L2L [16]
 - cultural L2L [35]
 - Social L2L [39]

MAXQDA

24/04/2015

- Linguistics [1]
 - rating skills [11]
 - Fluency [16]
 - Confidence in L2 [16]
 - Change in L2 [48]
 - Listening [14]
 - Grammar [9]
 - Writing [18]
 - Reading [14]
 - Speaking [32]
- Personality [0]
 - Responsibility [46]
 - change personality [63]
- future [19]
- MA [12]
- Recommendation [13]
- Sets [0]

Coded segments											
Comment	Document	Code	Begin	End	Weight score	Segment	Author	Creation date	Document group	Page	Coverage %
Shatha 3rd interview post-SA. Revised	Reason L2L\Social L2L		13	13	0	Yeah; speaking with native speakers was different. I learned new words. Naturally my language is going to improve because even if I go to MacDonald's, Starbucks, anywhere, I have to speak in English. There's no room for Arabic or a mixture of both languages, it has to be English for them to understand me. So yeah, it's improved.	3rd Interview	10/11/2014 11:23	1	1	330 1.76
Shatha 3rd interview post-SA. Revised	Linguistics\Writing		17	17	0	With regards to writing, I learned how to write a research paper, I learned how to do a search for certain things, debates; I had a debate there, it was really good. I learned the rules of debate, the words you use at the beginning and at the end, things like that.	3rd Interview	10/11/2014 11:31	1	1	265 1.42
Shatha 3rd interview post-SA. Revised	Linguistics\Reading		19	19	0	Yeah; even reading, everything. Everything changed. Because when you acquire new vocabulary and learn how to speak easily, you'll be able to write easily, when you read you understand the passage better. I was good in grammar from the start.	3rd Interview	10/11/2014 11:31	1	1	241 1.29
Shatha 3rd interview post-SA. Revised	Linguistics\Grammar		19	19	0	Yeah; even reading, everything. Everything changed. Because when you acquire new vocabulary and learn how to speak easily, you'll be able to write easily, when you read you understand the passage better. I was good in grammar from the start.	3rd Interview	10/11/2014 11:32	1	1	241 1.29
Shatha 3rd interview post-SA. Revised	Linguistics\Rating skills		21	21	0	Speaking, grammar, writing, reading.	3rd Interview	10/11/2014 11:34	1	1	36 0.19
Shatha 3rd interview post-SA. Revised	Linguistics\Listening		23	25	0	It was good; I was really good in it. If anyone come up and talks to me, I can understand immediately and answer. It's rare that I ask them to repeat what they said or don't understand what they say, except if they're talking really fast or if there's a loud noise or something. But if they just talked normally, it was fine. Speaker 1: Before you went abroad, did you ask people to repeat sentences or questions or were you okay? Speaker 2: I was good, I	3rd Interview	10/11/2014 11:36	1	1	463 2.48

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