

(Not) The Saudi Women You Hear about: The Developed Identity of Saudi Women in Australia

Luluh Ibrahim Alfurayh

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Applied Linguistics
School of Languages, Literatures, Cultures & Linguistics
Monash University
May 2016

© The author 2016. Except as provided in the Copyright Act 1968, this thesis may not be reproduced in any form without the written permission of the author.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any educational institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

The research for this thesis received the approval of the Monash University Standing Committee for Ethical Research on Humans (reference: CF15/4601 – 2015001982).

Signed: Luluh Ibrahim Alfurayh

27-5-2016

Dedication

To the soul of my father, you left fingerprints on my life.
You will not be forgotten.

To my mother, your prayers got me where I'm today.
I would not be able to do it without you.

To my little ones, Princess Eleen and King Ibrahim,
For ruling my life with love.

Lulu

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, thanks to Allah the Almighty for giving me the strength and the ability to learn, understand and complete this research.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Melanie Burns, for her valuable guidance, encouragement and for pushing me harder than I thought I can go. For your unwavering support, I'm truly grateful.

I would like also to thank all of the lecturers at the Faculty of Arts at Monash University for their assistance.

I sincerely thank my friends in Australia, especially Sarah Murphy for her support and help and for being such a good friend.

Many thanks to my friends back home, Lely, Nejwa, Alia, Mona and Abeer, for being there and making me laugh when I needed a break from the thesis work.

I would like to thank my relatives, my uncles Ali, Saleh and Badr, my cousins Samia, Alia and Mona, for keeping in touch, for their nice messages and prayers.

Most of all, many thanks to my dear brother, Zead, for his support and encouragement, and mostly for believing in me.

Last but not least, I would like to thank the participants of this study for giving me their time and sharing their stories, and who helped me to find my voice through theirs.

Table of Contents

Declaration	3
Dedication	4
Acknowledgements	5
Table of Contents	6
List of Tables.....	8
Glossary.....	9
Abstract	10
Chapter One: Introduction.....	12
1.1. Overview	12
1.2. Overview of the study	12
1.3. Research Aims and Questions.....	16
1.4. Organisation of the Thesis.....	16
Chapter Two: Literature Review I : Background.....	18
2.1. Overview	18
2.2. Saudi Arabia.....	18
2.3. Women in Saudi Arabia: a daughter, wife and a mother:.....	21
2.4. Girls' education in Saudi Arabia: An ongoing battle.....	23
2.5. Women's status in Islam: Complete Support.....	26
2.6. Islamic Feminism: Voices to be heard	29
Chapter Three: Literature Review II : Theories.....	33
3.1. Overview	33
3.2. Language, Gender and Identity	33
3.2.1.Social Identity Theory - Group vs. Individual Identity	34
3.2.2.Gender and Language.....	36
3.2.3.Second Language Learning Environment	39
2.2.4.Investment and Identity in L2 Theory	43
Chapter Four: Methodology.....	47
4.1. Overview	47
4.2. Qualitative Research Methods.....	47
4.3. Study Participants.....	51
4.3.1. Selection of participants.	51
4.3.3. Description of participants.	52
4.4. Data Collection.....	54
4.4.1. Questionnaire.....	54
4.4.2. Interviews.	55
4.5. Data Analysis	56
Chapter Five: Findings and discussion I.....	59
5.1. Overview.	59

5.2. Findings and discussion.....	60
5.2.1. Empowerment.	60
5.2.1.1. The sense of empowerment by maintaining their traditional roles.....	60
5.2.1.2. The sense of empowerment by trying on new roles accessed via language learning.....	64
• Islamic feminism	64
• The role of English as a resource.....	68
Chapter six: Findings and discussion II	71
6.1. Overview	71
6.2. Change:.....	71
6.2.1. English language as a tool of change: The importance of English.	71
6.2.2. The impact of the new environment: the role of socialization	72
6.2.3. Change as an investment in English language.....	80
• The Willingness to Change.....	80
• Future change	83
Chapter Seven: Conclusion, Implications and Recommendations	86
7.1. Overview	86
7.2. Conclusion.....	86
7.3. Limitations of the study.....	88
7.4. Implications and Recommendations for further research.....	89
7.5. Closing comment.....	91
References	93
Appendices	99
Appendix 1:Questionnaire.....	99
Appendix 2: Interview Questions	100
Appendix 3:Explanatory Statement	103
Appendix 4:Conset Form	104

List of Tables

Table 4.1 Description of participants	50
---	----

Glossary

Arabic terms

Abaya: a full length, long sleeved garment worn by some Muslim women.

Halal: permissible under Islamic teachings

Hadith: the teachings and sayings of the prophet.

Mahram: legal guardian

Makkah and Madinah: Muslim Holy cities which are commonly anglicised to 'Mecca' and 'Medina'

Quran: the word of God as transmitted to Muhammad, and the Hadith

Shahada: the testimony that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his Prophet

Sharia: Islamic laws

Shura council: the kings' consultative council

Sunna: Prophet Muhammad's practices

Abstract

Studying abroad is considered to be an important factor behind the social changes happening in Saudi Arabia especially among Saudi women (Alhazmi, 2010). When abroad, some Saudi women experience a change in their values and beliefs which affect their social behaviors.

Drawing on an Islamic feminism perspective, Norton's investment theory, and SLA theories, this study explores the experience of female Saudi international students in Australia and the role of English in the development of these women's identities. It discusses how learning English and living in an English speaking country impact upon Saudi women's social identity.

The participants were five postgraduate Saudi female students, currently studying in Australia. The research methodology utilized a qualitative approach and data was generated from self-completion questionnaires and in-depth face to face interviews.

The findings indicate that the Saudi women valued their traditional roles as mothers and felt empowered by performing the task of motherhood. However, they reject their traditional roles as wives and the mandates on women's roles in Saudi culture and seek different roles. They do that in line with their religion by reinterpreting the Islamic teaching i.e. Islamic feminism, and learning English linguistically and using English to access different cultures.

The findings also emphasize the importance of the English language, and socialisation in the new environment in developing the identity of the Saudi women, and how it is considered a resource which learners can optionally draw on.

The findings also show that the Saudi women are investing in learning the target language as a way to provoke change (within themselves, their family and the Saudi society).

This study helps to fill a gap in literature as almost all the literature found in this topic was conducted by non-Saudi researchers, who, as outsiders, could miss the changes happening in Saudi Arabia, so there is a need to discuss the identity of Saudi women with an insider perspective.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Overview

This study investigates the impact of English as a second language and living in an English speaking country on the identity of Saudi female students. It examines how their identity is shaped and developed through their experiences in a Western country and how the acquisition and use of English acts as an identity resource.

This chapter introduces and provides a brief outline of the study. It starts with an overview of the study and some background information. It then defines the aims and presents the research questions, followed by a discussion of the significance of the study. This chapter ends with an outline of the organisation of the thesis which provides an overview of each chapter.

1.2. Overview of the study

The English language enjoys a great power and high status in almost all the world. It is the official language in 52 countries (Mesthrie et al., 2009), and the language of technology, diplomacy and business in the majority of the non-native English speaking countries. Indeed, "English is now more commonly spoken as a second, rather than first language by bilinguals and is used more frequently for intercultural communication between non-native speakers than between native speakers" (Ricento, 2005, p. 903). It is the language of power, a language which provides its users with many educational, social and business opportunities. So, it should not be a surprise that many people in different countries are interested in learning English as a second or foreign language.

In Saudi Arabia, there has been a great interest in teaching and learning English, by making teaching English as an essential part of its schools' and universities' curriculum and by sending selected students to study at universities in various countries where English is the native language. In 2005, the King Abdullah scholarship program started, and since then a significantly large number of Saudi students have been sponsored to study in different countries, in Australia and worldwide. This program's main focus is to produce skilled, knowledgeable and internationally competitive students who will serve and meet the demand for an English-speaking and well-educated workforce in Saudi. It is also designed to allow international scientific, educational and cultural exchange between Saudi Arabia and the host country (Ministry of Higher Education. 2015). So the Saudi Arabian government has expanded its relations with other cultures in order to participate in the process of globalization (Alhazmi, 2010) and English plays an important role in this. This is discussed further in chapter 2.

All international students face new challenges when travelling overseas to study; however, with Saudi international students in general and the females in particular, the experience is particularly unique as there are significant differences between their home and host country cultures. In addition to being an international and foreign student, they experience a huge transition from a sex-segregated environment to a mixed one (Alhazmi, 2010). They come from a society of traditional gender roles, where women's role in public life is limited and their interaction with men outside their family is not favoured, and within conservative families not really allowed (Hamdan, 2005), to a free society, where no such restrictions apply.

Although this "new cross cultural experience is at the first strange, mysterious and scary for Saudi Arabian students" (Groves, 2015, p.7) it seems that after spending time in the host country many Saudi students enjoy their life abroad and start to get a feeling of "inclusion [as if] they were community members" (Shaw, 2010, p. 213). This new experience can have a significant impact on Saudi students, as living and studying abroad in a country with completely different values and culture can change these students educationally and socially, which will "impact on the experience of returning to their Saudi community" (Alhazmi, 2010, p. 347).

These young international students form a significant part of Saudi Arabia's population and when they return they can make a difference: "the impact of Western influences... rely heavily on how the group of returning international students... have changed and what they bring back from their international experience [which potentially] will lead to social change within Saudi Arabia"(Alhazmi, 2010, p. 347).

However, it seems that this experience of studying abroad has different effects on Saudi men and women. Coming from a country with traditional "gender roles, segregation, male guardianship, veiling, restrictions on women employment and education" (Groves, 2015, p. 33), putting women in an inferior position to men, may drive Saudi women to seek better positions. They do this by trying to master the English language and socialise more with people of different cultures to pursue change within themselves and in their society (Alsaweel, 2013), even when these change desires are not explicitly expressed (Sheridan, 2015), however, this is not the case with men. According to Hall (2013), Saudi men do not socialize much with outsiders and usually interact with other Saudi men, which is the Arab and Muslim way of maintaining their cultural and social values in their overseas study experience

(Alkharusi, 2013). So with Saudi male superiority in the Saudi society, stability is appreciated and valued. Therefore they do not seek to socialise outside of their group because the group already provides the recognition and power they desire, whereas Saudi women have less power in society so are maybe more willing to seek recognition and power outside the society.

When studying abroad, Saudi female students are influenced by the new language and its culture as "all languages carry within them a particular worldview and a particular culture" (Su Kim, 2003, p.156). This means that a language and its culture cannot be separated, as people learn cultures through languages and a culture is transferred through language. In a new country, they are faced with a completely different culture which plays an important role in shaping their identities, and this is explored further in chapter three. They may go through difficult times as they face conflicting ideas about their roles as women between their home culture and the host culture. From the constraints surrounding Saudi women at home, to the freedom of the new country, their identities go through many changes, as cultural identities are dynamic and exist within a changing social context (Lustig, 2013). Consequently, one's identity changes as do their ongoing experiences in life (Lustig, 2013, p.135).

This study centres around the nature of the relationship between English as a second language and identity, how learning a language constructs a self and how using a language represents a self which is associated with one's social identity and values. This study is concerned with the experiences of Saudi women in a Western country with the focus on two main issues: the impact of English as a global language on individual identity and the experience of studying in an English speaking country on the identity of Saudi female students.

1.3. Research Aims and Questions

The main goals of this study are to obtain a better perspective on the identity development of Saudi females and whether their perceptions and behaviours change according to the time they spent in an English speaking country (Australia). It examines their identity development by hearing their voices in regards to their views on being English-speaking Saudi women, how they view their home and host societies, and how they think both societies have influenced them. Therefore, the present study is designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the reported gender roles of Saudi women in the Saudi Arabian culture and society?
2. How has acquiring the English language and living in an English-speaking country impacted their roles and identities?
3. Do participants report a change in roles between their home community (Saudi Arabia) and host community (Australia), and if so how do they perceive themselves?
4. How do they believe this experience will shape their future goals and relationships?

In this study, a qualitative approach was employed, with the data collection methods consisting of a brief self-completion questionnaire and semi-structured in-depth individual interviews, and a thematic analysis method was used for analysing and interpreting the data.

1.4. Organisation of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into seven chapters, including this introduction chapter. Chapter Two presents the first section of the literature review, which takes a look at the background of the study, the history of Saudi Arabia, the prescribed and changing

women's roles in Saudi society, girls education, women's status in Islam and how Islamic feminism can be employed to understand these. Chapter three reviews previous studies around language, gender and identity and the interconnection between them. Chapter four discusses the methodology of the study, including the research approach, description of the participants, the methods for data collection and data analysis. Chapter five and six report and discuss the findings of the research. Chapter seven concludes the findings of the study in the light of the research questions and suggests some implications of the study, as well as limitations and recommendations for further research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review I: Background

2.1. Overview

This chapter reviews the background to the study in the light of previous works and studies. It is divided into five main parts. In the first part, the history of Saudi Arabia and its people is discussed, from the discovery of oil until the present day. This is followed by a discussion of the role of Saudi women and the change in women's roles in public life that is taking place. The third part discusses the history of female education in Saudi Arabia and how this is considered the starting point in the changing roles of women in Saudi Arabia. After that, a description of the status of women in Islam is provided to show the differences between the practices of Muslims and the normative Islamic teachings in regard to women in Saudi Arabia. The last part presents Islamic feminism as a position to understand and interpret the changing roles of women in Islam and Saudi Arabia.

2.2. Saudi Arabia

"Saudi Arabia has also changed. People today are connecting with each other all across the world through small gadgets and television. It's a different society."- Sultan Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud.

Saudi Arabia is a large country located between Africa and Asia. Islam is the religion of one hundred percent of its population and is intertwined with all aspects of Saudi life: "Sharia [Islamic laws] is the law and constitution of the land. The Sunna [Prophet Muhammad's practices] regulates daily life. Al-Shahada [the testimony that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet] forms the Saudi Arabian flag" (Pharaon, 2004, p. 348). It is known as the birth place of Islam, and sometimes it is

called "the Land of the Two Holy Mosques", referring to the Holy mosques in Makkah and Madinah, the two holiest places in Islam, which makes it the focal point for billions of Muslims around the world. Arabic, which is the language of the Quran and Islam, is Saudi Arabia's official language. However, these days English is quite common in education, business, and entertainment communities.

The Sharia, the Sunna, the Shahada and the Arabic language are all important factors that "regulate and influence the daily lives of the people in Saudi Arabia and are expected to prevail in the future like no other Islamic country on earth. It is believed that Islam will continue to hold together the fabric of Saudi Society in the twenty-first century and beyond" (Pharaon, 2004, p. 349). This illustrates the close relationship between Islam and the Saudi culture.

Saudi Arabia is regarded as one of the most conservative Muslim country in the world in regards to religion and social values (Clarke, 2007), and the character of the Saudi society has been influenced and shaped mainly by Islam and a strong Arabian culture. This means that the life of Saudis is deeply rooted in the Saudi society's specific interpretations of the Islamic religion. They live by believing that "church and state" are not separate, with a declaration of themselves as Muslims, and practicing their Islamic duties every day. In addition, the Arabian culture involves the interpretations, meanings and understandings of the different traditions, habits, customs, beliefs and histories which this region is made up of, as a country of people who identify themselves with the Arabic language. Saudi Arabia is made up of people from various tribes with different practices and traditions, but they are united under the religion and the language. Moreover, there are strong ties between Arabic and Islam, as Arabic is the language through which God's words are given to Muslims. Arabic is the

language of the Prophet and the Quran, and the language of prayers (even for Muslims from non-Arabic speaking countries). Thus, Arabic is integral to Islam and one's identity and practices as a Muslim.

Going back in history, during the fifties oil was discovered in Saudi Arabia which resulted in great wealth for the country. This huge discovery was one of the significant events in making Saudi Arabia into the state it is today. It made Saudi Arabia one of the richest countries in the world and this is considered as a starting point of its contact with the West, especially with the arrival of foreign workers, who came accompanied with different views and lifestyles (Lindsey, 2006). With this revolutionary economic development, education, health care, and other public services boosted rapidly. However, although the country was pursuing modernization, it had to be without secularization, a process which was a difficult challenge (Long, 1997); a good example of this is the segregated schools and special curriculum for girls, which was limited to teaching them how to be good wives and mothers, e.g. cooking and sewing classes.

The eighties witnessed an era of Islamic Fundamentalist revival in Saudi Arabia. The country had experienced decades of modernization and influence from the Western world through media and growing international travel. That caused the Saudi clerics to fear the disregarding of Islamic teaching. Major events which were happening at that time, such as the Gulf War, Iran's war and Makkah's siege, were seen as signs that people needed to return to their religion and caused Saudi society to add further restrictions on its people, especially on women (Ochsenwald, 1981). Women were forbidden from full participation in the development of their country, as it was

believed that "the Mecca siege was fuelled by the government stance on women's rights and role in the development of the Saudi nation" (Hamdan. 2005, p.43).

In short, over the last half a century, Saudi Arabia has experienced a rapid infrastructural development, and its GDP (Gross Domestic Product) has increased exponentially (World Bank, 2014). According to Pharaon (2004), along with these huge developments, there are many challenges ahead, including the increasing proportion of young people, a decrease in oil wealth, and the excessive dependence on foreign labour; all these challenges present a potential destabilization of Saudi's developments. This could also lead to destabilization of the society.

Lately, as attention is drawn on Islam and Muslim societies, and especially on the place of women, "it is hardly surprising that the Saudi society is suddenly squirming under this close scrutiny and torn between admitting the desire to progress and emancipate its women and defending its failure to do so" (Pharaon, 2004, p.351). So the Saudi society is currently in a place where they need to reconcile traditional, conservative beliefs and practices with modern progress. This leads to consideration about the role of women in Saudi Arabia, between the past, present and the future.

2.3. Women in Saudi Arabia: a daughter, wife and a mother

"Thus humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being... She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential... He is the Subject, he is the Absolute. She is the Other" (De Beauvoir, 1965)

Society plays an important role in determining the gender roles of its people, labelling who one is allowed to be or not to be, and what one can do or not do. The ideologies of a society shape gender norms, prescribing how women and men should act, look,

think and even dream (Smith, 1978). In Saudi Arabia, a woman's role is controlled by society and its interpretation of religion, which mainly runs around a familial circle. Women are expected to show loyalty and devotion to their families, husbands and children. Wives and mothers are the roles that society aim at when educating girls and that is the nature of the girls' and women's involvement in the society, as "a Muslim woman's main function is to produce righteous Muslim children; she is the primary caretaker, in charge of the household and chief supporter of her husband. She is allowed to participate in other activities only to the extent that they do not detract from her primary duties" (Al- Marayati, 1997 as cited in Alsaweel, 2013, p. 22).

Gender disparity is clearly manifested in that men are regarded as the heads of households and active in the public sphere, while women's main responsibilities are kept within the domestic sphere. There is a great affirmation of male superiority to females. Men are regarded the legal guardians of the family female members. Mostly, they have exclusive privilege in marriage, divorce, and child custody. These male powers are drawn from the society's interpretation of the Islamic teachings, and since these Islamic teachings control every aspect of people's lives, they have been integrated into public policy. Doumato (1992) outlines the impact of this on women's lives:

Women are not allowed to travel without the permission of a Mahram [legal guardian], a policy which is enforced by the state at airline check-in counters, railway stations, and hotels, where women traveling alone may not [until recently] register for a room. Further, women may not [until recently] receive a commercial license unless a male manager has been hired, and

certain courses, such as engineering, are only now opening up in female universities because it was the view that an employment in engineering is incompatible with sex-segregation (Doumato, 1992, p. 34)

However, the picture has changed in the current day, with many educated Saudi females providing the main financial support for their families by working long hours outside the home, which is due to the effects of globalization and current economic needs, which means that the increasing need for labour leads to the greater presence of women in the workforce. This change comes with resistance, as many conservative writers argue that this outside-the-home employment is the reason for the alleged breakdown of Saudi family values and highlight the virtues of the traditional stay-at-home wife and mother (Mill-Rosser et al, 2006). This change in women's roles, along with the resulting resistance, creates a conflict within Saudi women, between the traditional and the new, which can lead to a bigger change and force "democratization" as Keddie (2004) calls it, in the Saudi society. This means that the struggle these women are facing is creating a momentum for equality.

To trace back to the start of this change in women's roles and identities, one must look to education, as "education has been one of the major vehicles for the transmission of external values and is bound to have an uneasy relationship with existing social and familial standards" (Yamani, 2000, p. 49). In Saudi Arabia, the introduction of girls' education has led to a gradual change in the role of women in the society as discussed below.

2.4. Girls' education in Saudi Arabia: An ongoing battle

"The crucial feature of schooling is that all those who enter do not come

out the same"(Shaw, 1995, p. 4).

In Saudi Arabia, girls' education started in the forties with a few private schools only for the upper and middle class, but the sixties were the real start for girls' public education. However, this education was based on beliefs about the traditional role of women in Saudi society: becoming a wife and a mother, taking care of her own home, and complete obedience to her legal guardian (when a daughter, she answers to her father; when a wife, she answers to her husband; as a widow, she answers to her son). In short, these schools were established to preserve the socially acceptable barriers, which is clear in Mill-Rosser et al.'s (2006) recent study which stated that "funding for programs for educating women has been confined to those that prepare for occupations deemed culturally and religiously appropriate, such as teachers and school administrators" (p. 7). This goes along with Al-Zaid's (1981) statement that in Saudi Arabia, a girl is educated to "perform her duty in life, be an ideal and successful housewife and a good mother, prepared her to do things which suit her nature, like teaching, nursing, and giving medical treatment" (p. 56) which is also confirmed by Doumato (2000), who states that "girls were taught enough to buy into an assigned role, a role in which they were subordinate to men, but not enough to challenge it" (p.93). However, with all these limitations on girls' education, it has survived. Girls have dedicated all their time to studying diligently as this education gives them an "acceptable 'space of freedom' while conforming to gender norms" (Jansen, 2011, p. 28). Despite the cultural and social barriers, it is clear that education has a great influence on women's life, and helps improve the status of women in Saudi Arabia, as "certainly, education has played a pivotal role in promoting this [future] change" (Bahgat, 1999, p. 134). On the same line Pharaon (2004) argues that "education, while

still limited, has been extended to many more Saudi women than has formal employment" (p. 365).

Over time, education in Saudi Arabia continued to develop, with foreign female teachers brought in to teach different subjects to girls and the introduction of English language teaching in schools, and the eighties witnessed the introduction of scholarships which are considered the beginning of Saudi individuals' contact with the outside world. At this stage, some Saudis became allowed to see the world from different perspectives, had the chance to explore difference cultures, and then they started to question the prevailing norms of their society: "Saudi women and men who have been educated in the West return to the country with different visions for the future, [they] support women's rights and seek to support progress [and] implement change, [they] feel that the restrictions on women have been reaffirmed instead of diminished" (Hamdan, 2005, p. 55). Moreover, technology played a vital role here, as for many Saudi families who could not afford traveling to other countries around the world, technology brought the world to them. Through satellite dishes and internet access, Saudi society was able to become familiar with Western and Arabic countries. Yamani (2005) states that this cultural exposure to the outside world, along with education, are the main factors driving young females' questioning of their prescribed roles. Yamani (2005) suggests that "the men of the new generation have to decide on their attitude toward the role of women. They are still dominant and have to choose either to continue to restrain the aspirations of their sisters and wives or encourage them to develop the aspirations that education has afforded them" (p. 409). Now that many women are educated and working outside the home, sometimes as the main source of income in a family, they now have "more resources to change the nature of power relations in the family to her favour. She may question the norm of wife

obedience and reject the institution of polygamy" (Moaddel, 2006, p. 94). This is happening as the young female generation are "trying to take active roles in redefining their social identity" (Yamani, 1996, p. 270).

With these changes, research focus on women's issues has increased in recent years in the Muslim world in general, and in Saudi Arabia in particular as "differences in gender status in the Muslim world are greater in modern times than they were in the past" (Keddie, 2005, p. 54). The increased focus from the outside has had an almost opposite effect as outside influence has drawn the attention of Saudi traditionalists, who rather than address women's issues, are instead policing women more to ensure they aren't following outside practices. With many contemporary Muslims resisting gender equality, this has led to an exaggerated difference between men and women's status in the present time than it was before (Keddie, 2005).

2.5. Women's status in Islam: Complete Support

Although girls' education overcame many obstacles in Saudi Arabia, it "did not change the patriarchal nature of the Saudi society. Women in every field are subordinate to men" (Hamdan, 2005, p.48). Fatemah Naseef, the first female cleric in Saudi who is allowed to issue Fatwa, said in an interview in 1994 that "yes we have women professors and women Deans here. But all decisions, big or small, are made by authorities at the men's university" (Goodwin, 1994, as cited in Hamdan, 2005, p. 54). Despite this, throughout history women have been getting some support from men. King Faisal, as an example, has been known for his support for women's education, and in addition to his efforts in building schools and convincing his public of educating their girls, he helped Fatima Shaker, a Saudi anthropologist and the first Saudi woman to get a PhD degree, to fulfil her dream to get a scholarship to the USA

(Lacey, 1981). King Faisal stated that his support was drawn directly from the Islamic teachings and his beliefs on girls' education were derived from the Quran and Hadith. When facing resistance on the education of girls, King Faisal used to ask: "Is there anything in the Holy Quran which forbids the education of women?... we have no cause for argument, God enjoins learning on every Muslim man and woman" (as cited in Lacey, 1981, p.368).

So when discussing women's status in the light of Islamic teachings, the huge differences between Muslims' practices and normative Islam should be highlighted. Islam has often been criticized of treating women unjustly, but key Islamic teachings do not support this, as great respect towards women is one of the significant features of Islam. Furthermore, throughout Islamic history women have held important roles in their societies; for example, Prophet Mohammad's (PBUH) first wife, Khadija, was known for her successful commercial management and she was the first well known business woman in Islam (Badawi, 1995). In addition, Aisha, one of Prophet Mohammad's (PBUH) wives, used to discuss and negotiate different matters and political issues with the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), and her wisdom was recognised and appreciated, as acknowledged in the Hadith. Islamic historical documentations note that "one sixth of the Hadith record Aisha as being part of the chain of transmission of the sayings and traditions of the prophet" (Hamdan, 2005, p.53) which is greatly valued by many Muslims today. Moreover, "she led an army of 30000 soldiers, cooked for them and helped medicate them" (Hamdan, 2005, p.53). Another prominent woman in Islamic history, Fatima, one of Prophet Mohammad's (PBUH) daughters, was a politically active woman as reported in many historical records and her daughter, Sokainah, was a prominent mathematician. There is also Shagarat Al-Dur, a very powerful woman in Islamic history, and the first to be titled

'sultan of Egypt' (AlHassani, 2010). These examples and many others invalidate the religious conservatives' claims regarding women status in general and their education in particular. Further, Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) encouraged education and seeking knowledge equally as "the search of knowledge is a duty for every Muslim male and female" (the Hadith, as cited in Hamdan, 2005, p.54). Also when women complained to the Prophet (PBUH) about not being able to hear his lessons, he (PBUH) allocated one day per week to teach them. In general, there are many of the Prophet's (PBUH) sayings that show his respect and care for women, for daughters, for example: "Whoever had daughters and was patient with raising them, the daughters would be a protection for him from the Hell fire" (the Hadith, as cited in Jawad, 1998, p.9). For wives, he (PBUH) said: "Fear Allah with regards to women, you have taken them in the trust of Allah and have made their private parts halal with the word of Allah" (the Hadith, as cited in Alshafii, 2002, p.23). For mothers, he said, when a man asked him: "O Messenger of Allah! Who is most deserving of my fine treatment?" He (PBUH) said, "Your mother, then your mother, then your mother, then your father, then your nearest, then nearest" (the Hadith, as cited in Alshafii, 2002, p.20).

With this overview, it is clear that the key teachings of Islam, as manifest in the core religious texts of the Quran and the Hadith, give women an honourable status in Islam, advising men to respect and take care of women and protect them whether a mother, a wife or a daughter and reciprocally for women to respect and take care of men, as each one of them has duties and rights to fulfil. However, over the years, some non-Islamic habits and customs have appeared and become well established among Muslims in general and Saudi people in particular: "cultural customs that deny women equality have become entrenched in the Muslim culture to the point where they are often accepted as Islamic rules" (Hamdan, 2005, p. 54). Some of these cultural

customs and practices against women are based on a narrow interpretation of the Islamic teaching by conservative religious scholars.

The position of women in Islam was mentioned and discussed here since Islam and its teaching form a major part of Saudi women's life. Religion governs every Saudi's everyday life, so when discussing women's life in Saudi Arabia we have to discuss religion (Gallant, 2008). Therefore, it is possible to apply an Islamic feminist perspective to the issue of gender relations, which is "the reinterpretation of the Islamic teaching using different lenses and voices" (Alsaweel, 2013, p. 18); indeed, as will be seen in this study, the participants used the Islamic teachings to validate their opinions, moves, actions and reactions.

2.6. Islamic Feminism: Voices to be heard

"Islam turned out to be the religion that appealed to my feminist ideals"
(Corbin, 2014)

The above sections introduced and discussed Saudi Arabia and the role of women in the social, cultural, historical and Islamic context, and this study seeks to share the stories of Saudi women who are studying in Australia. An Islamic feminism perspective can be utilised to understand and interpret their relationship with the home culture, host culture, and religion. The word 'feminism' in the Western context does not really represent the struggles and needs of the Muslim women in general and Saudi women in particular. Noor AlSibai (2015, as cited in Sheridan, 2015, p.80) stated that "feminism is not one unified movement" and in the Arab world, the word 'feminism' is usually associated with the Western world, as religion must be considered when discussing feminism among Arabs (Gallant, 2008).

'Feminism' here is used in an Islamic context to capture the needs and struggles of the female Muslims, which have often been misunderstood by Western feminism. This has caused a "degradation of their status and curtailment of their rights" (Deo, 2006, p. 106) with Western feminists "criticizing Islam [which] is an inadequate way to fight patriarchy and Disrupts solidarity with Muslim women" (Sheridan, 2015, p. 81).

Western attention has neglected the most pressing issues facing Muslim women, instead focusing on minor issues, such as the veil or bans on women driving. Rather, Muslim women are concerned with bigger issues such as social rights, employment and education, which means that "the situation has not been helped by the western understanding of feminism"(Alsaweel, 2013, p.80), as the notion of complete equality is not of much importance to Muslim feminists which is in contrast to Western feminists. Islamic feminists are using Islam as the basis of their movement, and according to the Islamic and Quranic teachings, men and women are required to fulfil different roles and have different duties and rights. So they believe that "gender equity is a basic Islamic tenet" (Sherdian, 2015, p. 81) and they are seeking that Islamic equity. Thus, Saudi Muslim women are not seeking absolute equality with men, but to enhance their position and to be publically recognized. Throughout history many women have held powerful positions, and they have not been less Muslims than women of the present time. Within Western feminism, Muslim women have been perceived as 'helpless victims' who need outside help and enlightenment, they have been victimized without their consent (Ahmed, 1992; Haddad & Esposito, 1998; Jawad & Benn, 2003 as cited in Alsaweel, 2013).

Muslim women do not appeal to "movements that advocate for rapid change", they do not accept the word feminism because of its associations that do not "suit their culture"(Sheridan, 2015, p.37). Therefore, when investigating Muslim feminism, religion and the way it shapes every aspect of Muslims' life must be considered (Gallant, 2008). However, although Islamic and Western feminism are quite different, the core beliefs about independence and autonomy for women are the same.

Groups of women across the Islamic world have started to draw attention to their local situations and needs, with a primary focus to improve Muslim women's roles in Islamic society. These groups concentrated mainly on issues like employment, education, health, financial and social rights. Merissa (2005) stated that, in Muslim countries, these activist groups are fully aware that in fighting for human rights in general or women rights in particular, they have to base their claims on "religious history", i.e. to draw on stories of the early Islam, to compare their lives to the lives of women back then.

Islam has given women attention and "[w]omen's issues are a central and integral part of Islamic discourses" (Alsaweel, 2013, p.82); thus, women are considering the Islamic teachings as a source of human rights, equity and freedom. In other words, they need to work within the (religious) system to get change, rather than change the system, which is the goal of many Western feminist movements. Therefore, Islamic feminism is the rereading and the reinterpretation of the Islamic teachings from different angles and perspectives in order to find answers to modern women's issues. The Quran, the core Islamic text, has always admitted women's rights, socially and economically: they inherit, have their own property and the right to divorce. Isobel Coleman (2010, as cited in Sheridan, 2015) stated that "Islamic feminists are reading

the Quran and realizing the support for women's rights and women's equality it contains"(p.41). In the Quran, there is a clear declaration of equality in labour and the only quality that position a person has above the other is a religious ideal of righteousness, disregarding their gender or race, as stated in these verses of the Quran: "If any do deeds of righteousness be they male or female and have faith, they will enter heaven, and not the least injustice will be done to them" (the Quran 4:124) and "Whosoever performs good deeds whether male or female and is a believer, we shall surely make him live a good life and we will certainly reward them for the best of what they did" (the Quran 16:97). Such verses are the basis for Margot Badran's (2002) arguments about the Quran being the source of Islamic feminism and aiming for equality: "Islamic feminism, which derives its understanding and mandate from the Qur'an, seeks rights and justice for women, and for men, in the totality of their existence. Islamic feminism is both highly contested and firmly embraced" (p.33). Feminism then has been deeply rooted in Islam and gives "a more comfortable alternative path toward change", as it can be considered as a safe way and "a more culturally relevant and less threatening to core Islamic values" (Wagner, 2011 as cited in Sheridan, 2015, p.41).

In conclusion, after reviewing the deep religious history of Saudi Arabia, and showing how culture and traditions are strongly rooted in this nation, and how they determine the social roles and create people identities, especially the women's roles in such culture, the next chapter will review the literature on language, gender and identity and how they can be utilised to understand the context of Saudi Arabia.

Chapter Three: Literature Review II: Theories

3.1. Overview

This chapter describes the theories informing this study along with a review of some previous studies regarding the relationship between language, gender and identity. This will be discussed in the light of four main domains; social identity theory, language and gender, L2 learning environment and Norton's (2000) theory of investment.

3.2. Language, Gender and Identity

Language is more than a means of communication. It is an inherent part of the culture of a language's speakers, and therefore part of an individual's social and cultural identity (Warsi, 2009). It could be considered that language is the outward expression of culture (Su Kim, 2003). Language therefore contributes to the collective cultural identity of a linguistic group, and to the individual social and cultural identity of language speakers (Dastgoshadeh & Jalilzadeh, 2011). An example is the interconnection between Arabic and Islam. Arabic is the language of Quran, prayers and it is the way to access Allah's message; thus Arabic is tied up with the Islamic identity, and since Saudi Arabia is one of the most conservative Islamic countries, and Islam regulates the Saudi people's everyday life, Arabic is then part of the Saudi identity. Linguistic identity also encompasses an element of collective and individual power specific to the language, whereby the social power associated with a specific language is effectively conferred to the individual or group commanding it (Weiß & Schwietering, n.d.). In Saudi Arabia, and other Muslim countries, Arabic has a high social power, as it is the language of their religion, however, English has a high social

power in Western countries, around the world and in Saudi Arabia too, as it is a global language.

Given the relative global dominance of the English language, for example the place of English as the international language of business and technology, the importance of being able to communicate in English in an increasingly globalised world cannot be underestimated, and confers significant benefits to individuals' prospects and opportunities (Neeley, 2012). Thus, the increasingly global nature of Saudi Arabia, in terms of business, has led to more work requiring English-Arabic bilingual speakers, thus, better job opportunities to those who speak the language.

It could be argued that the power of English, as a global language, adds perceived power in the workplace in non-English speaking nations, such as Saudi Arabia, to those with command of the language. In addition to the previously mentioned job opportunities, English speakers in Saudi Arabia also have higher social standing and are perceived as educated and worldly. Therefore, acquisition of English imparts higher social standing upon them which impact their individual identity and how that identity is perceived by themselves and others (Weiß & Schwietering, n.d.). In spite of clear gender roles in other aspects of Saudi Arabian society (e.g. home and religious duties), speaking English can boost status for members of both genders. In order to understand how this impacts on Saudi females, a number of theories are considered below.

3.2.1. Social Identity Theory - Group vs. Individual Identity

Social identity is described by McLeod (2008) as an individual's perception of themselves based on their membership of social groups (ethnicity, social class,

nationality, family, sub-culture membership etc.). It confers a sense of 'belonging', and is an inherent part of an individual's sense of self (McLeod, 2008).

Whilst group social identity is characterised by collective 'in group' belonging (Burke, 2006; McLeod, 2008), individual social identity is not dependent on membership of a single group, but is derived from membership of multiple 'in-groups', which may not be entirely convergent. So, whilst an individual's social identity is comprised of a series of 'in group' identities, these multiple identities may be in conflict – such as an immigrant with both original and adopted national identities (Roccas & Brewer, 2002).

Lustig (2013) identifies individual social identity as a dynamic concept, which is subject to constant change as an individual encounters different experiences and influences. Therefore, as language affects an individual's group social identity (McLeod, 2008; Weiß & Schwietering, n.d.), and new experiences affect individual social identity (Lustig, 2013), the experience of learning a new language will impact on individual social identity. Da Costa (2012) explained in her study that although the national identity of the Saudi participants in her study is strong, new experiences like learning English and living in a new country affect their identities the same way that social changes such as getting married or being a mother affect the social identity of women. Even though her Saudi participants spoke positively of their Saudi traditions, Da Costa recognised a change in their beliefs and what they wanted for society, even though they were unable to voice their desire. For example, one of her participants rejected wearing the veil (wearing Abaya is mandatory in Saudi Arabia, but covering the face is optional) in one of her trips to Saudi Arabia, and due to her struggle with her mother, she did what was expected from her but deep inside she hoped for change.

3.2.2. Gender and Language

The majority of literature concerning gender and language espouses feminist theory concerning the balance of perceived power between genders and the role of women in a given society, which is subject to significant differences between cultures, and their associated languages (Su Kim, 2003). Language is described as "the site of identity construction" (Pavlenko, 2001, p. 319), and gender is described as "...one particular type of meaning or social identity conveyed by particular linguistic choices" (Holmes, 2008, p.5). These studies all focus on how people express their gender through micro linguistic features in the one language (predominantly English). The focus of the present study, on the other hand, is on how people may use different languages to express or highlight different aspects of their gender identity.

It is clear that the gender aspect of an individual's social identity is liable to change when the language they are using to convey that identity changes; for example, from a language which conveys a culture where women have a subordinate role such as Arabic, to a language which conveys a society where women have a more equitable status, such as a majority of the English-speaking world. This is supported by Pavlenko (2007), who argues that new gendered subject positions or identities offered by the target language ideologies may be welcomed by immigrant women, a process labelled "self-reconstruction".

Pavlenko (2002) also supports a multiple and complex approach to social identity, considering the concept of singular identities as outmoded and invoking a 'monolingual and monocultural bias' (Pavlenko 2002 p.279). This does not account for modern globalised communities with multilingual and multicultural populations, where many are simultaneously part of multiple cultures and in-groups which are in a

constant state of flux, and which in themselves may be a site of struggle. This is further supported by Shi (2006), who warns against a binary approach to gender in which a set of fixed traits are attributed as masculine or feminine (Shi, 2006). Instead, Shi talks about the construction of gender identity in the process of language socialization and discusses the relationship between gender and language ideologies, and cross-cultural transformation in the context of second language learners' socialization. She argues that "multilingual and multicultural contexts present a fertile site for investigation of the discourses, because especially visible and severe clashes of multiple ideologies of language and gender tend to occur in distinct linguistic and sociocultural environments" (Shi, 2006, p. 4). This is supported by Pavlenko (2001) who argues that every language inherently ingrains different ideologies of gender, which present different gendered practices and understandings of gender identity to the learners of the second language.

Of more relevance to the present study is the shift in gender identity and change in relative individual power engendered within different cultures. This is examined comprehensively by Gordon (2004) in his study of Lau men and women working in the USA. Gordon identified that, whilst men experienced reduced opportunities compared to their home culture, owing to a loss of perceived power traditionally inherent in patriarchal Lau culture and society, women's social identities and relative power were enhanced by increased opportunities central to egalitarian US culture. The women in Gordon's study were more likely to use English for this reason than the men. These Lau women become more independent, confident and gained more authority in and outside their homes with the use of increasingly improved English language (Gordon, 2004). Considering the similar patriarchal societal values in Saudi

Arabia, it can be expected a similar identity shift may occur in Saudi women in Western cultural environments.

Alsaweel (2013) explains the juxtaposition between the modern Saudi social identity and the traditional Saudi gender identity in a country with no separation between culture and religion. There are those whose values are informed by traditional Saudi culture and they may use religious Islamic text to impart their beliefs upon modern Saudi society. However, modern Saudi society is increasingly exposed to Western egalitarian gender-equal values, which has encouraged some members to question the narrow interpretation of Islamic texts. As Alsaweel puts it, the inherent incongruity is further exacerbated by the Western cultural influence of English, which is significantly divergent from Saudi culture, particularly as it pertains to women's gender identity (Alsaweel, 2013).

Alsaweel (2013) takes a well-considered approach to this juxtaposition, employing the multiple group social identity theory used by Roccas and Brewer (2002). English is a carrier of Western cultural values and modern media, business, education, and global travel place Saudi people in contact with English and those values. Alsaweel explains how Saudi women are able to rationalise the competing demands of traditional Islamic-based gender roles and resultant identity and the gender identity inherent in the modern culture they are exposed to through English language-based Western cultural influences. They do this by maintaining and developing multiple social identities which encompass each aspect of their gender identity, with each of these social identities contributing to their sense of self and their self-perceived role (Alsaweel, 2013, Roccas & Brewer, 2002).

In order to rationalise otherwise incompatible social identities, Alsaweel (2013) asserts that Saudi women have developed Islamic feminist perspectives which are based on reinterpreting traditional Islamic teachings through a modern perspective, in order to rationalise their divergent roles and expectations. Language is used to compartmentalise the two incompatible personal identities, such as the traditional Arabic speaking Islamic Saudi woman and the independent, modern English speaking Saudi woman, where English may be used to give ‘voice’ to, and therefore strengthen (and vice versa) the modern identity in its association with globalisation (Alsaweel, 2013). For example, coming from a gender-segregated country, where Saudi women and men do not socialize as they operate in different spheres, which is a cultural norm that is significantly influencing the Saudi cultural identity, these Saudi women used English to overcome the barrier of interacting with men, and they used English as a balance between their competing identities, the traditional and the modern one (Alsaweel, 2013), as the use of English maintains a social distance or level of formality to the interaction between men and women. This is possibly due to the status English hold in the Saudi society as the language of formal contexts.

3.2.3. Second Language Learning Environment

There is a significant body of evidence which highlights key differences in learner experiences and therefore effects on social identity between students of English as a foreign language (EFL) in their home nation, and English as a second language (ESL) in an overseas host nation (Schauer, 2006; Lustig, 2013).

Whilst these differences are multi-faceted, the pertinent element in this case is the influence of the learning environment on the learner’s perceived identity. For EFL students, their environment is within their home nation and, whilst the experience of

university of itself will add to the individual's overall experiences and therefore have an impact on the learner's dynamic identity as new experiences occur (Lustig, 2013), the environment remains that of the home nation. In other words, the learning environment is characterised by the same cultural and societal beliefs and norms as the home nation, therefore not exposing students as much to the target language culture.

In the case of ESL students, there is a sea change in perspective brought about by the experience of living and studying within a different culture. The main countries where English is the native tongue which offer educational opportunities for Saudi female students include Australia, Canada, the USA and the UK, all of which have vastly different cultures to Saudi Arabia, particularly with regard to the perceived role of women and their corresponding social identity within those 'Western' cultures.

Therefore, learning environment will play a major factor in how learning English affects Saudi females and their perception of their social identity, owing to the intensive and prolonged experience of a vastly different culture in which the societal role of women is one of the most divergent cultural elements. This divergent culture is expressed through language, which may characterise English for the learner as representative of the more autonomous social identity of women in Western culture, in accordance with Pavlenko's (2001, p. 319) assertion that language is "the site of identity construction". English gives access to different roles and identities, and learning the language in countries like Australia or the US offers opportunities to be part of different cultures, and although learning the English language is also offered in Saudi Arabia it is only to a limited extent – it only allows learners to learn about and remotely access a different culture but not live it.

The importance of learning environment between EFL and ESL education has been highlighted in a range of studies, which is perhaps unsurprising given the recent exponential increase in students studying abroad. In 2011, 4.3 million higher education students worldwide were enrolled in programmes outside their home nation, compared with 2.7 million in 2004 and 0.8 million in 1975 (OECD, 2013; Jackson, 2008). Since 2005, the start of the King Abdullah Scholarship program, tens of thousands of Saudi Arabian students have been sponsored to study in different parts of the world (Saudi Arabia Ministry of Higher Education, 2015). More than 7000 Saudi Arabian students have been enrolled in different Australian programmes in 2013 (AEI, 2016).

Jackson (2008, p.11), discusses "identity (re)construction, and the development of intercultural communicative competence and intercultural personhood", which supports Lustig's (2013) assertion that individuals are defined by their experiences, and their resulting social identity is dynamic and fluid, and subject to change as new experiences occur. Jackson's (2008) study is of interest as it focuses specifically on the ESL experience, describing the process ESL students experience as "journeys of discovering Self and Other"(p.2). The student's identity is understood through the perception of how one sees self and other, and how the other sees them, which is established through their interaction with one another in different situations (Jackson, 2008). Coming from a completely different environment, customs, traditions and ways of living, the journeys of female Saudi students of discovering their selves in Western countries must be different to those who do not leave Saudi Arabia.

Jackson (2008) investigates the ESL experience in depth and with focus on individual experiences and resultant reinvention of social identity, and indeed comments

specifically on the knowledge gap created by the subject being too-often approached using large-scale quantitative study instruments, whilst failing to consider the experiences and individual journeys (both literal and metaphorical) of L2 students. Quantitative studies smooth out individual differences thus providing only a high level, superficial overview of a phenomenon. The detail is lost. An additional knowledge gap created by this approach is explained by Kobayashi (2002): large-scale quantitative instruments may identify differences between genders in L2 learning success, but fail to identify or explore the rationale for the differences.

This is relevant as this is the same knowledge gap that this study intends to address through a qualitative and in-depth approach which, like Jackson's (2008) study, will consider the individual L2 journeys and experiences of participants and how these journeys impact on their social identities and perceptions, with particular focus on their perceptions of their gender identities.

This study will also address a knowledge gap which Jackson's (2008) study does not fully consider. Whilst Jackson (2008) focussed only on female students, a gender focus was not pursued or investigated, so it is impossible to know whether there was any change to their identities as women as they underwent the other linguistic and social changes brought on by studying abroad. Therefore, this study will need to ensure that the role of gender in identity is carefully considered.

The gender focus omission notwithstanding, most studies around L2 learning environments focus on the relative benefit of the learning environment on the student's linguistic success solely, rather than how the learning environment affects the student's experiences and, consequently, their social identity, making the Jackson (2008) study of particular value in this instance. However, it is entirely plausible that,

rather than the L2 environment directly impacting the student's linguistic success, that their social identity may be an antecedent of linguistic success; for example, if a learner sees their social identity as part of the host community, this may encourage further interaction with native speakers, improving L2 learning outcomes (Jackson 2008, Norton 2000).

2.2.4. Investment and Identity in L2 Theory

In addition to the Jackson (2008) study, the older foundation work of Norton (1995) made a similar assertion to Jackson (2008), who felt that investigations into L2 learning had largely failed to consider social identity issues which connect the student with their learning environment and how they interact with it, instead focussing on specific learning outcomes of L2 learning success or otherwise (Norton, 1995). Focussing on immigrant women with a more developed gender identity foundation than the Jackson (2008) study, Norton calls for a 'reconceptualization' of the learner within SLA theory (Norton, 2000).

The bulk of prior study into L2 theory has considered motivational factors in relating the learner to the language they are learning, such as the seminal work of Gardner (1985, 2006) and the more recent work of Dornyei and Ushioda (2009) considers multiple motivational factors of L2 learners and has been consistently used as a 'benchmark' for the majority of L2 learning environment study. Dornyei and Ushioda (2009) could be considered a transitional work, which references the multiple motivational focus of Gardner (Dornyei and Ushioda, 2009, p.2), and combines this with more recent postulations on a language learners' situated identity and self-perception as critical factors in determining a learner's SLA success.

However, Norton (1995) argues not only against the structure of these studies, which she considered incompatible with the complexity of the multi-faceted and sometimes divergent social histories of each learner, but also against the entire premise of considering the L2 learner experience on the basis of motivation. Rather, she argues in favour of an entirely different approach, which considers learner ‘investment’ in their linguistic abilities, rather than their motivations for learning, as a method by which greater understanding of the integration between the language learner and the language learning context (Norton, 2000).

Through this approach, Norton (1995, 2000) argues that a more comprehensive understanding may be reached by considering each individual’s investment in their relationship with both the L2 environment and their position within it and how that investment relates to the learner’s success at mastering the target language, rather than seeking to place them within broad ‘groups’ such as ‘extroverted/introverted’.

This approach is supported by the explanation by Roccas and Brewer (2002) that social identity is not comprised of a single ‘in group’ relationship, but by multiple social identity elements which may be in conflict, may change from context to context, and will be specific to the individual. For instance, categorising all Saudi female learners according to their nationality, gender and study area alone fails to take into account everything else which comprises the individual’s social identity (Roccas & Brewer 2002). By considering each learner’s relationship with their learning environment and their L2 studies, a much more comprehensive understanding of their investment in language learning and the impact of their studies on their individual, rather than group, social identity may be reached (Norton, 1995, 2000).

To summarise the crux of Norton's (1995) findings, she asserts that "SLA theorists have not developed a comprehensive theory of social identity that integrates the language learner and the language learning context." (p.12). This erroneously invites the assumption that, as long as a learner's motivation levels are sufficiently high, they will have a successful SLA experience. However, the truth is far more nebulous and complex, and far more dependent on the overall individual relationship between the learner, their environment, and the impact of that relationship on their personal social identity. Returning to the concept of power, Norton (2000) expresses the inherent weakness of utilising broad personality definitions (such as introverted/extroverted) rather than detailed examination of individual social identity with reference to "larger, and frequently inequitable, social structures" (Norton, 2000 p.5), which is particularly important in the case of women from inequitable cultures such as Saudi women in Western countries. Thus, Norton (2000) proposes that a learner's investment in SLA cannot be understood without a narrative which encompasses gender, ethnicity and social class; as these elements of multiple social identity affect the learner's relative power in their SLA environment, and therefore their ability to interact with the target language environment (Norton, 2000 pp. 12-13). Therefore, gender and ethnicity are given due recognition in analysing the data of the present study.

This chapter highlights the theories around language, gender and identity and how they can be defined and understood in the context of Saudi Arabia, as outlined in chapter two, and how English as a dominant global language may impact the gender roles, social identities, and perspectives of Saudi women. In the next chapter, chapter four, the methodology is discussed: qualitative in-depth interviews with Saudi women currently living in Melbourne, Australia to hear their voices and learn about their identities and roles.

Chapter Four: Methodology

"To study identity means to explore the story of identity-the narrative of identity-the way we tell ourselves and others who we are, where we came from, and where we are going"(Munoz, 1995, p. 46).

4.1. Overview

This study aims to investigate the effect of English language learning on the construction of identity of female Saudi students who are currently studying in Melbourne. Therefore, the nature of the problem researched is largely exploratory, aiming to understand certain identity aspects in certain social settings and therefore suited to a qualitative study. The research data collection methods consist of a brief demographical self-completion questionnaire and semi-structured in-depth individual interviews. For analysing and interpreting the data, a thematic analysis method was used.

This chapter includes four parts which explain the methodology and data collection measures of the research. The first part provides a brief justification of the selection of a qualitative research study. The second part provides a close description of participant selection. The third part outlines data sources and the final part discusses the method used for data analysis and interpretation.

4.2.1 Qualitative Research Methods

In the methods of social research, there are three primary research approaches: quantitative approaches, qualitative approaches and mixed methods approaches. Creswell (2003) suggests a need to “match between problem and approach” (p. 21)

when selecting an approach for a research, therefore, a qualitative research approach is the most appropriate research approach for my project, as its goal is to investigate the relationship between language and identity, and "qualitative inquiry is still the most humanistic and person-centred way of discovering and uncovering thoughts and action of human beings" (Holloway & Billey, 2011, p. 974). By using a qualitative approach, the researcher gathers "open-ended, emerging data", tries to reveal the views, meanings and perceptions taken from the data, and then uses them to develop the "themes" of the findings of the research (Creswell, 2003, p. 18).

Moreover, the fact that qualitative research focuses on the social world rather than the natural world makes it more fluid and flexible as the emphasis is on the meaning and interpretation (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). Further, Bryman (2012) highlights three features of qualitative research. First is constructivism, which is characterized by the researchers' attempt to "understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it" (Schwandt, 2000, as cited in Mertens, 2005, p. 13). It focuses on "the multiple meanings of individual experiences [which are] socially and historically constructed" (Creswell, 2003, p.18). Second, interpretivism puts stress "on the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participant" (p. 380). Thus, researchers use qualitative research methods in an attempt "to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.3). The last feature of Bryman's to discuss here is the "inductive view of the relationship between theory and research, whereby the former is generated out of the latter" (p. 394), which means theory and concepts will emerge from the data. In the present study, the researcher's aim is to explore the 'reality' these individuals construct 'socially and historically' by interpreting the participants' experiences by using the researcher's

insider status to elicit data and evaluate what is said; however, it is important to note that the researcher's own thoughts and opinions will not be imposed, they are simply a resource.

So qualitative methods allow the researcher to "capture people, meaning, definitions, and descriptions of events" (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1990, p. 5). To be able to accomplish this, qualitative researchers must get close to participants and consider the social and cultural contexts in which participants share their ideas, insights, experiences and feelings since "subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically, they are not simply imprinted but are formed through interaction with others and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals' lives" (Creswell, 2013, p. 24-25). This means that the participants' social-cultural background plays a significant role in the research process and should not be overlooked by the qualitative researcher.

Feminist research is built on the principle of the validity of all human beings' experiences, insights, feelings and thoughts, and the need to not be excluded from our understanding (Campbell & Wasco, 2000). Further, the qualitative researcher has to break the conventional hierarchy, as the researcher needs to get as close as possible to the participants in order to gain more insightful understanding (Creswell, 2013). The same happens with feminist researchers, as the 'intimate' relationship between researcher and participants is important in the feminist research. The feminist researcher has to be sensitive and pay attention to different aspects throughout the process of the research. Things like prior knowledge, educational background, experiences, insights, and emotional state are important here (Campbell & Wasco, 2000).

In this study, I explore the ideas and opinions of English speaking Saudi females about their gender identity while living in an English speaking country. So by using a qualitative method, the participant's responses were gathered and interpreted, and inferences from their views, perceptions, experiences and feelings were constructed.

Moreover, when adopting a qualitative approach, as Flick (2002) explains, the researcher is considered an explicit part of knowledge production instead of being excluded as far as possible as an 'intervening variable' (p.6). On the same line Jorgenson (2011) argues that the effect of the researchers' views, beliefs, feelings, and "identities" (p. 115) cannot be overlooked. Therefore, the researcher's socio-cultural background, prior knowledge, experiences and assumptions could possibly have an influence on the research process. However, this perspective has been regarded as too impressionistic and subjective (Bryman, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Usher, 1996), with it being suggested that qualitative researchers should set aside their prior knowledge and assumptions in order to undertake research through the lens of objective researchers (Minichiello, Aroni and Hays, 2008). Gadamer (1976, as cited in Usher, 1996), on the other hand, states the impossibility of escaping, even temporarily, from our prior understandings in qualitative research. He explains that the previous knowledge of the researcher actually makes them more open-minded since "this knowledge is put at risk, tested, and modified through the encounter with what he is trying to understand" (p. 21) in the process of the interpretation and understanding. Therefore, the researcher should consider prior understandings and assumptions as an important base to gain further knowledge instead of suspending them.

With these views being discussed, I agree more with Flick, Jorgenson and Gadamer's argument. I am an insider. I am a Saudi English speaking woman who is currently living in an English speaking country (Australia) like all my participants. We share common cultural, linguistic and educational backgrounds, and we are positioned very much alike in terms of perceptions, views, and feelings and in terms of the time and space in Melbourne.

However, this does not mean that we always share the similar previous understandings and assumptions. Although we share common views, we also might have different, even contradictory perspectives. Hopefully, these differences would aid the researcher to broaden their understanding of the study and contribute something new to the literature.

4.3. Study Participants

4.3.1. Selection of participants.

There were two main criteria in the process of participant selection. First, participants had to be Saudi women aged over 18 who are currently living in Australia for more than one year and with the intention to go back to Saudi Arabia. This requirement is because the longer they lived in Australia, the more experience and stories they can share in regard to this research, as the goal of this research is to investigate the changing nature of gender identity, and how these women practice different gender roles within different time, space and culture and how this experience of learning English and living in Australia is going to affect their life after going back to Saudi Arabia. Secondly, participants had to be postgraduate students who are currently doing their Masters or PhD in different specialties and fields in different Australian universities. This is to ensure that they have been using English for a significant

period of time and have acquired a good degree of fluency, as the researcher wants to investigate how the English language might have impacted their lives.

4.3.2. Recruitment of participants.

As a member of the community under study, the researcher recruited participants through snowball sampling from personal contacts who met the participant criteria. The researcher provided a summary of the study to potential participants via email, stressing that participation is voluntary. Willing participants emailed me back to confirm their participation in the study. Then snowball sampling was employed in which the participating participants introduced me to other potential participants who may be willing to participate and met the criteria of this research. Those who expressed interest in taking part in the study were emailed a copy of the consent form (appendix 4) along with explanatory statement (appendix 3) and questionnaire(appendix 1). The researcher then organised an interview time convenient for the participants, where the consent form was then returned to the researcher.

4.3.3. Description of participants

The table below provides a description of the participants in regard to their age, marital status, postgraduate degree, area of study, length of time living in Australia and using English.

Table 4.1 Description of participants

Name	Marital status	Age	Postgraduate degree	Area of study	Length of time living in Australia	Length of time using English regularly
Aisha	married with two children	29	PhD	Nursing	7 years	7 years
Asia	married with one child	27	Masters	English language	4 years	10 years
Fatima	Married with two children	33	PhD	Nursing	5 years	5 years
Maryam	Married with one child	30	PhD	IT	6 years	More than 25 years
Sumaya	Single	27	Masters	IT	4 years	7 years

As seen in the table above, the participants involved this study are five English speaking Saudi women between the ages of 25 and 35. They come from different regions in Saudi Arabia, mainly from the two biggest cities in Saudi Arabia; Jeddah and Riyadh. At the time of conducting this study, they were undertaking postgraduate study in different Australian universities and all lived in Melbourne. They all have been using English as a means of communication on a daily basis, but in different ways and with different levels of frequency. They all consider themselves as competent English speakers. Moreover, the duration of time the participants spent in Australia varies, with some still doing their masters while others are doing a PhD. Some of them have been abroad before to study for a certain period of time. The

participants of this study do not cover a representative sample of Saudi female students. Therefore, the results of this study have to be regarded as suggestive rather than conclusive.

To protect the participants' identities, their names are all pseudonyms. They were all given the names of strong women who have been known through history as they showed great strength and independence in the interviews.

4.4. Data Collection

There is an emphasis in qualitative research to employ more than one method for data collection, including questionnaires, interviews, observation, and documentation to make the research more valid and reliable (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2013). In this study, I have employed a self-completion questionnaire and in depth, semi-structured interview as the data collection methods.

4.4.1. Questionnaire

Using a questionnaire in qualitative research is not considered the most prominent method. According to Cargan (2007), when answering a questionnaire, the participants do not perform naturally as it generally obliges them to respond from the prompts given. Further, participants may not use their own words to express their ideas as writing cannot express one's self in the same way as speaking. Also, they may not correctly interpret the questions and usually they do not give deep answers and rich data (Cargan, 2007). However, when using a questionnaire to get certain clearly defined facts or thoughts, it can lead participants to systematically reply to prompts in the way they are intended (Cargan, 2007). Moreover, a self-completion questionnaire is “cheaper to administer, quicker to administer, and convenient for the respondents” (Bryman, 2012, p. 233). Most importantly, a questionnaire is functional and practical

when collecting participants' demographic backgrounds, as it can be used as an immediate way of collecting additional information. In this study, a questionnaire (appendix 1) was used to collect the background information of the participants in order to provide a complete understanding of the cases and provide useful points of discussion in the subsequent interview.

The questionnaire was written in English, to simplify the data analysis and save time. It was clear and understandable, to ensure that completing it would not take much of the participants' time. As all participants were English speakers, they did not report any difficulty in understanding the questions. It consists of seventeen questions about the background of the participants, such as the length of time spent in Australia, level of language proficiency before and after coming to Australia, number of years spent in learning English. The questionnaires were sent to the participants via e-mail to allow them to complete them in private.

4.4.2. Interviews

The qualitative researcher uses interviews to explore individuals' experiences, beliefs, feelings and thoughts concerning particular matters. Kvale (2007) points out that "the research interview is an inter-view where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between the interviewer and the interviewee" (p. 8). Further, throughout the interviews, the researcher "asks about, and listens to, what people themselves tell about their lived world, about their dreams, fears and hopes, hears their views and opinions in their own words, and learns about their school and work situation, their family and social life" (p. 8) as the interviewee's point of view is of great interest because it gives insights into what they see as relevant and important (Bryman, 2004). Based on this, the interview is not simply a means to collect data of a certain study but

also "about life: it is part of life itself, its human embeddedness is inescapable" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p.409).

In this study, I employed in depth, semi-structured face to face interview (appendix 2) as they facilitate the investigation of the construction of the gender identity of the Saudi English speaking women from their lived experiences. In-depth interviews are "flexible, responding to the direction in which interviewees take the interview and perhaps adjusting the emphases in the research as a result of significant issues that emerge in the course of interviews" (Bryman, 2012, p. 470). Moreover, this kind of interview gives rich and detailed data, and a closer look at the participants' views and opinions on specific topics or issues, which might give a deeper understanding of the constitution of the participants' gender identity and the place of English language learning on this. It also facilitates the self-expression of the participants, to see what they really think, feel or care about, so the researcher's personal influence is reduced during the interviews. In addition, conducting face-to-face interview enables the researcher to capture the participants' other social and emotional signals, which can help the researcher in analysing the data more accurately. The participants are given a natural setting to express themselves, as interviews are structured to allow participants to feel comfortable, to create a bond of sorts between the researcher and each participant. That is why the interview were conducted in Arabic, since it is their mother tongue and they feel comfortable using it.

4.5. Data Analysis

The data of this study were derived from two sources: questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire provided background information of the study participants, and

interviews which gave the participants the opportunity to tell and share their stories and experiences.

In qualitative data analysis, the researcher organizes and explains the collected data according to the "participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories, and regularities" (Cohen, et al., 2011, p. 537).

So first, the data collected from the interviews were transcribed verbatim, word by word, and all the informal conversation and emotional expressions were included. This verbatim transcription is used as aid to help the researcher understand the obtained data (Limputtong, 2011). The data were collected and transcribed in both English and Arabic, however, richer data was obtained when participants spoke their native language as it allowed them to express themselves more easily and naturally, thus some of the transcriptions were translated into English by myself.

I employed a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Bryman, 2012) for a few reasons. The first is its flexibility as it enables the researcher to identify themes from different angles. Furthermore, its suitability for a novice researcher as it facilitates the process of combining important information from the participants' responses (Riessman, 2008).

Following Braun and Clarke (2006) for analysing the data, three main steps were involved. First, the transcriptions were read repeatedly to be familiar with the data, then initial ideas were noted down. The second step was to generate initial coding. So recurring themes were coded. This 'coding' phase, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), depends to some extent on whether the themes are more 'data -driven' (themes completely depend on data) or 'theory-driven' (themes are directed by specific research questions). In the present study, coding was performed according to

theory-driven perspective (the research questions), in a way of connecting the data to the different theories which were discussed in the literature review. Third, after coding, the search for emerging themes began. Codes were gathered into potential themes and then within each theme relevant data were collected together. After that, the potential themes were reviewed to check if the themes work in relation with the coding and with the whole selected data. At the end, the specifics of each of the potential themes were refined along with the analysis overall story, and clear definitions and names for each theme were generated.

This revealed two main themes: first, the theme of empowerment, as the participants discussed this as a feeling they got by maintaining their traditional roles, and by trying new roles in the light of Islamic feminism and the use of English as a resource. Secondly, the theme of change emerged, where participants discussed the importance of English, and how they consider change as their investment in learning English language, and finally how socialization and the new environment have impacted their identity.

Chapter Five: Findings and discussion I

5.1. Overview.

Chapters five and six discuss and report the findings of the research: the participants' voices are explored through examination of their experiences, feelings and viewpoints in order to seek the answers to the research questions presented in chapter one. The data was collected from a face to face, semi structured interviews and a thematic data analysis was used to interpret the data. Emergent themes from the data are presented in these two chapters. When analysing the data, gender identity was examined from social and cultural perspectives, by looking at gender in relation to its social construct and how learning English and living in an English speaking country has affected social identity.

From the data analysis process, two main themes, with sub themes, have emerged from the data, they are as follows:

Chapter 5:

In this chapter, the theme of empowerment is explored. The participants discussed empowerment as a feeling they got by maintaining their traditional roles, and by trying new roles in the light of Islamic feminism and the use of English as a resource.

Chapter 6:

In this chapter, the theme of change discussed, as the participants talked about the importance of English, and how they consider change as their investment in learning English language, and finally how socialization and the new environment have impacted their identity.

In the light of the research questions and the literature review, each of these themes and subthemes is followed by a discussion.

5.2. Findings and discussion

5.2.1. Empowerment

The theme of empowerment derived from the learning of English is examined here in terms of different aspects, as it was felt in different ways by participants, as shown below:

5.2.1.1. The sense of empowerment by maintaining their traditional roles

This section explores how the participants define the key aspects of their gender roles, which can be considered as a grounding for later discussion on the role of English learning in influencing these roles. When the participating women shared their stories and experiences, the word "traditional woman" dominated the early conversations. The notion of traditional woman here is related to the image of family, which defines the woman in relation to her household responsibilities, and where the mindset of patriarchal ideology is still, in the present time in Saudi Arabia, fixed in the perception of gender identity (Al- Marayati, 1997; Mill-Rosser, et. al, 2006).

These women were aware of their family and society expectations, and what gendered roles they have to play. They discussed these roles within Saudi society and how important these roles were to them. These traditional roles were part of their identity. Being a mother, raising, educating and taking care of the next generation were considered important matters to these women. As Fatima puts it:

We do the most important job, we educate, we teach, we take care of the coming generation, yes we are. It is a tough job you know, and yet we do it

perfectly. Men chose not to do it, actually they cannot do it that is why they depend on us because they know we do it better than them.

They believed that the motherhood has given them power and they like this as they have little power in other domains: "when it comes to kids, I'm the one in control, my kid is my responsibility"(Maryam). Parenting seems to be the sole domain of the mother, and the absent role of the man, from parental duties as the father, has led these women to take on the strong parental role.

Sumaya, the youngest among the participants and the only single one of them, sees the situation from a different angle: "I would love to be a mom, you know, taking care of kids and other homey things. I think it is part of who we are! You know, being a female. But I don't think we should do it alone, it is a difficult task to raise children and I should not take full responsibility"(Sumaya). She acknowledged the fact that it is a woman's job as a mother to raise children but criticized the absent role of a man as a father: "My mom did it, my sisters and my friends are doing it. And who knows, I might be stronger and do it the future". She knows how hard it is to be fully responsible of another human being, and that she believes she will feel a sense of strength and self-worth when doing it.

From another perspective, these women accept their roles as mothers without complaining, as they don't feel that they are forced to fulfil this role; instead they are motivated especially since Islam has imbued this role with respect, and Islam is a huge part of who they are: "We will be rewarded for doing this, aren't we? So why rejecting this role!"(Aisha). They believed that by fulfilling their roles as mothers and caretakers of their family and by raising their children in the right way, they will go to Paradise when they die: "when you hear the prophet's sayings about the rewards of

raising good children, you do it with pleasure, actually I insist to do it, since I will be rewarded in the hereafter and I will be blessed with good kids"(Fatima).

The religious rewards are in the back of every Muslim mother's mind, but obviously the day to day benefits of being a mother are equally present: "it is in our nature as mothers to make sure that our kids are safe and sound, healthy and happy"(Maryam).

Although performing these traditional, domestic and familial roles have given these women the power to control their homes, they hated the traditional picture of what Aisha called "typical Saudi man and woman". When she was referring to the duties each of them do in their house, she stated that: "I do all the house chores, all the cooking, all the cleaning. I teach and take care of the kids, while my husband takes care of everything outside the house, we are typical man and woman, I mean typical Saudi man and woman, and I hate typicality"(Aisha). It is what their fathers did. They were brought up in the same patriarchal system and they want a chance to raise their children in a different way, to teach them different values, and to give them the chance to understand and play their roles in a different way than their parents did: "I can't change my husband's thinking in two or three years, this is the way he has been raised, it is 30 years of values and way of living, I'm trying slowly, but for sure I won't raise my kids the same way"(Aisha).

So, recognising that the world is changing, these women are hoping to raise their children to be flexible and to change the image of the prescribed gender roles for boys and girls and later men and women:"we hold the future of our children between our hands, we as mothers decide who they become, so we can use this to make a difference in their future"(Maryam).

However, what is interesting about these women is that they prioritize their traditional roles as mothers over wives. They did not want to live in the shade of their husbands. So they reject the traditional role of a wife. Aisha said it best: "a typical Saudi man and woman". By typical she was referring to the traditional gender roles of Saudi man and woman, husband and wife.

All the participating women were brought up in a patriarchal system where the man has the final say. They lived and still live within the expectations of the gender roles of their society, these roles that identify them as mothers and housewives. They see the value in their role as mothers and recognize the power and importance of this role so they accept and appreciate this role, however, they feel that the marriage roles do not give the role of mother the respect it deserves, so they try to change the traditional prescribed gender roles of being wives, instead trying to broaden their horizons and try on new gender roles. This shows that their social identity as Saudis is "a site of struggle"(Norton, 2000). Their identity as the primary caregiver in the family is strong, and they drew on their "symbolic resources"as mothers, to negotiate the power relations between themselves and their husbands (Norton, 1995, p. 8).

The participants believe that to achieve change in their Saudi-prescribed gender roles, they have to raise their children to see things differently, however, they have the desire to see this change happening in their own lives, and learning English and living in an English speaking country is believed to be one way to accomplish that. Learning English (linguistically and culturally) is seen here as an advantage which has the possibility to reshape their gender identity. They believe that English will redefine their social status and reposition them in a better social place when they go home, which will be discussed later.

5.2.1.2. The sense of empowerment by trying on new roles accessed via language learning.

'But I am forgetting the language,
sitting has become difficult,
and the speaking, intolerable,
to say, 'how interesting'
makes me weep.
I can no longer bear to hear
the men around the table laugh,
argue, agree,
then pause, politely
while we speak, their breath held in, exhaled
when we've finished,
politely, then turn to the real conversation,
the unspoken expectation of applause' (Gilbert, 1979 as cited in Smith, 1978).

The participating women have a clearly defined identity as Muslims and mothers but their dissatisfaction with their traditional gender roles in marriage leads them to seek empowerment and recognition through both Islam and the English language. This raises the issue of Islamic feminism and the importance of English, which will be discussed below.

- **Islamic feminism**

Throughout the interviews and the discussions, the influence of Islam was clear for these women; Islam regulates their lives and dominates most of their speech, which was clear in the breaks we took to pray and on the use of words like "Alhamdulillah" (praise be to God), "Subhan Allah" (glory be to God), and so on, which were often invoked when talking about non-religious topics. Religion here is part of their culture and their language, and hence part of who they are

(Pharaon, 2004; Clark, 2007 & Alsaweel, 2013). Therefore, these women are using Islam, their religion, as a support and believe that by holding onto Islam they can achieve what they want to be: "We are guided by Islam, I mean first of all we are Muslims, so why are we stuck under the Saudi traditions, I mean how would I respect these traditions if they are against my religion"(Fatima). They believed that the prescribed roles of women under the light of Islam are different than the ones their society has given them and the ones they have been taught in school; they believed that there is a mix between tradition and religion, which is why they are using the Islamic teachings to validate their new roles and ease the changes they encounter to their gender roles (Alsaweel, 2013). They believe that Islamic teachings are at odds with some of the gender roles they are forced to adhere to, thus Islam is enlightening them. They believe that some of the sociocultural practices of Islam within Saudi Arabia are inconsistent with Quranic prescriptions of the female role. In contrast to what Doumato (2000) writes, this shows that although these women "were taught to buy into assigned roles" and raised to believe that they are "subordinate to men" (Doumato, 2000, p. 93), they are challenging these roles. With cultural exposure to the outside world through English, along with their education, which enabled them to read and understand the Quran and Hadith, these women are questioning their prescribed roles (Yamani, 2005).

These women are looking for a way to expand and extend their cultural understandings and found this way through Islamic teachings, and English language, which will be discussed later, and this gives them the power to fight and reject the unacceptable customs: "we don't have the opportunities men have, in

education, jobs and in everyday life. I can accept certain house roles but I don't want to be buried alive"(Asia).

Based on their reading and understanding of the Quran and Hadith, they believed that women in Islam are not supposed to be treated this way; they believe that they know their duties and they can fulfil them, but they won't accept the society prescribed roles that is why they are seeking "Islamic equity" (Shridan, 2015, p. 81): "Aisha, Khadijah, Fatimah, Shjarat Aldurr and many other women have proven themselves to be great leaders, business women and were given great position during the time of prophet Mohamad and after him"(Maryam). The sound of power was clear when they talk about women in Islamic history: they are proud of what these women did, and ask for a chance to do the same and prove themselves to be more than just housewives, which support Hamdan's (2005) argument that "women's issues in Saudi society are often mistakenly connected to Islamic teachings"(p.54), where the truth is, as these women believe, Islam has supported women from the early years. This also proves that although girls' education in Saudi Arabia is limited, it has produced critically thinking women who can recognize and demand their rights (Bahgat, 1999; Pharoan, 2004).

Although the west has a certain perception of Saudi women, and often focused around issues like driving and veiling, Saudi women themselves see these issues as merely superficial, as they are after actual opportunities to be deemed autonomous individuals which supports Alsaweel (2013) and Sheridan (2015) arguments: "I've been living here for four years, I got the chance to learn how to drive and to actually drive, but really I don't care. It feels good just to have that option" (Sumaya). It seems that they just want their voices to be heard, their

opinions to be taken into account, and to be given freedom of choice; they are not running after everything they cannot do in their country, but instead aiming at something more important to them.

They believe that issues like driving are taking attention from other fundamental issues like the legal guardian for example. So driving is a superficial issue and even if women were allowed to drive that wouldn't necessarily invoke actual change or grant them equity. Saudi women are looking for more deep-seated change. They believe that if Saudi women focus their demands on other basic rights it may lead to driving and other issues, which is different to the West who believes that Saudi women will not achieve equity if they cannot do basic things like driving. They believe that giving them the ability to drive will delay and draw attention away from other basic issues and driving will be another burden on them, they will be serving inside and outside the house: "We have bigger issues, things like the male guardian, it seems like we don't exist without them, we have to live our life through them. Here, in Australia, I do everything by myself, it makes my life easy, and the most important thing is I'm not doing anything against my religion"(Asia).

They are seeking new opportunities and they validate these new roles through Islam, they feel responsible for themselves; actually they feel themselves. They feel that their identity in Australia is not defined in terms of the men in their lives, as it is in Saudi Arabia. They feel this new identity that includes a sense of control in the direction their life is taking, and the most important thing for them is that it is within the limits of the Islamic teachings, which "have created here a

comfortably familiar, yet pliable, element of roles and cultures" (Alsaweel, 2013, p.172).

These women are very switched on, and recognize the difference between religious mandates and sociocultural mandates: "I'm Muslim and Saudi, and when I succeed I will represent my religion, my people, my family and my country in a good way, that is why I hold to my religion"(Maryam). It seems that they are recognizing their multiple identities and separating their national identity 'Saudi', and religious identity 'Muslim'. Their lives revolve around Islam and they would never change that, it is the source and the goal, it is their past and future. Even learning English as a second language was regarded by these women as a way of adhering to the teachings of Islam, as "prophet Mohamad has encouraged us to read and to learn other languages"(Fatima).Also, they believe that through learning English new doors will open to them and they will be exposed to new cultures where they can change and try different roles as long as they are within their Islamic borders.

- **The role of English as a resource.**

"A word after a word after a word is power." Margaret Atwood (Nischik, 2000, p. 253)

The English language was considered by the participants as a resource. By using English, they felt strong, confident and proud as they have the ability to be independent, responsible and to do different new things both in Saudi Arabia and overseas: "I've been speaking the language for a while, before coming here, so as soon as we arrived here, I was in charge"(Maryam). Since she was born and lived parts of her life in the United States, Maryam's English is better than her husband's, who studied English in Saudi Arabia's public schools and therefore has limited skills. With

English, they feel that they have been given a higher status, an equal position to men, which gives them the confidence to perform new roles: "It likes we are equal here, I do stuff that he usually does and he is doing what I usually do, it is nice you know"(Fatima).

They do not get any help from the outside, with no maids or parents to help, so they share responsibilities with their husbands, especially since these women are the ones with scholarships, the ones studying here. This goes even further as they started to feel they are in charge of their husbands too: "he can't go anywhere without me, he takes me to the supermarket, hospital, even to his English language academy to fill out his register forms, it is funny how things are done here just because I speak English"(Asia).

Due to practical reasons, English allows their voices to be heard over their husbands', and their roles are becoming more important than their husbands. They are becoming the person in charge inside and outside the house. Like the Lau women in Gordon's (2004) study, these women become more independent, confident and gained more authority in and outside their homes with the use of increasingly improved English language and their social identities and relative power to their husbands are enhanced by the increased opportunities in the new culture.

However, they believe that one of the reasons that eased this change is the fact that their time in Australia is limited and they are eventually going back to Saudi Arabia. "The funny thing is that I don't think my husband mind it at all, as he believes that everything will go back the same way it was before coming here as soon as we go back home"(Asia), which is supported by Fatima: "to him it is a temporary situation so he does not resist it". So the fact that this lifestyle is not permanent makes it easier

for the women to act freely and for men to accept that. To sum up, these women are redefining their gender roles by the use of English, and the language gives them a sense of independence, confidence which lead to the feeling of being empowered. They believe that with English they have the opportunity and the right to speak. In Australia and with English, the social relations of power are redefined and reformed (Norton, 2000). They are investing in English to gain power, a "symbolic resource" which explain "their sometimes ambivalent desire to learn and practice it" (Norton, 1995, P. 17). They knew that Islam has given them their rights, which were lost somehow with the passing years, and through English and its accompanied culture they are hoping to get what were lost. They are trying to gain these rights while abroad, and maintain them when they go back home.

Chapter six: Findings and discussion II

6.1. Overview

In this chapter, the second theme that emerged from the interviews is explored. The theme of change is discussed here. The participants talked about the importance of English, and how socialization and the new environment have impacted their identity, and finally how they consider change as their investment in learning English.

6.2. Change

6.2.1. English language as a tool of change: The importance of English

The participating women viewed learning English as a second language as important before coming to Australia, and it was the reason they decided to come to an English speaking country to complete their higher education: "English is important, for me it is as important as getting my PhD"(Fatima). Although for some participants getting a PhD is a job requirement, for others it is a chance to get a better job. They consider learning English as the first step to development, and an essential part of education: "I could've done it back home, I mean I could've studied there, but I wanted to learn English and my kids and my husband to learn English as well"(Maryam). They believed that learning English will give them better opportunities in life and open closed doors for them and their family in Saudi Arabia and helps them understand and connect with the world: "With English you can read more books, explore many different websites, reach different ideas and thoughts, watch different programs and talk to different people"(Sumaya). It is obvious from the interviews that the participants knew how important English is to them, as there was the feeling of exposure to more resources, literature, contacts and the world around them. They felt

that they can be more and do more, they can develop themselves. Thus, with Arabic and its culture they are rooted, and with English and its culture, they can change.

b. The impact of the new environment: the role of socialization

"When identity change involves a second language, it signifies confrontations between two cultures, or two sets of values derived from the two cultures."
(Qu, 2005, as cited in Da Costa, 2012, p. 19).

It is clear that the English language plays an important role in shaping the participants' identity. They are driven to learn it because of its dominant global language status, but at the same time to encounter some of the Western cultural values attached to English. It is these values which are shaping the new identities of these women: "whatever we learned before was not English, (laughs), maybe we can call it Saudi English, maybe"(Sumaya) as the text books in Saudi schools shows the culture of Saudis in English, and limited indications of the Western culture, which is different than what they see in Australia. They acknowledge that process of learning English is completely different between Saudi Arabia and Australia (EFL vs. ESL). The fact that they use English on a daily basis, everywhere they go, even at their homes with their children, makes them feel connected to the English-speaking world and the Australian community, especially as their use of English before coming to Australia had largely been limited to academic settings. In the new English speaking environment, and similar to Jackson's (2008) participants, these Saudi women are interested in informal, social conversation. This interest leads them to seek to acquire the colloquial way of speaking, as will be discussed below, which could enhance their communication with locals, so they can fulfil their "socio-emotional goals" (Jackson, 2008, p. 163), so to be seen as members of the new society.

Moreover, the fact that they learned words in English that don't have equivalence in Arabic, for example, 'feminism', makes them feel disconnected from Arabic especially when this term carries something they are seeking: "It was a class I attended on feminism, I did not know what does it mean first, I googled it and what I got was a definition in Arabic, there is no single word in Arabic that means 'feminism'"(Asia). They feel distanced from their native language and culture with the increased mastery of English, with the unlooked secrets of the new culture. Their life in Australia is considered as a journey to explore different lifestyles and perspectives with the possibility of taking on different ways of being as long as it is in accordance with their religion: "I go with my kid to different places here, and we see inappropriate things in public, like the bad scenes in movies, so I tell her it is wrong and we close our eyes and go in a different direction"(Maryam).

They are on a journey of exploring but not necessarily taking on or copying everything they see; rather they have developed and want their children to develop a sense of distinguishing what is right and wrong for them as Muslims: "My kids did not know what the word 'halal' means before we come here"(Aisha) since halal is the norm in Saudi Arabia. It seems that being marked as 'Muslims' in Australia has reinforced their Islamic identity. They have developed an awareness of "Self and Other" (Jackson, 2008, p. 2), as being a foreigner has triggered their Islamic identity: "In Australia, I am always aware of my Muslim identity, I wear my hijab, eat halal food, and pray in public if we have to, so the people here see us differently, because we are different"(Asia). Feeling different increased their appreciation of their Islamic cultural roots. Islam plays an important role in their lives, impacting on their sense of self and relationships with others. They have defined Muslims as their 'in group', however, this did not prevent them from making connections across cultures with

non-Muslim people: "I've been living in Australia for quite long time now, I'm getting used to the life here, I have the freedom to be who I want to be, Islam controls my life here, nothing else, not the traditions, not the society, not the neighbourhood, just Islam"(Sumaya). This is the reason that they do not socialize with other Saudis in Australia, especially men. Maryam, Sumaya and Fatima preferred to live in the city, away from the Saudi community in the South, just to be themselvesL "Saudi people talk, you know, they don't approve, or whatever you can call it, being ourselves. They judge you on the way you dress, talk and act, it is the tradition of Saudis, I do not do anything that is haram [prohibited] and yet they talk. That is why it is better to be far far away from them"(Maryam).

Asia and Aisha, who live in the South, prefer not to make strong social connections with their Saudi neighbours for the same reasons, "it is better that no one knows me, I live here just because it is near my university, but all my friends live in the city and I like to hang out with them"(Asia).

It seems that these women are seeking to get beyond the sense of Saudi group belonging to a more individual level. The Saudis here are their 'in group' community, however, they are rejecting their membership in that group (McLeod, 2008). It seems that their Saudi identity is in conflict with their Muslim and international identity (Roccas & Brewer, 2002; Norton, 2000). Their Muslim identity is maintained as it is their source of pride, and their international student identity opens new doors to them, in contrast to the subordinate position of their Saudi gender identity. This disparity in the Saudi English-speaking community suggests that it is not the English language itself which changes identity, but rather whether the individual chooses to utilise English as an identity resource in certain ways. Thus, this indicates that these women

are seizing the opportunity of being a Western country to learn the second language and to achieve their goals, without being brought down or controlled by other members of the community as they were in Saudi Arabia.

By living in Australia and mingling with locals and people from different parts of the world, they felt that they are in a constant state of learning English: "I learned a new word the other day from my daughter's friend in her school, it is funny how much you learn outside the classroom"(Asia). Learning new English words is important to these women, and they are learning them in an informal way and by using them in practice: "with my classmates, native and international friends, my kids and their friends, in the shops, at the station, I mean everywhere you go you learn something different"(Maryam). They try to use English in their social life and seek opportunities to be exposed to the language in informal non-academic settings. This supports Norton's (1995) argument that "language learning is not just an abstract skill, but a practice that is socially constructed in the hegemonic events, practices, and processes that constitute daily life"(p. 10). The way they learn English here, as an everyday practice, is the opposite of the language learning process in Saudi Arabia, where the focus is on grammar, vocabulary and writing, whereas here they learn how to use the language in context, how to effectively communicate.

It seems that by studying and living in Australia they became more fluent: "I don't think too much now about what I want to say, I just say it"(Sumaya). After spending time in Australia, they realised that the most important goal in a conversation is to get the message across, rather than worrying about choosing the wrong word, grammar mistakes and pronunciation: "As a Saudi English teacher I focus too much on my grammar, I worry about getting caught up saying something wrong, but what I learnt

here is 'it does not matter'"(Asia). They understood that language is not just a "linguistic system of signs and symbols, [but rather] a complex social practice" that brings people together (Jackson, 2008, p. 137). With their new understanding of how to use the language in context and practicing it every day, they have steadily improved their language, which gives them the opportunity to interact and socialize with English speakers. English language brings them closer to the locals, the same way Arabic brings them together not only with Saudis but to other Arabs as well.

So with the use of improved English they made friends in this new environment, and they started to get more involved in the society: "I have some Australian friends, with them I do karate, I ride horses every weekend, I participate in every crazy contest here, why not! If I can do it"(Sumaya). Language here became their "site of identity construction" (Pavlenko, 2001, p. 319) as English gave them access to different roles and identities, and being in Australia gave them the opportunity to be part of a different culture and actually live the culture. By being more outgoing and active in the outside, It is clear that English and it's culture have provided them with means to represent themselves in a new way that encouraged them to cross their Saudi cultural boundaries and assimilate to the new community (Pavlenko, 2001), which proves the fluidity and dynamic nature of their identity (Lustig, 2013) and how it is "produced and reproduced in day-to-day social interaction" (Norton, 2000, p. 4).

They also discover hidden sides in themselves, sides they wouldn't know about if they did not learn English and leave their home country: "After coming here, I started to see different sides of myself, the crazy and wild side, I don't know, but I wouldn't express that side of me in Arabic"(Sumaya). Their personality and identity changes according to the language they speak and vice versa. They see English as the 'wild',

informal and unencumbered language and they become more outgoing and interactive, as Sumaya explained above, but it is also the language of academia and books, the language of their specialties. When they speak English they feel smart and educated: "when someone asks about my research, I tend to use English, it kind of says it better"(Maryam), something was also expressed by other participants: "it is the language of technology, and I have to use many English words if I want to explain what I'm doing"(Sumaya).

However, it seems that use of Saudi Arabic triggers the Saudi side of themselves, as it acts as a reminder of being Saudi and influences them to act according to the Saudi culture. Saudi Arabic being their mother tongue is of course bound with all the traditions and the sociocultural aspects of Saudi society. Classical Arabic is also used by these women when they quote the Quran or Hadith or when talking about Islamic issues, it is a respectful language as it is a symbol of Islam and the language of the Quran, it is a reminder of who they are: "it is like when you speak Masri (the Egyptian Arabic), you act funny, you tell jokes and you may dance while talking 'laughs'"(Sumaya), she continues, "we used to say let go of the Egyptian inside you". This shows that through the use of different languages, or even accents, in different settings and times, these women are negotiating "a sense of self", which is represented differently by the use of these languages as some of these languages give or deny them access to "powerful social networks" which gives them the confidence to speak (Norton, 2000, p. 5). They understood that language is not only a "neutral medium of communication" and just a means of exchanging information, but that each language refer to a certain social meaning (Norton, 1995, p. 10), and by using a certain language they will be sending a certain message like using English to address a Saudi man indicates a certain level of formality as has been discussed in Alsaweel (2013).

In Melbourne, a multicultural city, these women feel able to be themselves, free to wear whatever they want, as they do not feel obliged to change the way they dress or the way they act: "you feel free here to be who you are, and who you want to become, you see different people from different backgrounds and every one of them is living the way they want"(Asia). Harassment due to wearing the hijab is not an issue for the Saudi women in Melbourne: "I lived in America for a few months and couldn't survive there, people stare at me as if I'm kind of a terrorist or something, they did not talk to me or deal with me, I felt alone"(Asia). With this attitude toward them, they left the country, as they could not accept to change on someone else's conditions. They wanted to be free and to have the choice to adapt and change on their own terms. They want their rights, to act freely as Muslims, to be considered and their voices to be heard, it is the right they are seeking by coming to study in a Western country: "When we go to private parties in Australia and we wear short dresses and wear makeup, we usually wear our Abayas, and yes people do look at us especially if I take the train, but not in a bad way, you don't get the feeling that they hate you, 'laughs'"(Asia). There is no pressure in Australia. They can retain their traditional Saudi identity if they want, or can change if they want. They get a freedom of choice, a sense of individuality and autonomy here that they don't get elsewhere. They are more open to identity reconstruction and they have developed a sense of Self and Other and their ethnic identity (Jackson, 2008). Although they are a minority in Australia, but with the use of English they believed that they have established a connection with the host community, they did not view their differences negatively, instead consider it an opportunity to learn more about the host culture, and the host people to know about them. They believe that making friendship with the Australians is a chance for them both, Saudis and Australians, to learn about each other.

This attitude towards the Australian culture and people drove these women to learn more about Australia and to look for more Australian slang: "I love to learn and use the Australian words, you know words like brekkie, barbie, Ossie and the famous G'day"(Sumaya). Although their main aim of learning English is for better social status and employment opportunities in Saudi Arabia, they try to mimic the Australian accent, for example. This is not a case of surrendering their Saudi identity but rather they were looking for "a new respected and valued accent"(Asia) in their home country: "I teach English back home and I believe I'm going back with a new culture which my students do not know anything about"(Asia). They believed that this environment and its people have impacted them and they want to show that impact through new words, accent and habits. They have recognized the benefits of learning English in Australia, as acquiring "a wider range of symbolic and material resources" (Norton,2000, p. 22) but they are more interested in making the English part of who they are.They have developed a sense of belonging to this international language, and revealed a sense of identification with it, as the value of their "cultural capital" (Norton, 2000, p. 10), which is the non-financial resource that enables social mobility, increases which clearly shows "the integral relationship between investment and identity" (Norton, 2000, p. 10).

After living in Australia for a quite some time, these Saudi women start to feel a sense of belonging to it: "When I get in a taxi or start a conversation with strangers, they usually ask me, 'where are you from?' first I used to say Saudi Arabia, but later to avoid further discussion about my country and to talk more about different things, I started to say Yemen, it is not that famous as Saudi Arabia and few people know about it, however, these days I started to say from here, yes Australia, 'laughs' why not!"(Sumaya). These women see their social identity as part of the host community,

Australia or Melbourne in particular which has a multicultural nature with people from different backgrounds. This sense of belonging encouraged them to interact with native speakers, which has improved their second language in terms of vocabulary and accent (Jackson 2008, Norton 2000). Moreover, it seems that they are trying to play around with different ways of being, trying on different identities. This shows that their identity is, as Norton (2000) refers to it "multiple and changing" (p. 12) and in contrast to what Roccas and Brewer (2002) say, their social identities are not in conflict, but rather comprised of multiple in group identities which change from context to context.

b. Change as an investment in English language

"I come from a small town in Saudi Arabia where there are many girls like Wadjda who have big dreams, strong characters and so much potential. These girls can, and will, reshape and redefine our nation." -Haifa Al Mansour: the first Saudi female film director, talking about the main character in her film (2012, as cited in Da Costa, 2012, p. 32).

- **The Willingness to Change**

For all participants, the desire to learn English started before coming to Australia: "in my childhood I loved to watch Western cartoons and movies, although I didn't know what they were saying I just loved the fact that I'm watching something different"(Sumaya). Television was the most important source of information and a means to connect to the outside world, and to learn English and Western culture, since learning English at school did not give them a better idea about the western world: "English teachers could not enrich our knowledge about the western world, most of them have never travelled abroad, and the textbooks were poor"(Asia). As teaching English in Saudi public school is not advanced, and the outcomes are not good. The focus mainly is on grammar and Arabic is medium of classroom instruction.

Of all the participants, Aisha and Fatimah's knowledge of English was the worst; they came to Australia with a few English words and had to start English courses at introductory levels: "of course I have studied English back home, but you know how it is back there, it was another Arabic class about English, 'laughs'"(Aisha), referring to the fact that Arabic is the medium of instruction in the English language classroom. With Fatima it was a different scenario, with discouragement from the people around her: "I used to live in a small village, people there did not appreciate English that much, my brothers used to laugh at me when I study or do my homework, the funny thing is that most of them (my brothers) are now in scholarships in different countries and they speak English very well"(Fatima). All five participants were enrolled in English programs before starting their postgraduate degree, even Maryam whose English was very good: "I was born and raised in America, went home when I was 10, and my English is pretty good, but I wanted to get a chance to know the place and the people, to know the Australian English before starting my masters"(Maryam). Even Asia, who teaches English in Saudi Arabia, admitted that she needed to take an English course before perusing higher studies: "I have to improve my English because I'm an English teacher, I'm different than any other students here as I have to take all this back with me, to improve myself means to improve my students". She continues: "I was so upset when I got the required score in IELTS, I wanted to take more English courses"(Asia). When they first came to Australia they experienced that the English they have learned in Saudi Arabia was insufficient and did not meet their expectations, but they see living in Australia as an opportunity to learn and improve.

These women believed at a very young age and still believe that to learn a language you have to learn about the culture, and this was the reason behind their decision to come to study in Australia "English is not just a language, to master it, you have to live it" (Asia). They are looking forward not just to knowing the language or understanding it, they want to 'master it'. To do so they want to learn everything about it including different varieties and slang and in so doing see what this global language can offer them as every language carries within it different culture (Su Kim, 2003) and learning a language gives access to a different culture that one can be part of, take something of that culture that they need or reject that culture. They are aware of the fluid nature of their identity and the impact of English, its culture and interactions with others in a Western country in defining who they are.

Beside the job opportunities and the social status that learning English gives them in Saudi Arabia, their desire and ambition to learn English in a Western country was their drive to change. By living in a Western country, they were hoping to change for the best, to improve themselves and their families: "I waited for this scholarship for six year, I never gave up, I was determined to get it for my own good and for my kid" (Maryam). They came here, to study English, to get a degree, to see what this new culture is offering them, in order to change within their Islamic limits: "we don't celebrate Christmas, Halloween or Easter, etc., but now we know about them, what do they mean and why are some people in different parts of the world are celebrating them" (Fatima). They learn about different lifestyles and customs, to increase their worldly knowledge, since Islam encourages learning about other cultures and languages. Moreover, they want to know the culture to interact easily with the locals and to practice English which will enhance their English language. They do not want to be seen as outsiders. They know there will be cultural differences between them

and the host people, which were in their minds before coming to Australia, and their desire to enhance their intercultural communication skills distanced them from the Saudi community, as discussed above, who seemed to be "locked in an ethnocentric mindset" (Jackson, 2008, p. 153). They acknowledged that they are on "the periphery of the host culture", and were keen to fit in and make the most of their stay (Jackson, 2008, p. 153).

- **Future change:**

All the participants reported experiencing identity changes as a result of learning English and being in Australia. Some of them faced greater challenges than others, as they came here with a little knowledge of English. However, they feel now that they are more confident and ready to go back home, to their families, culture and society and try to find a way to come through without giving up their new roles and identification as new women: "I believe one of the main reasons that drives me to learn English and study abroad is to be exposed to different culture which might change the bad habits and traditions of my family first and the whole Saudi society second"(Fatima). As discussed above, change is currently happening within their immediate families, by taking on and exchanging different gender roles as these Saudi women are taking more public roles and their husbands are taking more domestic roles, and by treating their children, boys and girls, in the same way, but they aim to change their extended family and society. However, they believe that this change is difficult, especially for men, and such society needs time to change: "we live one way in Australia, and my husband is happy to let me take more active roles in public life, but once we go back in a holiday, it seems difficult to him to resist the dominant norms and support me the same way he does here, you know people will talk, 'he is

not man enough to control his wife', 'she is controlling him' and that kind of talk"(Asia).

They knew their society and are aware of what is waiting for them, and as some of them are about to leave Australia and go home, they felt that change is an obligation for them: "I have a hope that one day we will overcome this stubborn resistance to change"(Asia). They knew that with their new thoughts and ideas they will lose much in regard to their family and society but they will gain much in the work place: "In the academic atmosphere, new ideas and cultures are welcomed, but not at home, even English is much appreciated between my peers, but I won't use it much around my extended family"(Fatima). It seems that using English is 'valuable' in the professional settings but 'inappropriate' in social ones as "few people in the family speak the language and they won't understand me, especially old people"(Fatima).

These women expect to face some difficulties when they return home because living in Australia means their understanding of the world has greatly differed from families and friends. They believe that they have seen the Saudi society from a new vantage point, and saw something the people who are left behind would never see which supports Sheridan (2015) findings as her participants seek changes but do not want to initiate it. So, for them it is better to move slowly: "It is the safe way to proceed"(Aisha), for social acceptance and family reputation, and to secure their positions in the work place.

They also believed that changing society is the job of men and women together, as "one hand can't clap"(Maryam), especially in a patriarchal society, where men's voices are pretty much heard over women's: "Educated men, the professors, doctors and those who know better must do something"(Maryam). They believed that men

who reached a high level of education must open their eyes to improve their society and move forward towards better place and better future.

The access, exposure, and knowledge of English had an impact on these women's identities and social roles, however, with the challenge of going back to Saudi Arabia, they are faced with two options, to go back to the way they used to be or to change others, and with their intention and desire, change is happening slight and slow.

In short, 'change' is their investment in the target language, the desire to change themselves, their family and the Saudi society had led these women to speak up both the language and their rights. There is a clear relationship between their religion, identity and L2 learning, their complex social history and multiple desires have determined their investment in the target language. When speaking the English language, these women are in a constant state of negotiating, reconstructing and developing their identity, they are forming a new sense of who they are. Thus, speaking the English language is considered by them a means for more than just exchanging information with target language speakers. So they are not only investing in the target language but also investing in their own social identity, which is "multiple", "changing over time and place" and "a cite of struggle" (Norton, 2000, p. 12).

Chapter Seven: Conclusion, Implications and Recommendations

7.1. Overview

This chapter highlights the major findings of the study and seeks to address the research questions raised in chapter one. This chapter will end by examining implications and limitations of the study, and provide recommendations for further research studies.

7.2. Conclusion

Saudi Arabia has gone through many changes in the past few decades, and is still under constant change. In the past few years, women have been given increased rights and more opportunities in work, for example, in 2013, King Abdullah appointed 30 women to the 150 member Shura council [the kings' consultative council] (Mils, 2015, para. 12). Moreover, one of the biggest issues facing Saudi women has been resolved recently as the government has allowed divorced women and widows to manage their family affairs without the approval of a man or court by granting them family identity cards (a family identification document which used to be given only to Saudi men to complete government, administrative and legal procedures). This issue is considered essential to Saudi women, which is exactly what has been confirmed by Salwa al-Hazza, a member of the Shura council: "If you asked me which was more important, this or driving, I would tell you a hundred times this. It gives Saudi women the right to identify herself as head of the family, to put her children through school, get them married" (Salwa al-Hazza as cited in Mils, 2015, para. 11).

Contact with the West is considered one of the reasons for the social changes happening in Saudi Arabia, especially King Abdullah's scholarship program which

started eleven years ago (Alhazmi, 2010). With many Saudi students travelling abroad to study and to bring back different knowledge, cultures and perspectives.

This study investigated the effect of English language learning on the construction of identity of female Saudi students living abroad. It examined their identity development by hearing their voices in regards to their views on being English-speaking Saudi women, how they view their home and host societies, and how they think both societies have influenced them.

A qualitative approach was employed, with the data collection methods consisting of a brief self-completion questionnaire and semi-structured in-depth individual interviews, and a thematic analysis method was used for analysing and interpreting the data. Two main themes emerged from the data: empowerment and change.

The findings show that the traditional role of mother is valued by these women. The sense of empowerment is not only felt in performing the task of motherhood, but in 'choosing to' rather than 'having to' perform that role, also by realizing the importance of this role in changing the future generation. However, they reject their roles as wives, as they feel that the marriage roles do not give them the respect they deserve, and try on new gender roles and demand more rights and seek different roles. They do that in line with their religion by reinterpreting the Islamic teaching i.e. Islamic feminism, and learning English linguistically and culturally in a Western country.

The findings also emphasize the importance of the English language, and socialisation in the new environment and how these two factors play an important role in developing the identity of the Saudi women. By learning English in a Western country, their identity is reshaped, developed and attached to new cultural and social meanings. It is clear that their social identity is multiple and changing over time and

English language has played a role in developing their identity. The use of English language is embedded within their international identity, not the Saudi or the Australian identity. As international students in Australia, English helps the expanding of these women's perspectives and is considered not only as a tool for effective communication and socialising but also as an advantage to elevate their social status and negotiate gender equality in Saudi Arabia. It was also noted that the English language is considered a resource which learners can optionally draw on. So while some Saudi women utilized that resource to change and develop themselves, others chose not to.

Moreover, the findings suggest that although social identity theory makes it seem that every human being is made up of different labels and categories (ethnicity, social class, nationality, family, sub-culture membership etc.) and that is who we are, the reality is, as seen with the participating Saudi women, some aspects matter more than others. Their identity as Muslims is always present, in Saudi Arabia, in Australia, at home and outside, while their national and gendered identity were developing and changing. This development and change is happening due to learning English, as it gives them the ability to access different roles, and socializing in the new environment.

7.3. Limitations of the study

Several limitations of this study must be acknowledged. First, the limitation of time as the length of time to finish this study was only six months which has affected the recruitment process of the number and variety of participants. The research is limited to five participants who came from two big cities in Saudi Arabia and all live in Melbourne, so the value of this research data speaks for itself instead of being

generalized. Surely, a larger number of participants from different backgrounds, from small towns to big cities in Saudi Arabia, might show different views and experiences in terms of their social interaction and their investment in their experience of studying abroad.

Secondly, in a qualitative study, the researcher is considered a part of the research. Hence, as mentioned in chapter four, the interpretation of the data is influenced by the researcher positioning and experiences as a Saudi international student despite the efforts to reduce the bias. Other researchers might interpret the data differently as they have different positioning and experiences.

Finally, in regard to the data transcription, all the interviews were translated by the researcher which is subject to her own point of view, her personality and her social background. The Arabic cultural concepts are translated and explained in English depending on the researcher own understanding and subjectivity, as "it is evidenced that concepts cannot always be translated across languages and cultures" (Liamputtong, 2011, p. 134), and every language has its own culture and every person has his/her own understanding of this culture.

7.4. Implications and Recommendations for further research

This study could be considered as an extension of Alsaweel's (2013) study, but its main focus is specifically on how English has impacted postgraduate Saudi women in Australia and how their identity has developed in a Western country.

The findings of this study show that there is a need to hear Saudi women's voices, to see life from their own perspectives to better understand them as they have been misunderstood by the world. This study also helps in shedding light on a gap in literature as almost all the literature found in this topic was conducted by non-Saudi

researchers, and since things are changing in Saudi Arabia that can be missed by an outsider, there is a need to discuss the identity of Saudi women with an insider perspective.

In addition, this research could also help university educators to get a better understanding of the female Saudi students' identity transitions and cultural background especially with the increasing number of Saudi students coming to Australia to pursue their higher education. They can better support and help these students to achieve their goals and address their needs, by providing social events or group environment to meet other women and discuss their issues.

This study can also contribute to the linguists' knowledge of language, as it provides information about two different languages and cultures, and how they shape identity. Also how English acts as a resource and how it brings its own culture. More specifically, this study illustrates how English language, which carries a completely different culture to the Arabic one, is contributing to the social changes happening in Saudi Arabia. Also, how learning this language is affecting the unequal power relations between genders in Saudi Arabia. It shows how some Saudi students, such as my participants, use English as a resource to empower themselves and as a tool to change themselves and their society back home. This study provides academic knowledge as well as social information.

For further research, some following directions could be taken into account. First, at some points in this research, the construction of the identity of Saudi men, their gender roles and gender relations in the present Saudi society and in the host society have been slightly expressed. So further studies must be conducted to explore the development of their identity, to have a more comprehensive picture of how gender

relations and gender identity are constructed under one Saudi roof. Also to understand how these Saudi men perceive their gender identity in the social context as they are related to distinct cultural conceptions in Saudi Arabia.

Second, the findings of the study show that with the use of the English language the Saudi female students were engaged in a socialisation process which helped them to improve their English language. When doing the interviews, these women used many English words and sentences to describe their experiences even though the interviews were conducted in Arabic. The frequency of using the English words varied from one person to another. Some of these English words are terms in their specific academic specialties, others are cultural concepts which were considered difficult to give equivalents in Arabic, and other loan words are commonly used in everyday life. These women chose to use English to define their thoughts and ideas. The phenomenon of code switching in the Arabian context seem to be worthy of exploring in a linguistics research, to see if this code switching has an effect particularly in Saudi women's identity and gender roles. This might be explored by studying the specific contexts where this code switching happens and the vocabulary used in each context.

Moreover, a longitudinal study of Saudi international students can be of great significance, to trace the development of their identity from the beginning of their studying journey until they go back home through interviewing and observing participants regularly to examine how identity develops over time and the relative influence of the host culture on Saudi students at various stages of their journey. The results would be more comprehensive.

Finally, it would be worth investigating the journey of Saudi students in other countries, Arabic countries, such as the Gulf countries, where women have more freedom than Saudi Arabia, to see if living there would have an impact on their identities the same way as Western countries. Also to see if languages play a role in the development of identity in Arabian countries, and to see if Arabic language would carry a different culture in different Arabian countries than it does in Saudi Arabia. Would it be easier for Saudi women to adapt and change in such countries?

7.5 Closing comment

In this research, the identity of Saudi women has been explored, and how English language and living in an English speaking country have affected the development of their identity. By listening to these women's stories and experiences, it was clear how independent and confident they have become, which inspired me to write these lines:

we are Saudi women

No more weak

No more silent

We are average women

Not so special

BUT we know our right

We know we are bright

And we deserve

To be known

And recognized

As different

Because,

We are...

(Not) the Saudi women you hear about.

In the end, I hope this study gives the readers the opportunity to recognize and appreciate Saudi women's unique experience, knowledge and power.

References

- AEI. (2016). International student data 2016. Retrieved 3rd April 2016, from Australian Education International <https://aei.gov.au/research/International-StudentData/Pages/InternationalStudentData2014.aspx>
- Al-Hassani, S. (2010). *Women's contribution to classical Islamic civilization: Science medicine and politics*. Retrieved 14th April 2016, from <http://www.muslimheritage.com/article/womens-contribution-classical-islamic-civilisation-science-medicine-and-politics>.
- Alhazmi, A. (2010). Saudi international students in Australia and intercultural engagement: A study of transitioning from a gender segregated culture to a mixed gender environment. *The 21st ISANA international education conference*. ISANA International Education Association Inc.
- Alkharusi, M. (2013). *The intercultural communication experiences of Arab Muslims studying in New Zealand: Academic and social perspectives*. Ph.D. University of Waikato.
- Alshafii, Y. (2002). *Riyad Al-Saleheen*. Beirut, Lebanon: Dar Al Kitab Al Arabi.
- Alsweel, R. (2013). *The Impact of English as a Second Language on Saudi Women's Roles and Identities*. Ph.D. George Mason University.
- Al-Zaid, A. D. (1981). *Education in Saudi Arabia*. Jeddah: Tihama Publications.
- Badran, M. (2002). *Islamic feminism: What's in a name?* Retrieved from <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2002/569/cu1.htm>
- Bahgat, G. (1999). Education in the Gulf monarchies: Retrospect and prospect. *International Review of Education*, 45(2), 127-136. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3444942>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(1), 77-101.
- Bryman, A. (2008). *Social research methods* (3rd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Burke, P. (2006). *Contemporary Social Psychological Theories*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.
- Campbell, R. & Wasco, S. (2000), Feminist approaches to social science: Epistemological and methodological tenets. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 28(6), 773-791.
- Cargan, L. (2007). *Doing social research*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Corbin, T. (2014, October 14). I'm a feminist and I converted to Islam. CNN. Retrieved from <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/10/14/opinion/muslim-convert-irpt/>

- Creswell, J. W. (2003) *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, John W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Clarke, K. (2007). A modernization paradox: Saudi Arabia's divided society. *Harvard International Review*, 29(3), 30-33. Retrieved from <http://web.ebscohost.com.mutex.gmu.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=7957ced7-dc55-4e73-8858-25e14c4aafd5%40sessionmgr110&vid=5&hid=125>
- Cohen, M., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research methods in Education* (7th Ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Da Costa, M. (2012). *The impact of second language acquisition in the identity of Vietnamese and Saudi international students*. Retrived from https://www.academia.edu/2899412/The_Impact_of_Second_Language_Acquisition_in_the_Identity_of_Vietnamese_and_Saudi_International_Students
- Dastgoshadeh, A., & Jalilzadeh, K. (2011). Language Loss, Identity, and English as an International Language. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 21(4), 659-665.
- De Beauvoir, S. (1965). *The Second Sex*. London: Foursquare Books.
- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2011). *The sage handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publication.
- Deo, N. (2006). Is globalization our friend? Women's allies in the developing world. *Current History*, 105(689), 105-111. Retrieved from <http://mutex.gmu.edu:2048/login?url=http://proquest.umi.com.mutex.gmu.edu/pqdw eb?did=1004648051&sid=1&Fmt=3&clientId=31810&RQT=309&VName=PQD>
- Doumato, E. (1992). Gender, monarchy, and national identity in Saudi Arabia. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 19(1), 31-47. Doi: 10.1080/13530199208705547
- Dornyei, Z., & Ushioda, E. (2009). *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self*. Bristol: Channel View Publications.
- Flick, U. (2002). *An introduction to qualitative research*. London: Sage Publication.
- Gallant, M. (2008). The application of feminism in the Arab world: Research perspectives. *Education, Business and Society: Contemporary Middle Eastern Issues*, 1(3), 193-199. Doi: 10.1108/17537980810909814.
- Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social psychology and second language learning: The role of attitudes and motivation*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Gardner, R. C. (2006). The socio-educational model of second language acquisition: A research paradigm. In S. H. Foster-Cohen, M. M. Krajnovic & J. M. Djigunovic (Eds.), *Eurosla yearbook*, (pp. 237-260). Amsterdam: John Benjamins. Doi: 10.1075/eurosla.6.14gar.
- Gordon, D. (2004). "I'm tired. You clean and cook". *Shifting Gender Identities and Second Language Socialization*. TESOL Quarterly 38(3), 437-457.

- Groves, O. M. (2015). *Language learning as participation: case studies of Saudi Arabian international students*. Wollongong: University of Wollongong.
- Hall, T. (2013). *Saudi male perceptions of study in the United States: An analysis of King Abdullah scholarship program participants*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Bowling Green, KY: Western Kentucky University.
- Hamdan, A. (2005). Women and education in Saudi Arabia: Challenges and achievements. *International Education Journal*, 6(1), 42-64.
- Holmes, J. (2008). *Gendered talk at work: Constructing social identity through workplace interaction*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons.
- Jackson, J. (2008). *Language, identity and study abroad: Social cultural perspectives*. London: Equinox.
- Jansen, W. (2011). Gender and the expansion of university education in Jordan. In T. Abbas (Ed.), *Islam and Education* (Vol. 3, pp. 20-38). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Jawad, H. A. (1998). The legal status of women in Islam. In *The Rights of Women in Islam* (pp. 1-15). London: MacMillan Press.
- Jorgenson, J. (2011). Reflexivity in feminist research practice: Hearing the unsaid. *Women and Language*, 34(2), 115-119.
- Keddie, N. (2004). A women's place: Democratization in the Middle East. *Current History*, 103(669), 25-30. Retrieved from [http://mutex.gmu.edu:2048/login?url=http://proquest.umi.com/mutex.gmu.edu/pqdw eb?did=526631911&sid=2&Fmt=3&clientId=31810&RQT=309&VName=PQD](http://mutex.gmu.edu:2048/login?url=http://proquest.umi.com/mutex/gmu.edu/pqdw eb?did=526631911&sid=2&Fmt=3&clientId=31810&RQT=309&VName=PQD)
- Keddie, N. (2005). The past and present of women in the Muslim world. In H. Moghissi (Ed.), *Women and Islam* (pp. 53-79). New York, NY: Routledge.
- King, B. W., & Holmes, J. (2014). Gender and pragmatics. *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics* (pp. 1-6). Retrieved from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal1453/full>
- Kobayashi, Y. (2002). The Role of gender in foreign language learning attitudes: Japanese female students' attitudes towards English learning. *Gender and Education*, 14(2), 181-197.
- Kvale, S. (2007). *Doing interviews*. London: Sage.
- Lacey, R. (1981). *The kingdom: Arabia and the house of Sa'ud*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Liamputtong, P., & Ezzy, D. (2005). *Qualitative research methods* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Liamputtong, P. (2011). *Focus group methodology: Principles and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lindsey, G. (2006). *Saudi Arabia: From bedouin beginning to modern kingdom*. New York, NY: Hippocrene Books, Inc.

- Long, D. E. (1997). *The kingdom of Saudi Arabia*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.
- Lustig, M.W. (2013). *Intercultural competence interpersonal communication across cultures* (7th Ed). New York: Pearson.
- McLeod, S. A. (2008). Social identity theory. [Online] Available at www.simplypsychology.org/social-identity-theory.html [Accessed 22nd February 2016].
- Mertens, D. M. (2005). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Mesthrie, R., Swann, J., Deumert, A., & Leap, W. (2009). *Introducing sociolinguistics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Mill-Rosser, K., Chapman, Y., & Francis, K. (2006). Historical, cultural, and contemporary influences in the status of women in nursing in Saudi Arabia. *Online Journal of Issues in Nursing*, 11(3). Retrieved from <http://mutex.gmu.edu:2068/pqdweb?did=1154700401&Fmt=6&clientId=31810&RQT=309&VName=PQD>
- Mils, H. (2015). 'Saudi Arabian divorced women and widows to get greater legal powers', *The Guardian*, 22 Dec [Online]. Retrived May 13, 2016 from: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/02/saudi-arabian-divorced-women-and-widows-to-get-greater-legal-powers>
- Minichiello, V., Aroni, R., Timewell, E., & Alexander, L. (1990). *In-depth interviewing: Researching people*. Hong Kong: Longman Cheshire Pty Limited.
- Minichiello, V., Aroni, R., & Hays, T. (2008). *In-depth interviewing: Principles, techniques, analysis* (3rd Ed.). Sydney: Pearson Education Australia.
- Ministry of Higher Education. (2015). King Abdullah scholarships programme. Ministry of Higher Education. Retrived from <http://www.mohe.gov.sa/en/studyaboard/King-Abdulla-hstages/Pages/default.aspx>
- Moaddel, M. (2006). The Saudi public speaks: Religion, gender, and politics. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 38(1), 79-109. doi:10.1017/S0020743806412265
- Munoz, V. (1995). *Where "something catches": Work, love, and identity in your youth*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Neeley, T. (2012). Global business speaks English. *Harvard Business Review*, 90(5) 116.
- Nischik, R. M. (2000). *Margaret Atwood: Works and impact*. Rochester, NY: Camden House.
- Norton, B. (1995). Social identity, investment, and language learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29(1) 9-31.
- Norton, P. (2000). *Identity and language learning: Gender, ethnicity and educational change*. London: Longman.

- Ochsenwald, W. (1981). Saudi Arabia and the Islamic revival. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 13(3), 271-286. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/162837>
- OECD (2013). *How many students study abroad and where do they go? Education at a Glance 2013: Highlights*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Pavlenko, A. (2001). *Multilingualism, second language learning, and gender*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co.
- Pavlenko, A. (2002) Poststructuralist approaches to the study of social factors in second language learning and use. In V.Cook (Ed.) *Portraits of the L2 User* (pp. 277-302). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Pavlenko, A. (2007). Autobiographic narratives as data in applied linguistics. *Applied Linguistics*, 28(2), 163-188.
- Pharaon, N. A. (2004). Saudi women and the Muslim state in the twenty-first century. *Sex Roles*, 51(5/6), 349-366. Doi:10.1023/B:SERS.0000046618.62910.ef
- Ricento, T. (2005). Considerations of identity in L2 learning. In E. Hinkel (Eds.), *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning* (pp. 895-910). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Roccas, S. & Brewer, M.B. (2002). Social identity complexity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 6(2), 88-106.
- Schauer, G.A. (2006). Pragmatic awareness in ESL and EFL contexts: Contrast and development. *Language Learning*. 56(2), 269-318.
- Shaw, D. (2010). *Bridging differences: Saudi Arabian students reflect on their educational experiences and share success strategies*. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis. Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University.
- Shaw, J (1995). *Education, gender and anxiety*. London: Taylor and Francis.
- Sheridan, D. (2015). *"It is not in the stars to hold our destiny but in ourselves": Tales of Saudi Muslim women maintaining their identities in U.S. higher education*. Logan, UT: Utah State University.
- Shi, X. (2006). Gender, identity and intercultural transformation in second language socialisation. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 6(1), 2-17.
- Smith, Dorothy. (1978). A peculiar eclipsing: Women's exclusion from man's culture. *Women's Studies International Quarterly*, 1(4), 281-295.
- Su Kim, L. (2003). Exploring the relationship between language, culture and identity. *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies* 3(2), 1-3.
- Sultan bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 11, 2016, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/s/sultanbina417873.html>
- Usher, R. (1996). A critique of the neglected epistemological assumptions of educational research. In D. Scott & R. Usher (Eds.), *Understanding Educational Research* (pp. 9 - 32). London: Routledge.

- Warsi, M. J. (2009). Culturally speaking: Should culture be an integral part of language pedagogy? *South Asian Cultural Studies*, 2(2) 39-46.
- Wei, J. & Schwietring, T. (n.d.). The power of language: A philosophical-sociological reflection. Retrived February 22nd, 2016, from <http://www.goethe.de/lhr/prj/mac/msp/en1253450.htm>
- World Bank. (2014).Saudi Arabia's data. Retrieved May 2nd from <http://data.worldbank.org/country/saudi-arabia>
- Yamani, M. (1996). Some observations on women in Saudi Arabia. In M. Yamani (Ed.), *Feminism and Islam* (pp. 263-281). New York: New York University Press.
- Yamani, M. (2000). *Changing identities: The challenge of the new generation in Saudi Arabia*. Royal Institute of International Affairs, London: Chameleon Press.
- Yamani, M. (2005). Muslim women and human rights in Saudi Arabia: Aspirations of a new generation. In H. Moghissi (Ed.), *Women and Islam* (pp. 402-410). New York: Routledge.

Appendences

Appendix 1:

Questionnaire: Background Questions

- 1) How old are you?
- 2) Where were you born: Town/ city: country:
- 3) What is your current marital status? ☐ married ☐ divorced ☐ widow ☐ single
- 4) Do you have children? ☐ no ☐ yes
- 5) What is the highest level of education you have completed: ☐ bachelor ☐ master ☐ PhD
- 6) What is your field of study?
- 7) What is your current profession?
- 8) When did you come to Australia (year)? why?.....
- 9) Apart from Australia, have you ever lived in a country other than Saudi Arabia for a long period of time (that is, more than 6 months)?
☐ No
☐ yes, in: (town)..... (Country).....
- 10) Have you ever visited any Western countries, even if just for a holiday?
- 11) What language(s) did you acquire before starting school?
- 12) Did you attend any English classes before coming to Australia? ☐ no ☐ yes
- 13) How did you learn English:
☐ At school: starting ☐ in kindergarten ☐ in primary or ☐ in intermediate school.
☐ Self-directed study i.e. progressing independently by engaging yourself in language learning activities outside the classroom.
- 14) In general, how would you rate your English language proficiency before you moved to Australia?
 - Speaking skill: ☐ none ☐ very bad ☐ bad ☐ sufficient ☐ good ☐ very good
 - Reading skill: ☐ none ☐ very bad ☐ bad ☐ sufficient ☐ good ☐ very good
 - Writing skill: ☐ none ☐ very bad ☐ bad ☐ sufficient ☐ good ☐ very good
 - Listening skill: ☐ none ☐ very bad ☐ bad ☐ sufficient ☐ good ☐ very good
- 15) In general, how would you rate your English language proficiency at present?
 - Speaking skill: ☐ none ☐ very bad ☐ bad ☐ sufficient ☐ good ☐ very good
 - Reading skill: ☐ none ☐ very bad ☐ bad ☐ sufficient ☐ good ☐ very good

- Writing skill: ☐ none ☐ very bad ☐ bad ☐ sufficient ☐ good ☐ very good
- Listening skill: ☐ none ☐ very bad ☐ bad ☐ sufficient ☐ good ☐ very good

16) How often do you speak English?

☐ rarely ☐ few times a year ☐ monthly ☐ weekly ☐ daily

17) Who do you use English with?

☐ Spouse ☐ family ☐ friends from Saudi ☐ English-speaking friends

Appendix 2:

The Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself and your experience in living and studying in Australia.
2. Do you consider it important that you, your family and other Saudis can speak and understand English? Why or why not?
3. Do you feel more comfortable speaking Arabic or English? Why do you feel more comfortable speaking either Arabic or English? *Does your level of comfort depend on who you are talking to, what you are talking about, or something else? Do you feel that your level of language proficiency affect your use of a particular language?
4. What language or languages do you mostly use when talking to your family, friends and other Saudis? Do you use English? What do they use when talking to you?
5. Did you have any native speaker friends prior to coming to Australia?
6. Have you made new friends with native English speakers in Australia? How did you meet most of them?
7. In general, do you have more Arabic or English-speaking friends in Australia?
8. Do you only spend time with English friends at uni, whereas spend time in the homes of Saudis or go out with other Saudis?
9. Do you feel a sense of connection or closeness to English speakers? Why or why not?
10. Have you ever been a member of a Saudi club or organisation in Australia?
11. Do you ever get homesick in the sense of missing Saudi Arabia? Why? What do you miss?
12. Do you prefer listening to English or Arabic songs? Watching English or Arabic television programmes? Why?
13. Do you watch English language movies? Which ones?
14. Do you read or watch Australian news? Why?
15. Do you think you use more or less English since you came to Australia? Do you think your English language has improved, and why?
16. How does learning or speaking English make you feel? Do you feel comfortable using English in conversation? Can you think of an example of where you feel comfortable/ don't feel comfortable using English?
17. How important is your Saudi identity to the sense of who you are in a Western country?
☐ How much does this identity say about you?
18. Do you think you show different aspects of yourself in different contexts? Do they vary? Are they influenced by other people's expectations?

19. How important are these different aspects in relation to each other? Which are more or less important?
20. Do you think your background and origins and where you grow up have more influence on you than the experience in living in Australia?
21. Do you think this importance vary in different contexts? Is it influenced by others' expectations? If so how?
22. Have your views changed at all in the past few years? How? Why?
23. Looking back, do you think you have made the right decision in coming to study in Australia? Would you do it again if you have to make the choice again? Why?
24. We have reached the end of this interview. Is there anything you would like to add? This can be anything from language-related comments to remarks about the interview or the research itself.

Appendix 3:

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Project Title: The Effects of Learning English as a Second Language on the Saudi Females' Identity

Project Number: (This number will be provided by MUHREC upon receipt of the application)

Chief Investigator's name Dr Melanie Burns
School of Languages, Literatures, Cultures and
Linguistics

Student's name Luluh Alfurayh

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

You are invited to take part in this study. Please read this Explanatory Statement in full before deciding whether or not to participate in this research. If you would like further information regarding any aspect of this project, you are encouraged to contact the researchers via the phone numbers or email addresses listed above

My study investigates the relationship between learning a second language and social identity and values. You are invited to participate in this study because you are a postgraduate Saudi ESL female student. You will be asked to answer a few questions in an audio recorded face-to-face interview, which may take approximately one hour. Your participation in this study is voluntary and your answers to the interview questions will be kept anonymous.

You have to sign and return the consent form before starting the interview. You also have the right to withdraw from further participation at any stage. However, it will not be possible to withdraw anonymous data once it has been analysed. All collected data will adhere to the University regulations and will be destroyed after completion of the project or after 1 year.

If you would like to be informed of the research findings, or have any questions regarding the research project, please contact Luluh Alfurayh [REDACTED]. The final report will be available from approximately (June-2016).

Should you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact the Executive Officer, Monash University Human Research Ethics (MUHREC):

Executive Officer

Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)

Room 111, Building 3e

Research Office

Monash University VIC 3800

[REDACTED]

Thank you,

(insert Chief Investigator's signature)

Chief Investigator's name

Appendix 4:

CONSENT FORM

Project: **The Effects of Learning English as a second language on the Saudi Females' Identity**

Chief Investigator: **Dr. Melanie Burns**

Student investigator: **Luluh Alfurayh**

I have been asked to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement and I hereby consent to participate in this project.

I consent to the following:	Yes	No
1. I Read and understand the information in the explanatory statement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw at any time without explaining my reasons.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I agree that the interview is being audio recorded.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I agree to the use of anonymous quotes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I agree that the data collected might be published in anonymous form in academic books or journals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of Participant:

Participant Signature:

Date: