Learning English as a Foreign Language: A Vehicle to Another Self? A Multiple Case Study of Saudi Female University Learners of English

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PhD

Abstract

Research on the relationship between language learning and identity has received more attention in recent years. It is argued that there is a two-way relationship between language learning and identity i.e., one's sense of self; as a learner's identity affects his/her learning, and learning a new language has implications on a learner's identity. Most studies within this field have focused on how learner identity affects the learning process and its outcomes in second language settings. Not as much attention has been paid to if and how language learning may influence how a person views himself/herself. In this study, the goal is to explore how Saudi female learners of English as a foreign language view themselves and the factors affecting them during the learning process. The study uses second language socialization as a theoretical framework because it is a comprehensive approach that acknowledges the dynamic nature of identity and the social cultural nature of language learning. A multiple case study design was used in this investigation. Interviews, diaries, field notes and a background information form were used to gather data from six Saudi female university students of English. Cross-case comparison of the results of thematic analysis revealed that participants' identities were dynamic as they associated learning English with being different in the areas of knowledge and culture, confidence and power, acceptance and understanding, self-expression and lifestyle. The results also revealed the complexity of the participants' identities as they described their identities as Western, hybrid and multiple. Through learning English, learners appeared to create images of how they wanted to be in the future i.e., imagined identities. The findings also revealed that the learners' experience of learning English was affected by internal factors, such as investment and agency, and external factors, such as people's attitudes toward English and media and social media.

List of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

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I, Muneerah Al Shuhail, declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Chapter one: Introduction

The current study explores whether learning English as a foreign language influences Saudi female university students' identities. Identity is defined by Norton (2000) in terms of how an individual views himself/herself and how his/her connections to the local and global communities are shaped over time. It also investigates how learning English as a foreign language contributes to shaping Saudi female university students' identities and the factors affecting them during this process.

It has been argued that 'education can lead to individual and social change' (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 417). Studies such as Clarkson (2007), Goulah (2007), Norton (2000) and Prior and MacWhinney (2010) have revealed that learning a new additional language whether in a country where it is the medium of communication i.e., a second language learning (SLL) context or in a country where it is not the medium of communication i.e., a foreign language learning (FLL) context can have cognitive, educational and social emotional effects on the learner (see sections 2.2. and 2.11. for further details on the differences between SLL and FLL). These studies among others indicate that learners' mental processes, their learning trajectories, their feelings and views of themselves and the world around them may be influenced during the process of acquiring a second language or a foreign language (L2). Norton and Toohey (2011) argue that educational practices can transform a person by putting him/her in different positions of power which can have an impact on him/her personally and on his/her relationship with society and culture. Society refers to a group of people who are connected through living in the same area which could be as small as a village or as big as a continent (Merriam Webster, n.d.-a). Culture refers to a set of beliefs and customs that shape how people within a society live (Merriam Webster, n.d.-b).

One of the reasons for any influence language learning may have on learners' sense of self and their social and cultural relationships is the strong connection between language and culture (Ahearn, 2001; Burck, 2011; Chung Ke, 2015; Darvin, 2018; Kramsch, 1998; Kramsch & Zhu, 2016). It has been suggested that a person's sense of self or identity is shaped by culture and identity has been described as 'a linguistic phenomenon' (Joseph, 2004, p. 11). Several researchers have suggested that identity is dynamic and subject to change (Duff, 2012b; Norton & Toohey, 2011). When it comes to SLL and FLL, it has been argued by many, including Norton (2008), that language cannot be taught separately from culture. Kim (2003a, 2003b), Norton and McKinney (2011) and Samar and Mokhtarnia (2012) assert that SLL and FLL involve exposure to the second or foreign language's society and culture in terms of views and ways of life, which can have implications on learners' identities. Furthermore, with language learning being a social cultural process, it makes the learner evaluate and reshape their own position and relationships (Al Shuhail, 2020, Norton & Toohey, 2011). Several theories such as

the poststructuralist theories and the second language socialization theory (SLS) present accounts for the relationship between language learning and identity. According to Duff (2011; 2012b) and Norton and Toohey (2011), both of these theories assert the connection between language learning and identity as well as the complexity and fluidity of identity, as opposed to essentialist views of identity as static (see section 2.3.1). SLS views SLL and FLL as processes that involve learners engaging in interactions to develop their skills to use the target language as well as learning about its social and cultural system (Duff, 2011; Duff, 2012b). SLS considers all such processes to have implications on learners' identities (Duff, 2012b). SLS offers a comprehensive approach to the language learning process and the factors involved in it and this led to it being used in this study as an approach to investigate if and how learning English as a foreign language may influence Saudi female learners' identities.

Within the context of learning English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia, one cannot overlook the apparent differences, and in some instances conflicts, between the Saudi culture and the target language's Western cultures. These differences and conflicts have resulted in questions being raised regarding whether learning and teaching English as a foreign language would endanger Saudi students' identity. Specifically, there is a need for research on whether language learning may affect the way in which Saudi learners view themselves, and their views of the world around them. There is also a need to present accounts of how this takes place and the factors influencing it.

Over the years, there has been growing interest in researching the relationship between language learning and identity. Much of this interest and research focused on how learner identity influences the process of language learning and learner's engagement and success in it (Norton, 2000; Toohey, 2001). There has been little research on the potential impact language learning has on the identity of the language learner. In addition, most of the research in this area has been conducted in second language settings (Block, 2007). There appears to be a need for research on how learning English in foreign language settings affects the identity of the learner (Block, 2007). This is important as the factors involved, such as motivation i.e., learner's desire to learn the L2 and interaction i.e., learner's engagement and use of the L2, might be different (see section 2.11). Research in this area is much needed to answer these questions and to contribute to this topic at a global level. For example, in Saudi Arabia where English is taught as a foreign language, there has been little research on the possible implications of the language learning process on the learners as people. This is the area of concern for this thesis as the goal of this study is to explore whether and how learning English may influence Saudi female university students' identities. Researching this topic in Saudi Arabia presents an interesting context. The status of the English language in Saudi Arabia has changed over the years as it is becoming more common in Saudis' everyday lives, which is linked to the rise of English as an

international global language and to globalization in general. This in turn has created more demand for teaching and learning English. This rise could be viewed as having an effect on the local language, culture and identity. In addition, having Saudi women as the focus of this study is promising because the social cultural element of learning English may present them with different ways of thinking of themselves, their roles and their rights. All these points will be presented in the following sections.

1.1. English and globalization

In the last few decades, English has secured its status as the world's global language. According to Crystal (2012), one in every three individuals around the world has the ability to communicate using English. English is seen by many as the language to master in order to advance or even function in many areas of life (Pennycook, 2001, 2010). It has established itself as a lingua franca (Modiano, 2001) and it is considered necessary to have access to the fields of finance, media, medicine, culture, politics, technology and many others (Pennycook, 2010). Sklair (1999) specifically highlighted the important role media has played in the rise of English. American and British films, television and music are popular all over the world and this has created a familiarity with English and a desire to become proficient in English. All the above have contributed to English being viewed as a prestigious and important language (Tamimi Sa'd, 2018). This has created a need and demand for proficiency in English and has resulted in English being taught all over the world either as a second or foreign language (Al-Jarf, 2008).

Pennycook (2001, 2010), Phillipson (1992), Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1996; 2018), Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) and Zughoul (2003) asserted that learning English is connected to globalization. In other words, globalization which has been linked to the spread and dominance of Western, specifically American influence through politics, business and media and has contributed to the spread of English and the need for the learning and teaching of English worldwide. Pennycook (2001, 2010), Phillipson (1992), Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1996; 2018), Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) and Zughoul (2003) have argued that this spread of the English language and its teaching could have negative effects on local languages and cultures. Phillipson (1992), Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1996, 2018) and Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) have called this 'linguistic imperialism' as they consider it a way to impose Western influence on other languages and cultures through English.

 On the other hand, Honey (1997) has argued that English could be a tool that is used for personal and social development. For example, although Zughoul (2003) argued that learning English may be a threat, he also pointed out that, due to its global status and prestige, English could also be beneficial for learners as an empowering language. Furthermore, Johnson (2009) noted that the spread of English could be positive in terms of bringing people from different languages and cultures together. Norton (1997) suggested that English with its global status

does not belong to one culture. Therefore, it could be argued that learning English may not necessarily lead to imposing Western influences.

These views on the spread of English resemble to a certain extent the discussion on the learning and use of English in Saudi Arabia. People in Saudi Arabia are aware of the benefits of learning English for them personally and for their country's development, but they are also afraid that it may jeopardize the Arabic language and their local culture and identity (see section 1.2). In relation to this study, investigating Saudi women's identities as they learn English can help us understand whether learning English plays a role in shaping these women's views of themselves and their views and connections with the local and global communities. De Costa and Norton (2016) assert the importance of this type of research in an era of globalization as the lives of people from all over the world are more connected and intertwined than before, which has implications on their cultures and identities.

1.2. English in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is a country in the center of the Arab and Muslim world. It is traditionally viewed as a conservative Muslim country due to the influence of Islamic teachings on the country's foundation, laws and society (Alsolami & Saati, 2020). Saudi Arabia's important status is also related to its economic status as one of the G20 countries (Nurunnabi, 2017). The country's economy has been reliant on oil as a main source of revenue (Alsolami & Saati, 2020). Over the years, the country has developed in many areas of life such as education, healthcare and infrastructure (Alsolami & Saati, 2020). Recently, more rapid changes have been taking place in accordance with the 2030 vision. This vision is a plan to transform Saudi Arabia into a modern and developed country in all areas of life (Eum, 2019). One of its tenets is minimizing Saudi Arabia's reliance on oil as a main source of revenue (Nurunnabi, 2017). In this way, it is encouraging people from Saudi Arabia and all over the world to work, invest in and visit Saudi Arabia (Eum, 2019). Along with this change in the country's policy, came changes in supporting and empowering Saudi youth and especially women (see section 1.3). All these changes have had an effect on the status and the use of English in the country.

In Saudi Arabia, Arabic is the official language and the language dominantly used in the community. Nevertheless, English has been increasingly used in various settings. Historically, English has been taught in Saudi Arabia as a foreign language for decades (Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). It was taught in intermediate and secondary schools and, in 2004, it started being taught in the sixth grade. In 2011, Saudi students started learning English from the fourth grade (Al-Hazmi, 2017). In 2020, a decision was announced by the Saudi Ministry of Education to start teaching English from the first grade (CNN, 2020). The English language subject that students take in schools consists of units on various topics (Al-Hazmi, 2017). In each unit, there is presentation of new vocabulary and grammar rules as well as practice of listening, reading,

speaking and writing in English (Al-Hazmi, 2017). However, the method of teaching is quite traditional in terms of the teacher explaining the lesson and the students being mostly receivers and only participating to solve exercises (Al-Hazmi, 2017). Therefore, most Saudis graduate from schools with limited proficiency in English (Al-Hazmi, 2017). Over the years, the Ministry of Education worked on updating the English language curricula and improving training for English teachers (Al-Hazmi, 2017). However, more work seems to be needed as there is some discontent with the level of proficiency that English Saudi students obtain by the end of their school education (Al-Hazmi, 2017). This was one of the reasons for the decision to start teaching English from the first grade (CNN, 2020).

In recent years, the role of English has expanded in Saudi Arabia; as it is now the medium of instruction in many schools and universities (Alshahrani & Al-Shehri, 2012). Moreover, it is used by many institutions and companies as the language of communication (Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). Therefore, many Saudis, as Al-Seghayer (2012), Elyas (2008) and Rahman & Alhaisoni (2013) have argued, are highly motivated to learn English in order to get better jobs, stay connected with the world and develop on the personal, social and professional levels. According to Al-Asmari and Khan (2014), this is especially evident in younger generations who use English as a way of staying in touch with current information and trends in many areas e.g., entertainment, travel, technology, economy and politics. Generally, the attitudes of Saudis toward the learning and teaching of English reflect what has been presented in section 1.1, in terms of the rise of English as a global language and the views of various scholars about this phenomenon. Saudis have positive views toward the English language as they consider it an important language that is beneficial for the future and development of the country (Alsolami & Saati, 2020; Al-Asmari & Khan, 2014; Al-Jarf, 2008; Al-Seghayer, 2012; Elyas, 2008). Nevertheless, historically there has been some resistance to its teaching due to a fear that it would endanger the Islamic values of Saudi society and the Arabic language (Alsolami & Saati, 2020; Al-Hazmi, 2017; Al-Jarf, 2008). Al-Hazmi (2017: 136) used the term 'necessary-evil' to summarize how some Saudis have viewed the English language as they understood its importance but at the same time they were not always happy about its teaching and use. This view has changed over the years as people became more accepting of English as a language and realized that English does not necessarily lead to the westernization of Saudi society (Al-Hazmi, 2017; Al-Jarf, 2008). Al-Haq & Samdi (1996) investigated the attitudes of Saudi university students toward the learning of English in Saudi Arabia and whether they thought it was connected to westernization. Questionnaire responses from 1176 students from various Saudi universities revealed that the majority did not associate learning English with becoming westernized. They also did not consider English a threat to their national or religious identity (Al-Haq & Samdi, 1996).

Nevertheless, it appears that teaching and learning English still creates a dilemma for some Saudis as they are aware of the benefits but also afraid that it might have negative effects on Saudi culture and identity. This is not helped by the lack of studies on the effect of learning English on individuals on personal and social levels which could have helped in bringing some clarity to the issue. Therefore, this study could provide much needed clarity to the relationship between learning English and Saudis' identities.

1.3. Saudi women

Saudi women's status is different from men and women in many areas of the world in terms of roles and rights (Al Alhareth, Al Alhareth, & Al Dighrir, 2015). In Saudi Arabia, there has always been a debate between conservatives and liberals regarding the status of women (Hamdan, 2005). Some conservatives argue that the difference between the status of men and women is rooted in Islam (Song, 2018). But others (see Mtango, 2004 and Delong-Bas, 2004) argue that the differences are not related to Islam as a religion but are rooted in some extreme interpretations of Islamic teachings and some Bedouin tribal traditions. They point to how the Quran and Prophet Muhammad advocated respect for women and gave them rights they did not have before Islam (Almunajjed, 1997). Historically, the conservative view has resulted in Saudi women having fewer rights and roles than men in Saudi Arabia. For example, women needed to have a male guardian's approval for them to work and travel (Mustafa, 2017; Yamani, 2000).

Over the years, there has been progress and change in Saudi women's rights and roles as they acquired equal opportunities in education and employment (Mustafa, 2017; Yamani, 2000). Recently with the Saudi 2030 vision, women have been granted even more freedom and rights as they are able to do all things Saudi men can do without the need for approval from anyone (Eum, 2019; Naseem & Dhruva, 2017). Although this change was welcomed by a lot of women and men, some are still wary of that change as they consider it an abandonment of local religious and cultural values.

In relation to learning English, some Saudi people fear that learning English may help promote Western cultural values about women and lead to change, which they resist (Eum, 2019; Hamdan, 2005; Mustafa, 2017). The idea that Saudi women and girls learning English will learn about its cultures, values and lifestyle which includes women's status presents an interesting context for this study considering the differences between Saudi and Western cultures in terms of women's roles and rights. In this study, the goal is to find out if learning English, which involves exposure to Western English-speaking cultures, affects Saudi women in terms of how they view themselves and how they view the world around them. This can provide evidence to support or refute the claims that English could be viewed as a threat to Saudi women's identity.

This topic was chosen because of the researcher's interest in learning about how language learning affects learners personally and socially together with personal observations of people having discussions about the threat of English on Saudis and their culture. Working in the English Language Department at King Faisal University fueled this interest and led to the focus on Saudi women learning English. Many people commented on how students in the English Language Department are different from other students in their appearance, manners and personalities. This along with the general interest in the topic led to the decision to investigate whether and how the identities of Saudi women may be influenced by the process of learning English as a foreign language.

Previous research on SLL and FLL and identity revealed the dynamic, complex and multiple nature of the language learner's identity (see sections 2.5). However, much of that research focused on how learners negotiate and construct their identities while learning and how this had implications on their achievement and success. In contrast, this study aims to do the opposite as it investigates whether and how FLL of English may affect Saudi women's identities or perception of themselves. In addition, this study is conducted in a foreign language setting, Saudi Arabia, while most of the previous studies on the identities of language learners were mainly done in second language settings (see section 2.12 for more details about research gaps).

Few studies have investigated the effect of learning English on Saudi women's identities. These studies found that this process was associated with developments for Saudi women at various levels. However, those studies had different groups of Saudi women and used different theoretical frameworks and methodologies from this study (see section 2.10). Furthermore, those studies did not provide an account of how learning English contributes to shaping Saudi women's identities. This study investigates this issue with a focus on language learning as a social and cultural process which presents a different angle for this investigation. It also tries to avoid some of the methodological limitations of previous studies. Therefore, this study can contribute new findings to help to build knowledge in this field. It may also open the door to more research on the relationship between FLL and identity on other social groups.

1.4. Aim of the study and research questions

In this study the primary goal is to explore the identities of Saudi females during a period when they are learning English as a foreign language. The investigation examines how Saudi women view themselves. In addition, the study investigates the factors affecting their experience during the English learning process. This is all used to gain a better understanding of the way in which learning English engages and possibly influences the identities of Saudi women learning English. These issues are addressed in the following two research questions. The first is the main research question while the second is a sub-question that complements the first one.

1. How do Saudi female learners of English as a foreign language view themselves during the process of learning English?

1.1. What factors are perceived to influence the learning experience of English as a foreign language among Saudi female learners?

1.5. Research design

The setting of this study is King Faisal University in Alahsa, Saudi Arabia. The participants are Saudi women studying in the English Language Department. This study used a multiple case study design utilizing a qualitative approach to investigate the topic. This approach was used to obtain an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences, identities and views by using interviews, diaries, a background information form and field notes. Data collected from the participants over a period of fourteen months was analyzed thematically to obtain informative findings that answer the research questions.

In order to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings of this study, several measures were used. First, the use of multiple data collection methods and the collection of data over an extended period of time helped to address the issue in an appropriate manner. In addition, careful planning was done, and an elaborate description of every step taken during the research process was provided. Peer checks were also used during the process of data collection and analysis. Finally, relating the findings of this study to theories and other studies helped to establish the legitimacy of the results.

1.6. Structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of six chapters. After this introduction, chapter two, which has three parts, presents a review of the literature on the topic. The first part of chapter two presents SLS as the theoretical framework while also providing accounts of the theories it has been built on. The second part presents a review of research on language learning, identity and culture and relevant concepts such as imagined identities and communities, investment and agency as well as a review of relevant studies. The third part presents an account of the factors affecting the FLL process. This is helpful in clarifying the rationale for this study and the gap that this study aims to fill in terms of the field of language learning and identity.

Chapter three presents the methodology employed for this investigation. The use of a multiple case study design is explained and justified. The setting of this study which is King Faisal University is described. There is also an overview of the participants in this study - six Saudi female university students of English. An explanation of the procedures employed for choosing the sample is followed by a description of the data collection tools (background information form, semi-structured interviews, diaries and field notes), piloting and the thematic analysis. Finally, trustworthiness measures and ethical issues are discussed.

Chapter four presents the results of this investigation based on the cross-case comparison of the results of the six participants. These results arose from the thematic analysis of the data from the interviews and diaries. Data from the background information forms and field notes were used to support the understanding of the experience of each participant and contextualize the results of the interviews and diaries.

Chapter five presents an interpretation of the findings of this investigation as well as relating them to the literature on the topic. All this is used to fulfil the overall aim of this research and add to existing knowledge in the field.

Finally, chapter six summarizes the findings and contributions of this study and acknowledges its limitations. Chapter six also presents the pedagogical and research implications of the study.

Chapter two: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

Since this study investigates if and how FLL shapes learner's identity, this chapter presents a review of relevant research on SLL, FLL and identity. The first part presents second language socialization (SLS), which is the theoretical framework used in this study. Because SLS builds on poststructuralist and sociocultural theories, they are both presented. The second part of the chapter presents the major premise of this thesis, which is an account of the relationship between FLL and identity. This includes reviewing what research has reported in terms of the relationship between L2 learning and culture as well as L2 learning and identity. This is followed by accounts of relevant concepts relating to language learning and identity, these being imagined identities and imagined communities, investment and agency. Furthermore, since this study focuses on women, there is a review of what has been reported in earlier research on the relationship between language learning and women's identities. The second part of the literature review concludes with a review of previous studies on language learning and identity. The third part of the chapter presents an account of the factors influencing FLL as they are needed to present a comprehensive account of how learners experience FLL as a process and answer the research questions. This includes an overview of the factors influencing learners during FLL and where possible how they may differ from SLL. Finally, a summary of the research gaps as well as the research questions are presented.

As this study builds on theories and studies that investigated both SLL and FLL, it is essential to provide a description of SLL and FLL processes and the similarities and differences between them in the beginning of this chapter.

2.2. Second and foreign Language Learning

Second language acquisition and learning (SLL) is a process in which an individual learns an additional language after acquiring his/her first language in a country where the target language is the medium of communication (Cook, 2001; Ellis, 2008; Gass & Selinker, 1994). Learning a second or additional language can also take place in a country where the new language is not the medium of communication and in this case the process is most often called foreign language learning (FLL) (Cook, 2001; Ellis, 2008). In Saudi Arabia, English is considered a foreign language since Arabic is the native language that is used in everyday communications (Al-Asmari & Khan, 2014). SLL and FLL are similar processes as they both revolve around learning an additional language after the first or native language has been learned, and some argue that they both refer to the same process albeit in different settings (Cook, 2001; Ellis, 2008). In SLL, learning can potentially take place naturally or in a classroom, whereas, in FLL, learning takes place mostly in classrooms (Cook, 2001; Ellis, 2008). The differences between

the two settings are also reflected in differences in several elements and factors of the language learning process such as type(s) of motivation and the amount and types of input and interaction. All these differences will be discussed in the factors' section below (see section 2.11). Most importantly for the thesis, this difference in setting has implications for the amount and type of cultural contact the learners have during the learning process. In FLL, learners usually have less real-life interactions with people from the target language community than learners in SLL contexts. Since this study builds on the idea that FLL engages learners' identities because it includes learning the linguistic and social cultural skills of the L2, it is important to take that into consideration as how social and cultural contact and learning as well as its implication on learners' identities may differ from what has been reported in SLL. In other words, in SLL, learners may be more immersed in the L2 and its culture because they are living in it. But this does not necessarily mean that in FLL learners do not have social interaction in the target language and cultural contact with its culture as this may take place inside the classroom or through other means. This is why theories about SLL and identity such as the poststructuralist and SLS theories can and have been used to present accounts and investigate FLL and identity (Duff, 2011; Glowka, 2015; Moore, 2008; Norton & Toohey, 2011). However, researchers need to be careful and consider the differences between SLL and FLL, especially in terms of social and cultural contact and interaction when using these theories (Duff, 2007). In investigating the issue of Saudi foreign language learner identity, the researcher takes the position that SLL and FLL are similar processes, and this is why in the following literature review, both processes are referred to.

Recognizing the importance of identity and how it affects and is affected by SLL, several theories have been proposed to explain this relationship. They have arisen to complement other SLL theories which focus on the cognitive and psychological aspects of SLL, such as language processing and motivation (Atkinson, 2011; Block, 2003; Norton & Toohey, 2010; Ortega, 2011). Theories such as the poststructuralist theories, the sociocultural theory and SLS focus on the social aspects of language learning (Duff, 2007, 2011; Duff & Talmy, 2011; Norton & McKinney, 2011; Ortega, 2011). They also attempt to account for the connections between language learning and identity. Due to the similarities between SLL and FLL, these theories have also been used to account for the social nature of FLL (Duff, 2011; Glowka, 2015; Moore, 2008; Norton & Toohey, 2011). In this study, SLS is used as the theoretical framework for this investigation since it provides a comprehensive account of the linguistic and social cultural nature of the SLL and FLL processes because it builds on what the poststructuralist and sociocultural theories have proposed in terms of language learning, culture and identity. All these theories are explained in detail in the following sections as they are central in informing the understanding of the data elicited in the current project and in answering the research questions. First, the poststructuralist and sociocultural theories are presented. This is done in

order to describe the basis of the SLS theory and to provide an explanation of how using SLS is beneficial in terms of incorporating aspects of both theories and avoiding some of the criticism directed toward them.

2.3. Theories of language learning and identity

2.3.1. The poststructuralist theories

The poststructuralist theories are useful in conceptualizing identity and its connection to SLL. According to Spivey (1997), poststructuralism is grounded in the early work of Bakhtin and was built on by Barthes (1967), Derrida (1976) and Kristeva (1967). It has been adopted by Bourdieu (1977, 1985), Weedon (1997) and more recently by Norton and others (see Norton & McKinney, 2011). Poststructuralism's central tenet is that language ought to be considered as a meaning conveying tool as opposed to a system of words and structures (Norton & Toohey, 2010; Norton & McKinney, 2011). It emphasizes the social aspect of language in addition to the systematic part of rules and structures. This theory is associated with the structuralist approach of Saussure's (1966) work on the relation between a linguistic sign and its meaning (Norton & Toohey, 2011). In structuralism, this relation is arbitrary. In other words, there is no relationship between the form and the sound of the word and its meaning. In addition, structuralism argues that, within communities, meaning is fixed and is not negotiable or changeable. This is where poststructuralism differs; as it asserts that meaning is negotiable and not uniform across different contexts and people (Norton & McKinney, 2011). Bakhtin (1981) viewed language use as an interactive fluid process through which language users deliver messages. He emphasized the fact that language use is directly connected to and influenced by context e.g., place, time and people. He suggested that language learning should therefore be regarded as a process in which learners develop their ability to convey and understand linguistic messages in different contexts. Another key concept in poststructuralism is that meaning is linked to language use, the person expressing it and context (Norton & Toohey, 2011). In order to fully understand the meaning of any given utterance, one needs to consider the circumstances surrounding its production. This idea was put forward by Bourdieu (1977, 1985) as he also emphasized the key role of power in linguistic interaction. He suggested that a person's position within the community affects to what extent he/she is given a right to speak (Bourdieu, 1977, 1985); his suggestion reinforces the idea that language use and meaning are not fixed (Norton & McKinney, 2011). For instance, an individual might be in a high position in certain contexts and a lower position in others (Norton, 1995; Norton 2000; Norton & Toohey, 2011). For example, having a high educational degree may enable a person to be more vocal than others in certain academic situations but not necessarily outside of academia e.g., family gatherings.

Within poststructuralism, Weedon (1997) brings forward the concept of subjectivity. Subjectivity relates to 'the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual,

her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world' (Weedon, 1997, p. 28). She claims that language 'is the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed' (1997, p. 21). In this way, a person's sense of self and connection with the world around him/her is fluid and constantly changing as this person finds and negotiates ways to present himself/herself through discourse. Weedon also emphasizes the importance of social associations on identity as she suggests that race, gender and other social cultural factors affect how a person negotiates his/her identity and position. That is, identity is established through language and is affected by social context. This brings forward the idea that identity is multi-layered and subject to change (Norton & Toohey, 2011; Norton & McKinney, 2011). In SLL or any educational process, learners are put in different positions where they are expected to interact and negotiate, e.g., performing communicative tasks in the target language, which has implications on their identities and social connections (Norton & Toohey, 2011). This view of identity as dynamic is different from the view of identity as static in early research in language learning. Norton and Toohey (2011) note that research in the 1970s and 1980s viewed learners' identities as fixed while recent research adopting poststructuralist approaches takes a dynamic, complex and context-sensitive view of identity.

Overall, a poststructuralist approach to language and language learning is useful for researchers interested in investigating SLL and FLL from a social perspective as it 'allows for a more nuanced, complex and context-sensitive understanding of contemporary multilingual realities in which all language users have at their disposal multiple means of expressing themselves' (Pavlenko, 2002, p. 285-286). It also allows for the creation of unique linguistic and social identities since it considers language ideologies, social values and attitudes influential in the learning process. This enables this theory to acknowledge the challenges L2 learners face in handling their native language identity and the desire to acquire a new language for several reasons, in addition to issues of power that affect them during the SLL and FLL process. This approach also allows for the exploration of language learning related issues from a social rather than psychological perspective as in the concept of identity, and it does not aim to make any predictions in terms of learners' identities or learning trajectories (Pavlenko, 2002). This approach is especially useful because it asserts the connections between language learning and identity as Pavlenko explains,

The two-way relationship between language and identity recognizes that languages serve to produce, reproduce, transform and perform identities, and that linguistic, gender, racial, ethnic and class identities, in turn, affect the access to linguistic resources and interactional opportunities, and, ultimately, L2 learning outcomes (2002, p. 298).

In relation to the topic of this thesis, Saudi women learning English as a L2 may experience their identity differently in various contexts while learning and using English. One can wonder

whether learning English and being English speakers contributes to shaping Saudi women's identities. Specifically, they may feel more or less powerful while using English. For example, using English in the workplace may allow them to be perceived as more competent and claim greater competence. On the other hand, using English in social interactions may make them more distant and less personal. It needs to be mentioned that any connection between language learning and use and identity needs to be viewed and interpreted carefully while taking into consideration and acknowledging the complexity of the relationship between language, culture and identity (see section 2.5 on identity and language learning and use). It is informative to investigate the identities of Saudi women during the process of learning English to consider whether this results in them having dynamic identities as proposed in poststructuralism and how they view the role of FLL in that regard.

Although, as stated above, a poststructuralist approach offers a useful framework for the current investigation, there are also some drawbacks to using it for this study. One of the criticisms of poststructuralism is related to the concept of agency. Howarth (2013) notes that the poststructuralist theories have been criticised for not acknowledging the role of agency and how it relates to social structure. McAnulla (2002) argues that within poststructuralism, discourse is the key concept and everything revolves around it and stems from it which leads to the argument that poststructuralism has no room for agency other than the one in discourse and language. However, other researchers such as Miller (2014), Norton (2000) and Pavlenko (2002) disagree with this point, asserting that agency is indeed acknowledged within poststructuralism. Miller (2014) argues that, in its view of identity, poststructuralism considers agency one of the key characteristics of learners. According to Pavlenko (2002), poststructuralism is different from other psychological approaches to SLL as it acknowledges human agency and its importance in SLL, or any learning process, and views learners as active agents in the SLL process. Norton (2000) and Pavlenko (2002) point out that, as with identity, the agency of learners is dynamic and can change and develop over time. For example, an immigrant's agency in SLL may decrease with time if he/she is met by continued rejection. However, Miller (2014), Pavlenko (2002), Norton (2000) and others acknowledge that poststructuralism has yet to provide a clear definition of agency and this could be the reason behind the criticism that agency is not acknowledged in poststructuralism. Overall, there are different views on the role of agency in the poststructuralism; the stronger versions of the theory view the individual as a mere cog in the formation of reality, but the weaker versions do not deny agency and leave room for its existence. Although, as a theory, poststructuralism has not presented a comprehensive definition of agency, it does not deny the notion of active participants or of free will. More discussion on agency and its role in language learning will be presented in section 2.8 below.

Another criticism of poststructuralism is that it is deconstructive in nature. Bhaskar (1989), Howarth (2013) and Taylor (1989) point out that as this theory moves away from the centrality of meaning, it risks destroying universal concepts and making everything relative and unrealistic. In other words, poststructuralism argues that meaning is variable and context-dependent and some believe that this does not allow for any sense of reality and truth. Similar to the controversy surrounding agency, as explained above, this project adopts a version of the theory in which the notion of deconstruction does not deny individuals' self-reported ideas of reality. Therefore, in this study, self-reported data is relied on to have an understanding of the issue under investigation as it presents what the participants consider the truth of their experience learning English and their identities.

Some methodological criticism has also been directed at research conducted with a poststructuralist approach, most importantly for being too descriptive and providing little or no explanation for the social phenomenon under investigation (Howarth, 2013). Townshend (2003) reviewed a number of discourse theory and political analysis studies e.g., Griggs and Howarth (2002). She argued that their analysis of the discourse strategies behind the 'Vegans and Volvo' campaign to stop the construction of a new runway at Manchester airport did not offer explanations that incorporated the factors that were involved. However, it could be argued that this goes back to the researchers' analysis, specifically how they used discourse analysis rather than poststructuralism itself. In this study this is avoided by having a sub-research question about the factors perceived to affect the FLL experience and therefore having an understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Overall, although a poststructuralist approach is useful for this study because it acknowledges the dynamic nature of identity, a more comprehensive theoretical approach is needed to cover all the complex concepts involved in this study. Since this study focuses on foreign language learners and language learning is interactive in nature, it is essential to employ an approach which highlights interaction and its importance for language learning and identity, and this is why SLS has been used.

2.3.2. The sociocultural theory

Another theory that deals with and helps us understand the social cultural side of language learning is the sociocultural theory. This theory draws on the work of Vygotsky (1978) and focuses on the development of individuals and cultures over time (Duff, 2007). It asserts the fact that cognitive development is linked to biological capacities e.g., human brain and memory, and cultural tools (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Duff, 2007). These cultural tools include language, literacy, logic, rationality, categorization, imagination and others (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). This theory emphasizes the importance of these tools for human interaction and learning as they provide opportunities for people to practice, rethink and adjust their actions (Lantolf & Thorne,

2006; Duff, 2007). Although Vygotsky's sociocultural theory focused on the importance of interaction for learning and cognitive development, some have adopted it to theorize social development. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), through interaction, learners familiarize themselves with the target language and its community which they called 'community of practice'. Wenger (1998) argues that the learner's engagement in the community of practice or lack of it can affect his/her identity. He also proposes that a L2 learner might use imagination as a tool to establish connections in that community (Wenger, 1998). Wenger (1998) defines imagination as 'a process of expanding our self by transcending our time and space and creating new images of the world and ourselves' (p. 176). He goes on to add 'it is a mode of belonging that always involves the social world to expand the scope of reality and identity' (Wenger, 1998, p. 178). This idea of imagination is integral to Norton's work on identity, specifically the concepts of imagined identities and imagined communities, which will be discussed later (see section 2.6). According to Wenger (1998), imagination does not entail a disconnection from reality. It simply refers to the notion that a learner might have some established ideas regarding his/her future status in any given community. Within the Saudi setting, research has found that women want to learn English for various reasons, most of which relate to professional and social development (Alsweel, 2013). But it is not known whether they have any aspirations to assume specific roles socially and professionally or to be a part of certain local or global communities and how this affects their identity and learning.

In sociocultural theory, SLL is a process that comes about as a result of interaction between learners and L2 speakers in different social and cultural settings (Norton & McKinney, 2011). Through this interaction, learners internalize linguistic structures and forms and develop their mental functions (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). As mentioned above, some researchers have used this theory from a social perspective to highlight the importance of interaction for social and cultural development. This theory is informative for this thesis because it emphasizes the interactional nature of SLL, the importance of cultural tools like language and their implications personally and socially. However, this theory may not be the best framework for this study for several reasons. First, it discusses learning in general and for this investigation it may be better to utilize an approach that is dedicated to language learning as it would incorporate the factors involved in the FLL process e.g., instruction and others. Second, this theory does not discuss identity and its multiple and changing nature which is an integral part of this thesis.

From the discussion above, it appears that both poststructuralist and sociocultural theories emphasize the social nature of SLL and FLL. Poststructuralism is context-sensitive, asserts the dynamic nature of language and language learning and views identity as complex and changing. Sociocultural theory views SLL and FLL as a social cultural process that involves individuals engaging in interactions which have implications on them cognitively, personally and socially.

Each one of these theories presents an angle that is important for this study on the identities of Saudi female learners of English as a foreign language. Both of these theories have informed second language socialization, the theoretical framework used in this study, which will be discussed in the following section.

2.3.3. Second language socialization

Second language socialization is an approach that is gaining attention within the field of SLL, especially in investigating the social nature of language learning. Language socialization is defined as 'the process by which novices or newcomers in a community or culture gain communicative competence, membership and legitimacy in the group' (Duff, 2007, p. 310). SLS has been used in investigating FLL (Duff, 2011; Moore, 2008). However, it needs to be mentioned that there is a distinction in terms of access to different types of social interactions between FLL and SLL. In SLL contexts i.e., where learners are living among speakers of the target language, social interaction is common and often cannot be avoided, whereas it is less common in the FLL context because interaction may only take place in the classroom and other limited contexts. Therefore, the researcher will take that into consideration during this study to find out what types of social and cultural interaction the participants have with English, its speakers, societies and cultures and whether this has any implications on their views of themselves as people.

The foundation of the SLS approach came from the work of Gumperz and Hymes (1972). They proposed that language learning is not merely about acquiring linguistic competence. It transcends this to the acquisition of social and cultural information and tools that enable the learner to participate in community practices (Gumperz and Hymes, 1972). This approach gained attention after research by Ochs and Schieffelin (1984) and Schieffelin and Ochs (1986) on first language acquisition of children in Papua New Guinea. Their study on Samoan and Kaluli children revealed that language learning takes place through the process of socialization. Children's observation and engagement in social activities equip them with knowledge and training in the practices of their community as well as linguistic skills. Ochs and Schieffelin (2011) explain,

Language socialization is distinctively local and situated. Thrown into social situations from birth, human beings become attuned to socioculturally saturated linguistic cues that afford their sensibility to a fluidity of contexts. Infants not only become speakers of languages; they also become speakers of cultures. (p. 8).

Although this approach was originally used to describe how children learn their first language in monolingual and later multilingual settings, Duff (2007, 2011) and others extend this approach to include SLL too. Second language socialization is a branch of language socialization which is interested in the process of learning an additional language whether in immigrant, study abroad,

foreign language or any other settings (Duff, 2011; Duff, 2015; Moore, 2008). In this approach, 'L2 learners learn language through socialization and at the same time are socialized through the L2' (Al Shuhail, 2020, p.10). In this way, as learners interact with the target language speakers over time, they are equipped with linguistic, social and cultural knowledge and expertise that allows them to live and interact in the target language community (Duff, 2007, 2011; Fogle, 2012). SLS and language socialization are rooted in sociocultural theory (Duff, 2007; Vygotsky, 1978). Both theories emphasize the role of human interaction in language learning and development cognitively, personally, socially and culturally (Duff, 2007). SLS also draws on the poststructuralist theories as it asserts the context-sensitive nature of interaction, meaning, learning and identity and how it is affected by social and cultural structures (Glowka, 2015). Therefore, SLS combines aspects of both the poststructuralist and the sociocultural theories that are central to the current study.

In SLS, language learning is facilitated by individuals who have mastery of the target language and experience in its culture (Duff, 2007, 2011). Duff and Doherty (2014) extended the scope of SLS to include self-directed socialization in which language learners may utilize media and the internet to acquire the linguistic and social cultural skills of the target language. As a result of this socialization, learners are expected to gain knowledge and expertise in the target language in addition to its beliefs, customs and lifestyle (Duff, 2011; Fogle, 2012). In other words, learners acquire the ability to use the L2 e.g., grammar and vocabulary and also learn about how people in that society and culture interact and behave. Therefore, the outcomes of the SLS process are not only linguistic. Learners may end up with varying levels of proficiency in the target language (Duff, 2011; Duff & Talmy, 2011). But they may also develop varying attitudes toward their first language, L2 and their respective cultures (Duff, 2011; Duff & Talmy, 2011). Duff (2011) also argues that learners may have multiple identities as a result of SLS and further suggests that learners may end up with hybrid identities or might even assimilate and identify more with the target language community. This may stem from the language contact in the mind of the language learner i.e., native language and target language, but also from the interaction between two social systems and cultures. It could be argued that this might lead to change on a greater level socially, economically and politically. Duff (2015) indicates that globalization and technological advances play a part in that.

However, it has to be mentioned that the application of language socialization to second and foreign language settings needs to be addressed with caution as the factors and conditions involved are different from first language acquisition, which the language socialization theory was based on (Duff, 2007). There are differences between first and L2 learners as L2 learners have already acquired at least one language and its social and cultural structure (Duff, 2007). In addition, L2 learners may not be able to engage in the target language community, whether due

to rejection by others or unwillingness on their part (Duff, 2007). Still, employing SLS can be useful and informative as long as the researcher is aware of the above-mentioned differences and pays attention to them during his/her investigation. This study, which aims to explore how Saudi females' learning of the English language inside and outside the classroom might influence their identities i.e., their views of themselves, uses SLS as a theoretical framework. The decision to use SLS was based on the fact that this approach combines element of the sociocultural and the poststructuralist theories. First, as in the sociocultural theory there is emphasis on the importance of interaction for language development on different levels. Second, as in poststructuralism it asserts the complex, dynamic and changing nature of identity. Furthermore, using SLS as a theoretical framework can help in addressing gaps in earlier research as it not only sheds light on whether FLL influences learners' identities but also on how this takes place, hence making the framework key to understanding the answers to the project's research questions.

2.3.2.1. Studies on second language socialization

Since this study utilizes a SLS theoretical framework, it is essential to review studies within this framework. Many studies have investigated SLS in immigrant settings (Duff, 2011). For example, a study by Schecter and Bayley (1997) on the SLS practices of four Mexican families in the United States that used observations, interviews, narratives and samples of written work indicated the dilemma of preserving the learners' native language and identity and at the same time attaining proficiency and acceptance in the target language and its community. This was also observed in a study by Guardado (2009) employing discourse analysis in investigating the SLS of Spanish families in Vancouver. This study benefited from having a longitudinal design as the interviews and observations were conducted over a period of eighteen months which enabled the researcher to have more data on the issue under investigation. The issue of protecting the native linguistic cultural identity could be especially evident in cases where the first and target language differ greatly in their cultural systems. In the current study, Saudi culture differs on many levels from the cultures of English-speaking societies, such as The United Kingdom and the United States of America. In addition, the Arabic language has a strong connection to Saudi people's faith i.e., Islam, which in turn has an important role in people's lives. Furthermore, the English language is mainly perceived to be associated with Western countries such as The United States of America and The United Kingdom, and historically there has been tensions between these countries and the Muslim world. Therefore, the idea of being an English speaker could be problematic for learners as it may signal to them an abandonment of their native Arabic language and Islamic religion and an association with Western English-speaking societies and cultures. Saudi learners of English may struggle with balancing their identity as Saudis and English-speakers. The dilemma of preserving the Saudi Islamic identity while learning and using English could be a factor that influences Saudi

women's motivation in learning English and their identities. Kim and Duff (2012) point out to findings from a study they did on forty-five Korean students in Canada. The interviews they conducted revealed that limited access to interaction and the need to fit in with other Koreans inhibited the participants from engaging in the Canadian community, linguistically and culturally (Kim & Duff, 2012). Since this study was conducted during one academic year, it would be interesting to find out if the lack of interaction continues for longer periods or just for an initial period and whether as learners become more proficient, they have more opportunities to interact. In relation to the current study, it could be informative to find out if limited interaction is something that Saudi female English learners experience during their learning and socialization into English and whether they attribute it to the desire to fit in with their native community as reported by the studies mentioned above.

In the foreign language setting, Byon (2006) carried out a study on learners of Korean in two college classes in the United States. Analysis of teacher-student interactions revealed that through instruction in certain grammatical features of the Korean language, students were expected to learn about Korean culture and its values (Byon, 2006). For example, the teacher's frequent use of a personal pronoun such as 'sensayng-nim', a vocational term, reflected the importance of self-image and differences in power in Korean culture. The findings from this study encapsulate the essence of SLS, which asserts that language learning is a social process that involves acquiring linguistic and social cultural information and tools. Moore (2004) in her study of the SLS of Cameroonian learners of French and Arabic also reported that as they learned the two languages, students were presented with different cultural values that represented the cultures of the two languages. For example, learning Arabic and Quran involved structured repetitions which reflected the value of discipline in Arabic and Islamic cultures. In contrast, learning French involved acting out dialogues and the activities were freer and less structured reflecting the value of freedom in French culture (Moore, 2004). Although the learning of French and Arabic are based on different aims and different traditions of schooling, both languages remain foreign to the learners. Therefore, the studies of both Byon (2006) and Moore (2004) demonstrate that foreign language learners socialize or learn about the social and cultural system of the target language during the process of FLL, even if that learning is of a religious nature. In addition, those studies revealed that the nature of the socialization in FLL settings differed from SLL settings in the fact that socialization mostly took place inside the classroom through language content and activities. Byon (2006) and Moore (2004) studies are relevant to this study as they showcase how SLS can be applicable within a FLL setting. However, none of them aimed to establish a connection between SLS and foreign language learners' identities. In the current study, the use of SLS as a theoretical framework will add to existing knowledge about SLS in foreign language settings by providing insights into how Saudi female learners of English experience the FLL process at a social cultural level as well as use

this to provide an account for any implications the FLL had on learners' identities. Moreover, as far as the researcher is aware there are no studies in Saudi Arabia that used SLS as a theoretical approach which indicates that the study could provide new information within this context.

Adopting a SLS approach for this study is based on this idea of language learning being about more than gaining linguistic proficiency as it acknowledges the social cultural side of the process. It is important to note, as Duff (2011) points out, most SLS research is done in second language settings and has focused on European languages as the L2. This indicates a need for research to be done in foreign language settings due to the differences between the two settings (see section 2.11). The findings from such research could be especially informative considering the different nature of language socialization in foreign language settings as the language is not used as much and opportunities to socialize outside the classroom may be limited. This could add to the significance of the current study as it is conducted in a foreign language setting, in addition to the differences between the two languages' cultures i.e., the Saudi Arabic culture and Western English-speaking cultures, which present a promising context for this investigation. Moreover, this study uses the SLS framework to investigate a different topic, foreign language learner identity. In exploring the identities of Saudi female university students and how they may be influenced by learning English, there will be analysis of how this relates to the students' experiences of socialization in English inside and outside the classroom.

However, it needs to be mentioned that this study does not investigate the way in which SLS takes place in foreign language settings, but rather uses this theoretical framework to interpret data and answer the research questions. The project aims to extend the application of the SLS model to understand the far-reaching impact (if any) of learning English on learners' identities in a FLL context. This is different to the way in which this theory has commonly been used, as it has been traditionally applied to investigate the SLL and FLL processes rather than their implications on learners' identities or how learners perceive themselves as a result of learning a new language. Therefore, most previous research has relied on observations as well as self-reported data. In this study, because the main goal is to explore Saudi female learners' identities, the analysis relied mostly on self-reported data while field notes were used to contextualize and supplement the analysis. Similarly, a study by Ortactepe (2015) investigating the identities of two English as a foreign language teachers from Turkey within a SLS approach relied solely on self-reported data (interview, narratives and journal entries). Therefore, the current study conforms to previous practice while also extending (to some extent) this theory. As far as the researcher is aware, this issue has not been dealt with in this way before. This has the potential to present new findings that add to our understanding of whether and how FLL influences learners' identities.

In investigating this issue further, it is important to describe the rationale behind this study, which takes the position that language learning and use, culture and identity are connected. In other words, since the current study takes the approach that SLL and FLL have a social cultural nature and have implications on learners' identities, it is essential to present a review of what research has reported in terms of the connections between language learning and use and culture and identity.

2.4. Language learning and culture

Because this study investigates if and how FLL as a social and cultural process influences learners' identities, it is important to provide a review of what research has reported in terms of the connection between language learning and culture,

Learning is an important aspect of people's lives (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Rogoff (2003) views learning in general as engagement in a social and cultural process that can lead to change on the individual and social levels. She argues that learning takes place as learners interact with experienced individuals in their community. Through this interaction they gain mastery of various cognitive and social skills. The social nature of language learning is of special significance as many scholars have asserted the strong connection between culture, society and language (Ahearn, 2001; Burck, 2011; Darvin 2018; Kramsch, 1998; Kramsch & Zhu, 2016; Norton, 2008). Schieffelin notes that 'most linguistic anthropologists regard language as a form of social action, a cultural resource, and a set of sociocultural practices' (1990, p. 16). Culture, society and language are 'mutually constituted' (Ahearn, 2001, p. 110). Language is more than just a linguistic system of words and structures. It is a cultural tool and a human communication system that is used to convey feelings, information and experiences and to transmit culture (Kim, 2003a). It is entrenched in culture, and it differs from one ethnic, national or cultural group to another. Culture and language have a mutual effect on one another (Kim, 2003a). Culture, which is defined by Banks (1988) as characteristics that distinguish a certain group of people and which includes values, customs and practices, cannot be transmitted without language and language is shaped to a certain extent by culture (Ahearn, 2001; Kim, 2003a). Kramsch (1998) notes that 'language expresses cultural reality', 'language embodies cultural reality', and 'language symbolizes cultural reality' (p. 3). In other words, language use reflects people's experiences, values and views and at the same time people consider language a sign of their societal and cultural belonging (Kramsch, 1998).

Ahearn (2001) goes on to add that not only is language and society connected but language can be considered a social act. For example, language can be used to criticize or request; these are both speech acts and social acts. Since speech acts perform social and communicative functions, it is important to consider both linguistic production and the circumstances surrounding it to have a better understanding of any situation. Ahearn (2001) also points out that language

production and comprehension is rooted in social and cultural associations and that these associations are in turn influenced by language use. As Bakhtin (1981) argues,

All words have the 'taste' of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life. (p. 293)

In other words, when a person speaks, the words he/she uses and how others understand it is affected by social cultural factors. For example, the word 'adult' in some countries refers to a person over the age of eighteen, in other countries it refers to a person who is twenty-one or older and in some religious contexts, e.g., Jewish and Islamic communities, it refers to a person who has gone through puberty.

It could be argued that when a person learns a new language, he/she will experience the social and cultural values of the target language community. Similarly, Sapir (1921) and Whorf (1965) suggested in the linguistic relativity theory that the language a person learns and speaks shapes the way he/she views and processes the world (Boroditsky, 2003). In relation to SLL and FLL, Boroditsky (2003) suggests that when a person learns a new language, this may allow him/her to view and process the world around him/her in a different way. It could also give him/her a lens to understand how other people who speak that language view the world. Thus, gaining an insight into their culture and beliefs. In the FLL process, learners are expected to acquire a new linguistic system. However, as learners engage in the FLL process, they also become acquainted with social and cultural aspects of the target language community (Al Shuhail, 2020; Kim, 2003a, 2003b). Kim (2003a, "Introduction" para.2) claims that '[t]he learning of a second or foreign language enables one to view life through another cultural lens'. This claim is based on the idea that in FLL a learner is exposed to the culture, values and lifestyle of the L2 directly or indirectly while reading texts, watching videos, or interacting with native speakers (Al Shuhail, 2020). This might have an effect on the way the learner thinks, behaves and lives. Darvin (2018) and Kim (2003a) add that culture and language, along with other factors, are important in constructing a person's views and identity. If so, then it can be argued that FLL can inform and influence an individual's sense of self and how he/she views his/her position in society and the world. Norton and McKinney (2011) indicate that '[l]anguage learning engages the identities of learners because language itself is not only a linguistic system of signs and symbols, but also a complex social practice through which relationships are defined, negotiated and resisted' (p. 77). Learners find themselves in various new positions and situations while learning and using a new language and as a result have to respond creatively. The response varies from one individual to another. It can be in modifying their behavior and identity or can be in rejecting these new positions. Investigating identity and its relation to FLL is an integral part of the current study into the possible ways FLL can influence and shape learners' identities.

2.5. Language learning and identity

The concept of identity is central to the current study as the goal is to find out if and how learning English as a foreign language has implications on Saudi female university students' identities. As mentioned in the introduction, identity is viewed in the current study as self-perception or a person's view of himself/herself (Norton, 2000). According to Burck (2011) and Darvin (2018), a person's sense of self or identity is a work in progress. Norton (2015) notes that 'identity is multiple, a site of struggle, and changing across time and space' (p. 376). Taking into consideration this idea of identity as subject to change, one can argue that a language learner's identity and his/her connection with the outside world may go through changes while learning a L2 (Al Shuhail, 2020). This comes as a result of his/her engagement and achievement in the learning process and exposure to the social and cultural system of the L2.

Within SLL, a learner may try to claim new positions and aspects of identity other than what others have ascribed to him/her (Davies & Harre, 1990). Davies and Harre (1990) present the concept of positioning proposing that an individual assumes and is given different positions or roles in different contexts. They argue that a person can exhibit new productions of himself/herself through negotiating positions. For example, through learning a new language a person might want to assume a more powerful position in his/her workplace and among his/her colleagues or might want to break free from unfavorable positions as an immigrant or a woman. This idea is supported by Norton's (2000) study of five immigrant language learners of English in Canada. The participants, who were all women, came from Poland, Vietnam, Czechoslovakia and Peru. Using questionnaires, interviews and diaries over a period of two years, Norton aimed to investigate the opportunities learners had for interaction in the target language and their investment in SLL. Her data suggested that the participants claimed and were given differing identities specifically in different contexts. For example, one of the participants established herself as an esteemed colleague and worker although she was regarded originally as an uneducated immigrant. On the other hand, another participant who was an established professional found herself in a less favorable position as an immigrant woman. Norton's participants also expressed feeling inferior on certain occasions which limited their willingness and chances to use the target language. For example, most participants expressed feeling marginalized as immigrants which made them uncomfortable in using English. At this point, it needs to be mentioned that this study was conducted in a different setting to the current study. Therefore, the SLL experiences of its participants may differ from the FLL experiences of the participants in this study especially in terms of motivation and interaction in the L2 (see section 2.11). However, it is useful because it represents some of the first research on SLL and identity. In addition, despite the differences, there may be some similarities because it investigated the learning of English as a L2 which the current study does as well; therefore, there may be

similarities in terms of the value of English as global language and its effects on learners' identities.

Studies on the relationship between SLL and identity, such as the one mentioned above, have mostly focused on how L2 learners construct their identities while learning and the effect of that on their SLL process and their success in it. Not as much attention has been paid to how a learner's identity may be affected during this process. This is especially evident in foreign language settings (Block, 2007). There are some studies that investigated the identities of FLL learners (see section 2.10) but there is a need for more studies in settings such as Saudi Arabia using different theoretical and methodological approaches.

Another related area which is relevant to the current study is language use and identity because it has been suggested that language choice and use is an expression of a person's identity. Burck (2011) along with Pavlenko (2006) suggest that not only is language learning influential on identity, but also expressing oneself in different languages can reveal variable identities and experiences which again supports the notion of identity being dynamic. This suggestion is supported by Burck's (2011) study in which she used interviews and autobiographies to investigate the relationship between learning and speaking different languages and identity specifically in relation to gender. The results revealed that L2 speakers and learners assumed varying identities when expressing themselves in different languages. It has been argued that this difference may be partly attributed to the difference between the cultures of the languages (Pavlenko, 2006; Burck, 2011). For example, one female participant who grew up in China and was living in England revealed that using English allowed her to be aggressive as expressing anger is not encouraged in Chinese culture.

On a similar note, it has been reported that L2 speakers shift between using the native language and the target language in expressing emotions. Dewaele and Nakano (2012) argue that different languages have different ways of expressing emotions. Therefore, when one learns a new language, this enables him/her to express his/her thoughts and emotions in different ways. In addition, Burck (2011) and Dewaele and Pavlenko (2004) argue that L2 speakers may feel more distance to their thoughts and emotions when expressing them in the L2. They suggest that L2 speakers may use the L2 instead of their native language in expressing intense emotions because it is less personal and does not touch them in the same way. On the other hand, De Socarraz-Novoa (2015) reported the opposite as she found that L2 speakers resorted to using their native language when expressing their emotions in the workplace.

An L2 speaker's preference for using one language over another when expressing emotions could also be related to the language itself and the social distancing measures it employs (Wierzbicka, 2003). Wierzbicka argued that some languages reflect the values of their cultures. For example, Western English-speaking societies and cultures value individualism, formality

and professionalism and this is reflected in the English language itself (Al-Issa, 2005). Therefore, a L2 speaker may prefer to use English when wanting to be more formal and less personal. Another reason for a L2 speaker's preference for using English in professional settings may be related to the status of English as the global language and its importance in all aspects of life and work.

In addition, Dewaele (2013) suggested that using the L2 could be triggered by the speaker's desire to prevent others around him/her from understanding what is being said. For example, Arabs preferred to swear in English to avoid negative judgments within their society. This idea is close to the concept of 'we-code' and 'they code' proposed by Gumperz (1982). He argued that minority language users tend to use their language 'we-code' for informal personal activities among themselves while they use the official majority language 'they-code' for formal impersonal activities with others. This could be applicable in the context of the current study but in the opposite way. In other words, it could be argued that some Saudis may prefer to use English as a form of 'we-code' in certain contexts to exclude others from their conversations because it is not the majority language in Saudi Arabia.

All the points mentioned above about L2 speakers' use of the L2 instead of their native language signal that using the L2 allows them to present themselves in a different way or be perceived in a different way. All of which may signal a connection between language use and identity, specifically, that L2 speakers and learners may have multiple linguistic identities (Duff, 2011; Norton, 2015).

Furthermore, in the case of SLL and FLL, the learner may have a choice to express himself/herself in the native language or the L2. Furthermore, he/she can use both languages at the same time i.e., code-switching. Code-switching refers to the use of two languages during a person's speech by inserting words or phrases from one language while speaking another (Gumperz, 1982). Code-switching is a common phenomenon within SLL and FLL. Code-switching could be caused by cognitive or social reasons. For example, a person might use code-switching because they cannot recall or remember the word in one language. In addition, a person might use code-switching because of his/her desire to fit in a certain community or establish a certain identity for himself/herself (Chui, Liu & Mak, 2016; De Socarraz-Novoa, 2015). Anbreen, (2015) and Kim (2003b) investigated the identities of English language learners in Malaysia and Pakistan and found out that learners reported code-switching between their native language and the L2, and that this was both intentional and unintentional. Abubakr, Hassan and Muhedeen (2019) investigated code-switching and its relationship to the identities of Kurdish learners of English. Questionnaire responses from fifty-eight students at the English Department at the University of Sulaimani revealed that code-switching was done intentionally and unintentionally on the part of the participants. This was sometimes done to claim different

social positions, achieve certain goals and present different aspects of their identities. This study did not provide much discussion and explanation of their results. This could be because only a questionnaire was used and to understand that data better it would have been helpful to conduct interviews.

In the Saudi context, studies such as Al-Rawi, (2012), Omar and Ilyas (2018), and Turjoman (2016) reported that code-switching was common among Saudi learners of English whether in SLL or FLL settings. In these studies, code-switching was mostly triggered by the participants' inability to find Arabic terms to express what they wanted and therefore they had to use English words while speaking Arabic. However, none of these studies reported on whether code-switching was related to their participants' expression of who they are or their identity. Therefore, the findings from the current study will help in clarifying whether Saudi female learners of English experience code-switching and how it relates to their identities.

Overall, a person's self-expression and more specifically language use can be considered a reflection of his/her identity or a performance of his/her sense of self. In addition, the choices he/she makes in using one language over another could be a sign of changing or multiple identities.

At this point, it is essential to discuss the concepts that arise from exploring the relationship between language learning and identity which are, imagined identities and imagined communities, investment and agency. Furthermore, since this study focuses on female participants, a review of research about women's language learning and identity will also be presented.

2.6. Imagined identities and imagined communities

One of the key concepts in Norton's work on SLL and identity is that of imagined communities (Norton, 2001). It is related to Wenger's (1998) argument on the role of imagination in SLL mentioned above (see section 2.3.2). This term was first used by Anderson (1991) and refers to 'groups of people, not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of imagination' (Norton & McKinney, 2011, p. 76). Kanno and Norton (2003) and Wenger (1998) point out that an imagined community does not entail disconnection with real life or real communities. They cite the notion of 'hopeful imagination' used by Simon (1992); this notion indicates that the desire for an enhanced future informs the way a person lives his/her life. Kanno and Norton (2003), Norton (2001) and Norton and Pavlenko (2019) point out that SLL learners may have aspirations to establish memberships in the L2 community and this could be caused by them considering it better than their present community. This imagined community may be based on past and ongoing experiences or on certain cultural beliefs and is viewed by the learner as a place where his/her future identity lies (Norton & Costa, 2018). It is

further argued that the effect of this association with the imagined community on the learner cannot be underestimated as it can be as influential as his/her real community on his/her identity and learning process, if not even more (Norton & McKinney, 2011).

In SLL and FLL, investigating this concept can provide us with an understanding of how a language learner's anticipated connection with the target language community can affect his/her learning process and its outcomes (Norton & Pavlenko, 2019; Norton & Toohey, 2011). This notion will be beneficial for this project as it might help us better understand Saudi female students' motivation for learning English and its effect on them. In other words, the participants in this study may have aspirations to establish membership of certain local communities such as English teachers in Saudi Arabia and global communities such as English-speaking social media users and view learning English as a way for them to achieve that. In addition, within the FLL setting, the concept of imagined community could be extended to how the language learners view the effect of this process on their local community (Norton & Kamal, 2003). The present study could shed light on whether Saudi women may have desires to fit in with certain groups or imagined communities because of learning English or whether they may want to create change within their local community as a result of learning English.

Researching this topic, Norton conducted a study with Kamal investigating how Pakistani school students learning English as a foreign language imagined their community in the future (Norton & Kamal, 2003). Working with a group of eighty students they used questionnaires, interviews and observations to gain insights into the students' views on learning English, education and their community in the year 2020 (Norton & Kamal, 2003). The results suggested that the participants valued education and literacy highly. They also thought of English as a 'language of possibility' (Norton & Kamal, 2003, p. 309). They considered it a tool to empower their community with science, technology and media. Generally, the participants imagined a positive future for their society and considered technology, education and globalization helpful in that regard. These views are similar to the general views of Saudi people on learning English (Al-Jarf, 2008). They also asserted the importance of their Islamic identity and did not think that it would be in conflict with globalization (Norton & Kamal, 2003). The spread of English was also viewed positively by most participants with only two expressing concerns about westernization (Norton & Kamal, 2003). However, it needs to be mentioned that some scholars are not as positive in their view of globalization and the spread of English (Block & Cameron, 2002; Pennycook, 2010; Phillipson, 1992; Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996, 2018; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000; Zughoul, 2003). Pennycook explains that 'globalization is not only about economic processes, but political, technological and cultural processes as well' (2010, p. 113). He and the other scholars mentioned above point out that the spread of English and globalization can lead to social, cultural, linguistic, economic and political discrimination and

warn against the effect of this spread on communities, cultures and languages. Norton and Kamal (2003) point out that their participants may be too optimistic in imagining the positive effects of English and education on their communities.

Imagined communities is connected to another key idea in Norton's work which is imagined identities. Generally, it refers to how an individual sees himself/herself in the future. In SLL and FLL, it is concerned with the learner's vision for how he/she will be as a person after learning the target language (Norton & Toohey, 2011). Norton (2001) suggests that 'a learner's imagined community invites an imagined identity' (p. 166). The SLL and FLL process of any given learner may be shaped to a certain extent by his/her imagined identity (Kanno & Norton, 2003). It has also been suggested that learners are aware and possibly deliberate in constructing their imagined identities because they believe that the additional language would enable them to present themselves in a new way and free them from any previous associations (Burck, 2011). Burck indicates that this concept of imagined identity is not only relevant to the process of SLL and FLL but also relevant to language use. A person's decision to speak a certain language or in a certain way may be influenced by his/her desire to assume a specific identity and position. For example, using English may be a way for a person to establish a formal professional identity in the workplace (see section 2.5 for more discussion of language use and identity). This again relates to the point mentioned above about the fact that imagined communities and identities are related to learners' motivation to learn English. In the current study, the researcher seeks to find out if these concepts were relevant to Saudi female learners' experiences learning English and contribute to shaping their identities.

Burck (2011) argues that it may not be necessary to have one unified identity over time and that the varying senses of self and differences are a continuation of one's identity. Hence, to investigate this in the Saudi context, given the cultural differences between Saudi Arabia and Western English-speaking societies and cultures, would further inform current knowledge of the relationship between FLL and imagined identities, linguistic identities and cultural identities.

2.7. Investment

The concept of investment is used in this study to refer to Saudi female learners' motivation for learning English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia. It is used instead of motivation because it is aligned with the theoretical framework used and emphasizes the dynamic nature of motivation which is affected by social variables. This concept is informative in learning about how motivation affects the English learning process and whether it has an effect in shaping learners' identities.

Norton and McKinney (2011) argue that the idea of investment arose from the insufficiency of motivation in explaining learners' desires to learn the target language. De Costa and Norton

(2016) and Norton and Toohey (2011) argued that learners are too complex to be described in binary terms such as motivated or unmotivated. They wanted to describe language learners' level of desire and engagement in the learning process from a social perspective as opposed to only a psychological one. They argued that some theories of motivation view learners' level of engagement as internal and static. Norton and Toohey (2011) asserted that the language learner's motivation or investment is affected by race, gender, class and other social factors and that it varies over time and context. In this way, their view of investment is similar to their view of learner identity as dynamic and complex. They suggested that language learners have expectations of the benefits they will get because of learning the target language. In other words, learners expect a return on their investment in learning a new language. This reward may include the increasing of cultural capital, a term coined by Bourdieu (1977, 1985) referring to the social qualities that distinguish different classes of people. In his work, Bourdieu extended the scope of capital, previously defined in economic terms, to include society and culture. He suggested that a person equips himself/herself with knowledge and skills that would give him/her a higher position socially and professionally which would in turn improve his/her economic status. He indicated that having the ability to use different languages is one kind of cultural capital, which he called linguistic capital. He also argued that some languages are more powerful than others and that speakers of these languages are perceived to have more cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977, 1985). For example, with the spread of English as a global language, having proficiency in English gives its speakers access to better education, and better jobs which gives them a higher status in society. Pavlenko (2001a) shares this view indicating that learning certain languages gives access to better education and jobs and as a result better economic and social status. Pennycook (2001, 2010) asserts that this idea is linked to the rise of English as a global language and the great interest in acquiring it as a L2, which again relates directly to the concept of investment. A person learning English as a L2 takes on this challenge with the hope that he/she will obtain social and economic benefits. This applies to the setting of this study because in Saudi Arabia proficiency in English is becoming essential to secure jobs and to advance professionally and socially. It is expected that people learning English in Saudi Arabia are invested in this process as they wish to gain professional and social benefits. Whether and how Saudi women's investment in learning English influences their learning and identities is something to be investigated in this study.

In relation to imagined identities, Kanno and Norton (2003) argue that investment in the target language is partly determined by the learner's identity and vision of himself/herself in the future. Studies by Skilton-Sylvester (2002) and Haneda (2005) support Norton's idea of investment. Skilton-Sylvester (2002) used an ethnographic case study design to explore four Cambodian women's participation in English as a second language classes. Data from observations, interviews and discussions suggested that the participants' investment in SLL and

more particularly classroom activities was affected by their identities and roles as family members and workers. This in turn affected progress in the learning process. For example, one participant worked in her family-owned restaurant and therefore her motivation to learn English was influenced by her identity as a daughter, sister and a worker who needed to communicate in English. At the same time, her role in the family and work made it difficult for her sometimes to attend class because of work and family commitments. Changes in identity between home and the workplace have also been observed (Skilton-Sylvester, 2002). Since this study was done in a second language setting, its findings may not necessarily resemble the ones that will be found in this study as foreign language learners' investment is different from second language learners' investment in terms of the reasons motivating them to learn the L2 (see section 2.11.1). Within the FLL setting, Haneda (2005) conducted a study investigating investment in a Japanese FLL course and whether it is affected by identity and connections with different communities in Canada and Japan. It was found that the two participants in this study had different types and levels of investment in learning Japanese. For example, for one of them, his investment was related to connecting with his Japanese roots and establishing an identity for himself as a capable Japanese writer. Based on her results, she argued that shifting identities and connections with the target language and its community in the past and future shape and influence the FLL process, particularly learner's engagement and investment (Haneda, 2005). Although this study looked at Japanese as the L2, it could be informative to find out if the investment of Saudi women learning English influences and is influenced by their identity and different communities as Haneda reported. Kanno and Norton (2003) argue that investment in imagined communities may affect how a language learner engages in the learning process and how their identity is shaped during the learning process. They further add that progress in education and society can be facilitated by investment in imagined communities. Learners may imagine a new world that might differ from current reality as reported by Norton and Kamal (2003) above. Visions of the future can be used to motivate learners and inform their identity and actions.

2.8. Agency

In the current study, the concept of agency is used to describe how Saudi female learners of English engaged in the FLL process and the types of things they did, or did not do, to achieve their goal of learning English. Exploring how Saudi women view and describe their agency while learning English will add to our understanding of the role of agency in FLL, and whether it has any implications on learners' identities.

Research on SLS asserted the importance of learner agency to the process of SLL and its success (Duff & Doherty, 2014; Fogle, 2012). The concept of agency is used in SLL research as it rejects the view of learners as recipients but considers them active and in charge of their learning process by creating and utilizing chances for interaction and development (Duff &

Doherty, 2014; Fogle, 2012; Lantolf and Thorne, 2006). Despite the fact that agency is gaining attention within SLL research and in other fields, it is difficult to find a comprehensive definition of it (Ahearn, 2001). According to Ahearn, agency is 'the socioculturally mediated capacity to act' (2001, p. 112); she proposes that this definition could serve as a starting point for researchers interested in agency as it leaves much to be specified in terms of the nature of agency. Duff (2012b) defines agency as 'people's ability to make choices, take control, self regulate and thereby pursue goals as individuals leading potentially to personal and social transformation' (p. 417). Due to the elusive nature of agency, it has been viewed differently by scholars in many fields (Ahearn 2001). As a concept, many have linked agency to power. For example, some view it as free will while others consider it some form of resistance (Ahearn, 2001). It has also been suggested that agency is related to being in control or taking initiative (Biesta & Tedder, 2006). Ahearn (2001) argues that agency is much more than free will and resistance. She asserts that agency is not only about power struggle as implied in the previous meanings. She goes on to add that although agency is linked to power, it is context-specific and can be exhibited in many ways. She uses MacLeod's (1992) argument that agency could be exercised through 'accept, accommodate, ignore, resist or protest… sometimes all at the same time' (p. 534). For example, a learner may exhibit agency and control over the learning process by following the teacher's instructions, while another may exhibit it through ignoring or refusing to follow instructions. Ahearn (2001) mentions that there are many types of agency as in oppositional agency, complicit agency, agency of power, agency of intention and others.

Ahearn (2001) argues that it is important to know whether people link their actions and agency to power or attribute it to some other factors. These factors may relate to personal history, family background, and other social cultural elements (McKay & Wong, 1996). Ahearn (2001), Lantolf and Thorne (2006), and Mele (2003) assert the role of society, culture and other internal and external factors on agency. Age, gender, education, social and economic status affect how people exercise their agency. For example, having higher education might prompt and encourage a person to have more agency. Giddens (1984) argues that agency is influenced by social, political and economic structure and that this structure is established through agency. According to Duff, 'agency, power and social context (structures) are therefore linked because those who typically feel the most control over their lives, choices and circumstances also have the power- the human, social, or cultural capital and ability- they need to succeed' (2012b, p. 417).

In SLL and FLL, agency is mostly used to refer to 'learner behaviors that facilitate learning, such as participation and actively seeking out assistance' (Fogle, 2012, p. 4). However, it has been argued by Duff and Doherty (2014), Morita (2004) and Van Lier (2008) that resistance, or even lack of action are also forms of agency although they may not necessarily facilitate

language learning. Canagarajah (1999), in his ethnographic study of FLL of English in Sri Lanka, described how some learners of English exhibited their agency by rejecting classroom practices and not participating in classroom activities, such as group discussions. He argued that this could stem from the American content presented in such classes, which some students may have considered not relevant to them. This is based on observations, questionnaires, interviews and written work (Canagarajah, 1999). Overall, agency refers to learners' actions or lack of actions that shape their SLL and FLL process and influence their development positively or negatively and this is how it is viewed in this study.

With SLL being a dynamic process, a learner's identity, involvement and agency in it are also dynamic and changing (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001). Duff (2012b) points out that viewing language learners as active participants in the SLL process is linked to their agency as they 'make informed choices, exert influence, resist (e.g., remain silent, quit courses), or comply' (Duff, 2012b, p. 413). In other words, every learner is different in the way he/she exercises his/her agency. Moreover, Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001) argue that a language learner's identity may be affected by how the learner engages and progresses during SLL, which in turn may be affected by the variation in learner agency across different contexts. Therefore, learner identity is affected by many factors and one of them is agency (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001). Block (2007) argues that not only is identity affected by agency, it is a product of it. He explains that as identity develops over time; the choices people make, the positions they are put into all play a role in forming their identity.

Scholars interested in L2 learners' identities are interested in exploring the role of agency but have not provided a thorough account for it (Huang & Benson, 2013). For example, although Norton acknowledges agency in her discussion of identity, most of her work incorporates agency in investment which is the concept she focuses more on in her research. Several studies investigated the link between agency and investment. A study by Flowerdew and Miller (2008) revealed that both agency and investment were influential in the progression of three English L2 learners in Hong Kong. Through analysis of ethnographic data elicited by interview, essays, journals and observations, it was found that the linguistic capital linked to English in terms of having an enhanced future led to higher investment and agency in the learning process whether in the classroom or outside it (Flowerdew & Miller, 2008). This desire for an enhanced future implies a connection between agency and imagined identities and communities. Higher agency has also been linked to better achievement and proficiency in the L2. Hawkins (2005) found that having a good learner identity, which was associated with more agentive actions led to more success in academic and linguistic achievement in SLL. This was based on an ethnographic study of four English learners in a kindergarten class. Hawkins (2005) utilized a variety of data

collections methods including observations, home visits, interviews and samples of participants' work.

Within the FLL setting, Xiao (2014) investigated the role of agency in a distance English learning program. In this longitudinal case study, analysis of written narratives enabled Xiao to examine how agency influenced commitment to learning in this type of program. Xiao observed that success in learning was affected by identity in addition to agency (2014). The participant in this study viewed English as a way to assume the identity he aspired for as a business owner. His agency was exercised in his commitment to self-study and the distance learning program. Through his agency, he was able to be successful in learning English and reconstructing his identity. Because the findings are based on a case study of one student, more research is needed to support the results. In addition, the fact that the diaries were written in English which is the participant's L2 may have affected his ability to express himself more freely.

Duff (2012b) notes that although in certain contexts learner agency in the SLL process is not apparent, its importance to success and attainment is not to be denied. She also warns against generalizing learner identity and agency as every individual is unique in the way they construct their identity and exert agency in the SLL process (Duff, 2012b).

2.9. Language learning and women's identities

Since the current study focuses on women, it is important to provide a review of research on the relationship between SLL and FLL and women's identity.

Generally, Research on language learning and identity paved the way for scholars interested in how social categories such as race and gender may influence SLL and FLL and identity (Norton & Toohey, 2011). It has been indicated that gender and other social categories should be viewed as progressions that are influenced by power relations in the cultural and social contexts (Piller & Pavlenko, 2001; Norton & Toohey, 2011). Piller and Pavlenko (2001, p. 3) view gender 'as a system of social relations and discursive practices whose meaning varies across speech communities'. They emphasize the role of language and culture in constructing a person's understanding and performance of gender (Piller & Pavlenko, 2001). Pavlenko (2001b) extended this to SLL, as she argued that an L2 learner might reconstruct his/her own gender identity to be accepted and integrated in the target language community. This stems from the idea that 'languages are never neutral but come with a baggage of gender ideologies' (Piller & Pavlenko, 2001, p. 8).

When it comes to women, Ohara (2001) found out in her study on women learning Japanese that participants were conscious of the fact that they were expected to express their gender identity differently in different languages. Utilizing phonetic analysis and ethnographic interviews, she documented that learners were aware of how pitch is used in Japanese to display

femininity. She also noticed that some participants resisted certain aspects of the Japanese language which they felt gave them a lower status as women (Ohara, 2001). However, it needs to be mentioned that such findings about claiming and expressing different gender identity to be accepted in the target language community in research conducted in second language settings may not be exactly applicable in the case of FLL because the participants are not living in the target language community and therefore may not feel the need to assume or express a different gender identity to be accepted in that community. However, it could be argued that through FLL, women may establish or express a different gender identity for themselves within their local community.

Studies on language learning and gender, which are mainly rooted in poststructuralist theories (Cameron, 1992), seek to investigate how gender is constructed through language and how gender affects opportunities for language learning and use (Pavlenko & Piller, 2001). Findings from this type of research indicate that women have less access to language learning in several contexts (Pavlenko & Piller, 2001). Kouritzin (2000) found that immigrant women were not always able to attend ESL classes due to different reasons. Kouritzin's (2000) argument is based on a study in which she interviewed immigrant mothers. Their access to ESL classes was affected by many constraints not only in terms of time and money but also due to social and cultural reasons; some of which were related to gender (Kouritzin, 2000). It is further argued by Heller (2001) that even if women were able to attend classes their chances to interact were significantly lower than men. Employing observations, interviews and discussions in an ethnographic study, it was found that, in a school context, male students were in a favorable position and had more access to resources and interaction while female students had a marginal role in school activities (Heller, 2001). Heller indicated that these practices in school create and maintain inferior gender ideology for females and other groups. In her discussion, she asserted the complex relationship between gender ideology and language (Heller, 2001). This may not be present in the current study because all the participants are studying in female-only classes and therefore they may not have experienced such discrimination in terms of access to FLL and use.

Pavlenko and Piller (2001) mention that a relationship between gender and agency in SLL have also been observed. It has been suggested that women, in particular, might be more motivated and engaged in the SLL process in order to gain higher positions socially and economically (Gal, 1978; Burck, 2011). This may be influenced by the differences in the way gender is viewed in different cultures. Similarly, it has also been suggested that women want to learn English to free themselves from certain constraints (McMahill, 2001; Pavlenko, 2001b). Some may argue that Saudi women may want to learn English to escape certain cultural practices or assume more powerful roles and positions. In her analysis of narratives about SLL, Pavlenko (2001b) noted that breaking free from unfavorable gendered positions and practices was the

reason some immigrant and minority women wanted to learn English. Kobayashi (2002) argues that the gender-neutral nature of English is part of the appeal for women to learn it. On a similar note, McMahill (2001) found out in her analysis of classroom discourse in an English as second language feminist class that female Japanese learners linked English to feminism and therefore felt empowered by using English. Power is a theme that emerged in Burck's (2011) study as well with a learner viewing English as a powerful language and therefore feeling empowered by English (Burck, 2011). This idea of empowerment may be reflected in learners' identities and imagined identities. Burck's results also suggested that different languages can be used to claim varying gender characteristics, specifically more or less powerful identities (Burck, 2011). One Chinese participant in Burck's study revealed that she used both her native Chinese language and the English language interchangeably to assume different gender roles (Burck, 2011). For example, she revealed that she spoke English sometimes with Chinese men in order to have a more powerful position and at other times she spoke Chinese with them if she wanted help or if she wanted to create a more friendly relationship.

Pavlenko and Piller (2001) also argued that learners may resist learning a L2 because they want to preserve their original gender identity. This situation may be more visible in contexts where the native and target languages' language and gender ideologies differ drastically (Pavlenko & Piller, 2001), which is the case in this thesis. Saudi culture is undoubtedly different to Western culture in terms of gender construction, understanding and how it positions each gender in society and religion. In other words, Saudi ideas of gender are different to those the learners will encounter whilst learning English and this may have an impact on how learners experience the FLL process and their identities. Pavlenko and Piller (2001) point out that the role of gender in L2 learning is often ignored. As a result, investigating the identities of female Saudi learners can provide valuable findings that would better inform our understanding of the relationship between FLL and identity, specifically women's identity. However, it is important to note that research on the relationship between gender and SLL reveal that social categories such as gender, race and class are connected (Cameron, 1992; Pavlenko & Piller, 2001; Heller, 2001; McMahill, 2001; Norton & Toohey, 2011). Feery (2008) asserts that all these factors are key in creating the social identity of the language learner and have important effects on learning. She goes on to point out the complexity of the relationship between SLL and gender explaining that,

It is not merely being a man or being a woman in the target culture that affects the students learning outcomes, but rather the discursive and social practices that constitute being a man or being a woman in that particular society, the choices and social identities the learner is presented with and whether or not the learner chooses to resist or assimilate such identities. (Feery, 2008, p. 44)

Feery (2008) also argues that gender and other social categories influence access to social circles which affects engagement and development in the SLL process. Therefore, investigating their effect and relation to SLL and FLL is better done with a comprehensive approach that takes that into consideration (Norton & Costa, 2018); in the current study, the analysis will take into consideration any factor the participants report as affecting their English learning experience. The current study is informative in terms of exploring how Saudi females view their identity and their roles as women in society during the process of learning English. However, since this study does not have male participants, no claims can be made in terms of the role of gender as a factor affecting their experience.

In the following section, a review of relevant studies that explored the effect of language learning on identity is presented. This is done to demonstrate what has been done before and what this study aims to contribute to.

2.10. Review of studies on language learning and identity

There has been a limited number of studies on the effect of language learning on identity, especially in non-Western settings. Kim (2003b) investigated the effect of learning English on the identities of fourteen female Malaysian English learners. The participants were from different ethnic backgrounds and varied in age from twenties to fifties. They were all studying for a Master's degree in English Language. One semi-structured interview was conducted with each participant. Questionnaires and personal narratives were also used to provide more data on the background and to elicit the views of the participants. Thematic analysis revealed that participants' identities were complex, multiple and context-dependent. The participants reported shifting from one identity to another in systematic ways; participants chose not to use English in certain contexts to conform with others and be part of the larger social cultural group. For example, one Malay participant mentioned that she avoided using English with people from her ethnic circle because it was viewed as a sign of disconnection with her native culture and identity. Another participant reported that her use of English was rejected by locals and that they considered it a sign of being westernized and arrogant. A participant expressed her disagreement with the idea that using English made her less Malay or less Muslim. Another participant pointed out that others' negative attitudes toward her use of English made her use it more as a sign of resistance. On the other hand, the use of English was preferred in situations where participants wanted to be socially and culturally neutral. One of the learners mentioned that English freed her from cultural associations. Another participant considered learning English empowering because it enabled her to express thoughts and emotions such as anger more freely. Overall, participants reported that learning and using English was empowering and gave them more agency (Kim, 2003b). Furthermore, it was reported that some participants had conflicting feelings about the changes mentioned above as they were torn between their desire to fit in with

their cultural communities while staying true to their own selves. Based on evidence such as that set out above, Kim (2003b) argues that learners' multiple linguistic identities can be used interchangeably to achieve certain goals such as acceptance and resistance. She also points out that participants' investment in learning English was based on their desire to fit in with certain groups. This sometimes resulted in a negative reaction in their original cultural community. As a result, learners reported having to switch between different identities; Kim pointed out that the learners were mostly aware and conscious of their shifts from one linguistic identity to another. However, one participant mentioned that she sometimes shifted from one linguistic identity to another unconsciously. Another important finding is that regardless of use, knowledge of English affected the participants' identities. She bases that on the idea that while learning English, the participants were introduced to different cultures and beliefs. The participants considered this empowering since they had more access to information on other cultures, not only English. This affected them as people because it made them reflect on their own beliefs and cultural systems. Some learners revealed that this enabled them to be less judgmental and more accepting and tolerant of others' views and beliefs. They also described themselves as more open-minded and liberal. This study is informative, but in order to get a more comprehensive understanding of the participants' views, the researcher would have benefited from following the participants' experiences over a longer period of time because it would have provided more data on the issue under investigation. In the current study data was collected over a fourteen-month period to address this issue.

Kim, Siong, Fei, and Ya'acoub, (2010) conducted a study investigating the identities of Malaysian learners of English at the undergraduate level. They had twenty participants, four males and sixteen females, who came from different ethnic backgrounds (Malay, Chinese and Indian). They were studying in public and private universities in Malaysia. Thematic analysis was carried out on the data collected through one semi-structured interview. The findings revealed that the participants preferred to use English in their interactions whether in social or academic contexts. This was partly related to their background as half of them had family and friends who spoke English or had their previous education in English-medium schools. Some of the participants did not consider the ability to speak English as special; but they asserted that they were aware of its value as an international language that gives them an advantage over others who do not speak it. They considered English empowering as they believed it helped to improve their status in society. They also considered English empowering because it allowed them to learn more about the world and be more open-minded and modern. All this made them more confident in themselves as people. The results also revealed that there was a sense of othering or 'us' versus 'them' that the participants experienced because of their use of English. In other words, the participants believed being English speakers made them different from others who only spoke the native languages and made others react to them in a different way.

For example, one participant said she was described as 'white' because of her use of English. Another participant mentioned that others considered her use of English as arrogant. Overall, the participants mentioned that being English speakers made others think of them as westernized. Most participants viewed their competency of English in a positive light in terms of benefiting them on academic, professional and social levels. But there were some negatives as some participants mentioned that there was a stigma about not using the native language. However, Kim et al's (2010) participants did not appear to receive and have as much resentment toward English as the participants in Kim's (2003b) study mentioned above. This could be because they are younger than the participants in Kim's (2003b) study and therefore may have more positive attitudes toward English and its cultures. Overall, Kim et al (2010) argue that learning English enabled Malaysian undergraduates to establish identities for themselves as educated and confident individuals which empowered them and improved their status in society. It also contributed to them being perceived as different from people in their community. Kim et al (2010) highlighted the need for more research on this topic especially in foreign language settings, which this study aims to do in the context of Saudi Arabia. It should be noted that the studies of Kim (2003b) and Kim et al (2010) were conducted in Malaysia, which is different from Saudi Arabia as it is multilingual multicultural country. However, the findings of their studies may be relevant to the current study because both are investigating English learners and because of the similarity between Saudi Arabia and Malaysia in terms of Islam.

Atay and Ece (2009) conducted a study exploring how Turks studying to be English teachers viewed their changing identities. They specifically wanted to investigate the impact of learning English as a foreign language on identities from a social and cultural perspective, how learners dealt with their multiple identities and their views on this topic. Twenty-five women and nine men studying English Education at the University of Istanbul participated in this study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain biographical information in addition to insights into the participants views on English, culture and identity. The participants mentioned having Turkish Islamic and Western identities. Most pointed out that their Turkish Islamic identity was the primary and most important of these identities. They also asserted that their original cultural identity was too strong to be altered by their Western identity. However, some of them pointed out that their identities were influenced by place or context; they noted that their Western identity was dominant in school settings while the Turkish Islamic identity dominated at home. This shows that identity is a dynamic process in an individual, which may change depending on context and over time. Others indicated that as time passed, they felt that their Western identity gave them more freedom and was more aligned with the way they think. This created a conflict for some participants as they felt that they were betraying their Turkish culture. This came as a result of them becoming more aware of the differences between the two cultures. However, most participants viewed this positively considering it a way of expanding their horizons and

enriching their identities. For example, participants talked about learning about Christmas and Halloween which made them feel closer to Western cultures; but at the same it made another participant feel that she was abandoning her native culture. Participants also reported feeling more confident, social and willing to express themselves because of learning English. Females specifically felt that learning English and exposure to Western culture gave them higher status. But not everyone was positive in their views towards English learning and its effects. A number of participants indicated that young people studying English in schools may be attracted by the glamour of Western cultures and neglect or abandon their own cultural identity. They highlighted the important role of English teachers in explaining cultural differences and not imposing any beliefs on their students (Atay & Ece, 2009). Since the issue in question is quite complex, the study may have benefited from using more than one data collection method and to have done so over an extended period of time to have more data on the topic which would help in providing an in-depth account of the participants' identities.

Umrani (2015) investigated how Pakistani university students created and negotiated their English language learner identity. Umrani also wanted to shed light on the role of investment and agency in the construction and reconstruction of language learners' identities and future selves. She employed an instrumental case study design in which she recruited students from the Institute of English Language and Literature at the University of Sindh. Ten participants were from Year one. But she also recruited fifteen participants from Year two, Year three and Year four to have an idea of how language learner identity develops over time. Data from Year one participants was collected through two semi-structured interviews, diaries, shadowing and classroom observations. In addition, focus-group discussions were held with the participants from Year two, Year three and Year four. The findings revealed that the participants' identities as English learners were constantly being negotiated and reconstructed. In other words, the participants' identities shifted based on the context, to gain acceptance into social groups and to achieve their imagined identities. For example, female participants reported that their learning and use of English in classroom activities allowed them to establish identities for themselves as equal to their male counterparts and free themselves from social and cultural constraints. Another example can be seen in male and female participants viewing their knowledge and use of English as a way to create educated and professional identities and gain acceptance in the academic and work fields. Generally, the participants reported that they were more confident in themselves as people because of learning English and the pride this brought them and their families. Furthermore, the findings revealed that investment and agency in learning English was also an investment in the learners' identities. Investment was influenced by social cultural factors such as the societies' attitude toward English positively as a language of opportunities and negatively as a threat to the native language and culture. This created a conflict for some participants in terms of their feelings of being westernized although they asserted that their

identities were too strong to be changed by learning English. Umrani also reported that gender and other social categories influenced the participants' learning of English, their investment and their identities. Umrani's (2015) study would have been more informative had she collected data from the first, second, third and fourth year participants in the same way. Using interviews for Year 1 participants and focus group discussion for Years 2, 3 and 4, could have impacted her ability to compare participants from different levels. Therefore, in the current study, the same data collection tools are used for the participants from the different levels. Despite the differences between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan in terms of Pakistan's colonial past and the presence of English, studies by Umrani (2015) and Atay and Ece (2009) are informative for this investigation because they were conducted on foreign language learners of English who had an Islamic background.

Within the Saudi context, Alsweel (2013) conducted a study investigating how Saudi women learning English in the United States viewed their roles, identities, the impact of learning English and how they dealt with their multiple roles and identities. Using a qualitative design, Alsweel interviewed sixteen Saudi English L2 learners aged between eighteen and thirty-five. The interviews were used to gather biographical information in addition to their views on their first and second languages, their cultures and identities. Thematic analysis revealed that the participants valued their English identity because of the prestige of English and its global language status, which gave them the opportunity to grow and change on educational, professional and social levels. At the same time, the participants asserted that their Saudi Islamic identity was also a source of power. They also viewed their learning experience as empowering because it was a way for them to develop and connect with other people from different countries while embracing their own social cultural identity. Overall, they viewed their social, cultural and religious background, their English learning experience and exposure to Western culture as a way to create an identity that was suitable for the changing and connected world (Alsweel, 2013). This study is a starting point to understand the experiences of Saudi women learning English. However, since this study was conducted in a second language setting, the findings may not be applicable to the larger population of Saudi women learning English in Saudi Arabia. This is due to the different factors involved in the different settings. In this study, the participants were living in the United States of America, therefore they needed to learn English in order to communicate which means that their motivation and investment in learning English may differ from learners living in Saudi Arabia. It also means that the learners had more chances for interaction in English especially with native speakers. In addition, as they lived there, they had direct social and cultural contact with the target language community as they became acquainted with its lifestyle, practices and values. However, as mentioned above, students in Saudi Arabia, may not have as many opportunities to interact in the L2 or to get acquainted with the social and cultural aspects of their L2. All the above differences highlight

the importance of conducting the present study in Saudi Arabia, a foreign language setting, as it can provide valuable and possibly different findings because of the differences between SLL and FLL in terms of the factors affecting each process. In addition, Alsweel's study would have benefitted from conducting second interviews and possibly diaries to better understand and follow the participants' experiences which was done in this study.

Mustafa (2017) conducted a study investigating the impact of learning English on Saudi women's identities and agency. Using feminist theories, Mustafa (2017) wanted to shed light on the status of English in Saudi society and its effects on Saudi women. He specifically wanted to explore the way Saudi women performed and negotiated their identities and roles in society. Mustafa (2017) used a mixed methods design collecting data through a questionnaire distributed to three hundred Saudi women learning English in various institutes in four different regions in Saudi Arabia. Subsequently, twelve Saudi women were chosen to take part in semi-structured interviews. The results revealed that the participants considered English important because of its global status and that it was beneficial for them personally, socially and professionally. The results also revealed that the participants' agency as Saudi women was a balance between adhering to Saudi traditions and trying to change and improve their roles and status in society. However, there was no consensus on whether learning English affected Saudi women's agency; Although the majority of participants noted that learning and using English gave them more power to make their own decisions, they were divided in terms of whether English actually helped them have more freedom. In terms of identity, the results indicated that English had a positive effect on the participants' identities and positions in society as they were more educated, confident, independent, empowered, and open-minded as women. Two of the participants reported that they had two identities, one in Arabic and one in English. These two identities were different from each other in terms of self-expression and behavior. For example, they reported that their English identities gave them more freedom to talk with men or to express some thoughts and emotions. Mustafa (2017) also reported that some participants may have been cautious in talking about how learning English affected their identities. For example, one participant associated speaking Arabic with her Islamic belief and therefore was keen to emphasize that her identity as a Saudi Muslim woman and her beliefs had not changed as a result of learning English. Mustafa's (2017) study sheds light on how learning English impacts Saudi women's agency and identities. However, because his study used a feminist theoretical framework, his results and discussion focused on how the participants experienced their identities and agency as women who speak English. Not much attention was paid to how they experienced the FLL process and how it led to the changes they experienced in terms of their identities. This is why this study, which uses SLS as a theoretical framework, will be informative as it not only aims to shed light on Saudi female L2 learners of English identities, but it also aims to shed light on how FLL contributes to that. This is specifically addressed in

the sub-research question about the factors perceived to affect the FLL experience of Saudi female learners of English. It is also addressed through the use of SLS as a theoretical framework to establish links between any results that emerge in terms of learners' views of themselves and the FLL process. In addition, while Mustafa's study investigated the identities of Saudi women learning English in English teaching institutes across Saudi Arabia, this study investigates the identities of Saudi women learning English at the university level. So, the content and nature of the English learning experience is different and this may lead to new or different findings.

From the review above, there appears to be a need for a study to be conducted in Saudi Arabia that addresses the topic in a comprehensive and different manner in order to better understand the possible ways in which FLL may contribute to shaping the learner's identity and outlook on life. Although previous studies have been informative, more research needs to be done on this topic using different theoretical frameworks and more elaborate methodologies. This present study aims to shed light on Saudi female foreign language learners' experience of learning English, how it affects them personally and the factors that affect them during this process. In doing so, it employs a multiple case study approach that relies on multiple data collection tools used over an extended period of time to yield more data and have a comprehensive and deep understanding of identity development during FLL.

In addition, a different angle that this thesis hopes to present to research on FLL and identity is exploring how learners experience FLL and the factors affecting them during this process. This can help bring more knowledge and understanding of how FLL as a process may influence learners' view of themselves or their identities. In the current study, one of the research questions revolves around the factors affecting Saudi female university students' experience of learning English as a foreign language. Therefore, it is important to present an overview of the factors that influence the FLL process and its outcomes.

2.11. Factors of foreign language learning

Both FLL and SLL learning involve cognitive, social and psychological factors e.g., motivation, anxiety and learner characteristics (Cook, 2001; Ellis, 2008). They also include educational, linguistic and social cultural factors e.g., teaching methods, input and interaction (Cook, 2001; Ellis, 2008). The following sections present an overview of the FLL factors relevant to the current study.

2.11.1. Motivation

One of the important factors affecting the learner during the FLL process is motivation. It refers to the learner's desire to learn the new language and the amount of effort he/she puts into learning (Ellis, 2008). Several theories have been proposed to account for motivation in SLL

and FLL. Gardner and Lambert (1972) identified two types of motivation relevant to learning a new language. The first is integrative motivation; it refers to a learner's desire to learn the new language in order to fit in or associate with the target language's society and culture (Dornyei, 2005; Dornyei & Ushioda, 2001; Gardner, 1985). The second is instrumental motivation, which refers to a learner's desire to learn the new language in order to achieve certain goals such as getting a degree or a job (Dornyei, 2005; Dornyei & Ushioda, 2001; Gardner, 1985). There may be some differences in motivation between learners in second and foreign language settings (Cook, 2001; Ellis, 2008). A learner in a second language setting often has no choice but to learn the L2 in order to communicate and function in society. In contrast, a foreign language learner may not have the same inclination because he/she can communicate and function in his/her society without the L2. However, it should be noted that this does not necessarily mean that learner motivation is higher in second language settings as every learner is different. In addition, in FLL settings, learners' motivation may be mostly instrumental as they are not living in a society that uses the L2 and therefore they may not have as much integrative motivation as learners in SLL settings. However, this should not be assumed for all foreign language learners as every learner is unique. The type and amount of motivation the learner has for learning the target language has effects on how the learning process takes place and his/her success in it (Ellis, 2008). Within Saudi Arabia, studies such as, Aljuaid (2021) and Moskovosky and Alrabai (2009) revealed high levels of motivation among Saudis for learning English. Saudis' motivation for learning English was related to its value as a global language that is beneficial on the personal and professional levels (Moskovosky & Alrabai, 2009). It has been found that Saudis have instrumental motivation and integrative motivation for learning English with the former appearing to be higher than the latter (Aljuaid, 2021).

An L2 learner's motivation is dynamic in that it can vary from one point in time and place to another based on several circumstances (Dornyei, 2005; Dornyei & Ushioda, 2001). For example, a person's motivation to learn the target language could increase or decrease based on how others react to his/her learning and use of that language. Within research on language learning and identity and this present study, the dynamic nature of L2 learners' motivation is emphasized and the term investment is used to account for it (see section 2.7 above).

2.11.2. Anxiety

Another factor that affects the foreign language learner's experience is anxiety. Anxiety in FLL refers to the learners' feelings of stress and uneasiness while learning and using the L2 (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). There are different types of anxiety such as trait anxiety, which refers to a person being anxious as part of his/her personality, and state and situation-based anxiety, which refer to a person being anxious at a

certain point of time or in reaction to a situation he/she is in (Ellis, 2008). All these types of anxiety can affect learners during the FLL process.

A number of studies have investigated anxiety in FLL. In Saudi Arabia, studies such as Bensalem (2018) and Tanielian (2017) investigated L2 anxiety among Saudi university students and found that they experienced various levels of anxiety. Bensalem (2018) reported that female students experienced higher levels of anxiety in comparison to their male counterparts. Tanielian (2017) found that anxiety was higher in earlier stages of learning and that it decreased with passing time and improved proficiency. Since the current study investigates the factors affecting the experiences of Saudi female learners of English, it would be informative to find out if anxiety is among the factors the participants talk about and to what extent it affects their learning experience and possibly their identities.

2.11.3. Learner characteristics

The characteristics of the L2 learners are also among the factors that influence their FLL experience and its outcomes. Such characteristics include age, intelligence and language aptitude (Ellis, 2008). It also includes personality traits such as extroversion and introversion (Ellis, 2008). Furthermore, the learners' beliefs and attitudes toward the target language and its culture could also influence their FLL (Ellis, 2008). The background of the learners, including their family and educational background, any previous experiences in FLL and their experiences using the L2 in travel and so on, could also affect their FLL. Kim et al (2010) in their study of the identities of Malaysian learners of English reported that having a previous experience of learning English and coming from a family that speaks English was influential on learners' learning and use of English (see section 2.10). In Saudi Arabia, Alrabai (2016) reported that many factors such as age, aptitude, learning strategies and styles, attitudes, society, culture and religion and other factors affect Saudi learners of English, specifically their achievement. Through the current investigation, it is possible to find out if any of the above factors affect the experience of Saudi female learners of English.

2.11.4. Teaching approaches

FLL takes place in educational settings, therefore, the elements of the teaching process may affect the learner's experience learning the target language and its outcomes. This includes the teaching method used by the instructor and the syllabus (Ellis, 2008). In addition, the instructors' attitude toward the learners and their errors has been found to affect FLL (Ellis, 2008). All these factors may impact the learners' engagement in FLL, specifically their agency, which in turn affects their achievement and success in FLL (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001). For example, using traditional teaching methods, such as lecturing, may limit L2 learners' interaction in classes and have negative implications on their proficiency. Furthermore, research has shown that teaching foreign languages includes social and cultural elements of the target

language. Atay and Ece (2009) found that prospective English teachers from Turkey were aware of that as something that has implications on the learning process as well as learners' identities (see section 2.10). Alrabai (2016) and Ashraf (2018) reported that Saudi learners of English were affected by instructional factors such as the teaching approaches, the curriculum and the teacher. In relation to this study, these could be among the factors affecting the English FLL experience of Saudi female university students.

2.11.5. Input and interaction

Input and interaction are two important elements of any language learning process. Input refers to the target language the learner is exposed to and interacts with during FLL, which could be in oral and written form (Ellis, 2008). For example, input can be an audio-recording of a conversation, an article or a book and feedback from the instructor. Interaction refers to the participants' engagement and use of the target language (Ellis, 2008). Interaction could be productive i.e., speaking or writing in the target language and it could also be receptive i.e., reading or listening to what a person says or writes in the target language (Ellis, 2008). Ellis (2008) points out that the amount and type of input L2 learners are exposed to differs according to the setting and context of their learning. The amount of input the learner in a second language setting receives may be higher because the L2 is used everywhere all the time (Cook, 2001; Ellis, 2008). Furthermore, the input he/she receives may also mostly come from native speakers of the L2 (Cook, 2001; Ellis, 2008). In contrast, foreign language learners may not receive the same amount of input because the foreign language may not be spoken much outside of the instruction context (Cook, 2001; Ellis, 2008). In addition, the input he/she receives may not necessarily come from native speakers of the language. Within Saudi Arabia, Ashraf (2018) reported in his study that Saudi university students considered lack of exposure and interaction in English one of the issues they faced while learning English.

In terms of interaction, learners in second language settings usually have more opportunities to interact in the target language because it is used everywhere whereas foreign language learners' interaction in the target language may be confined to the classroom and other limited contexts (Cook, 2001; Ellis, 2008). Moreover, the nature of the interaction in second language settings is more natural than foreign language settings where it may be more structured and artificial (Cook, 2001; Ellis, 2008). Therefore, the situations may not be as realistic as in SLL. Furthermore, Krashen (1988) believes that formal instruction and learning, which is what often takes place in FLL, is different from language acquisition in natural settings, which happens often in SLL. Krashen' s argument is mostly related to a language learner's achievement in the L2. This is not an area of concern in the current study.

However, with the spread of social media nowadays, it may be possible for foreign language learners to have more input and more opportunities to interact in the target language using social

media applications, such as Twitter and Instagram (Oroujlou, 2012). Moreover, one could argue that input and interaction in the target language could also take place through watching media in that language e.g., films and shows (Cabansag, 2011; Chan, Chin, Nagami & Suthiwan, 2011; Wang, 2012).

Input and interaction are relevant to the SLS theory which is used as the theoretical framework in the current study. As SLS emphasizes the role of interaction in developing linguistic and social cultural skills in the target language and the implications this may have on L2 learners' identities. Therefore, in applying this theory it is essential that differences in input and interaction between SLL and FLL settings are acknowledged and paid attention to.

2.12. Research gaps

Through the literature review presented above, it was possible to identify gaps in research on the topic of FLL and identity. They were discussed above but will be summarized here as well. It appears that recently many studies have investigated issues related to language learning and identity. However, while most have focused on the effect of identity on language learning especially in second language settings, little interest has been given to how learning a new language might influence identity especially in foreign language settings. The few studies that have investigated this topic in foreign language settings provide interesting results in terms of language learners having fluid, multiple and complex identities.

This study explores the issue of FLL and identity in a way that adds to what has been done before and addresses some of the research gaps on different levels. On the contextual level, few studies have investigated the impact of FLL on Saudi female English learners but none of them focused on female learners of English inside Saudi Arabia at the university level. On the theoretical level, there is a need for research on FLL and identity with a theoretical approach that acknowledges the social cultural nature of FLL and the dynamic nature of identity. This is why the use of SLS will be informative, especially since the previous studies did not provide accounts of how FLL contributed to shaping L2 learners' identities. On the methodological level, this study aims to improve on the study design used in previous studies through having a multiple case study design and collecting longitudinal data through multiple data collection tools.

2.13. The research questions

This project aims to understand whether and how learning English as a foreign language influences the identities of Saudi female university students and will do so through asking the following questions:

1. How do Saudi female learners of English as a foreign language view themselves during the process of learning English?

1. 1. What factors are perceived to influence the learning experience of English as a foreign language among Saudi female learners?

The research questions were formulated to complement each other as the first one addresses the main reason behind conducting this study which is to learn whether and in what way FLL shapes Saudi female English learners' identities. The sub-research question helps in shedding light on how those learners experience this process, specifically the factors affecting them during it, which provides us with an understanding of how FLL as a process contributes to shaping learners' identities.

2.14. Conclusion

Overall, it appears that the research on language learning and identity offers intriguing possibilities for scholars to explore various issues in relation to language learning and identity. FLL and identity have a mutual effect on each other. On one hand, learners' identities influence their investment and agency in FLL and, as a result their progress and success. And on the other hand, engaging in the process of learning a new language and getting acquainted with its culture and lifestyle can affect learners' identities. The latter is the area of focus in this study. As proposed in the sociocultural theory, and specifically SLS, learning is facilitated through interaction and this interaction has social cultural implications on the learner. In this study, SLS will be used to approach and deal with the FLL process. This allows a focus on the social cultural nature of language learning. In addition, since this study explores the identities of Saudi women learning English, SLS, which draws on the poststructuralist theories, will be informative in identity analysis because it recognizes identity as dynamic and complex. Investment, agency and other factors also influence identity during the FLL process. Therefore, the researcher needs to be aware of the complexity of this topic. However, with careful planning, such research can provide valuable results that are much needed as the world and our lives are always changing because of globalization.

Chapter three: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology used for this study. The use of social constructivism in the form of the interpretive framework is justified, as is the employment of a multiple case study design. This is followed by an overview of the qualitative approach used in the project. Then, there is a presentation of the setting and the participants. After that, a detailed description is provided of the data collection instruments: semi-structured interviews, diaries, a background information form and field notes. This is followed by a description of the pilot study conducted to determine the efficiency of the study design and the changes that were made as a result of it. The chapter then explains the data collection procedure and data analysis. Finally, the measures employed to ensure trustworthiness and matters of ethics are presented.

3.2. Social Constructivism

One important decision that any researcher must make before embarking on any study is with regard to the research paradigm. The research paradigm is based on what the researcher considers as reality i.e., ontology and how that reality can be known i.e., epistemology (Scotland, 2012). Since this research deals with human subjects, their experiences in learning English and how it influences them on personal and social levels, a choice was made to adopt a social constructivist paradigm because it appears suitable to answer the research questions and provide an understanding of the topic. At this point, it needs to be noted that in the literature, there are two terms used interchangeably, social constructionism and social constructivism (Andrews, 2012). However, one needs to be careful with the distinction between constructivism in general and social constructivism and constructionism. The former emphasizes the cognitive aspect of the creation of meaning while the latter emphasizes its social nature, which is the focus of the current study.

This paradigm is based on the idea that meaning lies within the individual (Andrews, 2012; Creswell, 2013). Social constructivism is widely used in applied linguistic research; it is especially useful in topics of a social cultural and linguistic nature, which is the case in this study (McGroarty, 1998). It is useful for this study because, as McGroarty (1998) points out, researching language learner identity with its dynamic nature is best done under a social constructivist paradigm that emphasizes the multiple nature of reality and acknowledges the role of social interaction and individual perceptions in that regard. Therefore, the topic is approached with the view that there is no one truth or reality as every individual constructs his/her own meaning through interacting with others (Andrews, 2012; Creswell, 2013). Spivey (1997) explains that 'constructivists view people as constructive agents and view the phenomenon of interest (meaning or knowledge) as built instead of passively "received" by people whose ways

of knowing, seeing, understanding and valuing influence what is known, seen, understood and valued' (p. 3). Furthermore, social constructivists argue that these individual-constructed meanings are a result of social interaction and conveyed through language. Therefore, using this paradigm to investigate how language learning influences the identities of language learners seemed logical because language learners are agents involved in a process that requires them to interact with others and this has implications on their view and understanding of themselves and the world. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory has a strong connection to social constructivism (Kim, 2014) because as a theory it emphasizes the importance of interaction for human development. Vygotsky (1978) argues that individuals develop their understanding of the world as a result of their interactions with others in society (see section 2.3.2 above). The importance of social interaction for creating individual realities is also a key idea in social constructivism. As a result, this paradigm is considered suitable for investigating this topic because it deals with experiences of human participants as they learn and interact in English (Creswell, 2013; Scotland, 2012). In doing so, an interpretive framework is employed (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). This means that since reality differs from one person to another, the way to understand it is to interpret what people report in terms of their lives, experiences, ideas and activities; making this research data-driven as opposed to theory-driven (Creswell, 2013).

It is important at this point to note that this study, as with other research within this paradigm, mainly aims to understand the studied phenomenon (Mack, 2010). Social constructivism and more specifically the interpretive framework is mainly qualitative in nature (Creswell, 2013). In this study, data is collected through interviews, diaries, field notes and a background information form (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). The researcher has the important role of interpreting the data while considering the participants' context and background (Mack, 2010). Mack (2010) adds that within this paradigm, research can be subjective as it requires the researcher to be in direct contact with the participants and any results cannot be generalized since every individual has their own unique experience.

From the above, choosing a social constructivist paradigm with an interpretive framework for this research appears appropriate considering that the goal of this study is to uncover how learning English influences the identities of Saudi female learners, especially their views of themselves.

3.3. Multiple Case study design

A multiple case study is used to carry out this investigation because it is aligned with the interpretive framework and is suitable to explore, describe and understand language learners' experiences and identities (Darvin, 2018; Duff, 2020, Duff & Anderson, 2015; Hood, 2009; Schoch, 2019). Employing this design involves choosing a number of individuals to investigate

in-depth to gain insights into the studied phenomenon (Yin, 2003). The design was chosen because it allows for an exploration of a topic such as language learner identity in a way that acknowledges its complex nature as well as providing real-life examples/manifestations of abstract concepts (Duff & Anderson, 2015). This study along with other studies on language learning and identity employ this approach (see Kim & Duff, 2012; Norton, 2000; Umrani, 2015) because it acknowledges the multiple and dynamic nature of reality (Duff, 2020). In addition, having a small number of learners to investigate allows for creating more detailed in-depth accounts of their experience learning English as a foreign language (Duff, 2020; Hood, 2009; Schoch, 2019). All this prompted choosing this design for this investigation because it allows the researcher to answer the research questions specifically in terms of how Saudi female learners of English as a foreign language view themselves and how this relates to their FLL experience.

The cases in this study are six Saudi female English students from King Faisal University who were selected through purposeful sampling which is encouraged in this study design (Creswell, 2013; Duff, 2020; Hood, 2009; Schoch, 2019; Yin, 2003) (for more details see section 3.5.2.1 below). Employing a multiple case study as opposed to a single case study was prompted by having different accounts on the same issue and comparing them to explore the similarities and differences (Duff, 2020; Duff & Anderson, 2015). Creswell (2013) and Hood (2009) argue that having a multiple case study allows researchers to theorize their findings to a larger group. This was done in this study by creating a report and narrative of each case and then presenting a cross-case report in which the common themes of all cases are discussed (Creswell, 2013; Duff, 2020).

Case studies are mostly qualitative in nature (Duff, 2020; Hood, 2009; Schoch, 2019; Yin, 2003). Creswell (2013), Hood (2009), Schoch (2019) and Yin (2003) note that multiple case studies rely on collecting data from several sources; in this study these are semi-structured interviews, diaries, a background information form and field notes (see section 3.6). The aim is to provide rich accounts of the realities of the cases explored here to answer the research questions. Furthermore, a longitudinal element is often encouraged in this type of research, and this is why data was collected over a period of fourteen months in order to follow the participants and have more data of their experiences and views of themselves as they learn English.

In the following section, the qualitative approach used to carry out this multiple case study is presented.

3.4. The qualitative approach

The qualitative approach is employed because it is compatible with the goals of this study. It allows for a comprehensive understanding of the process of language learning and the many complex factors affecting it (Duff, 2008). It also provides reasoning and explanation which is important in understanding how the participants in this study describe any effect FLL (if any) may have had on them and what may have contributed to it. All this creates a deep and broad understanding of the language learner's identity, which is a complex issue (Dornyei, 2007). To achieve this, interviews and diaries were used to collect data presenting the participants' personal views on themselves and their FLL experience. A background information form and field notes were also used to supplement and contextualize this data.

3.5. Data collection setting and participants

3.5.1. The setting

King Faisal University in Al-Ahsa in Saudi Arabia was chosen as the research site. It is a public university that was established by royal decree in 1975; it is one of the largest universities in Saudi Arabia with around 41500 students and 2144 faculty members (King Faisal University, n.d.-a). This university has 86 academic programs (59 undergraduate and 27 postgraduate). There are fifteen colleges in this university; the degrees offered include diplomas, bachelors, higher diplomas, masters and philosophers' degrees (King Faisal University, n.d.-a). The study was conducted in the English Language Department at the College of Arts which is the largest college in the university and has eight departments (King Faisal University, n.d.-a). The English Language Department was established in 1976. It has two academic programs; they are a bachelor's degree in English Language and a master's degree in Applied Linguistics; it has around 1500 students (King Faisal University, n.d.-b). In the undergraduate English language program, students take courses to develop their various skills in English such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. They also take courses in English grammar and vocabulary. Furthermore, they take courses in English literature, linguistics and translation from English to Arabic and Arabic to English (for more details on the content of the English Language program see King Faisal University, n.d.-b). The field notes collected through the researchers' visits to the site and attendance of various classes (see section 3.6.4) are used here to provide more detailed information on the setting. The number of students in courses varies according to the nature of the course. In practical courses such as speaking and writing, the number of students in class is around twenty. In the theoretical courses such as literature and linguistics, the number of students is around forty. The method of teaching varies depending on the nature of the course and the instructor. Some courses have mainly a lecturing style where there are limited opportunities for discussion and interaction, some courses take the form of a discussion and exchange of ideas, and some courses revolve around doing exercises individually or in groups.

In all courses, the use of Arabic is discouraged and students are asked to use English in all their interactions. The content of many of the classes, especially those in literature courses include references to American and British society and culture e.g., the English thought and culture course, and the introduction to American literature course. In addition, the content of many books, such as the ones used for teaching listening and speaking, use references and situations that are relevant to American and British societies and cultures. In this way, the nature and content of the English Language program at the university level is different from the one in Saudi schools. This is because it is more focused on developing learners' proficiency in the English language especially in earlier stages through extensive exposure and use of the English language. It is also different in the fact that it includes content related to literature, linguistics and translation which enables learners to acquire broader and deeper knowledge on the linguistic and the social cultural levels.

The choice of this site was made for several reasons. First, interest in this topic started because of the researcher's experience teaching English and working in this department. Second, the researcher's work experience and connection to this institution meant that handling issues of accessibility and permission could be done easier and faster. Third, since this study investigates how learning English might influence learners' views of themselves, English language university students were the most suitable participants for this study. Formal permission and authorization were sought and granted before conducting the study.

3.5.2. The participants

The participants in this study were six female students. They were studying to get a bachelor's degree in English Language from the English Language Department at King Faisal University. They were in the second, third and fourth year of their university studies. All of them were Saudi. They differed in their social status e.g., single and divorced. All six participants had undertaken seven years of instruction in English in school, starting in grade six, before joining the university. It needs to be mentioned that although all Saudi students including the participants learn English in school, there are three main reasons that may motivate them to choose The English language as a university major. First, as mentioned in section 1.2, there is a general discontent with the level of proficiency in English achieved by the end of the school education and this could be one reasons for the participants' desire to learn English at the university level. Second, having a university degree in English language is desirable in the Saudi job market and allows English language graduates to pursue careers not only related to the language itself but in many other areas e.g., banks, hospitals, retail and others (see section 1.2). Third, as mentioned in section 1.1., Saudi students' motivation to learn English on the university level may be related to the spread of English as global language that is needed to engage in many areas of life such as, media, social media and technology. Table 3.1 below

presents the six cases in this study. Pseudonyms are used to maintain the anonymity of the participants.

Table 3.1: List of participants

Participant	Age	Place of birth	Marital status	Previous education	Academic level	Years of learning English
Nora	19	Al-Ahsa	Single	Public school	Year 2	8
Fatma	22	Al-Ahsa	Single	Public school	Year 2	8
Leena	21	Al-Ahsa	Divorced	Public school	Year 3	9
Reema	20	Al-Ahsa	Single	Public school	Year 3	9
Sara	22	Al-Ahsa	Single	Public school	Year 4	10
Lama	24	Al-Ahsa	Single	Public school	Year 4	10

3.5.2.1. Sampling

Having a case study design meant that the researcher needed to gain a deep understanding of the participants' experiences and as a result a choice was made to focus on six participants. This arguably allows for the exploration of each case in depth and at the same time ensures that there are enough cases and data to answer the research questions and provide informative and valid insights into the relationship between learning English as a foreign language and identity. This decision was informed by the recommendation of several scholars in this field to have no more than eight cases (Creswell, 2013; Duff, 2008; Hood, 2009; Schoch, 2019). Therefore, careful sampling procedures were used to ensure having a sample that could provide rich data to enable the researcher to make insightful, valid and reliable arguments regarding the issue under investigation (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Dornyei, 2007). In this study two sampling strategies were used. The first was convenience sampling, which refers to choosing participants that the researcher has access to (Dornyei, 2007; Mackey & Gass, 2005). Students in the English Language Department at King Faisal University, where the researcher worked, were chosen to take part in this study. This step also had a purposeful element in the fact that all participants had to be Saudi, female and majored in English. The decision to have only female participants was made partly due to convenience, as the researcher had connections in the

female section at the English Language Department at King Faisal University. The second reason was that inspiration for this topic came from the researcher's experience teaching at this department. Finally, Saudi females present an interesting group to investigate as learning English may present them with a different way of viewing themselves as women, their roles and their rights.

The researcher got in touch with faculty members in the English Language Department and asked them to make an announcement requesting volunteers for the study. Over forty students got in touch to inquire about the study. After explaining to them the nature of their participation, thirty-eight Saudi female students in the English Language Department volunteered to take part in this study. But only twenty-seven wrote the first diary. The number gradually fell to fifteen. This number may be more than what is recommended in case study research, but it was decided to do the data collection with all of these participants to avoid any problems that may be caused by participants' withdrawal, a phenomenon which is common in longitudinal qualitative research (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Collecting data from a large number of participants while presenting the results of only a small number of them has been done in a multiple case study by Kinginger (2008) investigating the L2 experiences of American students during their study abroad in France. They collected data from twenty-four participants and presented case studies of six of them.

The second sampling strategy used to choose the participants for the case study was purposive sampling, a common sampling strategy in qualitative research. It refers to using specific measures to choose the participants (Duff, 2020; Yin, 2003). There were several criteria used for choosing the six cases to focus on in the current study. The first, as mentioned above, included the nationality, sex and major. The second was typicality. According to Duff (2006, 2008, 2012a) and Patton (1990), it is possible to choose participants for a case study based on the fact that they represent typical features of the population. This can be helpful in terms of the transferability or generalizability of the results, although this is not the goal of qualitative research (see section 3.10.1.2). The six cases chosen for this multiple case study were graduates from Saudi public schools and did not live or study English abroad. These criteria were used because these participants represent the typical Saudi female university student as 87% of Saudi students are enrolled in public schools (Strategic Gears Management Consultancy, 2018). Although this study does not aim to generalize its findings, using typicality helps in terms of the transferability of the results as the participants are similar to the majority of Saudi female learners of English and therefore their experiences may be applicable or similar to others. Using this criterion was also informative because in Saudi public schools the teaching of English is limited to four classes per week. The method and quality of teaching is basic; as a result, there are few chances for interaction and socialization in English (Alshahrani & Al-Shehri, 2012).

When students enter the English Language Department at the university level they are faced with a new experience in terms of the quality and nature of English learning. So, having participants who graduated from public schools and did not have any experience of living and studying abroad was informative for this research because they were going through a new experience in terms of learning and socialization in English (on linguistic and cultural levels) and therefore it is possible to investigate whether this new experience had implications on them as people, specifically their view of themselves. The third criterion was the year of study; the researcher wanted to have a broader view of the target population of Saudi female university learners of English and therefore the participants of this study came from the three years of study in the English program. There were two participants from year two, two participants from year three and two participants from year four. Students from year one are not enrolled in the English Language Department courses as they are preparatory-year students; therefore, they were not recruited in this study. To collect the information needed to carry out the purposeful sampling explained above a background information form was used.

3.6. Data collection tools

One of the key elements in a good study design is employing suitable data collection tools that enable the researcher to answer the research questions. As mentioned earlier, four data collection tools were used in this study: a background information form, diaries, semi-structured interviews and field notes. A detailed description of each instrument is presented in this section.

3.6.1. Background information form

A short online form was sent to the participants to collect basic background information. According to Dornyei (2007), this tool is useful for researchers to collect important data on the participants. In this study this included the participants' age, their education, marital status, any travel experiences they may have had, and other relevant information in terms of their background and learning of English (see appendix 2). This data was needed to apply the purposeful sampling criteria as explained above (see section 3.5.2.1). In addition, it was needed to create a profile for each case. This was important for the thick descriptions needed for this type of qualitative study and more specifically for the transferability of the results (see section 3.10.1.2). In addition, the data from the background information was compared with the data from the interviews and diaries and was employed in understanding and interpreting them more fully.

3.6.2. Diaries

Diaries were used in this study to have a documentation of the participants' experience of learning English in terms of their engagement in learning English inside and outside the classroom and the effect of this experience on linguistic and personal levels. As Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli (2003) explain, in this research tool, the participants were asked to provide a regular

written record of their lives and experiences. This was done on a monthly basis. In this study, diaries were chosen as a data collection tool for several reasons. First, this tool fits within the interpretive framework and was useful in answering the research questions because it is informative in exploring topics of a social and psychological nature (Bolger et al., 2003). Exploring identities, which is a complex topic, required rich data that diaries helped in supplying. Second, they were quite useful for the researcher as they provided continuous information on participants' lives (Block, 2015). Diaries would also give the participants a chance to provide their own perspective and interpretation, which could be highly informative. They could also enable the researcher to elicit information from the participants that they may not express in person due to the sensitive nature of the information, the participants' state of mind during interviews and time constraints. In this investigation, ten diaries were collected over a period twelve months because of the summer break in which the participants were not attending English language courses. During this period, it was decided to have one diary covering the months of the summer-break period so the participants could report any personal learning or use outside of term time.

A diary prompt has been designed to aid the participants in writing their diaries. The diary prompt was based on the goals of the research as well as diaries used in other studies that investigated the relationship between language learning and identity (Tong, 2011; Umrani, 2015). The diary format differed from one study to another but all of them requested participants to write down accounts of their experiences learning and using English inside and outside the classroom. In this study, the diary needed to address the following points:

1. Participants learning and use of English inside and outside the classroom.
2. Participants' linguistic progress and any challenges they face.
3. Any effect the process of learning English had on them.

For example, the diary prompt requested the participant to write about situations in which they used English, others' reactions to their use of English, their efforts to improve their English and the difficulties they faced with specific examples (see appendix 3). Using such prompts helped the researcher to direct the participants' attention to providing accounts of the issues under investigation to avoid the diaries being too general which is a common weakness for diaries as a data collection tool and something that was encountered during the pilot study. If the participants did not experience any of the things requested in the prompts, then they would not write about it as indicated in the instructions and by the researcher. In the prompts, the participants were instructed that the diary's length should be more than 300 words.

The researcher is aware that diaries require a lot of commitment and written communication skills on the part of the participants. In this study, the participants were university students and had the freedom to write the diary in Arabic or English. Therefore, it was expected that they

would be able to do this task. In terms of commitment, the participants were asked to submit ten diary entries (April, 2019 to April, 2020) in an electronic format. These factors might encourage the participants to commit to writing the diaries as it should not take too much of their time. The decision to have one entry per month was made to ensure that the participants had enough experience and material to draw on while writing the diary and to encourage them to commit for a longer period as mentioned before.

Qualtrics was used to collect the diary entries. Every month, a link was sent to the participants to write their diary. This made it easier for the participants to do this task as they had access to their diary whenever they wanted. Once the diary had been written and submitted by the participant, it was imported into MAXQDA for thematic analysis (see appendix 6 for a sample of the diaries).

3.6.3. Semi-structured interviews

A decision was made to use semi-structured interviews, which are common in applied linguistic research, as they fit within the social constructivist paradigm and the goals of this research. In applied linguistics, using interviews can provide in-depth data about the lives, beliefs and experiences of the participants (Dornyei, 2007). It can also elicit the interpretation of the participants on their lives, experiences and views (Cohen et al., 2007). This is one of the strengths of this instrument. In addition, many people feel comfortable sharing information in this way as it resembles their everyday social interactions (Dornyei, 2007). These were the reasons this tool was used.

There were specific points that the researcher wanted to investigate in-depth especially after collecting some diary entries because these diaries gave an initial idea of the views of the participants. The interview questions needed to uncover any effects learning English had on the participants and how the participants viewed those effects and explained them. It also aimed to explore the participants' investment and agency as well as any other factors that influenced them during this process in order to provide an account of the participants' experiences learning English. Using semi-structured interviews meant having pre-prepared questions to address these points. But at the same time, issues could be brought up during the conversation. It also allowed for follow up on any interesting points the interviewee brought up. All participants were asked fourteen questions which revolved around learning English as a foreign language, their views of themselves and their social cultural views. The interview questions were divided into three parts, they were:

Part 1: background questions in which the participants were asked to talk about themselves, their background, their interests and aspirations for learning English and generally in life.

Part 2: questions about the participants' experiences learning English, the factors affecting them and their feelings about learning and using English,

Part 3: questions that focused on if and how participants think learning English may have affected them as people.

To come up with the interview questions, the researcher reviewed interview questions developed and used in studies investigating similar topics (see Alsweel, 2013; Mercer, 2011; Mustafa, 2017; Umrani, 2015). These studies investigated the identities of English language learners in different settings. In their investigations, these studies relied on interviews as a data collection tool that helped them in uncovering how language learners' identities are affected by their experiences learning English. The questions in these interviews revolved around several points: learning and using English inside and outside the classroom, future goals, social relationships and goals and personal and social change. For example, Alsweel (2013, p. 207) asked in her interviews, 'What are your future plans? Why?'. In this study a question was formulated to ask about how the participants viewed their future (see appendix 4 for the pre-set interview questions and appendix 7 for a sample of the interviews).

The steps taken in the interview procedure for this study were as follows. First, the interview was designed, tested and revised. The researcher agreed with each participant on a time that suited her. The participant was given the freedom to speak in Arabic or English; this was done to allow the participants to express themselves in the way they preferred. All the participants spoke in Arabic except for Lama. The interviews lasted for around sixty to ninety minutes. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by the researcher soon after the interview finished to be accurate and avoid any confusion in writing down and understanding what had been said (McLellan, MaCqueen & Neidig, 2003). Verbatim transcription, in which every word produced during the interviews was written, was used to ensure that the transcripts accurately reflected the conversation that took place during the interviews (Loubere, 2017; McLellan, MaCqueen & Neidig, 2003). The transcription was revised, then the transcripts were imported into the MAXQDA software to carry out the thematic analysis (see section 3.9.1.2).

3.6.3.1. Follow-up interviews

A second follow-up interview was conducted with each one of the six participants after analyzing all their diaries and interviews (see appendix 5). Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this interview was done remotely. The interview was conducted at the end of the academic year to allow the participants to draw on a whole year of learning English. The goal of these interviews was to elicit clarifications on any unclear points in the participants' data. It was also an opportunity to ask participants to reflect on the period after the first interviews were conducted and consider whether there was any change in their experiences and views. Furthermore, it was a chance for the researcher to establish the representativeness of the results by doing a form of

member-check. In this study, member checks were done through asking the participants to provide their opinions of whether the initial results of the analysis were reflective of their experience and consider anything they would like to add, correct or clarify (Thomas, 2017). For example, participants were asked whether the statement 'learning English made me feel more cultured and knowledgeable' was an accurate description of their experience and whether they wanted to correct, clarify, change or add anything in that regard. Member checks are encouraged in qualitative research to improve trustworthiness and credibility (see section 3.10.1.1.). They are aligned with the goals of this research, the case study design and the interpretive approach (Thomas, 2017). Such checks are commonly used in similar studies (see Alsweel, 2013; Kim, 2003b; Kim & Duff, 2012; Umrani, 2015).

3.6.4. Field notes

Field notes provided a contextualization for the participants' experiences inside the classroom (Cohen et al, 2007; Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). In this qualitative study, there is a need to provide a description of the setting in order for the audience to learn about the context because of its importance within the social constructivist paradigm and the interpretive framework (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Field notes were written throughout the data collection process e.g., interviews, visits to the setting and attendance of classes. After getting permission from King Faisal University, the researcher visited the College of Arts where the participants were studying and attended six classes with the participants. Specifically, the researcher attended two classes with the two participants from each of the three levels. During that time, the researcher wrote down field notes on the physical and interactional settings such as the number of students, the teaching methods and classroom activities (Cohen et al, 2007; Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). In addition, the researcher wrote down field notes during the interviews to document any remarks about the participants, their behavior, and what they said. This data was used to provide a description of the setting, specifically in terms of how teaching and learning English took place in the English Language Department at King Faisal University. Mackey and Gass (2005) emphasize the importance of providing such thick descriptions to situate the findings and improve the transferability of the results (see section 3.10.1.2.). In addition, in this study, the field notes were categorized and compared to the codes derived from the thematic analysis of the interviews and diaries. This was helpful in better understanding, and in some instances supporting, the diary and interview data. This understanding of the participants' experiences inside the classroom helped in interpreting the data under the social constructivist paradigm (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Field notes were also used by Kim & Duff (2012) in their study investigating the identities of Korean learners of English in Canada.

3.7. Piloting

Carrying out a pilot study is considered an important step in many research projects (Dornyei, 2007; Mackey & Gass, 2005). It is always helpful if the researcher can test the study design in general and specifically the data collection tools to ensure they are informative in terms of answering the research questions and fulfilling the goals of the research. A pilot study can highlight the areas that need work in terms of the study design overall. Piloting can also help the researcher identify potential problems and issues that might take place and try to avoid them. In addition, it provides the researcher with a chance to test his/her research skills and identify any required training and development.

For these purposes, a pilot study was conducted in January 2019. The researcher traveled to Saudi Arabia after acquiring approval from King Faisal University to conduct a pilot study in the English Language Department. The study design at that time was a mixed-methods design in which data from questionnaire responses from a large number of students was supported by in-depth analysis of interview, diaries and observational data of a smaller number of students. The participants were Saudi female university students majoring in the English language. During the pilot study, all the initial data collection tools: a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, a diary and an observation, were used to gather data. The researcher obtained twenty-two questionnaire responses. Subsequently, four students of the twenty-two participants that took part in the questionnaire volunteered to do the interviews and diaries. The researcher also observed one classroom session. A descriptive statistical report was generated through Qualtrics which was used to distribute the questionnaire while thematic analysis was carried out on the interview and diary data. Moreover, data from the observation were used to support and contextualize the findings. Carrying out the analysis, deriving the results and consequently the findings was important for me as a researcher to have confidence in my ability to carry out this type of analysis.

The results of the pilot study indicated that the overall study design employed was appropriate to answer the research questions. Because the data elicited was informative and useful for the researcher to present the case of each participant and how she experienced learning English and whether it affected her personally. The participants noted that the instructions and questions were clear in all the data collection tools and did not report any difficulties. The time to finish the questionnaire, to conduct the interview and to write the diary was reasonable and did not create any issues.

However, there were several areas that needed to be improved in terms of the study design. First, there appeared to be some overlap in the research questions, so they were changed into two questions. The first focused on the main goal of the current study which is exploring whether learning English as a foreign language might influence Saudi female students' sense of

self or identity. The second question complemented the first by exploring the factors the students perceived as affecting them during the English learning process to better understand the participants' experience.

The second issue that was encountered during the pilot study was the recruitment of the participants; some participants that volunteered at the beginning did not commit to doing all that was requested from them. To counter this, the study was deliberately over-recruited.

The third area where changes were needed related to the data collection tools. First, changes were made to the interview questions and diary prompts so that they could elicit more detailed data. The interview and diaries were revised and requests to mention actual situations and examples were included. Another change was in the use of the term identity, which appeared to be problematic due to its abstract nature. Therefore, it was decided to provide more clarity by using simpler terms. The wording of the interviews and diaries was revised and terms such as who you are and as a person were used instead of identity. In addition, an interview question was added to ask the participants what the term identity meant to them. This was done because it appeared that this term was vague and understood by different people in different ways. I asked the participants this question to ascertain what identity meant to them and to draw on this when interpreting their data. Furthermore, a decision was made to conduct follow-up interviews for clarifications and member-checks. These changes were helpful as the data elicited for the main study was more detailed and provided insights into various aspects of the participants' experiences learning English and views of themselves and the world around them.

As for the observations, a decision was made to conduct short follow-up interviews as a way of validating the researcher's notes and getting to know the participants' perspective on what took place. Later on, the usefulness of the observations was reconsidered as they provided external data while the research questions were focused on the inner thoughts and personal experiences of the participants which could be collected through interviews and diaries (Bolger et al, 2003; Cohen et al, 2007; Izadinia, 2019). In addition, as noted by Izadinia (2019), observations may make participants less comfortable and affect their normal behavior, which can have implications on the quality and validity of the data. As a result, a decision was made to only use field notes to describe the setting and provide a contextualization of the results as needed.

Finally, the usefulness of the questionnaire was reconsidered. After conducting the pilot study, a decision was made to make changes to the questionnaire to make it more focused and informative. So, there was a need to do two more pilots for it. The first one was for the novel constructs and items and the second was for the questionnaire as a whole after applying all the changes. These pilots were carried out in October and November 2019 on other groups of female students in the English Language Department. The results of the pilots indicated that the questionnaire was reliable. However, it did not appear to add much information that could not

be collected through the other data collection tools given the small number of participants. Therefore, it was not used and a simple background information form was used instead.

As a result of all the changes made after conducting the pilot study, the study design was completely qualitative and more focused on addressing the two distinct research questions. All the changes that were made proved beneficial for the study design as they improved the quality of the data collection tools to elicit detailed data to answer the research questions and did not compromise the trustworthiness of the study.

3.8. Data collection procedure

Using a number of data collection tools meant that a decision needed to be made in terms of the order in which they would be used. It was decided to start with the diaries in April 2019 as they took place over a long period of time. Later that year, the researcher traveled to Saudi Arabia and was able to visit the setting and collect field notes and conduct the first interviews. This was followed by a period of analysis in the first months of 2020. Then, follow-up interviews were conducted by the end of the academic year in Saudi Arabia in May/June 2020. This is a table showing the order of the data collection process.

Table 3.2: Data collection timeline

Month	Data collection	Notes
April/2019	Diary 1	Start of data collection
May	Diary 2	Summer Vacation
June		
July		
August		
September	Diary 3	
October	Diary 4	
November	Diary 5	
December	Interviews 1 Diary 6	
January/2020	Diary 7	
February	Diary 8	
March	Diary 9	
April	Diary 10	
May- June	Follow-up interviews	End of data collection

3.9. Data analysis

Analyzing the data is a crucial step in any research project. The data analysis method used in this study was chosen based on the data collection tools, its suitability within the social constructivist paradigm and its usefulness in answering the research questions.

3.9.1. Qualitative analysis

In this study, qualitative analysis has an important role in achieving an understanding of how Saudi female university students think the process of learning English influences them as people. The decision to use thematic analysis was based on a consideration of the research goals and the research design.

3.9.1.1. Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is 'a focus on the content of what is said, leaving to the side other aspects of the narrative such as how it was produced' (Block, 2015, p. 530). The data collected from the interviews and diaries were analyzed to find out the emerging themes showcasing the thoughts and views of the participants on how learning English affected them. Thematic analysis was also used in previous studies on this issue (Alsweel, 2013; Kim & Duff, 2012; Mustafa, 2017; Norton, 2000; Umrani, 2015).

The approach used to carry out the thematic analysis in this study was the reflexive thematic analysis approach as advocated by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Braun, Clarke, Hayfield, and Terry (2019). This approach was useful in this study because it highlights that there is no one reality and that meaning varies according to context. This approach acknowledges the role of the researcher in making sense of the data and this is why the approach is termed reflexive. In this type of thematic analysis, the researcher derives patterns from the data based on common meanings, whether on the semantic/explicit level or latent/implicit level. The semantic meanings refer to what the participants said about themselves and their experience e.g., 'I spend a lot of time learning English'. The latent meanings refer to what the participant's statement revealed about them e.g., 'I have no time to spend with my family and friends'. Both statements are linked to spending a lot of time learning English, but one was stated directly while the other one was stated indirectly. These meaning-based patterns or themes resulted from a critical and continuous process of iterative coding. To perform this process of thematic analysis, the six-step guide presented by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Braun et al (2019) was followed.

1. **Familiarization with the data**

The first step in carrying out the thematic analysis in this study was getting to know the data. This was facilitated by the fact that the researcher transcribed the oral data into a textual form; it was at this stage that data analysis started as the researcher was able to create a preliminary understanding of what was reported in the data (Bailey, 2008, Braun & Clarke, 2006, Dornyei,

2007). After that, the researcher immersed herself in the data through listening to the interview recordings and reading the entire data including the interviews, diaries, field notes and background information twice. During these readings, there was no coding, but the researcher wrote down notes expressing her thoughts and ideas on the data. It was also possible to identify similarities across different data collection tools, different participants and, on a larger level, similarities to literature on the topic.

2. Generating codes

The second step was carrying out a systematic and elaborate coding process of the entire data set. Before starting this process, decisions were made in regard to how the coding process would take place. This involved choosing an inductive or deductive approach to coding. Deductive coding which is aligned with social constructivism was used as the primary coding approach. It employs a top-down approach as the coding process is guided to some extent by certain concepts and theories (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2019). However, as Braun and Clarke (2006) and Braun et al (2019) point out, both approaches complement each other. Therefore, in this study deductive and inductive coding were used. In the first stage of coding, the researcher relied on the research questions, the second language socialization theory and related concepts to create the initial codes. In other words, in the deductive stage, the researcher assigned labels to texts based on how they represent relevant theoretical constructs, such as investment and agency. For example, in this stage, codes such as 'learning English for jobs' and 'learning English for communication' were used as they reflect the concept of investment. In the second stage of inductive coding, the researcher assigned descriptive codes to extracts of the data e.g., 'favorite course' and 'boring teacher'. These codes were then used to form the category of 'types of instruction and instructors'. Combining both approaches has been done in other research (see Braun & Clarke, 2009; Breda, Pinho, Bakas, & Durao, 2016; Duff, 2008). The other decision that needed to be made was related to which type of meanings the coding was going to focus on. In this study, the coding needed to be done on the two levels of semantic or descriptive meanings and the level of latent or indirect meanings as explained above. This is because, as Braun & Clarke (2006) and Braun et al. (2019) note, these two are a continuation of one another and to have a deep and comprehensive understanding of learner identity both are informative. Therefore, the focus of the coding process shifted from explicit meanings to implicit meanings in the advanced stages of coding. So, in the third stage of coding, the researcher focused on extracting codes based on the meanings in the data that needed some interpretation. For example, the code 'resistance to change/preserving identity' was used to describe the following quote:

> *I remained the best person, the usual one, the cultural mentality you know*
> *the things we're used to, we're born with. So, yeah, it opens things but, like,*

76

you soon return. Sometimes I said, like, I said to myself, like, if I had the
chance to study abroad, maybe something bad will happen, thank God! may
be like due to my mentality. (Lama-Interview1-Entry1)

With an established coding framework, the researcher started the coding process. As explained above, the first two waves of exhaustive detailed coding focused on the semantic and direct meanings in the data set. This was followed by a third wave of coding focusing on the latent meanings in the data (see appendix 8 for a sample of the coding). Then, the researcher reread the data and revised the codes in order to verify that they were representative of the data. The codes used for each participant were compared to make sure that they were exhaustive and not overlapping. In addition, these codes were compared to the field notes and the background information data. Figure 3.1 illustrates the coding process in this study.
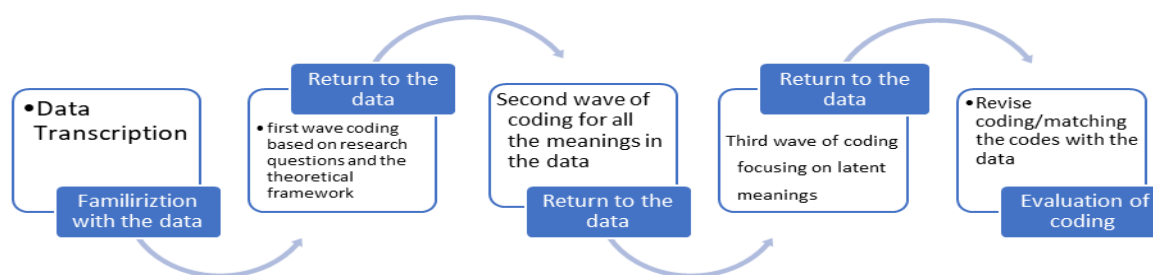
Figure 3.1: The coding process

To ensure the reliability or dependability of the coding process, a fellow researcher within the field of applied linguistics was given random samples of the diary and interview data along with a list of codes and their definitions. She was asked to code those samples and then a comparison was made between her coding and the researcher's coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The result indicated that her coding was more than 90% similar to the coding done by the researcher.

3. **Searching for themes**

The third step involved constructing themes from the detailed list of codes. This process was done by putting related codes into groups and using these codes along with extracts of data they represent to provide an account of a certain aspect of the issue under investigation. In other words, the researcher considered what each code was telling her about the participant; when a number of codes worked together to describe one aspect of the participant's experience they were put together under a theme. Braun and Clarke (2006) and Braun et al. (2019) compare the

role of the researcher in this step to a storyteller. As an example, in this study, the codes: confidence in using English, confidence in capabilities, confidence in social situations and others were gathered under the theme of confidence and empowerment because they revolved around one type of change the participants reported experiencing while learning English as they felt more confident and empowered. To achieve this, the researcher relied on visual representation of the data, i.e., thematic mapping to work out how codes combine into themes and at later stages how these themes relate to each other.

Because of the case study design of this investigation, themes were decided based on their prevalence on two levels: for each participant and across the data. In this study, these decisions were guided by whether such meanings represented key aspects of each participant's accounts by looking for recurring mentions of this theme by this participant in one or more data collection tools. In addition, these decisions were also guided by looking for recurring mentions of this theme across all the participants in all the data. This was facilitated by having multiple data collection tools which were aligned with the interpretive data driven nature of this project under the social constructivist paradigm.

However, it needs to be mentioned that, as Braun and Clarke (2006) and Braun et al. (2019) point out, having clear criteria to judge whether a certain pattern of meaning emerges as a theme is not possible. Because although it is possible to look for repetitions of meaning across the data, relying simply on quantifiable measures in this regard is discouraged as this may fail to capture aspects of the data that are key to answering the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2019). For example, only one of the six participants talked explicitly about having multiple identities. However, given the significance of statement and how it relates to literature on the topic, the researcher should not ignore it. This is why Braun and Clarke (2006) and Braun et al. (2019) encourage researchers to be flexible and use their judgment in making such decisions.

In this study quantifiable measures were used in presenting the frequency for each theme for each participant across the data. Duff encourages the use of quantification in qualitative research 'to reduce data' and demonstrate patterns (2008, p.163). In this study frequency figures provided evidence of the occurrence of each theme for all the participants. Frequency was calculated by counting the number of coded segments relating to each theme across the participants. In other words, all the extracts of the data coded under various codes that were gathered under a certain theme were counted to provide evidence of the occurrence of this theme overall, for each participant and for each data collection tool. However, no importance was assigned to the differences in frequency because they may not necessarily be indicative of the importance of the theme itself. Furthermore, since this study relied on self-reported data, there could be several reasons for the variation in the number of times each participant talked

about a certain theme. These could be related to the condition of the participants during data collection in terms of readiness and what they wanted to talk about. Therefore, the researcher did not want to make assumptions about the participants in terms of which themes were more important to them. The important point for the researcher was that all participants talked about all the themes. In future research it is advisable to find ways to collect data that would allow for presenting accounts for variations of frequency.

4. Refining the themes

The fourth step was reviewing the themes that were generated to decide whether they captured and represented the meanings in the data accurately and comprehensively. This was done by reading the extracts of coded data under each theme and deciding whether they created a unified meaning. In other words, checking whether the data under this theme revolved around one single meaning. It was also important to make sure that themes had clear boundaries. During this phase it appeared that there was some overlap between some of the themes, so the researcher revised these themes and merged some of them together. For example, confidence and empowerment were merged together in one theme because the data and analysis revealed that the participants' perception of empowerment was strongly connected to their feelings of increased confidence which allowed them to perform various tasks, help others around them and improve their status in society. Once the themes had been established, the researcher returned to working with the whole data set in order to see if any related data had not been coded appropriately under these themes. Finally, the initial thematic mapping done in step 3 was revised to verify the connections between the different themes and the way in which they worked together to tell a coherent narrative and answer the research questions (see appendix 11 for a mind map of the main themes).

5. Defining the themes

The fifth step was providing clear and detailed definitions of each theme. This included explaining the central meaning or essence of each theme, the scope of the theme and its boundaries. This step was helpful for the researcher to ensure that themes did not overlap and that they captured important meanings that were informative in answering the research questions. Finally, the names of the themes were revised. This was done to make sure the name of the theme reflected its content and was inviting for the reader (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2019). (For a list of the main themes and their definitions see appendix 10)

6. Writing the analysis report

The final step of thematic analysis was writing up a report that presented a thorough account of the narrative of the data. In doing so, the researcher was influenced by Bazley's (2009) three steps of reporting thematic analysis results which are describing, comparing and relating. First,

six individual reports were written about the six cases in this study after finishing the thematic analysis process. These reports included a description of each participant's background, her views on her experience learning English and how she viewed herself during this process. These reports of each participants' findings were helpful in making comparisons between participants and finding out the similarities and differences between them in terms of their FLL experience and any implication it may have had on their identities. Second, a cross-case report was written in which the common themes from all the participants were presented and supported by data extracts from the different participants. The data extracts used were translated from Arabic to English as needed. It needs to be mentioned that the report was not simply about stating the themes and providing examples from the data. It also included the researcher's interpretation of what the participants reported and how it fitted within the theoretical framework and the literature on this topic. All these elements of the report created a comprehensive picture and understanding of the experience of Saudi female learners of English and how this experience may have contributed to shaping their identities or views of themselves.

3.9.1.2. Computer-Assisted Analysis

Qualitative analysis in general requires a lot of time from the researcher to prepare, conduct, transcribe and analyze. Careful preparation, planning and time management helped the researcher overcome these difficulties and benefit from the wealth of data this method provided. To aid in the process of qualitative analysis, MAXQDA software was used. This software is similar to the more-widely used software used in qualitative analysis, NVIVO. MAXQDA was chosen because it is compatible with Arabic data which NVIVO does not support. This was important for the researcher as it allowed her to analyze the data in the language it was produced. This was beneficial to accurately capture the meanings in the data as some aspects of the meaning might otherwise have been lost in translation.

 MAXQDA has an interface that is similar to WINDOWS software as it has four windows that present four elements of content analysis which are: data/texts, codes/categories, editing and searches/checks (Oliveira, Santos, & Teixeira, 2013). In this study, MAXQDA Analytics Pro was used. This version of the software provides tools for qualitative analysis, quantitative analysis and mixed-methods analysis. This software was used and tested on some of the data from the pilot study to ensure its compatibility and usefulness for this investigation. However, the efficiency of any qualitative software depends on the ability of the researcher to carry out the qualitative analysis as it is merely a tool to aid in this process because it cannot code the data and generate themes, as this is the job of the researcher (Oliveira et al., 2013). Using this software helped the researcher be more systematic, organized and efficient in carrying out the qualitative analysis.

3.10. Quality Criteria

Academic research is considered a 'disciplined inquiry' (Dornyei, 2007, p. 48). Therefore, there must be quality standards or criteria that are used to assess any research study (Dornyei, 2007). However, due to the complex versatile nature of research and the fact that truth is not always straightforward, there is no one accepted way of measuring this. In qualitative research the term trustworthiness is used.

3.10.1. Trustworthiness

This study is qualitative and therefore it is necessary to explain how validity is viewed in this approach. Validity in qualitative research is much more difficult to assess due to the relative subjectivity of this type of research (Holliday, 2015). This is why some have suggested using the term trustworthiness instead of validity (Holliday, 2015). In order to achieve trustworthiness, there were several things that the researcher did. First, the researcher had to be very transparent in describing the research and the procedures that were followed during every step of the study (Holliday, 2015). According to Dornyei (2007), this gives the audience trust in the researcher's integrity. The researcher also followed the lead of the data and allowed any findings and arguments to emerge whether they were expected or not (Holliday, 2015). In addressing these issues, the researcher paid attention to the four elements of trustworthiness. These are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Dornyei, 2007).

3.10.1.1. Credibility

Credibility refers to the degree of accuracy to which the findings represent the reality of the phenomenon and participants under investigation (Mackey & Gass, 2005). To achieve it in this study, three techniques were used. The first was having a longitudinal element in the diaries. Mackey & Gass (2005) point out that following participants over an extended period of time (in this study the period was fourteen months) minimizes any influence the research process itself may have on the data and results. It also provided rich in-depth data that allowed for an examination of the foreign language learner's identity.

The second technique employed to increase credibility was triangulation or the use of multiple collection tools (Dornyei, 2007). Triangulation was done on the level of data collection by using interviews, diaries, a background information form and field notes. This strategy of triangulation gave the researcher and audience more trust in the findings because they were based on rich data that provided a full picture and thorough understanding of the issue under investigation. According to Korstjens and Moser (2018), triangulation is a common method researchers use to improve the validity of their study and create trust in their findings. Triangulation is beneficial in research of social nature as with applied linguistic research because it provides the researcher with a wealth of data from different tools that enabled

him/her to have a better understanding of the issue being investigated – as was the case with this study.

The third technique used to increase credibility was doing member-checks. Thomas (2017) notes that this strategy is encouraged in qualitative research and can be especially useful in case study research for two reasons. One reason is improving the credibility of the findings by having some form of validation from the participants that the results represent their realities. The other is to minimize researcher's bias and influence on the results as through the member checks the participants can correct any misrepresentation of them and their experiences. This was helpful for the researcher to maintain a reflexive process of thinking throughout the research process.

3.10.1.2. Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree in which the findings of the research may apply to others in different settings and contexts (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To achieve this, thick descriptions of the research setting and participants must be provided. These descriptions in this study included, a presentation of King Faisal University, the setting of this study, and more specifically the English Language Department in the College of Arts, its history, structure and student population. It also included background information on all the participants in the study, including basic facts such as age and social and educational details.

Mackey and Gass (2005) assert that providing such descriptions can help the audience determine if the research findings may be applicable to their context based on similarities in terms of participants and setting. In addition, having multiple cases that were compared to find out the similarities and differences in their experiences was helpful in that regard.

3.10.1.3. Dependability

Dependability refers to 'the stability of the findings over time' (Korstjens & Moser, 2018, p. 121). Some argue that it resembles the concept of reliability in quantitative research due to the fact that it focuses on the consistency of the results if the study was to be replicated. Dependability was supported in this study by maintaining the consistency of the researcher while conducting this study. This included choosing the theoretical framework for the study, matching it to a study design, participant recruitment, collection of data, its analysis and the reporting of results. An inquiry audit in which the researcher's notes of all the steps and choices taken during the research process were presented to a fellow researcher to examine and assess the dependability of this research. The auditor, a fellow researcher in applied linguistics who was not involved in the study, mentioned that all the decisions were consistent and there were no apparent mistakes or lack of logic.

3.10.1.4. Confirmability

A closely related concept to dependability is confirmability. It is concerned with the neutrality of the findings of the research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In other words, it addresses the extent to which the results of the study are independent of the researcher's views. To ensure that the data elicited from the participants was the basis of any findings in this research and that this data was not manipulated in any way by the researcher to fit within her own agenda, a peer-check was used. As mentioned in section 3.9.1.1, an external researcher was asked to check the coding of the data. She was also asked to read a brief report of the analysis to determine whether the results and researcher's interpretation were sound and reflected accurately what was reported by the participants. In addition, she reviewed some of the Arabic to English translations of the participants' responses and quotes.

In addition, keeping a journal where the researcher wrote down notes and memos reflecting her thoughts throughout the process was helpful in keeping track of everything and reflecting on her own role in the research process and the emergent findings (Hood, 2009; Schoch, 2019).

Finally, the anonymized original data used in the current study can be shared through a secure google drive and made available for other researchers to conduct an audit trail.

From the discussion presented above regarding the validity or trustworthiness of this research, one point that becomes clear is the importance of addressing the researcher's role because of her direct involvement in every step taken during this study.

3.10.2. Researcher reflexivity

In any type of research, it is difficult to assume complete objectivity. This is especially the case in qualitative research because the researcher is the one who conducts the data collection and analysis and determines the emergent findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The results of the study are based on how the researcher handles and interprets the data. Therefore, personal judgment, agenda and views may play a part in the outcome of the study.

Being a Saudi female who studied and taught English in King Faisal University, the setting of this study, meant that I had some thoughts and expectations regarding the issue under investigation. I had some prior knowledge of how teaching and learning took place at this institution, such as teaching methods, grading systems, some textbooks and courses. However, I was aware that this knowledge may not have been applicable or relevant in terms of the current students' experiences and that is why it should not have influenced in any way how I handled the data and the emergent findings. Continuous reflection and applying an iterative process during data analysis also helped in achieving that. In addition, using field notes, a personal journal and member checks during the process of data collection and analysis became key in understanding my relationship with the data and results. Finally, tracing all the results and

findings to parts of the data, i.e., quotes meant that all of them were relevant to the participants' experiences.

Acknowledging the researcher's influence in this way helped to prevent the results from being subjective. Nevertheless, it is difficult to claim complete objectivity, but this does not mean that the results are flawed or invalid because of the various efforts made to ensure that the research was conducted rigorously, with due attention to quality measures.

On the other hand, being a member of the community could be viewed as an advantage. Being a Saudi woman who went through a similar experience to the participants, helped me understand them better. During data collection, it became evident that having a shared background with the participants proved helpful, especially with the interviews. In addition, the results of the study did not completely match what I was expecting which signaled that I was able to put aside my own views and let the data speak for itself. For example, based on the findings of previous research, I did not expect the participants to associate learning English with westernization. Finally, to ensure that researcher's bias did not alter or change the results of the study, peer-checks and member-checks were used during different stages of data collection and analysis, as explained above.

3.11. Ethical issues

Research in social science that involves human participants raises ethical issues which the researcher should address (Dornyei, 2007). The researcher must ensure that due attention is paid to ensure participants' safety, privacy and anonymity and to make participation in the research beneficial or at least not harmful (De Costa, 2015). According to Dornyei (2007), such issues may be more prevalent in qualitative research because it sometimes deals with personal issues. However, he points out that research in educational settings does not normally pose much risk to participants.

The measures that were used in this study to address ethical issues, in line with the University of York guidelines and in compliance with the UK Concordat to support research integrity (2012), are the following. First, the researcher made contact with the participants and explained to them the general aim of the study, how the study would be conducted, and the nature of their participation in the study. It was explained to them that their participation was voluntary, and they had the right to withdraw. They were assured that they would remain anonymous and that no sensitive information about them would be shared. Their anonymity was ensured by using pseudonyms. The procedures used for data storage, usage and destruction were also mentioned. The data was stored in locked filing cabinets, a password-protected computer and storage pens. The data will be destroyed after ten years. The researcher also explained that if any of the participants would like to keep in touch after the study finishes to enquire about anything related

to the study, they were welcome to do so. The participants were given an information sheet and consent form to read and to sign if they agreed to take part in the study (see appendix 1a). Consent was also requested from the teachers for the attendance of classes (see appendix 1b). Before all of this was completed, ethical approval was granted by the ethics committee in the Department of Education at the University of York in December, 2018. In addition, approval from King Faisal University, the setting of this study, was requested and granted.

3.12. Conclusion

This chapter presented and described the research design used in this study. Since this study aims to explore whether and how learning English influences Saudi female students' identities, a social constructivist paradigm with an interpretive framework was adopted due to its suitability for this type of topic and research. A multiple case study was utilized to provide deep and detailed accounts of the experiences of six Saudi female learners of English as a foreign language. A qualitative approach was used to get in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences and views by using semi-structured interviews, diaries, a background-information form and field notes. Thematic analysis was carried out on the data in order to find out the views of the participants on the topic and to obtain detailed description and explanation of each participant's views. Several measures were used to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings of this study. First, having a longitudinal element as well as triangulation helped to address the issue in an appropriate manner. Second, careful planning and elaborate description of every step taken during this research process were employed. Peer-checks and member-checks were used during the process of data collection and analysis. Third, relating the findings of this study to theories and other studies also helped in establishing the legitimacy of the results. Fourth, a pilot study was conducted to determine the efficiency of the study design in answering the research questions and fulfilling the goals of this study. Prior to that, ethical issues were considered, and ethical approval was granted by the department of education ethics committee at the University of York.

Chapter four: Results

4.1. Introduction

The main aim of this study was to investigate Saudi female learners' identity during the learning of English as a foreign language and to ask the following research questions:

1. How do Saudi female learners of English as a foreign language view themselves during the process of learning English?

1.1. What factors are perceived to influence the learning experience of English as a foreign language among Saudi female learners?

Since this study views meaning and reality as socially constructed by individuals and realized through language, the answers to the above research questions are based on what participants reported in terms of their English learning experience. Six steps of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al, 2019) were carried out to code the diaries and interview data and find out the emerging themes for each participant. Individual reports were then written for each participant (see appendix 9 for a summary of the individual case reports). After that, the researcher compared the findings from each participant and was able to find the common themes across all six participants in terms of how they viewed themselves during learning English and the factors influencing them during this process. The results of the cross-case thematic analysis are presented in this chapter.

In this research, learning English is viewed as a process of acquiring, using and engaging with English inside and outside the classroom. This is based on the proposal of the SLS theory that language learning goes beyond what happens in the classroom (Duff, 2007, 2011). The accounts of the participants also revealed that learning English for them went beyond the courses they were studying at the university, as they often referred to other engagement they had with English whether through books, media or online as a form of learning. Therefore, in the presentation of the results, the researcher provided quotes that included mentions of all these aspects as evidence of how learning English influenced the participants' views of themselves. It needs to be mentioned that some of the quotes do not have a direct mention of learning English, but all the quotes were responses to questions about learning English. In addition, the participants' data drew on all their time learning English at the university and not only the period of the current study. Furthermore, most of the quotes used were from the interviews as it turned out they were more effective as a data collection tool in teasing out the inner experiences and thoughts of the participants than the diaries, which had limited benefits (the reasons for this are discussed in section 6.5). Since the majority of the data was in Arabic, most of the quotes used here were translated from Arabic to English.

The chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section provides a profile of each participant including a summary of her background information. The second section answers the first research question; it presents the findings related to how the participants viewed themselves while learning English. It describes the dynamic, changing nature of the participants' identities. More specifically, it explains how the following themes that were derived from the data: knowledge and culture, confidence and empowerment, acceptance and understanding, self-expression and lifestyle and interests contributed to changing how the participants viewed themselves while learning English. The third section addresses the sub-research question; it presents the findings in regard to the factors perceived to influence the participants' experience of learning English and considers both internal and external factors. Figures are used to provide the frequency of each theme as evidence of its occurrence in the data of each participant. Frequency is presented in terms of the number of times each theme was mentioned in the data. The difference in frequency between the different themes is not of importance here, because, as Braun and Clarke (2006) and Braun et al. (2019) noted, in thematic analysis, frequency does not necessarily equal importance (see section 3.9.1.1). Therefore, the themes are presented based on their relevance to the participants' experiences and their relation to each other and not on their frequency. In the presentation of the results, links to theories and other studies are presented to establish connections to literature and help the reader make sense of the large amount of data; these connections are discussed in detail in the discussion chapter. The presentation of the results in this way is dictated by the nature of the research and by way of helping the reader to understand how the findings answer the research questions, how they relate to each other and how they help shed light on the relationship between FLL and identity.

4.2. Participants' profiles

4.2.1. Nora

Nora (pseudonym) is a second-year student in the English Language Department at King Faisal University. She is nineteen years old. She was born and lived all her life in Al-Ahsa, a city in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia, where King Faisal University is located. According to her, she comes from a middle-class family and has five siblings. Her parents are both university graduates and, as described by her, have limited to average proficiency of English. The father learned English through personal efforts and the mother was able to learn some English words to communicate with housemaids from other countries. Her siblings learned English in schools. Before joining the university, she studied in Saudi public schools where the medium of instruction was Arabic. During that time, she received instruction in English for seven years. She traveled sometimes outside Saudi Arabia and when she did, she visited nearby Arabian Gulf countries. She mentioned that she tried to use English as much as she could during her travels. She expressed a love for languages as she previously learned Korean and now wants to learn

French. She aspires to be an academic or a translator after graduating from the university with a bachelor's degree in the English language. She also dreams of opening an English language learning and teaching institute where she can help people learn English in non-traditional ways.

4.2.2. Fatma

Fatma (pseudonym) is a twenty-two-year-old second-year student in the English Language Department. She was born and lived all her life in Al-Ahsa in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia. She comes from a middle-class family and is the youngest of six siblings. Due to the age difference between her and the other members of her family, she did not have much connection to them except for one of her sisters. She traveled sometimes to neighboring Arabian Gulf countries, where she occasionally used English. All her school education was in Saudi public schools. During that time, she received seven years of instruction in English. After graduating from secondary school, she enrolled in a general management institute where she got a diploma in human resources. After that she joined the English Language Department at King Faisal University. She hopes to work in the field of human resources.

4.2.3. Leena

Leena (pseudonym) is a twenty-one-year-old third-year student in the English Language Department at King Faisal University. She was born and lived all her life in Al-Ahsa. She comes from a middle-class family. She is divorced and has one child. Leena lives with her family which consists of her parents and five siblings. Some of her family members have some level of proficiency in English. She studied in Saudi public schools before joining the university. In school, she received instruction in English as a foreign language for seven years. She traveled occasionally to Arabian Gulf countries where she sometimes used English. She wants to work in Saudi Aramco, one of the biggest oil companies in Saudi Arabia and the world.

4.2.4. Reema

Reema (pseudonym) is a twenty-year-old third-year student in the English Language Department at King Faisal University. She was born and lived all her life in Al-Ahsa. She comes from a middle-class family. She described herself and her background as conservative. Her parents are both university graduates. She has nine siblings; she is the sixth and the oldest one still living at home; she mentioned that she carries a lot of responsibilities because of that. Among her siblings, her older sister is the closest to her as they have a lot in common because they both majored in English language. She traveled sometimes to countries like Malaysia, Egypt and Siri Lanka where she used English regularly. Before joining the university, she learned English as a subject in school for seven years. She aspires to be an academic or a translator.

4.2.5. Sara

Sara (pseudonym) is a twenty-two-year-old fourth-year student at the English Language Department in King Faisal University. She was born and lived all her life in Al-Ahsa. She described her economic background as above average. She is the oldest of seven siblings. Her mother is an English teacher, and her father has a master's degree in sociology and works as an advisor. All her family have some proficiency in English. She received all her education in Saudi public school. During that time, she received instruction in English as a foreign language for seven years. She often traveled abroad to countries in Europe and Asia where she used English all the time. Sara did not have clear professional goals in terms of what kind of career she wanted to pursue after her graduation, but she mentioned that she wanted to have a job to provide for herself.

4.2.6. Lama

Lama (pseudonym) is a twenty-four-year-old fourth-year student in the English Language Department in King Faisal University. She was born and lived all her life in the city of Al-Ahsa. She described her family as a middle-class family. She has nine siblings, of which she is the second youngest and the only one still living at home. Most of her family members have some level of proficiency in English. Because her parents are old and the majority of her siblings are much older than her, married and busy with their lives, she reported feeling not understood and not having much connection to them. She traveled sometimes outside Saudi Arabia and when she did, she used English for communication. Her previous education was in a Saudi public school where the medium of instruction is Arabic. During that time, she studied English language as a subject in school for seven years. After that, she joined a technical college where she obtained an accounting diploma. Then, she joined King Faisal University to study for a bachelor's degree in the English language. Lama was not sure of what she wanted to do after her graduation, but she mentioned that she aspires to continue her education by working as an academic and pursuing a PhD degree.

4.3. Saudi female learners' views of themselves

The analysis revealed that learning English contributed to the participants viewing themselves differently, specifically the participants viewed their identities as dynamic and changing. All six participants reported that they created identities for themselves that were different from what they used to be before their English learning experience and different from others around them, as shown in these quotes:

> *I know that the language affected me, and affected my personality. I find that
> my personality differed from many girls even though they study English.
> (Sara-Interview1-Entry1 (Sara-I1-E1), translated from Arabic)*

It changed me a lot as a person like whether on the academic, professional and social sides. My studies changed me, like to develop or try to develop, being in a certain level and trying to advance to another level, honestly it developed me a lot. (Fatma-I2-E1, translated from Arabic)

In this study, the dynamic nature of the participants' identities can be seen in the fact that they were different in five ways. First of all, the participants reported that they felt different in their development and growth in terms of knowledge and culture. Second, they reported that they felt different in terms of having more confidence and feeling more empowered. Third, they reported that they felt different in terms of being more accepting and understanding of differences between people, societies and cultures. Fourth, the participants reported that they felt they were different in terms of the way they expressed themselves. Fifth, they reported that they felt they were different in their interests and lifestyle. The idea of difference and change in the five areas listed above emerged from the participants' self-reported data.

Figure 4.1 below illustrates the common themes from all six participants in regard to how they viewed themselves differently while learning English and the number of times each theme was mentioned across the data.
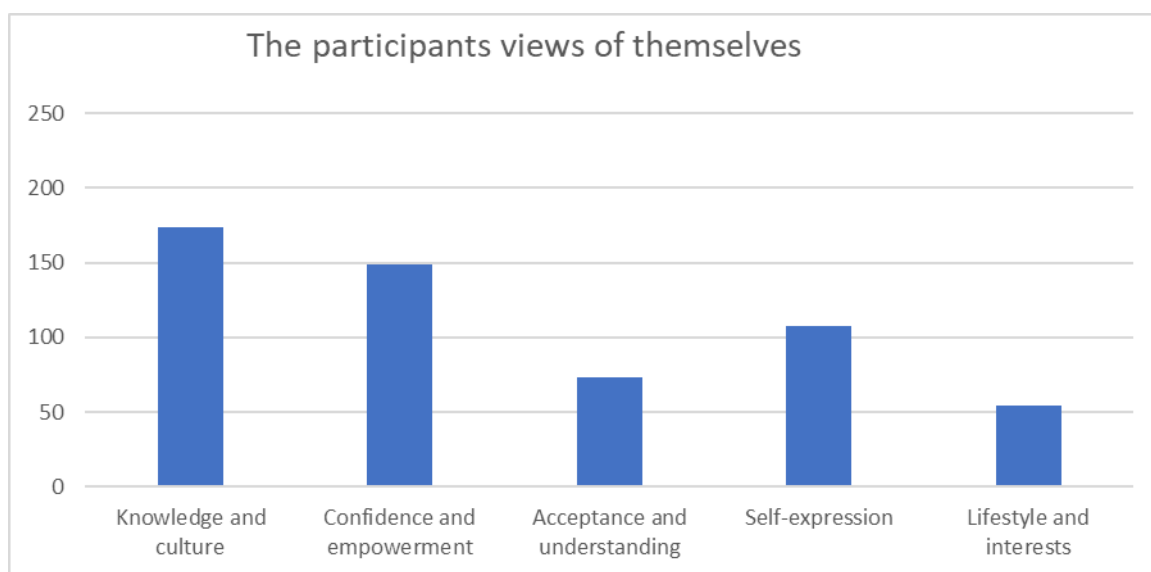
Figure 4.1: Frequency of themes relating to participants' view of themselves across the data

The figure above shows the five themes that emerged in terms of how Saudi female learners of English as a foreign language viewed themselves. These themes are knowledge and culture, confidence and empowerment, acceptance and understanding, self-expression and lifestyle and interests. There is some variation in the number of times each theme was mentioned in the data. Knowledge and culture was mentioned the most, followed by confidence and empowerment, self-expression, acceptance and understanding and finally lifestyle and interests. This variation in frequency could signal that some themes were more relevant or important than others to some

participants or in general. However, as explained earlier, this will not be assumed in this study. Therefore, the themes will not be presented following the order of frequency but based on how each one informs the others. The theme of knowledge and culture is presented first because it is an element of the other themes. Knowledge and culture is followed by confidence and empowerment, acceptance and understanding, self-expression and lifestyle and interests.

4.3.1. Knowledge and culture

All six participants in the study reported that they became more knowledgeable and more cultured while learning English. In other words, they were able to learn new things through the university education they were receiving in English and through the English language itself. The English language gave them access to a variety of content which made them feel educated, aware and cultivated. Figure 4.2 displays the number the number of times each participant talked about the theme of knowledge and culture in both the interviews and diaries.

	Knowledge and culture					
	Nora	Fatma	Leena	Reema	Sara	Lama
Diaries	11	7	8	13	3	2
Interviews	26	17	16	26	24	21
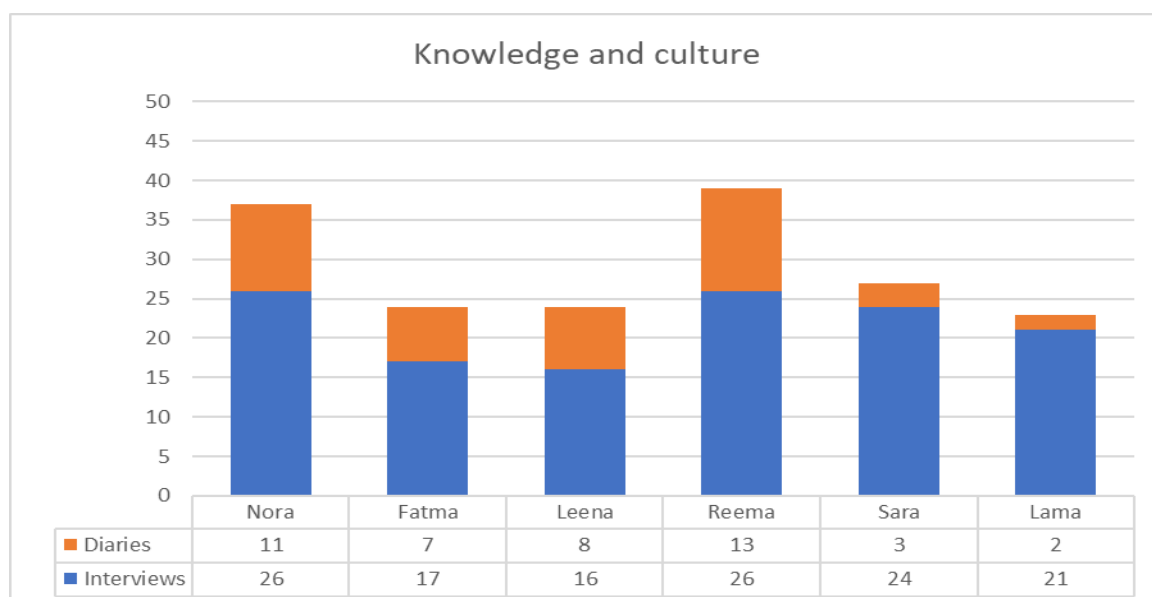
Figure 4.2: Frequency of knowledge and culture in the data

The figure above shows that this theme appeared to be a common aspect of the participants' experiences. The figure also reveals that while all the participants talked about this theme, some of them discussed it more than others. Nora and Reema had more to say than the other participants. This could signal that this theme was more important to these participants or constituted a key part of their learning English experience more than the others.

All six participants mentioned that during the process of learning English, they acquired more knowledge in various fields such as linguistics, literature, culture and others (types of knowledge will be discussed in sections 4.3.1.1 and 4.3.1.2). This knowledge acquisition contributed to them viewing themselves as culturally aware individuals, as this quote from Reema demonstrates:

It lets me feel cultured, I feel I have knowledge, I have experience, when I talk to someone I feel I have confidence in myself talking about something I know already and have information about, and a language that I master it now from my studies. It is a great feeling honestly I feel proud of myself. (Reema-I1-E1, translated from Arabic).

The participants attributed their perception of being cultured to the information they acquired on linguistic, cultural and other levels while learning English. According to the participants, this knowledge was acquired through two means. The first was through the classroom learning experience. In other words, through the instruction, materials and discussions that took place in courses, the participants were introduced to topics that they had not learned about before, and this increased their knowledge. For example:

Indeed, the language affected my culture and view of life especially the new topics we study and discuss in class. (Leena-D2-E1, translated from Arabic)

The second was through English language content which they were able to access because of their learning of English. In other words, learning English gave the participants the ability to access content in English such as books, films, shows, YouTube and social media that also increased their knowledge. For example:

My studies gave me more information, I became capable, as long as I learned the language I could read and follow things in the language itself, read English books, watch things in English and understand it, this made me more cultured on both sides, the Arabic and the English. (Reema-I2-E1, translated from Arabic)

The quotes above signal that learning English was considered informative and culturally enriching. According to the participants, this could be linked to the status of English as a global language, specifically the fact that a command of the English language allows access to domains of knowledge not necessarily available in other languages, which in turn gives the learner a window into the world, as shown in these quotes:

From a life perspective, sometimes there are things, Praise God, that English opens your eyes to, different things, things you did not think before were an important issue, something that is spread to that extent. But with learning the language, you start to discover that, no, this is present in this country and that country. The reason why is basically the English language because it is a spoken language in many places. (Reema-I1-E2, translated from Arabic)

Because most information is more available in English, more than Arabic, most sources are in English. Most of the time I search in English, for example if I have a presentation, I don't search in Arabic. Some girls search in Arabic, I search in English and Arabic at the same time. I find more information than in Arabic. So, sources from both sides but the information in English is usually more, you feel you find more information in English, you cannot find it in Arabic, so the information is more. (Fatma-I1-E1, translated from Arabic)

The quotes above show that the participants considered learning English eye-opening to them in terms of discovering the world and acquiring knowledge that is available in English. This indicates that English as global language and probably globalization play a role in the participants' experiences learning English (see section 5.9).

Although all participants talked about having more information in different fields e.g., climate change and music, generally, the knowledge fields that all six participants talked about were: knowledge of the English language and knowledge of societies and cultures.

4.3.1.1. Knowledge of the English language

All six participants talked about learning new things about the English language. This included information on English grammar, vocabulary and phonetics. They were also able to learn about literature, linguistics and translation. For example, in the following quotes Nora talked about learning about the different expressions, accents and dialects, while Fatma talked about studying linguistics, translation and literature:

With the English language, I am talking about phrases and expressions that would mean something, for example, in their customs you should not say this word because of that. For example, in the different dialect we know that people from there say this, we know it more and we know how to differentiate between the English accents. In America itself for example New York is different from LA. (Nora-I1-E1, translated from Arabic)

This semester, I am going deeper in the language with courses like linguistics, translation and literature. (Fatma-D7-E1, translated from Arabic)

The fact that learning English at King Faisal University involved learning about literature and various theories was also informative for the participants in terms of their views of life and the world around them, (see section 4.3.3), as mentioned here:

> *Because I studied a lot of theories and a lot of I don't know what can I call it*
> *cultures or something like this related to the past their past not ours of*
> *course. Now I can understand them why they are like reacting to each other*
> *like doing this, there is a lot of theories they are believing in or I don't know*
> *they practice these theories without thinking about it. (Lama-I1-E2)*

It needs to be mentioned that there was a difference between the participants in this area. The participants from year four (Sara and Lama) connected having more knowledge to courses of a theoretical nature more than the other participants. This could be related to the structure of the English language program itself as in advanced stages there are more courses of that nature.

The point about learning about other societies and cultures through learning English is an important finding in this study and is presented in the following section.

4.3.1.2. Knowledge of cultures and societies

All six participants mentioned that as they learned English, they were becoming more knowledgeable of other cultures and societies as shown in these quotes by Nora:

> *English has influenced me a lot because I did not only learn the language*
> *but I've learnt about new cultures and that change my views to some of my*
> *society issues. (Nora-D1-E1)*

> *There are many benefits of language learning, a lot, and one of the best*
> *things I love is that it widens your horizons and increases your cultural*
> *knowledge. (Nora-I1-E2, translated from Arabic)*

From the quote above, it appears that the participant considered having more knowledge of cultures as one of the benefits of learning English. However, it needs to be mentioned that some participants appeared to value this aspect of learning English more than others. For example, Nora, Reema and Sara repeated multiple times that having knowledge of other societies and cultures was a positive thing about learning English and something that they liked about this process. On the other hand, Fatma, for example, mentioned that she had more knowledge of other societies and cultures, but did not appear to be as passionate about this type of knowledge. This could be related to differences in motivation as Fatma asserted that the main reason behind her desire to learn English was to help her find a job and therefore she may not have been that invested in acquiring this type of knowledge. While Sara's motivation for learning English was mainly related to personal desire and development and therefore, she was invested in acquiring this type of knowledge to feel more cultured and developed.

Four participants (Nora, Leena, Reema and Sara) mentioned that learning English allowed them to learn about societies and cultures from all over the world e.g., Indian and Korean cultures.

But according to all six participants, most of the knowledge of societies and cultures they acquired while learning English revolved around having information on Western English-speaking societies and cultures' beliefs and lifestyles. It also made them more aware of issues such as racism and its history, especially in the West. The following quotes from Leena and Reema illustrate the types of information they were able to learn about Western English-speaking societies while learning English:

> *The way they think, why they think like that, why they talk like that, why they dress like that, why they live like that, why some people do these things. (Leena-I1-E1, translated from Arabic)*

> *The English language has greatly affected my view of different issues, for example I became interested in issues of bullying and racism, whether for color or religion, and became more open about them and how to deal with people like the likes of bullies and how to defend the oppressed in these issues. (Reema-D2-E1, translated from Arabic)*

The quotes above indicate that learning English allowed the participants to learn about Western English-speaking societies in a deeper way as well as learn about issues in these societies and the world. The participants associated this social and cultural knowledge with learning English as a vehicle that allowed them to access information. For example, Reema explained the role of learning English as follows:

> *Because I learned more, I read more, I have knowledge now, I have information and learned to read articles about these things in a better way. I have more awareness about these types of societies, why they think like that. (Reema-I2-E2, translated from Arabic)*

At this point it needs to be noted that the participants often talked about English media while talking about learning English and how it impacted them as people in becoming more knowledgeable and cultured. They appeared to associate English media with learning English as shown in this quote in which Nora was talking about problems in Western English-speaking societies (the role of media will be discussed further in section 4.4.2.4):

> *Through studying and through movies and series, it became clearer, their suffering, how they live with debts. With life, their life depends more on the financial, someone loses his job as if he lost his life. Life is more difficult there. The safety is less, of course safety is very important. (Nora-I1-E3, translated from Arabic)*

Overall, it can be concluded that the participants were able to learn more things not only on the linguistic level but also on the social and cultural level. This knowledge was not only limited to what they were taught in class or read in textbooks, but more importantly it was linked to English content they were able to access as a result of learning English. This included books, films, series, YouTube and social media. Although some participants mentioned learning about cultures from all over the world, all of them talked about learning about Western English-speaking cultures. This could be related to the fact that people mostly associate English with Western countries like the United Kingdom and the United States of America. This could also be attributed to the dominance of these cultures in the world media which was one of the sources of the participants' knowledge.

On a related note, the results revealed that learning English was associated with learning and sometimes adopting some Western values and beliefs. For example, Sara mentioned that learning English allowed her to read books about Physics that made her question her Islamic faith as shown in this quote:

> *At the beginning there was the stage of doubts, for example, does God Almighty exist, is the Islamic religion correct, is Christianity better than us, why, what makes me sure? I went through all of this in the first two years of my study. Because, as I told you, I acquired knowledge and I used to see people talking, for example, Stephen Hawking. At first, I was reading about Physics, then I stopped reading about Physics because I feel that all physicists suddenly became atheists, and I am afraid for myself as I feel that I cannot live without religion. I know that our religion is true, but these doubts and questions, I do not expect that they would have happened to me if I had not been informed and read in English. Of course, these doubts can come even to a person who does not speak the language, but I see that if I did not speak English, these doubts would not come to me at this stage.*
> *(Sara-I1-E2, translated from Arabic)*

All six participants commented on the fact that they considered acquiring cultural knowledge through learning English a factor contributing to the westernization of Saudi people and possibly Saudi society. According to the participants, English learners have access to content in English that may present them with Western views and ways of living which may affect the learners as individuals and collectively as a society. In other words, the participants linked learning English to Saudi people having Western mentalities or thinking because it allows for connection and communication with Western people, societies and cultures, as mentioned here:

The English language has a role in changing the society ... maybe as acquaintance, the effect of people influenced by those people ... people they know, people outside, maybe in Western societies, and those people talk and express their opinions. (Fatma-I1-E2, translated from Arabic)

When people learn more and learn English, they start to disconnect from the traditions and customs and thoughts they have and start thinking in a Western way. (Reema-I2-E3, translated from Arabic)

Generally, this type of connection between people from different societies cannot be separated from globalization in general. According to the participants, because English is a global language, it allows people from all over the world to connect, communicate and share, especially through media and social media. Moreover, Sara suggested that globalization helps promote Western content and English plays a role in that. For example:

With the openness and globalization that is happening, I expect that it will change I don't know if it will change positively or negatively, but yes it will change. I see that we started a little bit to be open to each other, we started to accept differences a little bit, like there are people who are different to you ... I feel those things came from our learning of the language and the people who speak the language and the scholars themselves, yeah, this openness will change people. (Sara-I1-E3, translated from Arabic)

Now, we are becoming more like them and the reason is social media, people being more open, maybe their interest in learning the English language because when they learn the language they will learn more things about them. This is why films the majority now have Netflix, foreign series are popular. This is the thing that made the two culture closer although there was a huge difference before between them. (Nora-I1-E4, translated from Arabic)

The quotes above signal that the participants linked learning English to them being able to open up and engage with the world. This exposed them to different people and ways of thinking, especially from Western English-speaking societies. All this may have contributed to various reported changes in them as individuals and to society in general as they possibly become more similar to Western people and societies (see sections 5.2.1 and 5.3), which could have positive and negative effects on Saudi society. However, the issue is not that simple. Leena pointed that any change in Saudi society was mainly caused by politics and that learning English and any other factor merely contribute to it.

These findings highlight the connection between language specifically language learning and culture. Kramsch (1998), Kramsch and Zhu, (2016) and Norton (2008) argued that learning English cannot be separated from culture because using English has connections to the society and culture where it has been used. The findings also support the notion behind the SLS theory that language learning is not just about acquiring linguistic information but also includes learning about the social and cultural system of the target language and its community (Duff, 2007, 2011) (see sections 5.4 and 5.5). Nevertheless, one needs to be careful and point out that although all participants associated learning English with being more knowledgeable and cultured, one cannot claim that it was the only reason for the participants' perception of increased knowledge. There could be other reasons such as the university educational experience, age, travel and others.

4.3.2. Confidence and empowerment

All six participants in this study reported that their confidence increased as they learned English. They mentioned that the confidence in their ability to use English increased as well as their confidence in themselves as cultured, capable and social individuals (these points will be discussed in detail in the following sub-sections). They also reported that the developments they reported achieving in terms of knowledge, confidence and abilities while learning English empowered them as individuals and women. Figure 4.3 below displays the number of times each participant talked about the theme of confidence and empowerment in both the interviews and diaries.

	Nora	Fatma	Leena	Reema	Sara	Lama
■ Diaries	8	5	6	9	6	9
■ Interviews	17	16	13	14	27	19
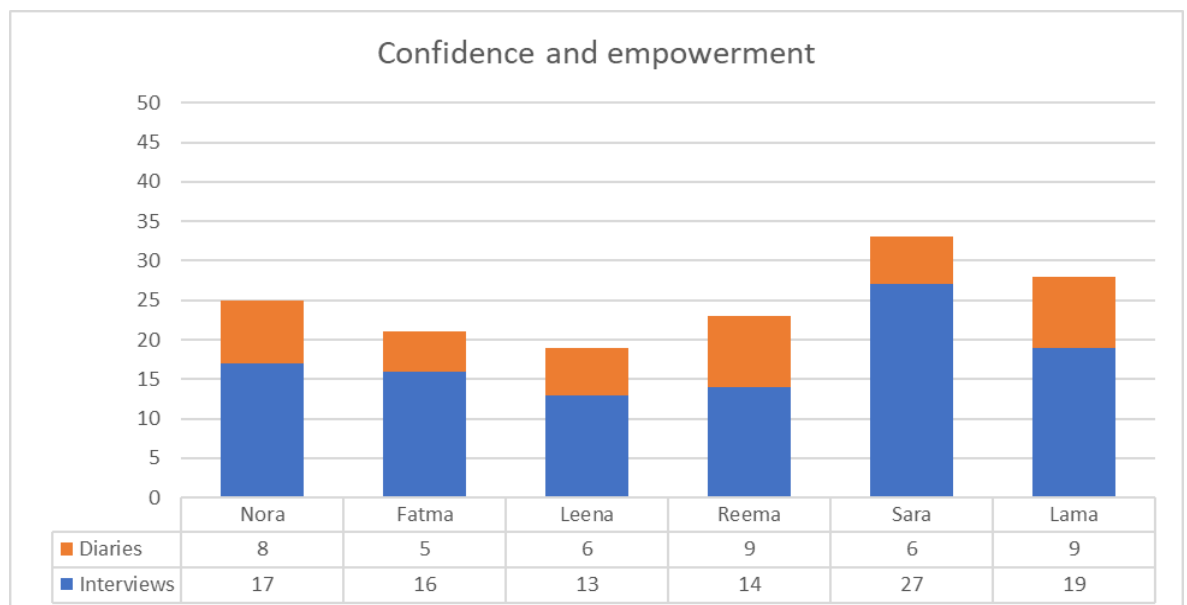
Figure 4.3: Frequency of confidence and empowerment in the data

The figure above shows that this theme appears to be a key aspect of the participants' experiences based on the repeated mention of it in the data. There is small variation in the

frequency of this theme across the participants as Sara and Lama mentioned it more than the others. This could be related to the fact that they were in the final year of the English language program and therefore, their experience of learning and using English, inside and outside the classroom, was longer, their proficiency may have been better than others, and as a result their sense of confidence and empowerment may have been higher. This finding was also something that the researcher noticed during the interviews and wrote down in her field notes. It was noticed that all six participants conveyed a sense of confidence while answering the interview questions with Sara and Lama appearing more at ease in expressing themselves and their views.

4.3.2.1. Confidence as an English speaker

First, all six participants mentioned that as they learned and used English more, they felt more confident about using it whether inside or outside the classroom. The participants' increased confidence in terms of using English was mainly attributed to their self-perceived progress in terms of their proficiency and command over the English language as shown in these quotes:

> *Now after practice and after my language developed, I feel more confident*
> *and the more I develop I feel my confidence is higher in talking in English.*
> *(Fatma-I1-E3, translated from Arabic)*

> *Generally, I became more confident in myself after improving my language*
> *in terms of reading and the basic skills in general like speaking and writing.*
> *After acquiring a lot of words through reading, it became easier to express*
> *my thoughts and my vocabulary became much better. (Sara-D4-E1,*
> *translated from Arabic)*

The quotes above suggest that the participants believed the improvements in their level of English increased their confidence as English speakers. They asserted that developing the ability to speak English, overcoming their anxieties about using English (see section 4.4.1.3) and achieving better results in their courses gave them a sense of accomplishment and pride as shown in these quotes:

> *I feel so confident more than before, Therefore [therefore] I saw how that*
> *positive changes let my progress get better and better even my exams'*
> *results were Great [great]. (Lama-D5-E1)*

> *When i [I] feel disappointed about any thing [anything] in my study life i [I]*
> *always remember how much work i [I] had to do to speak English fluently*
> *this makes me feel good about myself and also proud. (Nora-D3-E1)*

> *I am happy and glad with this thing, like I feel the feeling of accomplishment*
> *that I am able to speak this language. (Reema-I1-E3, translated from*
> *Arabic)*

This sense of pride or accomplishment could have also contributed to the participants' feelings of increased confidence. In other words, feeling that their hard work resulted in a positive outcome may have raised the participants' confidence in themselves and their abilities as English speakers. It may also have played a part in increasing the participants' confidence in general and in other areas.

4.3.2.2. Confidence as a knowledgeable and cultured person

All six participants reported that their increased confidence during learning English was also linked to having more knowledge and feeling cultured. As mentioned in section 4.3.1, the participants associated learning English with having more information in many fields specifically in terms of culture. This made them feel more confident as shown in quote Reema-I1-E1 (see section 4.3.1 above) and this quote from Nora:

> *Honestly, confidence, the first thing is that my confidence in myself*
> *increases when I talk to someone and I know that I am an aware, cultured*
> *person, I get that feeling. (Nora-I1-E5, translated from Arabic)*

The participants' increased sense of confidence was linked to their perception that they were knowledgeable and cultured individuals. Furthermore, for Sara, her increased confidence was also connected to others viewing her as knowledgeable and confident, as shown below:

> *I see English is influential in them seeing oh she is confident, she knows and*
> *so on. This confidence and knowledge came from learning the language and*
> *knowing how people view their lives, so I think English has an effect. (Sara-*
> *I1-E4, translated from Arabic)*

All the above signals that the participants associated learning English with being more confident as knowledgeable and cultured people because learning English increased their knowledge and helped them establish themselves as cultured individuals.

4.3.2.3. Confidence as a capable and useful person

All six participants reported that their increased confidence during learning English was also linked to the improvements in their abilities as people to communicate and perform different tasks. These improvements in the participants' abilities were attributed to the development in their English, the knowledge they acquired and their overall accumulative experience during the learning process, as shown in these quotes from Lama and Fatma in which they were talking about how learning English developed them and their abilities:

It makes my abilities good, higher like trying to get whatever I'm thinking about easily, like even like dealing with others, even like it builds your experience too even the confidence. (Lama-I1-E3)

I feel that the language helped my confidence, for example develop myself and parts of my personality like changing something negative in me to something positive, like that. (Fatma-I1-E4, translated from Arabic)

The participants appeared to associate learning English with being more experienced and personal developments in terms of better communication abilities and better personality traits and as a result having more confidence as more capable individuals.

In addition, the six participants reported that learning English made them feel that they could be helpful and useful for others around them, such as family and friends, as shown in the following quotes:

It's like I feel that I proved something to myself that I reached a good level, it's real, I am capable … when a message from the bank or something serious comes in English or anything for travel, I have to be there so they are sure. Although as I said before my father's English is considered good and he can understand but he feels sure when I am there. This feeling of confidence alone is something else. (Nora-I1-E6, translated from Arabic)

I noticed that my family and friends started depending on me in translating things, games and when ordering in restaurants. This thing gives me happiness and confidence personally because I am a person that loves to be always efficient and useful. (Reema-D1-E1, translated from Arabic)

From the above, it appears that being able to help others around them especially with tasks and activities that require English proficiency, along with the feelings of personal pride that came with, that gave the participants positive feelings about themselves in terms of capabilities and usefulness and contributed to their increased confidence.

4.3.2.4. Confidence as a social person

Four of the participants (Fatma, Leena, Sara and Lama) reported that learning English gave them more confidence to create social relationships with people around them, specifically their classmates. For example, Fatma said:

The confidence to know how to talk with people older than me without annoying them, to make friends. I was not very social but now I started to try to be social. Even in class I used to sit alone most of the time usually. But I try now for example if they asked for help I try to help them and so on so I

am not alone. If I see people gathering and sitting discussing the exam, I sit
with them and see what they want and the questions they have. (Fatma-I1-
E5, translated from Arabic).

From the quote above, it appears that Fatma's confidence to socialize with her classmates was mainly related to the development in her ability to talk to others (see section 4.3.4.2) and to her command over the materials they were learning in English. Similarly, Sara mentioned that her English level may have contributed to the social relationships she created with her classmates as shown in this quote:

I noticed recently that my studying of the language affected me on the social
side, my confidence in my language reflected in my personality in general
and this led to making many relationships with my classmates. These
relationships are not related to studying at all. We don't talk much about
university issues and studying although I am sure the reason behind these
relationships is my studies and efforts to improve my language. (Sara-D5-
E1, translated from Arabic)

The quotes from Fatma and Sara reveal that their level in English contributed to them having relationships with other students. However, it needs to be mentioned that there is a difference in how learning English helped Fatma and Sara to create social relationships with their classmates. For Fatma, her relationship with her classmates was mainly related to discussions about their studies and courses while, for Sara, the relationship was not about talking about their studies or courses.

Generally, it appears that proficiency and command of English played two roles in the participants' social development. On one hand, their abilities in English gave the participants the confidence to approach others and socialize with them and on the other hand, people around them were attracted to socialize with them because of their abilities in English. This is in line with the idea of power in linguistic interactions, as argued by Bourdieu (1977, 1985) and Norton and Toohey (2011), that learning, specifically language learning, can put learners in different positions of power which can have an impact on their identity and status in society. In the cases above, being perceived as capable English speakers gave the participants the confidence to engage in social interactions with others and made others more willing to engage with them (see section 5.6.)

Overall, it appears that all participants viewed themselves as more confident people due to learning English. These feelings of increased confidence were attributed to several things. The first is the progress the participants were achieving as learners of English and the respect they received because of their English language ability. The second is the development in their

knowledge and abilities. The third is that they were able to establish themselves as capable and useful individuals by helping others through English. The fourth is the improvement in their social abilities and status. Confidence is a major theme in other studies investigating L2 learners' identities (see Alsweel, 2013; Atay and Ece, 2009; Kim, 2003b; Kim et al, 2010; Mustafa, 2017). It appears that the capital of English as a global language and power relations in language learning and use all played a role in the participants' perceptions of their own growth and feelings of increased confidence. These findings emphasize the social nature of confidence and that a learner's confidence is affected by the different power positions they are put into and the experiences they go through over time (Norton, 1995; Norton & Toohey, 2011) (see section 5.6).

4.3.2.5. Empowerment

All six participants reported that learning English empowered them as individuals and as women. This empowerment was exhibited and expressed by participants in a number of ways. First, the six participants mentioned that being English speakers empowered them by giving them, as women, the strength to depend on themselves in terms of communication and work and have a value in society as shown in the following quotes:

> *Day after day, this thing [knowing English] improves the way you handle*
> *and face things, being a woman who knows how to talk and understand.*
> *This thing gives you power when you need this thing and use it, you will feel*
> *strong as opposed to, God forbid, being in a situation and not understanding*
> *what is being said, you will be very embarrassed. (Leena-D3-E1, translated*
> *from Arabic)*

> *I like to be a person who has a value. I don't like to be someone*
> *undependable, useless. I love to be useful, it does not mean that I have to be*
> *the center of attention. But I want to be of use, interest, to have a role in*
> *society, to work and provide for myself, to provide for myself the financial*
> *things. Of course, I feel this thing was built in me after I studied. I don't like*
> *to take money from anyone. No, I depend on myself. (Reema-I1-E4,*
> *translated from Arabic)*

Second, the six participants' sense of empowerment can be seen in the fact that they felt more aware of their rights as women and that they did not approve of some of the constraints imposed by their families and society, as shown in these quotes:

> *Among the changes that happened in me is that I became more independent*
> *by myself more and I have my own opinions and beliefs that are cemented*

more after learning the language like my opinion on my rights as a woman
and daughter. (Reema-D7-E1, translated from Arabic)

The society around you, like you to be that girl who is not bold, who does
not raise her voice to men, who is afraid, afraid for herself, does not try and
take a step forward to take her right even in the simplest things. For
example, when you are buying you don't argue with the man because like it
is shameful although it is her right. These things I don't express, but in
reality if I had a problem with a man and had to argue, I will argue …
because I saw examples of how women are fighting for themselves to prove
their presence. (Sara-I1-E5, translated from Arabic)

The quotes above signal that the participants had more awareness of their rights as women to live according to their own beliefs. This made them reject some social and cultural boundaries they encountered in the form of customs and traditions. This can be seen in Sara's comment that she had the right to have a discussion with a man while shopping although some people around her did not approve of that.

The participants reported that their empowerment was connected to learning English. First, learning and knowing English gave them the ability to communicate with others without the need for someone to help them. Second, learning English gave them the qualification to work and provide for themselves without relying on others. Third, the participants attributed their empowerment to learning English as it enabled them to learn how women can live independently through seeing models of independent women in Western English-speaking media and social media. For example:

I started to think that I want this type of the independent American woman's
life, who lives alone in an apartment and works and provides for herself
alone without depending on anyone. I want it to be like that I want myself to
be like that in the future … I mean I want my personality to be independent
… There is an American black woman, this person … Her name is Shahad,
she's more into make-up, like she loves fashion and these things. But she is
living alone. I see myself like that like living alone, providing for myself, I
have my work and at the same time I am surviving in the face of all the
racism, for example for my color or religion and whatever. I want to be that
person who faces struggles but overcomes them and stands strong. (Sara-I1-
E6, translated from Arabic)

To have a general view of how to be, how to develop, how to be
independent, to be myself, different from my family. I feel this thing helped, I

> *feel this thing, I took it from the foreigners, how to be independent, how to*
> *have your own job and home. I feel this thing from foreign series how to*
> *have a life of your own. (Fatma-I2-E2, translated from Arabic)*

The quotes above indicate that learning English may be a vehicle through which the participants access English content in media and social media. This content presents them with examples of independent women in Western English-speaking societies, which contributed to creating this desire and sense of empowerment in them.

Fourth, some courses and classroom discussions gave the participants information on feminism which also raised their awareness of the issue of women's empowerment, as shown in this quote:

> *We learned things, for example, in literary criticism we learned about*
> *feminism and so on. (Sara-I1-E7, translated from Arabic)*

The SLS theory (Duff, 2007, 2011) argues that while learning a L2, learners are exposed to its social and cultural system which affects their views and attitudes towards various issues in their society and the target language society. In this case, the participants' learning of English exposed them to the Western social system and the rights and status of women there. In addition, with English being a global language, this means that learning it exposes its learners to global issues such as feminism and the fight for women's rights. In this study, the participants reported that knowledge and awareness about these issues as a result of learning English, made them reflect on their status and change some of their views of issues faced by women, especially women in Saudi Arabia.

From the above, it appears that the participants considered learning English empowering for them in terms of establishing themselves as capable and independent individuals and women. It could be argued that this could be a form of imagined identity that participants created for themselves while learning English (see section 5.3). The participants linked that to learning English giving them the tools to depend on themselves in communicating and having a career. They were influenced in that regard by Western models of female empowerment which they came to understand through learning English specifically their exposure and ability to access social media and media in English. These findings, in terms of feeling empowered as women, echo findings from Alsweel (2013) and Mustafa (2017) who reported that Saudi women considered English empowering for them because it gave them confidence and independence (see sections 2.10 and 5.6).

However, it needs to be mentioned that it is difficult to attribute women's empowerment only to learning English. The participants may also have been exposed to this topic through Saudi social media; over the years, this topic continued to gain attention on the social and governmental

levels in Saudi Arabia. As a result, women in Saudi Arabia have been gaining more rights, especially with the 2030 vision. Therefore, it could be argued that learning English was one of several factors shaping the participants' views towards the topic of women's empowerment and contributing to their own empowerment.

4.3.3. Acceptance and understanding

All six participants reported that as they learned English, they became more accepting and understanding of different people, societies and cultures. Figure 4.4 displays the number of times each participant talked about the theme of acceptance and understanding in both the interviews and diaries.
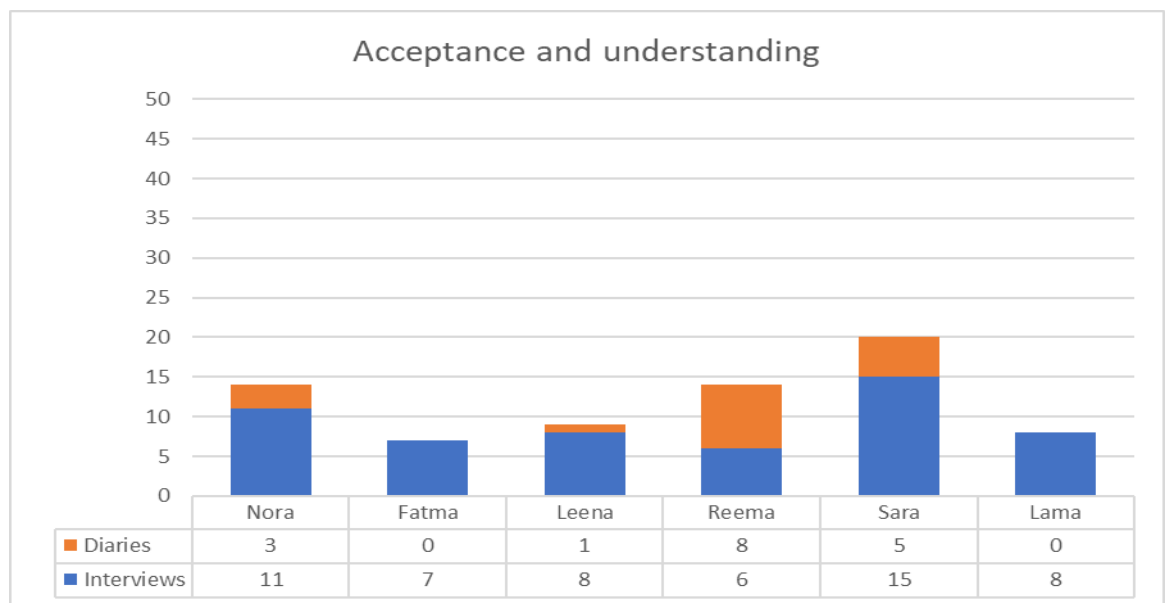
Figure 4.4: Frequency of acceptance and understanding in the data

The figure above shows that Sara was the participant that talked about this theme the most (20 times) followed by Nora (14 times) and Reema (14 times). This could signal that these participants may have experienced more changes in their views of different people and cultures or that they considered this theme an important part of their experience of learning English in Saudi Arabia.

The six participants noted that they became more aware and knowledgeable of differences between different societies and cultures while learning English. This was linked to the knowledge they acquired during the English language learning process as presented in section 4.3.1. This knowledge and awareness contributed to the participants' increased acceptance of differences. For example, Nora and Sara said:

> *The more I go deeper in learning the language, it widens my view and understanding of difference more and this is one of the reasons that makes me love learning languages. (Nora-D2-E1, translated from Arabic)*

> *For my opinions and beliefs, undoubtedly they changed drastically. I became more accepting and open to other cultures. (Sara-D1-E1, translated from Arabic)*

It appears that the participants viewed having more acceptance and understanding positively and possibly enriching in terms of making them more aware and tolerant of others who are different than them. They considered it one of the things they loved about learning English. But they acknowledged that some people thought of it negatively, as shown in this quote:

> *The word open-mindedness is viewed negatively now. But the real open-mindedness is the one on science/knowledge, on life, on the right culture. I started to distinguish and accept difference. This is what I mean and this is why I feel it is one of the things that affected me. (Nora-I1-E7, translated from Arabic)*

The participants' increased acceptance and understanding can be seen in them having different, more tolerant views toward various cultural and religious issues. In other words, the participants said that they had a deeper understanding and acceptance of people from different cultures and religions, as shown in these quotes:

> *After learning the language, I became more understanding of cultural and religious differences between people. For example, I used to think that any person different than me religiously or culturally is unfriendly and you cannot communicate with him but with learning my view of this issue in particular changed. (Reema-D7-E2, translated from Arabic)*

> *From an open-mindedness, I changed a lot like the difference in religions and sects. That the person learns to accept the difference in a way that making friends with someone that is different is normal. (Nora-I1-E8, translated from Arabic)*

The participants' comments above signal that they were more accepting of differences and this is exhibited in their willingness to connect and create relationships with people who were different from them. It needs to be mentioned that the participants' acceptance of different religious beliefs and practices was not limited to other religions. Three participants (Nora, Sara and Lama) pointed out that as they learned English, they had more acceptance for Muslim women who did not wear hijab i.e., head covering or veil i.e., face covering, as shown in these

quotes in which Lama and Nora were responding to a question about whether learning English affected their views of social and religious issues:

> *I used to look at the anti-hijab person like [she] is not good … But like I don't know why they are doing this. Right now, my mentality changed, everyone has his opinion, everyone has his point of view. I can't judge the person from his look, yeah maybe the religious person will be bad not like vice versa, so yeah maybe the anti-hijab or uncovered girl will be better than that religious yeah, so I cannot judge, you know that affects me in that way. (Lama-I1-E4)*

> *I, because I was in a house where we all wear niqab [face covering], so the idea is that the woman who wear hijab [covering the hair but not the face] is something wrong and so on … why? Only because she is wearing hijab? I did not understand especially because I met friends who wear hijab and see them, I feel it does not make sense. They are good respectful people and everything. So, I always try to change this view in my family and so on, when someone talks about this topic not in my family at home but the extended family, like, I try to change the view. The reason for that is the same thing, it came from acceptance of differences from Western cultures. (Nora-I1-E9, translated from Arabic)*

This signals that the participants were less conservative in their views, at least on the religious level because knowing English allowed them to increase their cultural knowledge and connect with Western English-speaking cultures. This can be seen more clearly in the views of the fourth-year participants (Sara and Lama), as they revealed that they had an acceptance and understanding of (LGBTQ) people, i.e., 'lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning (one's sexual or gender identity)' (Merriam Webster, n.d.-c), although this is something that is not often expressed in a society such as Saudi Arabia, as shown in this quote:

> *Homosexuality I still believe it is haram [sin, not allowed] but from my studying of it, we have an instructor, praise God, brings anything, anything, any issue in the world she would bring it up, she was talking about LGBTQ+. I feel now that I am starting to accept them although I still consider it haram. But I learned that they faced struggles and so on. So, as long that they did not affect me psychologically, it is your haram, and it is between you and God. (Sara-I1-E8, translated from Arabic)*

In this case, Sara linked her acceptance to learning English, specifically topics raised by one of her instructors. Furthermore, Sara and Lama linked their acceptance of homosexuality to the

English content, specifically media they were able to access because of their knowledge of English, as shown in these quotes:

> *The media I am exposed to, they always send messages like that saying that it is not a problem for this to happen [homosexuality] and for you to be that person. In the beginning, I refused that thing but because I speak English and understand English and always read in English, I feel it is becoming normal, I feel it is ok for me to accept it because of the many things I have read and seen. (Sara-I2-E1, translated from Arabic)*

> *Because I'm really into Ellen Show, and like it [she] is really a lovely person, lovely personality and she is not a regular female, because she is married with [to] another female. So, I don't know, but I think I'm trying, I think now I'm accepting that thing, and it's wrong, like maybe because due to me, I used to watch this show, yeah, I think so, that affects to be open-minded person. (Lama-I1-E5)*

It needs to be mentioned that Sara and Lama, the participants from year four, appeared to be less conservative in their views than the participants from the earlier years which could signal that the changes they reported experiencing in their views were larger or more substantial. Despite the fact that Nora and Reema talked about this theme more than Lama, which supports the decision not to rely on quantifiable measures to determine a theme's importance, Sara and Lama may have had more changes in their views or they may have been more comfortable in talking about changes to their views that may not be accepted in their society because they spent more time learning English. In other words, this could be linked to the fact that the longer time the participants spent learning English, the more they started to accept and become aware of the difference in them as people. It could also be attributed to the fact that the longer the participants learn English and engage with its societies and cultures, the more this will have effects on them as people. However, it could also stem from other factors such as age and experience.

The quotes above also suggest that access to English media was a factor that contributed to the reported changes in the participants' views. As mentioned before, English media cannot be separated from the participants' experience of learning English, as they often referred to it in describing various aspects related to their learning of English (see sections 4.4.2.4 and 5.9). In addition to English media, the participants linked the changes in their views to the educational experience of learning English. While learning English, the participants were able to gain more knowledge of societies and cultures, specifically Western English-speaking ones, through instruction, course materials and classroom discussions. The participants also linked these

changes to the English language content they were able to access because of English and their communication with people from all over the world through the common language of English. In other words, learning English enabled the participants to have access to content produced by people from different nationalities through the medium of English and allowed them to communicate with these people through different platforms, e.g., YouTube and Twitter.

> *I am learning about their cultures through the books and studying. It is teaching me and giving me, letting me know them and accept them … I learned about their culture so if I did not study I would not have an interest in them, I would not have cared about them. It would be just a love for series and films, like that, but I would not have learned these things or thought in this way. (Leena-I1-E2, translated from Arabic)*

> *Having learned a new language, it made me able to talk to those people. If I had not learnt it, I don't expect that I would be the person who I am today in terms of acceptance. (Sara-I1-E9, translated from Arabic)*

All the above reveals that the participants considered learning English key to them having an interest in learning about cultures and having a way of learning about cultures through instruction, media and communication. Moreover, the participants also associated their increased acceptance of differences with learning English as they considered language a window into its cultures which led them to view those cultures in a different way as shown in these quotes:

> *If you learn a person's language like him you will be able, with God's will, to understand things from his perspective. (Reema-D1-E2, translated from Arabic)*

> *I feel that the language, like, I feel it gave me through dealing with foreigners it gave me another perspective, like it gives you not just knowing the point of view of this person, no, because it gives the view of the society that he is living in about a certain idea. So, when you learn about it and talk to him, this person, in English you feel like, wow, what am I missing, what are people who don't speak missing and seeing this kind of ideas. I feel it is impossible for them to appreciate and understand people more if they don't interact with them. (Sara-I1-E10, translated from Arabic)*

The quotes above assert the connection between language and culture. They are in line with the idea that the language a person speaks influences the way he/she views the world, as argued by Kramsch (1998) and the linguistic relativity theory (Boroditsky, 2003) (see section 5.5). In this

study, the participants revealed that learning English made them view things from a different perspective and understand how English speakers view the world. In other words, it presented them with different ways of thinking on various issues at the religious, social and cultural levels. This in turn made them evaluate and change some of their own views and increased their acceptance and understanding of other people and their views on life.

Overall, it appears that learning English was perceived to affect the way the participants viewed themselves in terms of them being more accepting and understanding of difference. There was some variation in terms of the extent of the acceptance and change in views that the participants reported they experienced. Some participants, like Fatma and Reema, were simply more accepting of other religions and cultures. While others, like Sara and Lama, reported more changes in their views that were not in line with their religion, society and culture. These findings are similar to those reported in other studies such as Kim (2003b). Kim found in her study of the identities of Malaysian learners of English that the learners became more tolerant and less critical of people who were different to them in terms of beliefs.

These findings assert the social and cultural aspects of language learning as participants were able to learn about other societies and cultures', mostly Western English-speaking societies and cultures, systems and values which made them develop different attitudes towards themselves and others as proposed by the SLS theory (Duff, 2007, 2011). However, it needs to be mentioned that the fact that the participants associated their learning English experience with having more acceptance and understanding of others does not necessarily mean that other Saudi females who are not learning English do not share their views. Furthermore, although the participants asserted that learning English played a part in the changes to their views, other factors could have also played a role such as, travel and education.

4.3.4. Self-expression

All six participants reported that the process of learning English affected them as people in terms of the way they expressed themselves. The difference in self-expression included more use of English, developments in self-expression abilities and variations in expressing thoughts and emotions. Figure 4.5 displays the number of times each participant talked about the theme of self-expression in both the interviews and diaries.
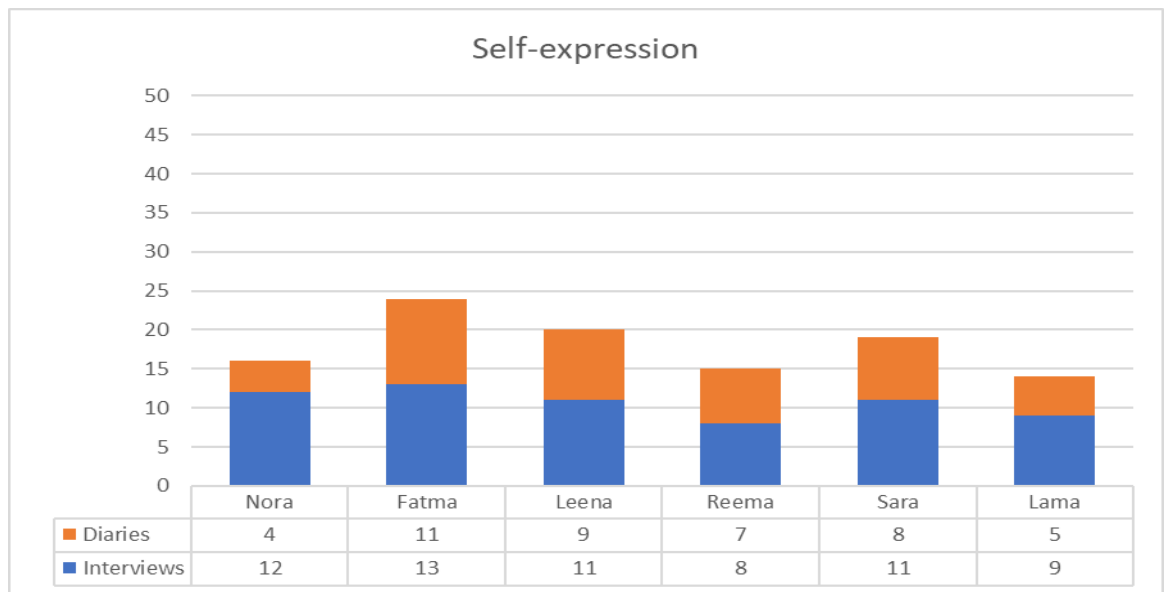
Figure 4.5: Frequency of self-expression in the data

The figure above shows that this theme appears to be a key aspect of the participants' experiences based on the repeated mention of it in the data across the participants. Fatma talked about her self-expression twenty-four times which is slightly more than the other participants. This could signal that she considered this theme an important part of her experience. It could also be related to the fact that using English was something new to her.

4.3.4.1. Frequent usage of English

All six participants reported that English was becoming part of their everyday lives due to their learning of English. This meant that they were using English more in their lives when talking and interacting with people in different contexts. The participants said that they were using English more in their speech and mentioned that their increased use of English included incorporating English words and phrases in their speech. For example:

> I personally believe English language became part of my life and everything, I try everything that surround me I switch it in English, even if nobody understand [understands] me. (Lama-I1-E6)

> I say some English words in the middle of my speech because they are more expressive or because I do not remember the Arabic word, so it comes out in English. (Fatma-D10-E1, translated from Arabic)

> I discovered that is has become a part of me, like even sometimes I forget the term in Arabic, but I remember it in English and say it. (Reema-I1-E5, translated from Arabic)

112

> *I find difficulty in the idea I want to say sometimes so I mix Arabic and*
> *English. (Sara-D3-E1, translated from Arabic)*

The participants' usage of English as described above can be described as code-switching. The participants chose to use English in places in their conversations where they felt that it was more expressive. The participants also used English instead of Arabic because they could not remember or think of the Arabic term for what they wanted to express. This is something that the researcher noted in her field notes during the interviews as all participants frequently used English words and phrases while speaking Arabic.

In addition, the six participants noted that they were using English regularly as a language of communication in public places, e.g., restaurants and hospitals, in formal situations and in social media, as shown in these quotes:

> *In the restaurant, I handle the ordering and say it in English, I love it this*
> *way, like they even say, 'why do you talk in English?' because he mostly*
> *understands Arabic. But I say to them I will talk in English, I feel it is nice, it*
> *is an exciting feeling to find a foreigner that cannot speak that I can talk to.*
> *(Fatma-I1-E6, translated from Arabic)*

> *In my story and in sharing things and for example in complaining, like,*
> *things like that. It is normal that I put a question in English in my story and*
> *comment in English as well … There was a period in WhatsApp, when I*
> *became, not WhatsApp sorry snap [snapchat], when I did not write in*
> *Arabic at all, I always wrote in English, until one day I put a picture and*
> *wrote in Arabic, they said we did not expect the day would come when we*
> *would see an Arabic word written. (Leena-I1-E3, translated from Arabic)*

These quotes indicate that the participants may have used English deliberately at times as a form of practice because they felt it was suitable to express their thoughts or because it was suitable to interact with non-Arabic speakers. On the other hand, the six participants also pointed out that their regular usage of English was becoming natural and spontaneous, as shown in these quotes:

> *I used English more in my speech in a spontaneous unintentional way.*
> *(Fatma-D7-E2, translated from Arabic)*

> *I used English in an unconscious way in many instances whether as a*
> *student, in everyday tasks or in public places. (Reema-I1-E6, translated*
> *from Arabic)*

Both the intentional and unintentional use of English by the participants could be a sign that their proficiency in English was increasing which led them to use English more. It could also be an indication that their connection to English was increasing. In other words, the fact that the participants were using English more in their interactions may reflect that they felt English was now part of their self-expression and could be used to reflect their thoughts as people. All this could be simply a common strategy of using multiple languages that multilinguals often use when speaking for various reasons e.g., cognitive and social reasons. It could also be an indication of multiple linguistic identities and a reflection of the fluidity of moving between different complex selves i.e., identities. This does not mean leaving one identity behind and taking another one on. For multilinguals having multiple, even contradictory, ever-changing positions, selves, identities is expected. (see section 5.2.2).

This increased usage and connection to English in the participants' everyday lives seemed to contribute to some feelings of embarrassment or guilt that some participants (Nora, Leena and Sara) experienced. For example:

> *I feel bad sometimes as a result of my usage of English terms that I could have said in Arabic. It could be feelings of guilt because I used to make fun of those who put English in their Arabic speech. (Sara-D6-E1, translated from Arabic)*

> *I became used to practicing too much so I started to, a little bit, not find the words in Arabic, like I lost my people. (Leena-I1-E4, translated from Arabic)*

Leena's usage of the phrase 'lost my people' could be a sign that she may have associated language use with belonging to her society and culture. This could be an indication that learning and using English could be linked to having association with Western English-speaking societies and cultures. This point will be discussed further in section 5.7.

4.3.4.2. Improvements in self-expression

All six participants reported that as they learned English, their ability to express themselves, whether in English or in Arabic, improved. On the English language level, the six participants mentioned that they were becoming more fluent and able to more easily express whatever they wanted in English as shown in the following quotes:

> *My use of English developed with the passing days ... I became more capable and I had the ability to talk more and my confidence increased during talking especially with people who are older and have more*

experience, like my uncle and big sister. They were very proud of the
development I reached. (Reema-D4-E1, translated from Arabic)

I can express my opinions, I can, like when I am in a public place, not being
shy, always in class, whether in a coffee shop or airport and things. I am not
shy that I may not understand the person and so on because he is foreigner
and does not speak the language, the opposite I talk to him with more
comfort because I am sure he will understand me, and I will understand
him. (Leena-I2-E1, translated from Arabic)

It appears that the participants felt that their abilities to express themselves and engage in
conversation increased during their learning of English. All this seemed to contribute to
improving the participants' abilities to express themselves in situations where they needed to
use English or where using English would improve the quality of their self-expression. Actually,
Lama reported that her self-expression was better in English than in Arabic as shown in this
quote:

I don't know but like it gives me like my personality shows up in English
language more than Arabic, it gives me the energy and the vibes, like you
know, like I don't know, to express myself more. What can I say, I don't
know even my tone is smooth and stable in English more than Arabic. So, I
usually stumbling [stumble] a lot in Arabic more than English, so it's really
I don't know weird. But I don't know why, because, maybe because I used to
talk with myself in English. (Lama-I1-E7)

Lama also adds:

I don't know, I think it's just so me, I don't like expressing in Arabic …
because I really enjoy expressing in English. So, yeah because I think I don't
know it gives me confidence more than Arabic. (Lama-I1-E8)

The quotes above signal that not only was the usage of English better for Lama in terms of
expressing her thoughts, it also seemed that she felt better when expressing herself in English
and that having an English-speaking identity allowed her personality to come through.
According to Lama, this could be because she was used to expressing herself in English even
while talking to herself. On this note, it needs to be mentioned that the field notes the researcher
wrote during the interviews, revealed that Lama was the only participant that spoke English
during the interviews, which is aligned with the statements she made about her preference to use
English to express herself. All this, as mentioned in section 4.3.4.1, could be an indication of
deeper changes on the identity level (see section 5.2.2). This could be related to the fact that

Lama's investment in learning English was related to her love for the English language from an early age more than her professional or academic goals. However, it needs to be mentioned that Lama's feelings in this case were not shared by the other participants. For example, Nora said that she felt different when expressing herself in English and Arabic, but she did not mention whether one was more favorable than the other.

> *In certain topics, when I talk in English like it's basically that my thinking pattern or the thing I focus on is a certain thing, and when it is in Arabic it is a different thing. (Nora-I2-E1, translated from Arabic)*

The other way learning English improved the participants' abilities to express themselves is through developing their self-expression abilities in Arabic as well as English. This included learning about ways to express their ideas and thoughts in a clear, elaborate and interesting way. It also included being more capable and willing to engage in discussions. For example:

> *Like before, I used to talk in short answers like saying oh I feel I am smart, but now if someone says to me, why smart, I can say I am smart because of so and so and so. How, because I know how people express themselves, I know how people view themselves or how they bring up a topic in a funny way for example or a serious way. This I learned from people who talk in English, from books, from YouTube especially, the series also. (Sara-I1-E11, translated from Arabic)*

> *The first thing that changed a lot, an obvious change is my way of talking, like for example before I did not like to talk to someone who is older than me a lot because I feel I don't know how to talk to older people, I don't feel. So, this obstacle is broken because I now have topics I can bring up. (Nora-I1-E10, translated from Arabic)*

> *It gave me the confidence to engage in a dialogue with others, like facing a large group of people. I used to be very shy, very, very shy and the English language, I feel, helped me break this barrier. Not completely, I still get nervous, I still get afraid, but I broke the barrier a little, like I went up a bit. (Fatma-I1-E7, translated from Arabic)*

The quotes above also reveal that the participants felt more capable of expressing themselves when talking with older people and with larger numbers of people. The six participants linked these improvements in their self-expression to learning English in class as shown in these quotes:

That I am talking in class and having discussions and understanding, these things gave me more boldness and gave me more organization to my thoughts. (Leena-I1-E5, translated from Arabic)

I think that the listening class also reduced the intensity of my replies and taught me to listen to others until they finish talking even if it doesn't agree with my opinions. (Sara-D4-E2, translated from Arabic)

It appears that the participants considered the discussions that took place in courses, especially the listening and speaking classes, helpful in developing their abilities to engage in discussions, whether in English or Arabic as it taught them how to listen to others and respect their right to speak. In addition, they also helped them to build the courage to express their thoughts and improved their ability to talk coherently.

Furthermore, Fatma mentioned that learning English developed her self-expression abilities because it gave her more options to express herself as she can use both Arabic and English vocabulary, as shown in this quote:

Like I did not know how to express myself in certain words in Arabic, it gave me a bigger field to express myself in English more than Arabic. Like I feel I have a bigger field in English than in Arabic, I feel my language is limited when I speak Arabic. (Fatma-I2-E3, translated from Arabic)

Overall, it seems that the participants associated learning English with developing the way they expressed themselves. Specifically, they felt their self-expression was clearer and more sophisticated. They also felt that they were better at engaging in discussions both in English and Arabic. This in turn may have contributed to the other changes they reported experiencing in terms of being more confident (see section 4.3.2).

4.3.4.3 Emotions

All six participants reported that as they learned English, they started feeling more comfortable expressing some of their thoughts and emotions in English instead of Arabic, as shown in these quotes:

I feel there are things that maybe I am embarrassed to express in Arabic, but I have more courage when it is in English. I don't know the obvious reason honestly, but I feel I am more comfortable expressing my emotions in English. (Leena-I1-E6, translated from Arabic)

When I had the difficult chance to get deeper, I switch in English because I think speaking English is better to release my things to release my emotions, to release the things that I'm thinking about. (Lama-I1-E9)

117

The quotes above signal that the participants' preference to use English in expressing some of their thoughts and emotions may stem from the fact that it made them feel more comfortable or because it helped them express themselves in a deeper or better way. This preference applied to real life interactions and was common in online interactions, such as expressing their thoughts and communicating with others on Twitter and other social media applications. The participants' preference for using English was mostly associated with expressing personal and possibly private thoughts and emotions e.g., apology. Actually, the majority of the participants (Nora, Fatma, Leena, Sara and Lama) mentioned that they preferred to use English when expressing sorrow, sadness and anger, as shown in these quotes:

> *For me, I can express anything I want in English better than writing it in Arabic –personally, not academically – I feel it delivers my feeling better and there is no embarrassment. Even if there were mistakes it's ok because it is between me and myself for example in social media websites or, for example, I want to convey an apology for someone I prefer using the English language to express my apology. (Fatma-D3-E1, translated from Arabic)*

> *I could express my emotions in English in twitter because it could deliver the meaning in a better way. (Sara-D2-E1, translated from Arabic)*

> *Like feelings of sorrow, feelings of longing, mostly like that personal things … I do not know I feel it is lighter than Arabic. (Fatma-I2-E4, translated from Arabic)*

> *When I get angry … like when I fight with my brother or something, there are expressions that describe the feelings like I feel I will explode, like mostly I hear it a lot 'I feel like I'm gonna blow up' and I write it a lot when writing, it comes out mostly in describing feelings … I feel it expresses more, describes the feeling more. (Nora-I2-E2, translated from Arabic)*

Similarly, Leena and Sara pointed out that they prefer to use English insults instead of Arabic ones. For example:

> *You feel it is more respectful, more than our insults because you feel that our insults you touch them you feel them a lot, you understand. But theirs no, like you feel, I feel less, I feel their very bad insults you feel it is respectful. Like this is my stupid thinking. I know it is not logical. (Leena-I1-E7, translated from Arabic)*

> *Like when we joke around especially with my brother, our relationship is strong, we always talk and with discussions it happens like saying a strong*

word you feel it really strong in Arabic, like God Damn you, very strong but
its ok we can insult in English and it is less … because we are not used to it
maybe, I feel it is less. (Sara-I2-E2, translated from Arabic)

What Leena and Sara expressed above reveals that they felt using English insults was less offensive or less disrespectful because it may not be understood by others. In addition to the fact that it was not in their native language and the meaning was less tangible. It could be argued that using English in the contexts mentioned above could stem from the fact that English is not the native of language of the participants and therefore it makes them feel less connected to these thoughts and emotions. This is in line with the idea that the target language could be preferable in expressing thoughts and emotions when the person wants to create some distance between him/her and what he/she is expressing (Dewaele & Pavlenko, 2004). This idea was expressed by Sara and Leena in the following quotes:

Like when there is a problem, for example, a problem in our house, I will
talk about it only in English because I feel that if I talk about it in Arabic it's
impact on me will be stronger, like I don't know, maybe because English is
not my mother language so when I say for example or talk about the
problem in English I try to use it to make it like it is silly or easy in this way.
I don't take it seriously and I don't worry about it that much, like if, for
example, I talked in Arabic, I feel my expressions are strong because it is my
mother tongue. (Sara-I1-E12, translated from Arabic)

I feel that if it was in our language because it is our mother tongue, you feel
the talk not only externally you feel it yourself and you are disgusted by it.
Because it is not in our mother tongue, I do not know you do not feel the talk
will be as tangible like for them, for sure they feel it more tangible like we
feel our talk more tangible. (Leena-I2-E2, translated from Arabic)

It could be argued that having the ability to speak English as a L2 allowed the participants to express themselves in certain contexts more freely and comfortably. All this is in line with Burck's (2011) argument that a L2 can give its speakers a means of expressing their thoughts and emotions in a less personal and more neutral way. It could also be connected to the idea that different languages express emotions in different ways (Dewaele & Nakano, 2012). Having competence to express oneself in English allows the speaker to express their feelings in a foreign language that carries a different, most likely less emotional load. This is a natural choice many multilinguals make in their everyday interactions (see section 5.7).

Interestingly, Reema reported that she would switch to English when feeling happy, as shown in this quote:

When I talk to myself and when I express, for example, that I am happy, I love to talk in English, of course with myself. All of this, only when I express that I am happy and so on, I love to hear myself talking in English. But when I express pressure or something that I am upset with like no I express in Arabic honestly. (Reema-I1-E7, translated from Arabic)

Reema's preference to use English when talking to herself when she is happy as opposed to when she is angry highlights that there are differences between language learners in terms of how they prefer to express themselves and their emotions. Some learners may find the target language suitable to express certain emotions while others find it suitable to express other emotions. This could be related to the learners' feelings about the target language and its use.

Overall, it appears that learning English affected the participants as people in the way they expressed themselves. A connection between language learning and self-expression was reported by studies on L2 learners' identities such as those of Abubakr et al (2019), Kim (2003b) and Kim et al (2010). In this study, the participants reported using English on a regular basis and in various situations. Many of them felt that English gave them a better ability to express themselves in various contexts. This was reflected in their preference to use English in formal settings and in social media. Some of this use of English was also associated with the participants' presenting themselves in different ways. This is aligned with the idea that the first language and the L2 may be used to perform different functions (Burck, 2011). All of which could be a sign of increased connection, and possibly identification with English. It may also signal deeper changes within the participants and could be a reflection of learners' dynamic fluid identities as Burck (2011) and Pavlenko (2006) argued that expressing oneself in a certain language can be an indication of changing identities (see sections 2.5 and 5.7).

4.3.5. Lifestyle and interests

All six participants reported that learning English affected them as people in terms of the things they liked and their lifestyle in general. They said they felt there was a difference in the activities they enjoyed, the books they liked to read, the films and shows they liked to watch, and the healthy lifestyle some of them adopted. Figure 4.6 displays the number of times each participant talked about the theme of lifestyle and interests in both the interviews and diaries.
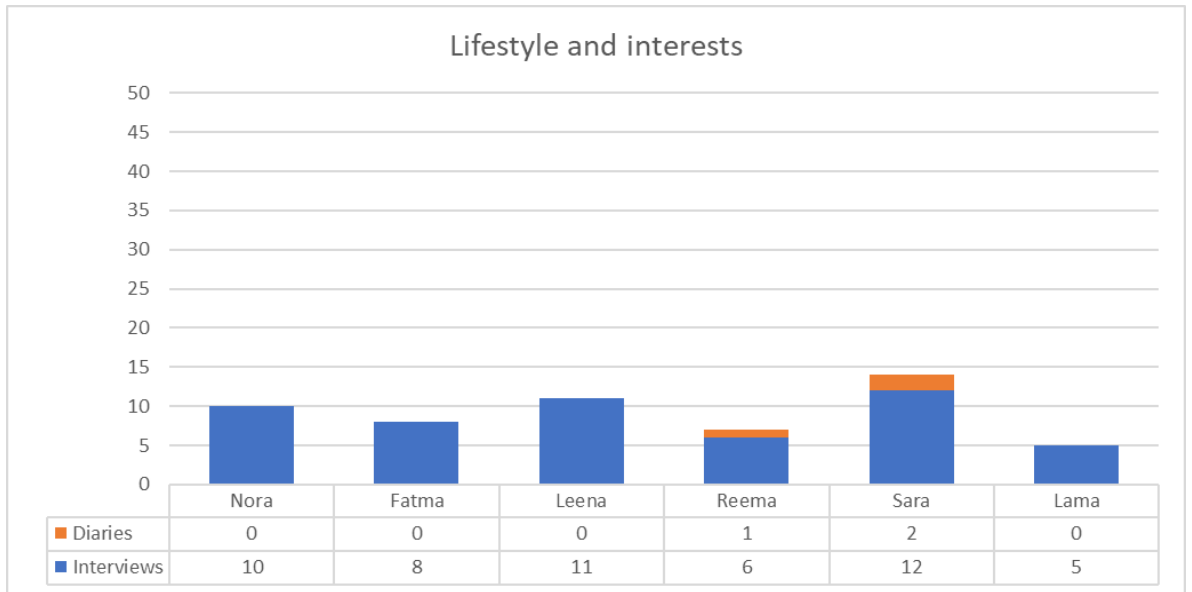
Figure 4.6: Frequency of lifestyle and interests in the data

The figure above shows that all participants talked about their lifestyle and interests among the things that were affected by their learning of English. Some participants mentioned this theme more than others, e.g., Sara, Leena and Nora. This could reflect differences in the relevance of this theme to each participants' experience and its importance.

All six participants reported that there were some changes to their lifestyle and interests. For example, Leena and Sara talked about changes to the way they dressed and ate, as exhibited in these quotes:

> *I started leaning towards healthy food more, like now, if, for example, my*
> *family cooked kabsa [Saudi famous dish of rice with chicken or meat],*
> *mostly no, I will go and make chicken breasts or salad or something.*
> *Because I felt that I did not enter this healthy lifestyle, exercise and healthy*
> *food, if not for them, I learned how to make a balance between the healthy*
> *things and the unhealthy things, all this from foreigners. It is correct that*
> *there are Arabs who talk about healthy lifestyle and suchlike, but I started*
> *because of the English-speakers. (Sara-I1-E13, translated from Arabic)*

> *I like to be like them in their healthy lifestyle, their accent. I also like the*
> *way they dress and their arrangements are mostly nice, even their simple*
> *make-up and hairstyles. (Leena-I1-E8, translated from Arabic)*

There were also reported changes in the six participants' interests in terms of the activities and the things they liked to engage with. For example:

121

Even when we watch a film, sometimes we watch things I laugh and my family members do not laugh because they do not understand the atmosphere that much. I know my family they do not like comedy films, they say they do not understand what they refer to, what they mean when they talk. (Nora-I1-E11, translated from Arabic)

The kind of books that I read changed sometimes, with English, it started to be some in Arabic and some in English … now I lean to literature more, English literature and English stories and things. (Reema-I2-E4, translated from Arabic)

All the quotes above reveal that the participants connected these changes in their interests and lifestyle to learning English as a vehicle that allowed them to access new content on many levels. For example, through literature and films, learning English allowed the participants to access a world their family and others around them did not have access to or understand. All this had implications on how they lived their lives in terms of the things they liked to do and engage with.

However, it appears that there is variation in terms of the extent of the difference that the participants experienced in their lifestyles and interests. For example, Sara mentioned that she found herself feeling distant from others around her as she resented some of the habits she used to enjoy:

These habits of gossiping and talking about people behind their backs that happen in gatherings I used to participate in them … But after studying English after having this huge amount of access to things like I had, I know, for example, this topic and this topic, so instead of gossiping and talking about people behind their backs and so on, no, I have issues to talk about, not always political issues or serious things, mostly it is things like make-up and fashion, it depends on the girls with me. But I noticed that the kind of girls I sit with changed. The people who are gossiping and talking about people behind their backs, I get away from them, not from a religious point of view but because I came to dislike this thing, I came to dislike this habit. (Sara-I1-E14, translated from Arabic)

The quote above signals that learning English may have contributed to elevating this participant's thoughts and made her feel that she can be better in terms of how she spends her time. This is in line with other things the participants reported in terms of being more cultured and cultivated (see section 4.3.1). Although the other participants mentioned that the changes that they experienced in their lifestyles and interests made them different from people around

them, none of them reported that this alienated them or decreased their connection with people around them. This difference between the participants highlights that although many language learners may experience similar changes during the learning process, there are also unique ways in which each learner views these changes as well.

4.3.6. Saudi female English learners' identities

Overall, the results presented above, provide a picture of how Saudi female learners of English as a foreign language viewed themselves. All six participants reported that as they learned English, they grew and changed as learners and people, specifically in the five areas presented above. All this had implications on their sense of self or identity. Generally, the participants' identities can be described as dynamic as the participants reported experiencing various changes in that regard. The participants' identities can also be described as complex because the participants experienced and talked about their identities in different ways. The dynamic and complex nature of the participants' identities was reflected in the participants' talking about having Western identities, hybrid identities and multiple identities. For example:

> *I feel that, I do not know, I feel that I now I identify with the Western society more. (Sara-I2-E3, translated from Arabic)*

> *It is a mixture, things changed in me because of learning English, so I cannot attribute everything to Arabic. As I said, I changed because of my studies and knowledge of English. I feel exactly as a hybrid. (Fatma-I2-E5, translated from Arabic)*

> *When I switched in Arabic, my personality will show up in Arabic and I have another personality that shows up in English, so that I have two different personalities. (Lama-I1-E10)*

It needs to be mentioned that the participants from the fourth and final year of the English language program (Sara and Lama) were more direct and explicit in talking about their development as people during the learning English process. This was seen in the fact that they acknowledged changes to their identities in terms of it being Western, multiple and hybrid in a more elaborate way while other participants were more reserved in talking about these things. This could be linked to their longer experience learning English. More discussion on the different types of identities can be found in section 5.2.

The next section presents the results relating to the sub-research question about the factors perceived to influence Saudi female learners' experience of learning English with reference to how these factors may have contributed to the participants' views of themselves or identities.

4.4. The factors perceived to influence Saudi female learners' experiences learning English

The participants reported that seven factors affected their learning of English and how they experienced this process. Two categories of factors emerged from the data. The first is internal factors of the English learning experience; these factors come from within the participants and are related to their goals and feelings. The second is external factors of the English learning experience; these factors come from the context and are related to the setting and the people around the participants. It needs to be mentioned that the current study does not claim that the factors presented below are the only factors affecting the participants' English learning experience, it is merely that these are the factors that emerged from analysis of the self-reported data collected from the participants.

4.4.1. Internal factors

The analysis revealed that the participants' investment in learning, their agency in learning English and anxiety about learning and using English were all factors affecting the participants and their English learning experience. Figure 4.7 below displays the number of times the participants talked about each internal factor in the data.
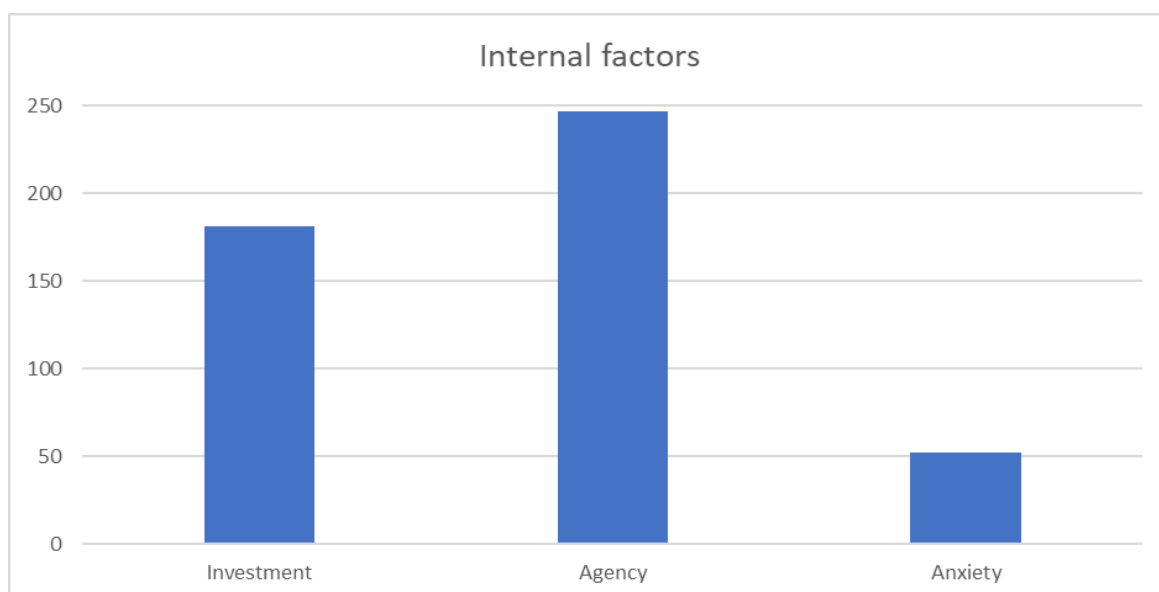
Figure 4.7: Frequency of the internal factors across the data

The figure above shows that agency was the most mentioned internal factor in the data. The second was investment. The third factor was anxiety; but there was a big difference between anxiety and the other factors in terms of frequency, which could signal that it may not have been as influential as investment and agency. All three factors are discussed in the following sections.

4.4.1.1. Investment

All six participants reported that they had high levels of investment in learning English which played a major role in their English learning experiences. Investment refers to the participants' motivation to learn English; it describes learner's motivation in terms of the expected benefits language learning will have on him/her (Norton & Toohey, 2011). Figure 4.8 displays the number of times each participant talked about the theme of investment in both the interviews and diaries.
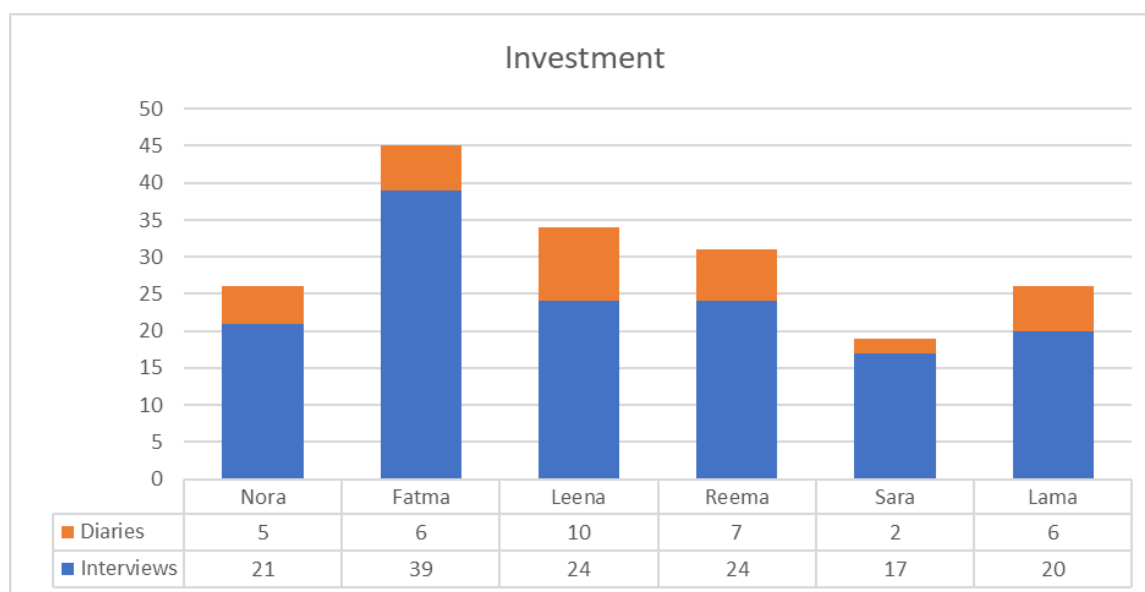
Figure 4.8: Frequency of investment in the data

The figure above shows that all participants talked about why they wanted to learn English and the various benefits they expected this process would bring to them. The multiple mentions of this theme across the diaries and interviews signals its importance as a factor affecting the participants' learning English experience. Fatma's mentions of this theme are higher than the others which may be related to the reasons and levels of her motivation.

In this study, there were three main reasons that motivated the participants to learn English and they had expectations for the various benefits this process may bring to them. This investment had an impact on the participants' experience of learning English and possibly their identities.

First, all six participants reported that their investment in learning English started when they were young; they had a love for the English language from an early age which made them want to learn English. They associated this love with watching media in English and wanting to be like the people they were watching. For example:

> *The first thing I had a love for it, I loved it meaning I wanted to learn it. When I see people talking or if I see films, I love seeing myself talking. I want to see myself fluent in English. But after that when I grew up and so*

125

on, I felt that it will benefit me in the work field, abroad and so on and on a social level it will benefit me. (Fatma-I1-E8, translated from Arabic)

Since I was like about 12 years old, I dreamed to be talkative in English, not like talkative I don't know, but like to have an accent and something like this. Whenever I watch a movie sometimes I'd say I'll be like this person in the future. (Lama-I1-E11)

You know when you like become passionate about other cultures. I, because, as I said before, I loved listening to English songs, series and so on. I thought, wow, I want to understand more. So, since I was young in elementary school, I remember Bugs Bunny saying things and I listened to him and said one day I will speak English and understand what he says. I used to ask my mother what this means and she says this and that. But I don't want anyone to translate for me, I want to understand. So, I think, since I was young, I loved learning and wanted to understand what they say, what they see. (Sara-I1-E15, translated from Arabic)

The quotes suggest that the participants' investment in learning English was related to their desire to be fluent like the people they saw in English media. It was also related to their desire to fully understand what is said in English media without the need for translation. Above all, the quotes highlight the role of English-speaking media in the participants' investment in learning English (see section 4.4.2.4. for more details).

Second, all six participants wanted to learn English because of its importance as a global language for communication all over the world. For example:

English language for me is something so important, because I believe we can't communicate with others from different countries, if I don't know it. It is the global language that must anyone [everyone must] learn it. (Lama-D7-E1)

Third, since knowing English is a requirement or at least a desired skill for most jobs in Saudi Arabia, the participants asserted that this motivated them to learn English. For example:

Now, all jobs ask for someone who has experiences and English language … The English language is comprehensive/broad like we say, we need it in all jobs. (Reema-I1-E8, translated from Arabic)

For example, I was in a situation, I was applying for a job in sales and my C.V. was in English and everyone else wrote theirs in Arabic. When I

126

> *entered for the interview, he said, 'you are the only own who wrote it in*
> *English', and they accepted me in the job. I think they accepted me because*
> *it gave me an advantage. (Fatma-I1-E9, translated from Arabic)*

Most of the participants' professional aspirations were connected to learning English as the background information showed that they wanted to work in fields related to learning English, such as English teaching, translation or in companies where English is the medium of communication.

Generally, it can be argued that the participants' investment in learning English was related to its value as a global language that brings benefits to them. These benefits were on the personal level, professional level and social level, as shown in the following quotes:

> *I learn English, I learn it for myself in order to develop, in order to improve,*
> *and the development and improvement for me is related to confidence and*
> *knowledge and way of dealing with people. (Sara-I1-E16, translated from*
> *Arabic)*

> *It gives you more qualification, gives me more qualification in the C.V.*
> *People's view is, basically, even if you enter a work field that is not related*
> *to your major, studies and the things you are studying, just because you*
> *have language, they will look at you with open hearts and open their hands*
> *to you. So, I feel it helps. (Leena-I1-E9, translated from Arabic)*

> *Most of the people think if you talk English, you're prestigious and you're*
> *developed one. (Lama-I1-E12)*

The quotes above reveal that the participants were aware of the value of English as a language that allows them to learn and develop as people, more specifically it helps them improve themselves in terms of knowledge, abilities and confidence (see section 4.3.1 and 4.3.2.). They were also aware that English could help them in finding jobs because in the job market proficiency in English is required. The participants were also aware of the social benefits English brings to its speakers in Saudi society in terms of prestige. All the above is in line with Bourdieu's (1977, 1985) argument that linguistic capital is one of the factors shaping a person's desire to acquire a new language that would bring him economic, professional and social benefits.

Although all the reasons presented above were influential on the investment of all six participants, it needs to be mentioned that there may be some variations in terms of how influential each one was on each participant. Nora, Fatma, Leena and Reema appeared to be mostly invested in learning English for instrumental professional reasons as they had clear

professional goals which were mentioned in their background information. On the other hand, Sara and Lama may have been mostly invested in learning English for personal desire and development reasons as they did not have pre-established professional goals. Differences in levels and types of investment may have played a role in the variation between the participants in terms of how they experienced the English learning process and its implications on their views of themselves as presented in section 4.3.

Overall, the participants' investment in learning English was linked to the fact that they thought it would be beneficial for them on many levels. All this is also related to the value of English as a global language (Pennycook, 2010), which will be discussed in section 5.8. Having high levels of investment in learning English is important because it shapes to an extent the learners' engagement with the language and learning i.e., their agency, which has an impact on the learners' progress, which in turn has implications on them as people. This point will be presented in the following section.

4.4.1.2. Agency

All six participants reported that they were dedicated to learning English and this had an impact on the amount and types of efforts they put into learning i.e., agency, which in turn had implications on their development as English speakers and as people. Figure 4.9 displays the number of times each participant talked about the theme of agency in both the interviews and diaries.

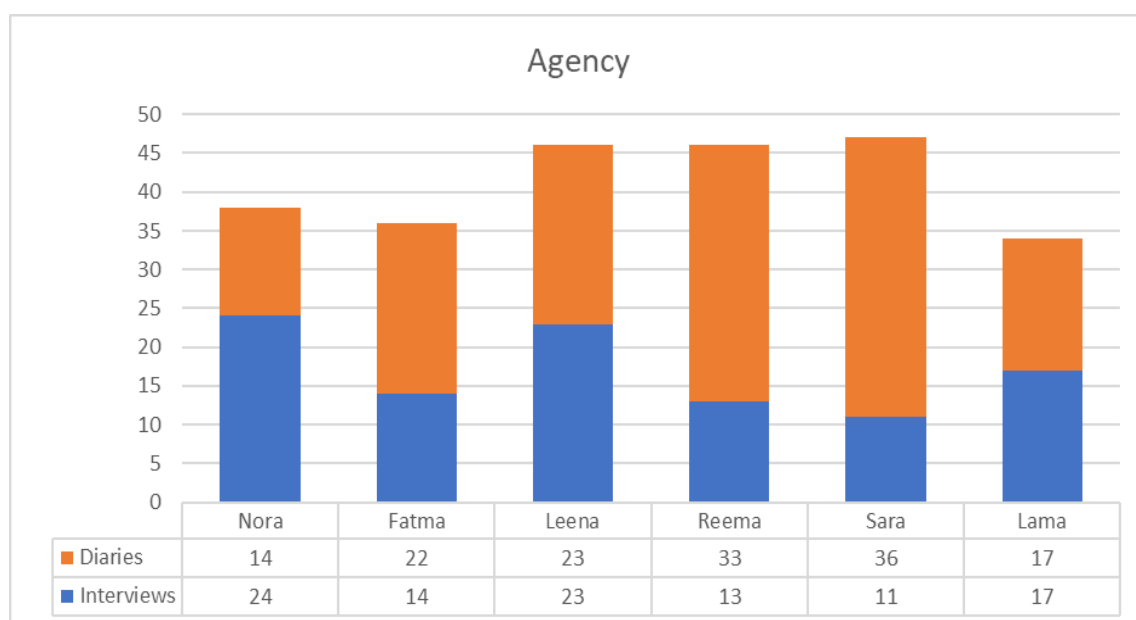|	Nora	Fatma	Leena	Reema	Sara	Lama
■ Diaries	14	22	23	33	36	17
■ Interviews	24	14	23	13	11	17

Figure 4.9: Frequency of agency in the data

The figure shows that all six participants talked a lot about the various efforts and things they did to learn English. There is little variation between the participants in that regard. One

128

interesting point is that the diaries were an effective data collection tool in terms of their usefulness in collecting data on learners' agency.

In this study, agency is viewed as the learners' willingness and capability to work on achieving their goal of learning English through various means (Fogle, 2012). The participants' agency in learning English can be seen in their assertions of the importance of dedication and commitment to success in learning English. For example, Lama and Sara wrote in the diaries:

> *Actullay [Actually] the development comes first from the person himself, if he was passionate about it he will seek to learn more and more, there's limited less [limitless] ways to reach your aim. (Lama-D1-E1)*

> *I noticed that I became more patient and committed than before. After discovering some linguistic problems after entering the university and until now I try to develop and learn more. Now after four years until this moment, I think that my learning and development attempt and improving my level continuously has affected my patience greatly, committing myself to daily learning and usage of the language even if slightly through YouTube or watching series and games made me more willing to commit to any plan in the future (even if not complete commitment). (Sara-D3-E2, translated from Arabic)*

The quotes above suggest that those participants were aware of the importance of them taking responsibility for their learning of English. They noted that patience and perseverance were key to their development and success. From what the six participants reported in terms of their learning of English, it seems that their agency in learning English was exhibited in three different ways. The following quotes provide examples of the different exhibitions of agency the participants reported:

> *The dedication in studying and university courses had a big effect on the improvement of my language and grammar. (Reema-D5-E1, translated from Arabic)*

First, the six participants' agency can be seen in their dedication and commitment to the courses they were taking through attendance and participation in classes, doing assignments and studying for exams. From what the participants reported in the interviews and diaries and based on the field notes, this type of agency may have differed from one participant to another and differed from one course to another depending on the instructor's attitude and nature of the course (see section 4.4.2.2).

Second, the six participants' agency was also exercised outside of the instruction context, as they relied on films, series and songs to develop their English. Furthermore, they accessed online material such as YouTube and social media that aided their learning as shown in these quotes:

> *Because of my passion to learn English, lately I started looking for specific ways to use the language more and this is why I joined a group on Instagram. The goal of this group is to exchange experiences and cultures in English. (Nora-D2-E2, translated from Arabic)*

> *I used to watch and still do, a YouTube program that teaches English through films, it connects two things I love films and language. It gives you from the film a rule, a new word and general information from one film, so it is very nice. (Reema-I1-E9, translated from Arabic)*

> *Mostly on my mobile phone, like I download programs and use them like development programs, for example, speaking and writing programs or talking to a foreign person … I open YouTube for example and watch educational videos. (Fatma-I1-E10, translated from Arabic)*

The quotes above signal that the participants were not passive learners of English as they appeared to take the initiative and look for ways to improve their English through different means, e.g., films, YouTube and social media groups. The quotes also reveal a key connection between the participants' agency and English media and social media as a lot of the things they did to improve their English and exhibited their agency revolved around using media and social media to develop their proficiency in English. This again highlights the important role English media plays in the participants' experience of learning English and will be discussed in section 4.4.2.4.

The third exhibition of agency can be seen in the six participants' reporting that it was very important to them to use English as much as possible, which they tried to achieve through two different means, as shown in these quotes:

> *The things I use to increase my language is shifting my mobile phone to English, reading English books and articles, communicating in English in twitter and Instagram. (Reema-D8-E1, translated from Arabic)*

> *I have started to try when I see foreign people to talk to them so I can evaluate myself in the language and do not use Arabic words if I get stuck, like my aunt's Pilipino housemaid just talks English so I have discussions with her. (Fatma-D8-E1, translated from Arabic)*

The English language Is every thing [everything] to me, I use it inside the
class of course, and I try to use out side [outside] the class as possible as I
can to keep me up on the path. (Lama-D1-E2)

The quotes above signal that the participants believed that practicing the use of English was important for their development and success in learning English. This pushed them to try to use English in two ways. The first is using English in activities such as reading and using the mobile phone. It can be argued that this could be considered an exercise of agency as they were doing these things to pursue their goal of learning English. The second is in interacting in English with others whether in person or online. This type of agency appeared to differ from one participant to another based on the context. Nora, for example, mentioned that she avoided using English at times because of some negative reactions she encountered, while Sara mentioned that negative reactions made her use English more in resistance (see section 4.4.2.3)

Overall, the participants' agency as discussed above appeared to have implications for their development on the linguistic and personal levels. On the linguistic level, it was considered beneficial to improving their proficiency in English. In other words, the participants' agency in terms of their dedication, perseverance, patience and various actions they took to learn English, contributed to their self-perceived progress in the learning of English itself. It also affected them personally as all this may have contributed to the participants viewing themselves as more confident, cultured and empowered, as argued in sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2. In addition, the participants' agency in terms of using English media and social media as a means of learning English and improving their proficiency may have had implications on the participants' knowledge, acceptance, self-expression and lifestyle. These findings are in line with what Lantolf & Pavlenko (2001) argued in terms of agency being a factor affecting learners' experience of language learning and their identities (see section 2.8).

4.4.1.3. Anxiety
All six participants reported that they suffered from anxiety during learning English. Figure 4.10 displays the number of times each participant talked about the theme of anxiety in both the interviews and diaries.
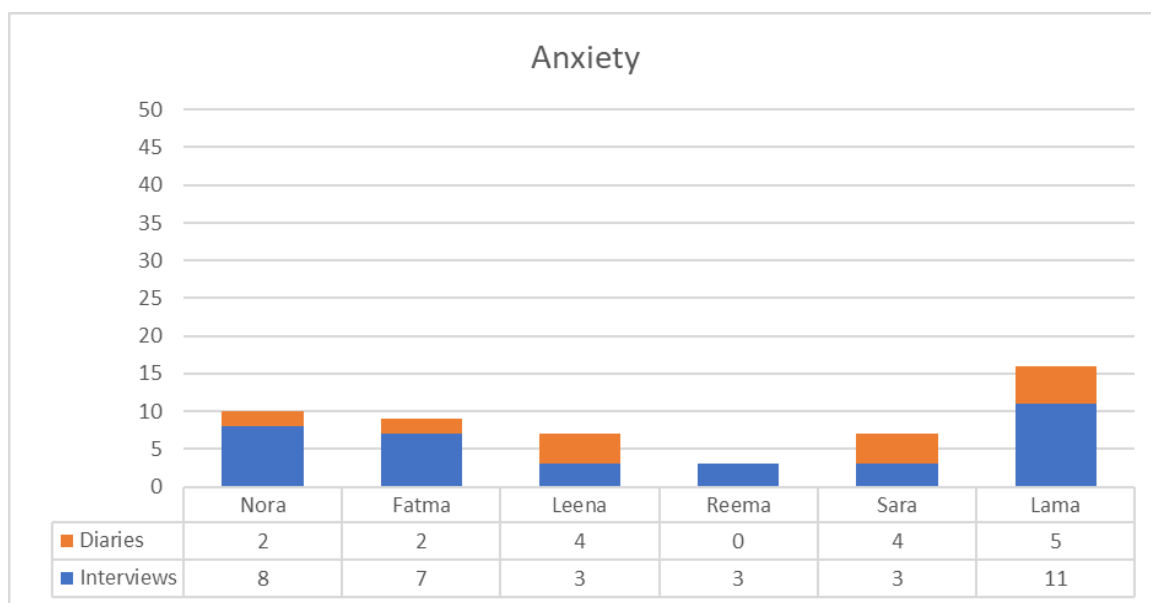
Figure 4.10: Frequency of anxiety in the data

The figure shows that all six participants talked about suffering from feelings of uneasiness and stress while learning English. This appeared to be a little bit higher in the participants from Year two, which is aligned with findings from previous studies in terms of anxiety being higher in earlier stages of FLL (Tanielian, 2017). However, Lama does not follow this pattern as she talked about anxiety more than all the other participants. This could be related to the fact that her anxiety was not only related to learning and using English i.e., situation anxiety; but it appeared to be related to her personality i.e., trait anxiety (Ellis, 2008).

The participants' anxiety was caused by several things. First of all, they all had anxiety about using English which was mostly prevalent in the early stages of learning English. The anxiety was connected to not wanting to make errors while speaking. Leena and Lama also suffered from anxiety because of their studies and exams. For example:

> *Whether in class or when talking to someone I do not know, I am shy of having a conversation with him. Even in class, if I have the answer, I am shy and nervous to participate because of fear of errors. (Fatma-D2-E1, translated from Arabic)*

> *I really as well am suffering of anxiety, tensions and nervousness, what can I say, whatever happens at the college, it affects all or entire my day. So, I think this is really I don't know a big issue, that I didn't, like I didn't know how to overcome it … I always like calculating my grades, calculating things, trying to analyze what the things like I will receive and the things that will happens [happen], and this is wrong, you should not be like you know anxious person. (Lama-I1-E13)*

132

Such feelings of anxiety in relation to SLL and FLL and use are common and documented in the literature (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Anxiety's effect on learners' experience of language learning and its outcomes varies from one learner to another. In this study, it appears that Lama struggled with anxiety more than the other participants. This could stem from the fact that her anxiety also stemmed from comparing herself to her classmates in terms of achievement in addition to fear of making errors as detailed above. It could have also been related to her characteristics as a person.

Nevertheless, it needs to be pointed out that all the participants indicated that they were mostly able to handle their anxiety, as shown in these quotes:

> *Sometimes I have a problem that I know the thing, I know the information but sometimes I am shy to say it like fear of it being wrong. But, Praise God, after learning English more and more, I felt that this tension was decreasing, I started to express my opinion even if it was wrong or incomplete, the most important thing is that I express my opinion and not stay silent. (Reema-I1-E10, translated from Arabic)*

> *I used to be very anxious about making stupid mistakes. But now I feel more confident, even if I made mistakes I do not want to stop like I did before. (Sara-D3-E3, translated from Arabic)*

It appears that the participants relied on time and practice to handle and possibly overcome their feelings of anxiety. These findings are in line with the results of a study by Tanielian (2017) conducted on university learners of English at King Faisal University, which is the same setting for this study. He reported that anxiety was higher among students in the earliest stages of English learning and appeared to decrease with time and more learning of English.

From the above, it appears that anxiety caused by learning and using English is a part of the participants' experiences. However, with more learning and linguistic progress, the participants reported they were able to handle and decrease their anxiety, which could be one of the reasons for their feelings of increased confidence in themselves as English speakers and people.

4.4.2. External Factors

The analysis revealed that English media and social media, others' attitudes and reactions, instruction and the learner's background were all factors affecting the participants and their English learning experience. Figure 4.11 below displays the number of times the participants talked about each external factor in the interviews and diaries.
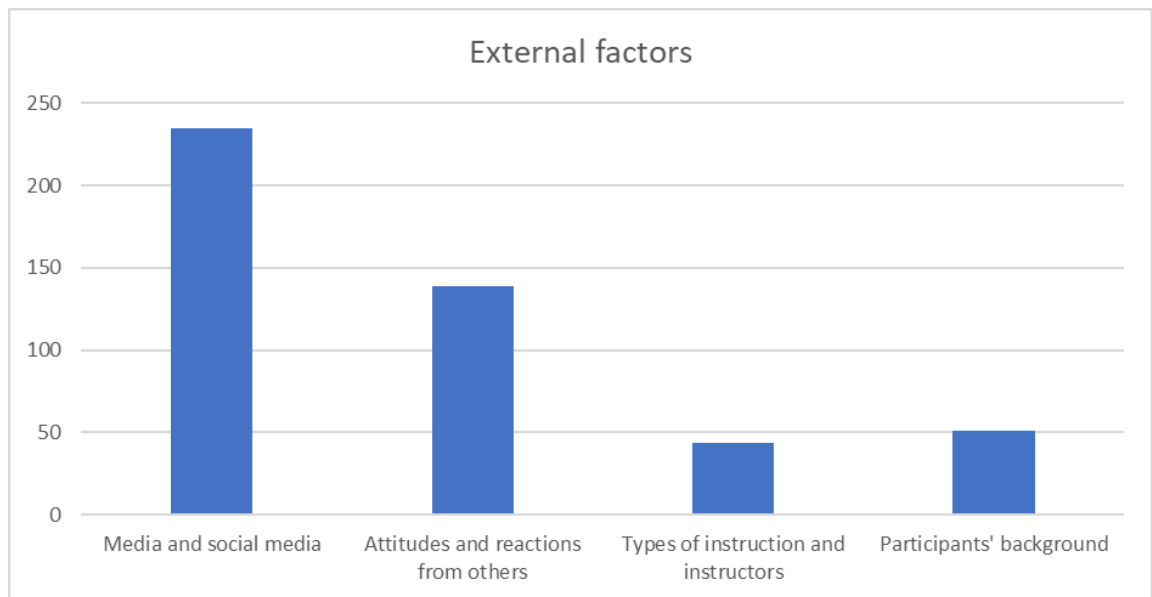
Figure 4.11: Frequency of the external factors across the data

The figure above shows that English media e.g., films and shows, YouTube and social media, e.g., Twitter and Instagram, followed by positive and negative attitudes and reactions from people around the participants, were the most frequently mentioned external factors. These factors were followed, with a substantial difference, by participants' background in terms of their families' education and travel and finally the type of instruction that the participants received, e.g., teaching methods, materials and instructors. The difference in variation could signal that some of these factors were more relevant to the participants' experience than others. All four factors will be explained and presented in the following sections.

4.4.2.1. Participants' background

All six participants reported that certain aspects of their background such as their families' knowledge of English and their experience of traveling abroad with their families appeared to be beneficial to their English learning experience. Figure 4.12 displays the number of times each participant talked about their background in both the interviews and diaries.
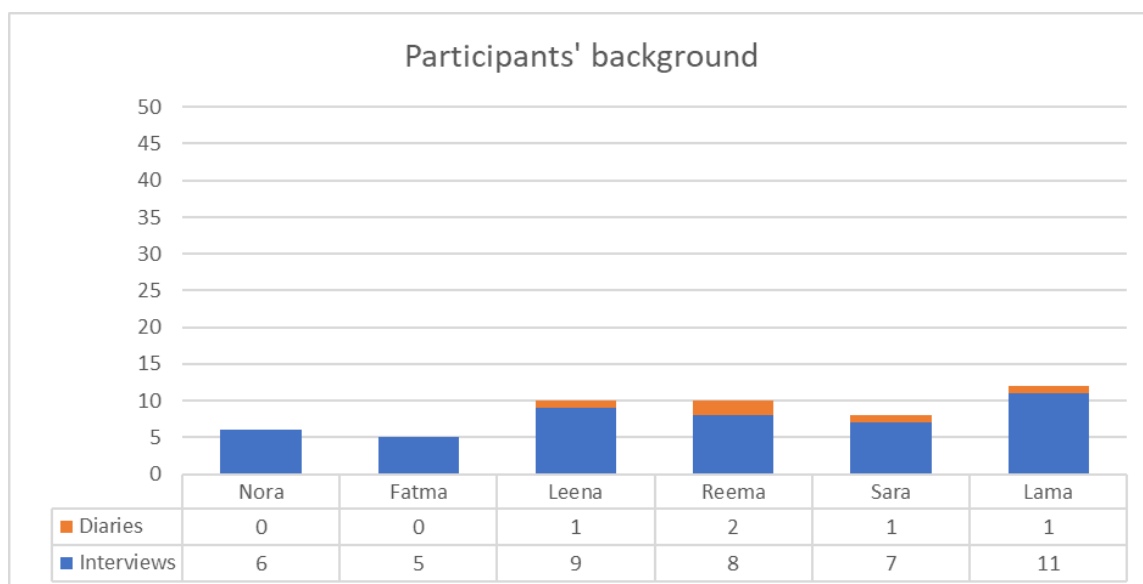
Figure 4.12: Frequency of participants' background in the data

The figure shows that the participants mentioned that their English learning experience was affected by two elements of their background which are: their family knowledge and use of English and their use of English while traveling.

Nora, Leena, Reema, Sara and Lama had family members who spoke English, which allowed them to use English more and also gave them the chance to request help if needed. For example, Reema and Sara said:

> *My sister is an English teacher, my uncle also speaks English and my brother as well since he works in Aramco ... there was a period when I was young, almost every Saturday before school, my sister, if I did not talk to her in English would not respond to me. It was not practice for her but it was practice for me, so I had to look up the meaning of the words in order to talk to her and answer her. (Reema-I1-E11, translated from Arabic)*

> *My mother the first thing, my mother studied English, she majored in English and now teaches English. From the start when we were young, she always bought for us things to learn English, tried to talk to us in English. I think this is the biggest thing that affected me. (Sara-I2-E4, translated from Arabic)*

These types of opportunities to use English on a regular basis are important for language learners, specifically in a foreign language setting like Saudi Arabia where learners may not have many opportunities to use English outside the classroom.

135

In addition, all six participants traveled outside Saudi Arabia to countries where they used English on regular basis, as shown in these quotes:

> *Since the last months were a summer vacation, I was traveling for over a month and naturally I was only speaking in English to communicate with others. I did not have difficulty in speaking English, the opposite I enjoyed using another language other than my mother tongue to communicate. (Sara-D2-E2, translated from Arabic)*

> *Talking about my language that helped me a lot while i'm [I'm] visiting Turkey. Actually, it was really helpful in communicating with others and enjoyable to me as well. I can say that I find the place to practice it with different Nationalities [nationalities], so that's why I enjoyed talking to everyone one even if I didn't need to! Opening a discussion with strangers was fun to me not just for practice. (Lama-D2-E1)*

It appears that traveling provided the participants with a chance to use English in a different way. This is based on the fact that it may have been required of the participants to use it extensively every day to communicate with others. This is different from using English in Saudi Arabia which may have been by choice and not that often. At this point it needs to be mentioned that there were some differences between the countries the participants traveled to and the frequency of that travel. Sara mentioned that she traveled regularly to Western counties e.g., Germany. Reema and Lama sometimes traveled to countries such as Turkey and Malaysia. Nora, Fatma, Leena, Reema and Lama sometimes traveled to neighboring countries such as Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates. Although all the participants mentioned that they used English during their travels, there may have been some differences in their experiences of using English based on the differences in the countries and the frequency of their travel.

Kim et al (2010) asserted that coming from a background that gave learners access to learning and using English was one of the factors that affects learners during the process of language learning. In this study, the fact that the participants had these opportunities to use English, either with family members or during travel, appeared to be beneficial for the participants in terms of improving their ability to speak English. This may have contributed to increasing their confidence, their cultural knowledge and may have also affected their acceptance and understanding and their self-expression.

4.4.2.2. Type of Instruction and instructors

All six participants reported that the teaching approaches and materials used in their various courses affected their engagement in these courses and in learning English in general. Figure

4.13 displays the number of times each participant talked about types of instruction and instructors in both the interviews and diaries.
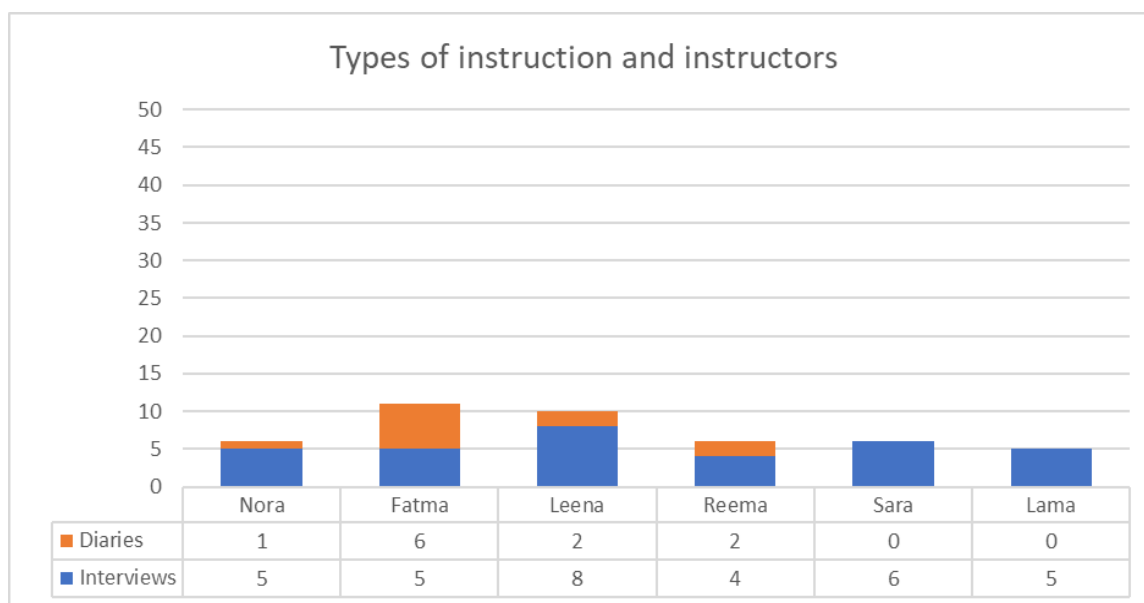
Figure 4.13: Frequency of types of instruction and instructors in the data

The figure shows that for all six participants, their English learning experience was affected by some aspects of teaching and instruction in the English Language program at King Faisal University whether it was the types of courses, the materials used, the teaching method or the instructors' attitudes.

All six participants reported that they preferred classes where they were allowed to have discussions. The majority of them were also fond of courses that exposed them to the history and literature of the target language's cultures.

> *Some of them [instructors] lecture and go out which I do not like a lot but the majority, give you and try to give and take with you, try to ask and listen to your opinions, listen to your thoughts, I like this a lot … As a student I am attracted to lectures that I can interact in like I am interacting with you now, I am very, very interested and I enjoy it more (Leena-I1-E10, translated from Arabic)*

> *I enjoy it, especially the cultural and thoughtful classes, American criticism, poetry, novel, that we know the thoughts of people who died a thousand million years ago, to know their way of thinking, especially if the instructor loves this and is passionate about it, she will give you from her heart, like how this happened, it gives you the experiences. Really, I enjoy it because of*

> *learning new things I did not expect to know. (Sara-I1-E17, translated from Arabic)*

The participants had a love for such courses because these courses allowed them to learn new things and express themselves, which may have been influential on their achievement in learning and generally their development as people in terms of being more knowledgeable and confident and in terms of their views, as presented in section 4.3. It was noticed that the participants in Year four highlighted the importance of theoretical and literature courses in shaping their experiences more than the participants from the lower levels, especially the second-year participants. This could be attributed to the fact that these courses are mostly taken in the later stages of the English language program.

On the other hand, the six participants indicated that they did not like or enjoy some of the courses because of the lack of discussion and opportunities to interact. They also disliked some courses for their difficult or uninteresting materials e.g., translation theories. For example:

> *The classes in which I can not [cannot] express my opinions or communicate with the professor are not much liked by me, but I find it dull, and I hope it ends quickly. (Leena-D1-E1)*

> *What shocked me the most is the lecture of translation i [I] thought i [I] would be thrilled to learn about it but the first lecture killed my excitement, maybe because the book that we are studying from i [I] do not know but honestly it was not interesting but maybe it's the beginning only i [I] hope it gets more interesting. (Nora-D7-E1)*

In addition, the six participants mentioned that they had issues in courses where practice was limited and wanted to have more practice and exercises, as shown here:

> *I have difficulty in something else which is phonetics. Until now, I feel I am not understanding it because from my point of view it needs practice ... but the rules were just explained to us and we applied it to some words. I feel we need to practice more and more so it sticks. (Leena-D2-E2, translated from Arabic)*

> *We need more realistic examples. For example, vocabulary building this course I feel is the best in this topic because it has examples, it is connected to our reality so we can relate. (Nora-I1-E12, translated from Arabic)*

Furthermore, the six participants reported that they did not enjoy some courses because of the instructor's character or approach. Moreover, some instructors' attitude toward learners' errors were negative which made the participants reluctant to interact in these instructors' classes:

I faced like a lot of lectures that is boring one, I don't know most of the time
I sleep, may be due to her [the instructor] like attitude, her way to explain,
her personality, it is not attractive, it's not not attractive word but like I
don't know … like she doesn't have active one to talk. (Lama-I1-E14)

There are some instructors who bring you down, not bring you down but like
'you either give me the right answer or you do not give me any answer'.
These I do not participate with. (Sara-I1-E18, translated from Arabic)

What the participants expressed in terms of the issues they had with some of the courses they were taking whether because of teaching approach, material or instructor's attitude was noted by the researcher when she attended classes to gather information on the setting through field notes. There was some variation in terms of students' engagement in classroom activities. This variation was mostly related to the type of courses, as students were more engaged in language skill courses such as listening and speaking. In addition, there were differences between instructors in the way they taught their courses; some of them relied mostly on textbooks in terms of presenting the material, followed by a discussion or solving exercises. While others involved students in all aspects of the lesson.

All this appeared to shape the participants' experiences learning English and affected their agency in it positively and negatively, which in turn may have contributed to their achievement and the changes they reported experiencing while learning English as presented in section 4.3.

4.4.2.3. Attitudes and reactions from others

All six participants reported that the reactions and attitudes of people around them regarding their learning and usage of English affected their learning experience. Figure 4.14 displays the number of times each participant talked about others' attitudes and reactions in both the interviews and diaries.
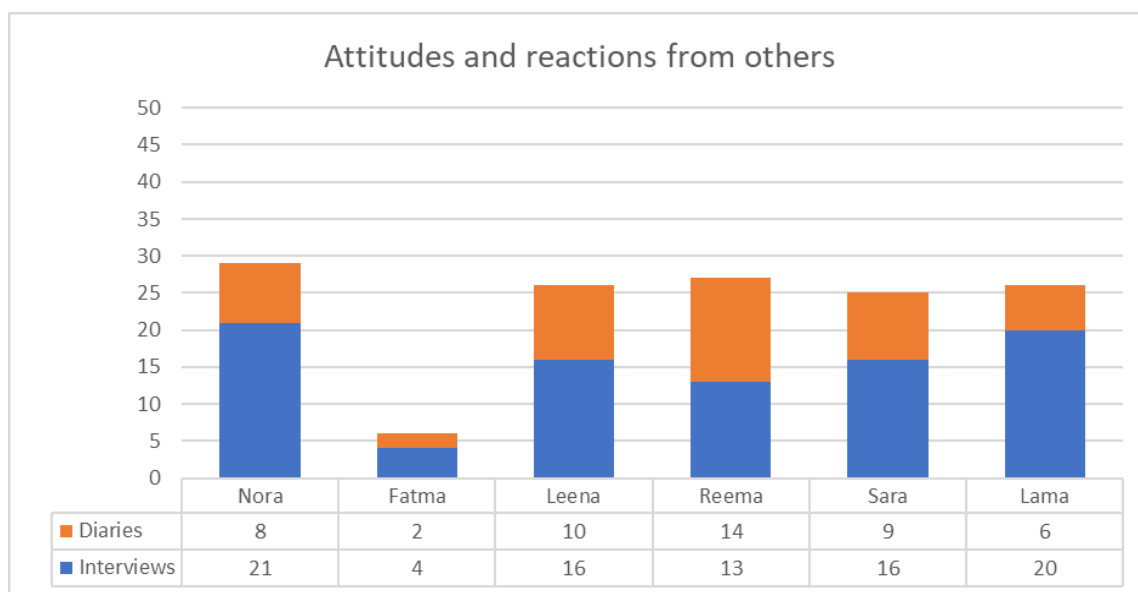
Figure 4.14: Frequency of attitudes and reactions from others in the data

The figure shows that all six participants reported that the way other people around them, such as family, friends and instructors, reacted to their learning and use of English was among the factors affecting their English learning experiences. It is interesting to note that Fatma talked about this point much less than the other participants, which could be because she experienced this less than the others or that she was not affected by that factor as much as the other participants.

The six participants talked about positive reactions, in the form of compliments and support, they received from people around them in relation to their learning of English, which pushed them further in their learning of English and helped them develop more as English speakers and as people. First of all, the most common type of support the six participants talked about was the one provided by their families. This support was exhibited in their encouragement for the participants to study and use English. Family support was also exhibited in the families' expressing their pride in the participants and complimenting them on their English. For example:

> *My effort in learning the language was positive thanks to my mother, she always said to me 'benefit from the language as much as you can because it will benefit you in your life and it will not let you need anyone, I was your age and did not learn it well and now I do not understand it and cannot speak it, you have a big status work for it'. Her words were the engine that made me push and learn more. (Reema-D1-E3, translated from Arabic)*

> *They are proud of me because always when we meet a new person or something, a while ago I was going to the dentist, my father and the dentist*

140

were talking about English, its importance and that teaching English should
develop, my father said to the dentist that my daughter is good in English
and was complimenting my English. I felt a nice feeling, feeling of pride that
my father was complimenting me. (Nora-I1-E13, translated from Arabic)

One of the situations that really encouraged me to continue my writing
training was the reaction from my brother, he had to write a letter in
English to his professor so he asked me for help, and, because of my
excitement, I volunteered to write the whole letter. When I was done reading
it, I asked him to read it to revise it, and he could not hide his fascination
with what he read. He was very impressed. It is rare to witness a reaction
like this. I would think of this situation often, this situation pushed me to
continue and increase my effort to develop this skill. (Sara-D9-E1,
translated from Arabic)

It appears that the participants felt that receiving positive reactions and support in the form of praise and pride increased their motivation to continue learning and developing their English. It also contributed to their feelings of increased confidence, as mentioned in section 4.3.2. These findings are similar to those reported in a study by Umrani (2015) investigating the identities of Pakistani learners of English. Umrani found that her participants' knowledge of English gave their families a sense of pride which encouraged them to continue learning and developing.

It needs to be mentioned that the amount and type of support the participants received from their families and its impact on them may have differed from one participant to another. For example, Reema talked extensively about the support from her mother, sister, uncle and father and how it made her work harder and helped her progress while Lama mentioned that her father and siblings were supportive of her learning of English but that this was influential on her mostly in the earlier stages of learning English.

The participants reported that they also received support and compliments from others around them. For example, Nora, Leena, Reema and Sara's friends supported them by encouraging them and helping them, as shown in these quotes:

My friends are very supportive, we always support each other on the
academic level and emotional level. (Reema-I1-E12, translated from Arabic)

I gained many experiences from a friend of mine, and he who encouraged
me to learn in this way was easy and fun. (Leena-D9-E1)

All six participants also mentioned that some of their English instructors provided support for them by complimenting them, as shown in these quotes:

> *There is something that made me very happy, we were in class talking and an instructor that taught me before was there to attend, she said to my current instructor 'as long as this is your student you are lucky', this thing made me very happy honestly. (Reema-I1-E13, translated from Arabic)*

> *While I'm studying My [my] major I met doctors that gave the motivation and the inspiration to keep going. (Lama-D1-E3)*

It cannot be denied that peer support and instructor support can be influential on a learner's experience during language learning. In this case, it appeared to help the participants mostly on the emotional or psychological level as it may have given them more motivation to continue learning and more faith in their abilities.

Overall, it appears that the support and compliments the participants received from several people around them played a part in pushing them further in their learning. This may have had implications on their achievement in English learning and the changes they reported experiencing as a result of that.

It needs to be mentioned that the six participants also reported that sometimes there were negative reactions to their usage of English, specifically in terms of people thinking they were showing off, as shown in these quotes:

> *I reply to the people around me In [in] English, sometimes they gave a look that I'm showing off! but I don't care. (Lama-D1-E4)*

> *From the situations that I used English was a conversation with my friend in the university hallways, we were telling our stories and walking, I could not stop myself from noticing the disapproving looks on the faces of some of the girls, the vast majority would look up to see who is talking in a different language, I was embarrassed at first but I continued talking anyway. (Sara-D1-E2, translated from Arabic)*

It appears that such negative reactions may have stemmed from some people's disapproval of the use of English in situations outside of instruction. It may have also stemmed from others feeling that this is a sign of arrogance or because they were jealous of the participants as some of the participants indicated (Leena and Sara). Nevertheless, the participants revealed that they mostly ignored these reactions, as shown here:

> *While talking in English with my classmates for practice, I find a lot of looks of astonishment and some anger, I cannot understand why but I think that it is possible that some think there is no need to speak in another language*

outside the classes! But I continue to ignore because practice is the most important thing for a learner to do. (Nora-D6-E1, translated from Arabic)

Those people who are envious of you because of your level in English you can deal with them in the way of speaking more so you frustrate them more, like this is my way, you do not know, this is your problem but look at me speaking more, look at me knowing more, like die with your envy. (Sara-I1-E19, translated from Arabic)

However, it is not clear whether the participants were able to completely ignore such negative reactions or criticism. Because, although Nora mentioned in the quote above that she ignored such comments, she also mentioned that she stopped herself from using English in some situations to avoid any potential negative reactions. In addition, the fact that Sara mentioned (above) that she used English more to resist such comments also signals that she was not able to completely ignore them. Similarly, Kim (2003b) found in her study of Malay students of English that due to negative comments, students reported that they tended to avoid using English or use English in defiance. All this indicates that negative reactions may have had an effect on the participants' experience of learning English and that this differed from one participant to another.

4.4.2.4. *Media and social media*

All six participants in talking and writing about learning English often referred to English media such as films and series, YouTube and social media applications, such as Twitter and Instagram, as important aspects of their English learning experience. Figure 4.15 displays the number of times each participant talked about media and social media in both the interviews and diaries.

Media and social media

	Nora	Fatma	Leena	Reema	Sara	Lama
■ Diaries	4	10	13	17	21	6
■ Interviews	27	38	26	23	30	20
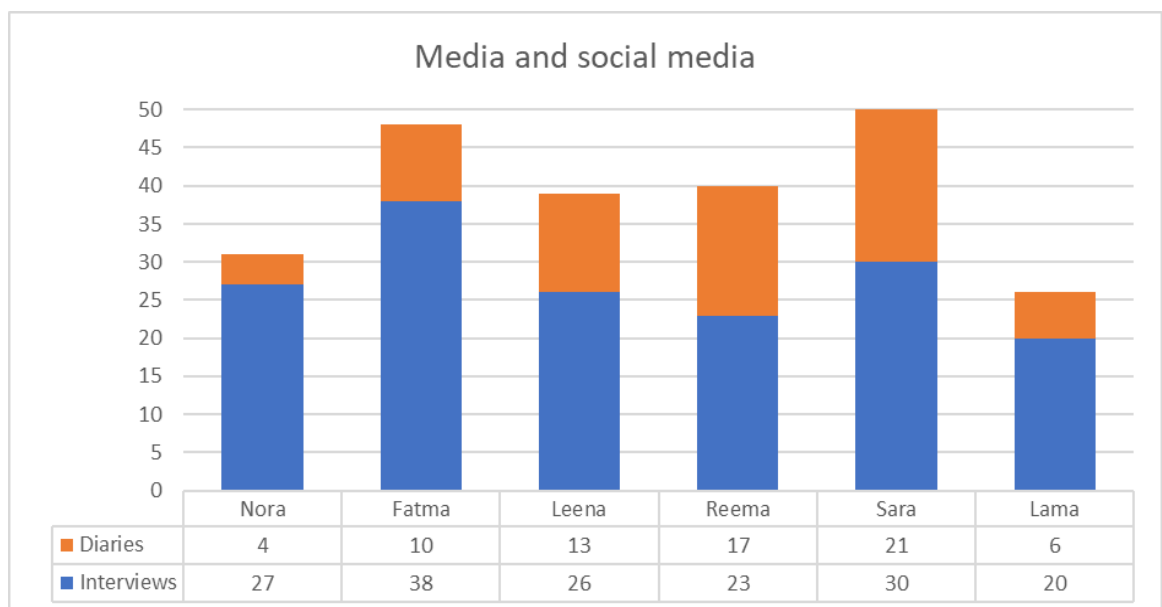
Figure 4.15: Frequency of media and social media in the data

143

The figure shows that media and social media was one of the most talked about factors affecting the participants' English learning experience and possibly one of the most important. This is supported by the fact that it was mentioned in the diaries as well as the interviews.

The analysis revealed that English media and social media affected the participants' experience learning English in several ways. First, all the participants indicated that English films and series were one of the things that motivated them to learn English, as mentioned in section 4.4.1.1. They connected this to the popularity of the English language and its cultures, especially the dominance of its media through globalization (see section 5.9), as shown in this quote:

> *I think it is wide-spread because we watch their series and so on. So, I think their culture is more spread than other countries because we watch, we are connected to them in series, films, we watched it from a long time ago. So, I think we are more affected by them more than other countries. (Fatma-I1-E11, translated from Arabic)*

Second, the six participants mentioned that they considered watching films, series and YouTube videos beneficial to their learning and development; they noted that they utilized social media apps, e.g., Instagram as a way to access educational material and communicate with English speakers all over the world, as discussed in section 4.4.1.2.

Third, the six participants revealed that they considered being able to access such content because of their learning and knowledge of English a key aspect of the cultural learning that goes along with English learning, as shown in these quotes:

> *Basically, it [learning English] is the base not only the vehicle, the material that I look at and anything, media and everything it is all in English basically, if it was not for my learning I would not have understood the things that are happening. (Nora-I2-E3, translated from Arabic)*

> *YouTube, everything in it, but the first thing is talk shows I love talk shows a lot … Ellen, Steve Harvey … I feel sometimes that I understand their way of thinking or their culture in general, the pattern of their culture. For example, the known things, to be appropriate or inappropriate, the things here you know because we are living here but their things, to know them, the talk shows are the closest thing to teach you. (Nora-I1-E14, translated from Arabic)*

> *I feel the media created another life for me maybe, like if media was not there, I would have been another person. But the media that I am exposed to*

as I said is all in English, and this affected my personality. (Sara-I2-E5,
translated from Arabic)

The quotes above reveal that the learning of English allowed the participants to access English media, such as talk shows, which was key to them learning about Western English-speaking cultures and understanding them better in terms of their thoughts and ways of life. These findings are aligned with the SLS theory in terms of language learning being about acquiring social and cultural knowledge and skills as well as linguistic knowledge and skills (Duff, 2007, 2011). Although it needs to be mentioned that in this study the nature of the socialization may be different from that in other studies conducted in second language settings (see Kim & Duff, 2012; Schecter & Bayley, 1997). This is based on the fact that the participants' socialization took place mainly through engagement with content in the target language online and in media and was less about actual interactions with the target language speakers. This may have been due to the fact that this study was conducted in a foreign language setting where opportunities to interact with native speakers are limited. Therefore, having Saudi Arabia, a country where English is considered a foreign language, as the setting of this study brings a different perspective to SLS as a process that can take place through various means (see section 5.4 for more discussion).

Generally, the participants constantly referred to English media while talking about their experience of learning English. Therefore, it appears that English media in its different forms cannot be separated from the process of learning English. It can be considered part of the learning and socialization experience in the English language and it played a part in the participants' development of English, knowledge, confidence, acceptance, self-expression and lifestyle. All of which has implications on the participants' identities.

4.5. Conclusion

Overall, all the participants appeared to be highly invested in learning English for several reasons. This was reflected in their agency as they put various and variable efforts into learning English. As a result, they felt that they were able to improve their English language skills which gave them a sense of accomplishment and pride. In addition, as they learned English, they had access to content in English whether through instruction, reading, watching films and shows, YouTube or social media, which helped them to learn and develop. As a result, they were able to establish themselves as educated, knowledgeable and cultured among their peers and family. Moreover, having good command over English made their family and others in their vicinity depend on them in various situations which made them feel capable and useful. They also received compliments in that regard. All this contributed to increasing their confidence and sense of empowerment. Furthermore, their increased confidence might be linked to the view that English has superiority over other languages and the notion that people have respect and

admiration for people who speak it because this is something that they encountered in their lives.

In addition, learning English appeared to be influential in making the participants more accepting and understanding of different people and cultures. The participants reported changes in the way they thought about some religious, social and cultural issues. They seemed to be more liberal in their views which was linked to the cultural knowledge they acquired through learning and using English.

Furthermore, the participants also reported changes in how they expressed themselves. They mentioned that they were using English more in their speech, sometimes unconsciously. They also had a preference for using English in formal situations and in social media. Furthermore, it appeared that English gave them a means of expressing their thoughts especially their emotions differently. All of this indicated that learning English may have resulted in the participants having fluid identities as speakers of Arabic and English. Finally, the participants reported experiencing some changes to their lifestyle and interests.

Through learning English, many participants aspired to creating an identity for themselves as cultured, professional and independent people. Their identities were dynamic, complex and unique, and they appeared to struggle to describe their identities. All six participants believed they had hybrid identities mixing their Arabic identity and English identity. Three participants believed they had Western identities and one believed that she had two identities one in English and one in Arabic.

Many factors played a role in shaping the participants experience of learning English and as a result their identities. As mentioned above, investment and agency had an effect on how the participants engaged in the English learning process and their development. The participants' background, the instruction they received and the reactions from people around them also had an effect on them as learners and as people. In addition, the participants considered English-speaking media and social media influential on their learning and identities. On the other hand, the participants reported that they suffered from anxiety while learning and using English, especially in the early stages of learning. They also mentioned that sometimes there were negative reactions to their usage of English.

From the findings above, it can be concluded that learning English was not only about acquiring the linguistic skills of the English language. It was also about having access to information through the medium of English. It also involved contact with other cultures, specifically Western English-speaking cultures, such as American and British cultures. This can be seen in the participants' multiple assertions that through English, they were able to know more about Western English-speaking cultures and embrace some of their values. This may have also been

influenced by the perceived superiority of the American and British cultures due to their dominance of media and globalization. Furthermore, the status of English as a global language used all over the world in various fields as well as the spread of its teaching as a L2 was also a factor.

However, it needs to be mentioned that although the findings above are common across all participants, there were some differences between the participants in the way they experienced and talked about their English learning and identities. For example, some participants may have experienced more changes in certain areas than others. In addition, some participants talked about certain themes more than others. This could signal that there was variation in terms of the importance of each theme to each participant. However, it is not possible to make such claims in the current study due to the nature of the study design.

Chapter five: Discussion

5.1. Introduction

The present study aimed to explore the identities of Saudi female learners of English specifically how they viewed themselves while learning English. In addition, the factors that the participants thought affected their experiences of learning English were investigated. SLS was chosen as the theoretical framework in which FLL is viewed and analyzed. In this theory, language learning is a process in which learners are equipped with the linguistic, social and cultural tools to engage in the target language community. This process can have implications on learners as people in terms of their attitudes toward their own culture and the target language culture and in terms of their identity or sense of self. A multiple case design, which collected longitudinal data from interviews and diaries, background information forms and field notes, was used to investigate six Saudi female university students' experience learning English and their identities. Investigating this topic in this way had not been done before in Saudi Arabia and avoids some of the shortcomings of previous studies. In this way, the findings of this study contribute important information to our understanding of whether and how FLL as a social cultural process shapes English learners' identities.

The findings of this study add to knowledge obtained by previous research on FLL and identity. First, the results showed the dynamic nature of learners' identities as the participants viewed themselves differently in terms of knowledge and culture, confidence and power, acceptance and understanding, self-expression and lifestyle. Second, the results revealed the complex nature of learners' identities because the participants described their identities as Western, multiple and hybrid, sometimes within the same participant. Third, the results highlighted the importance of investment, agency and imagined identities in FLL and shaping learners' identities. Fourth, the results revealed the complexity of FLL as a process that is affected by many factors. Fifth, the results shed light on the different nature of SLS in foreign language settings.

In this chapter a detailed discussion of the key findings of this research is presented. This includes relating the findings to the relevant theoretical concepts and previous studies. Sections 5.2 and 5.3 discuss how learning English engages the learners' identities in terms of them having Western, multiple, hybrid and imagined identities. Section 5.4 discusses the relationship between learning English and the acquisition of knowledge and culture. Section 5.5 discusses the relationship between learning English and changing learners' attitudes and views towards social, cultural and religious issues. Section 5.6 discusses the relationship between learning English and learners' confidence and power. Section 5.7 discusses the relationship between learning English and learner's self-expression abilities and preferences. Section 5.8 and 5.9 discuss the role of investment and agency in the process of learning English and identity

development, highlighting the relationship between learning English and media as a factor shaping the learners' experience of learning English and their identities.

5.2. Learning English and dynamic complex identities: Western, hybrid and multiple

This study views identity as a person's perception of themselves and their relationship with the world around them (Norton, 2000). The SLS concept of identity as dynamic and complex is used to make sense of what the participants reported in terms of their views of themselves or their identities while learning English. The findings of this study indicated that learning English engaged the identities of the Saudi female university students. Several forms of the participants' complex and dynamic identities emerged. The participants talked about how their identities were different from before learning English and different from people around them as a result of learning English. They described their different identities as Western identities, hybrid identities and multiple identities. Furthermore, learning English was associated with the creation of an imagined identity. Figure 5.1 below illustrates the different ways the participants viewed their identity as a result of learning English.
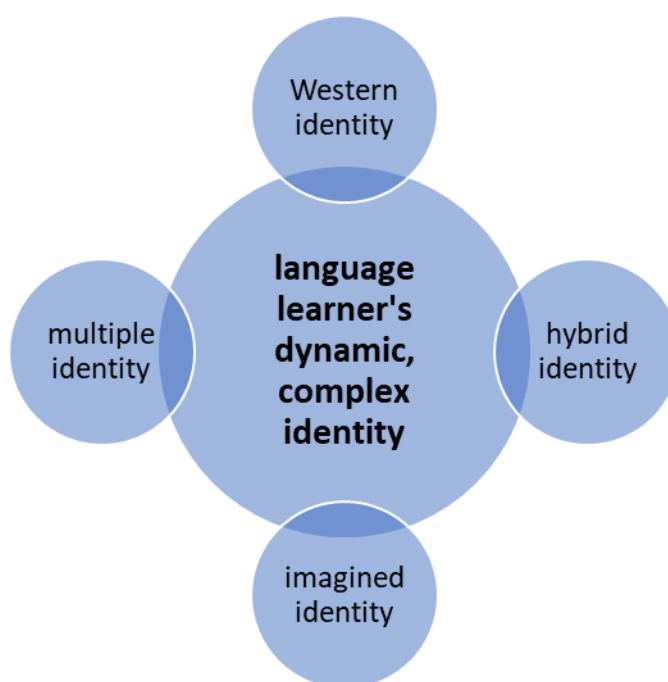
Figure 5.1: The dynamic complex nature of language learner's identity

These findings are aligned with the idea of language learner's identity and identity in general being complex and subject to change (Al Shuhail, 2020; Burck, 2011; Duff, 2012b, Norton, 2015). All these forms of the participants' dynamic identities will be discussed below.

5.2.1. Western identities

Three of the participants (Nora, Sara and Lama) reported that they felt that learning English was linked to them having a Western identity. They mentioned that they were becoming or at least they were being viewed as westernized or influenced by Western values as a result of learning English. The three participants viewed this change in different ways. Nora noted that some of her views toward people with different religious beliefs and practices changed as she learned and used English e.g., accepting women who do not wear hijab. This change in views and interests, which was not always supported by her family, made others think she may be westernized. In other words, the fact that Nora became more open-minded, as she described herself, created some negative reactions from people around her. She attributed this to the fact that when the word 'open-minded' is used people often think that it means giving up your own religious and cultural beliefs. Another reason Nora felt contributed to the view she was westernized was her usage of English in her speech and communication as she noted that some people around her resented that. This is similar to the findings of Kim (2003b) and Kim et al (2010) that Malay learners of English were viewed as westernized. Actually, Kim et al (2010) reported that their participants experienced what they called 'othering' as they felt they were different from people around them and at the same time others behaved differently with them. This could be similar to what was found in this study, as Nora's usage of English along with the changes in her views made her different from people around her and contributed to these people viewing her as different or westernized. Nora resisted this new aspect of identity that was assigned to her by others, which reinforces Norton and McKinney's (2011) argument that language learners resist certain associations or positions they are put in as a result of the complex linguistic and social cultural process of language learning.

Unlike Nora, Sara and Lama were concerned about adopting Western identities and losing their native cultural identities and ways of being. It appears that they thought the learning of English and the changes they reported experiencing as a result of it may affect them on a deeper level. They described it as changes to their mentality, personality and thinking. For example, Sara mentioned that she experienced a period of doubt in her faith and Islam because learning English allowed her to read books by Western scholars that presented her with ideas that were not in line with her native Saudi and Islamic identity. This indicates that learning new things as a result of knowing English can be an important factor affecting language learners' beliefs, views and their identity. This finding is different from what has been reported in previous studies within the Saudi context (Alsweel, 2013; Mustafa, 2017) as none of them reported that their participants associated learning English with having a Western identity. This highlights the variation in how language learners view the influence of learning English on their identities.

Other studies such as Atay and Ece (2009) and Umrani (2015) reported that learners of English as a foreign language felt that they were adopting some Western influences, and this created an inner conflict for them. The conflicting feelings about westernization and identity change that the participants in this study experienced, along with those found in participants in Atay and Ece (2009) and Umrani (2015), could be related to the Islamic background they come from. In other words, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Pakistan are mainly Muslim countries. Therefore, the historical religious and political tensions between the West and parts of the Muslim world may contribute to people from these countries being reluctant to admit and embrace any change in their identities that they perceive as Western. Nevertheless, SLS studies such as Guardado's (2009) and Schecter & Bayley's (1997) in Western contexts reported similar findings in terms of L2 learners having concerns about losing their native cultural identity. These findings are aligned with the arguments made by Duff (2011, 2012b) and Norton (2000, 2015) in terms of language learning bringing change to the identity of a learner; they argued that language learning may result in a learner having a different identity as he/she identifies more with the target language and its culture.

Generally, several participants commented on the fact that they considered learning English a factor contributing to the westernization of Saudi people and possibly Saudi society. They reported that the social and cultural content that learners' access because of learning English may present them with Western beliefs and lifestyles which may affect Saudi individuals and collectively as a society. In other words, the participants linked learning English to people having Western mentalities or thinking because it allows for connection and communication with Western English-speaking people, societies and cultures through songs, films, social media and other content. This was viewed as having positive and negative effects on Saudi society (see section 5.3). However, the views of the participants of this study may not necessarily reflect the views of all Saudis learning English. A study by Al-Haq and Samdi (1996), investigating learning English and westernization in Saudi Arabia, revealed that Saudi learners did not associate learning English with westernization or consider it a threat to national and religious identity. But because that study was done more than twenty years ago, its findings may not be applicable to this time. Mustafa (2017) commented on some concerns about westernization within his participants. Therefore, more research is needed to shed light on whether Saudis associate learning English with westernization and their views on this topic.

Finally, it must be noted that although the participants in this study associated learning English with the westernization on personal and social levels, one cannot deny that there may be other factors contributing to this such as politics, globalization and technology.

5.2.2. Multiple identities

Lama in her description of her identity was different from the other participants as she explicitly talked about having multiple identities, one in Arabic and one in English. Lama attributed her two identities to her experience of learning English as it created a second identity for her as an English speaker. Lama was not clear as to which identity was more powerful. She mentioned that she felt that her English-speaking identity reflected her personality more. But at the same time, she wanted to assert that her native cultural identity was strong and was not changed by learning English. Similarly, Atay and Ece (2009), in their study of the identities of Turkish learners of English, found that their participants reported their Turkish identity was more powerful than their Western identity. But some of their participants also mentioned that their Western identity was getting more powerful with time. This supports the argument of identity being flexible and subject to change.

This finding confirms what has been argued by Duff (2012b) and Norton (2000) in terms of language learning creating multiple identities for the learner. However, it needs to be pointed out that in this study, only one of six participants talked explicitly about having multiple identities. It could be that the other participants did not consider self-expression in different languages a sign of multiple identities or that they did not consider having multiple identities relevant to their experience. Similarly, Mustafa (2017), in his study on the identity and agency of Saudi women learning English, reported that only two out of his twelve participants reported having multiple identities. However, in other studies, such as Alsweel (2013), Atay and Ece (2009) and Kim (2003b), multiple identities was a major finding across the participants. This difference could stem from the fact that in most of those studies self-expression in two languages was viewed as a representation of two linguistic identities. In other words, those studies based their finding of multiple identities on the participants' reporting that they switched from one language to another in different contexts to achieve various goals and it was not necessarily based on the participants' mentioning explicitly that they had multiple identities. In this case, although five of the participants in this study did not talk explicitly about having multiple identities, it is possible that they may have experienced having multiple identities on the linguistic level following Joseph's (2004) description of identity as 'a linguistic phenomenon' (p.11). Burck (2011) and Pavlenko (2006) argued that self-expression in different languages may be an indication of multiple identities (see section 2.5). Specifically, the participants may have experienced having Arabic-speaking and English-speaking identities. This is based on the fact that the findings indicated that the participants switched from speaking Arabic to English in certain situations consciously and unconsciously. This was done to achieve different goals such as creating a professional identity and creating distance between themselves and others. Furthermore, the participants reported that when expressing themselves in the two languages, they felt different. All the above could be considered a reflection of multiple

identities. These findings support the notion that identity is context-sensitive in terms of learners using the native language and the L2 in different contexts to present themselves in different ways (Glowka, 2015; Pavlenko, 2002). These findings are also in line with Weedon's (1997) concept of subjectivity, in which he argued that a person's sense of self is reflected through language and affected by social connections and interactions. Pavlenko (2002) made a similar argument as she asserted that language is used to establish a person's identity.

5.2.3. Hybrid identities

All six participants reported that they considered their identities hybrid identities. For them, a hybrid identity meant that their identities incorporated aspects of both the Arabic language and culture and the English language and cultures which came as a result of learning English. In other words, the participants' description of their identities as hybrid stemmed from the fact that they felt that they as people were influenced by Arabic and English as two languages that represent different cultures, which presented them with different ways of living, talking, thinking, dressing, and eating. This was mostly viewed positively as it helped the participants develop and grow as people. Similarly, Alsweel (2013) reported Saudi women learning English in the United States of America viewed the influence of both Saudi Islamic culture as well as Western English cultures on their identities as a source of power. These findings are aligned with the argument that language learning contributes to creating hybrid identities (Duff, 2011) (see section 2.3.3). However, other studies such as Kim (2003b) and Kim et al (2010) did not report that learning English was associated with having a hybrid identity. This could be related to the fact they were done in Malaysia where learners were already living in a multicultural society and therefore, the learners were influenced by different cultures regardless of learning English; whereas, in Saudi Arabia, the society and culture is more homogenous in terms of having one language and one religion. Therefore, it could be argued that for Saudi learners, English learning introduces them to different cultures and this affected their identity.

It needs to be mentioned that the participants appeared torn when talking about their identities as although they asserted that they changed as people, specifically in terms of the influence of Western English-speaking cultures, they wanted to assert that this did not affect their original identity and belonging. In other words, although the participants were happy with the various developments in their identities specifically in terms of knowledge and confidence, it was important for them to emphasize that their native cultural identity was the most powerful and that all this change did not affect them negatively in terms of their connection with their own culture. This could be related to the fact that they associated identity with their faith in Islam and, considering the importance of Islam in Saudi society and culture, it was important for them to emphasize that their faith was not affected by learning English.

This type of resistance is documented in other studies such as Atay and Ece (2009), Kim (2003b) and Umrani (2015) in which the learners also had an Islamic background. It was also found in studies on SLS such as Schecter and Bayley (1997) and Guardado (2009). Within the Saudi context, Mustafa (2017) found that Saudi women learning English acknowledged the changes in their identity which were brought on by learning English; but also wanted to assert that their native cultural identity is too strong to be altered by learning English. They mentioned that they wanted to find a balance between their Saudi traditions and their aspirations for progress and change. On the other hand, Alsweel (2013) reported that Saudi women learning English as a second language, considered their dynamic and developing identity a source of power. In other words, they believed that their identity as English speakers and their native cultural identity complemented each other and gave them more strength. This is in line with Burck's (2011) suggestion that all different forms of identity are a continuation of one another.

Overall, the findings of this study reinforce what has been reported before in terms of the dynamic, complex nature of language learners' identities and that FLL engages and affects learners' identities in a new context (Alsweel, 2013; Atay & Ece, 2009; Kim, 2003b; Kim et al, 2010; Mustafa, 2017; Umrani, 2015). However, this study differs from others as it was found that there was some variation in how the participants described their identities. In other words, most previous studies reported that L2 learners had multiple identities, while in this study three types of identities emerged which are Western, multiple and hybrid. Furthermore, sometimes the same participant described her identity in two different ways. This asserts the difficulty of describing identity and that every learner is unique in the way he/she views it and talks about it (Duff, 2012b). This finding of the different views of the English learner identity presents a new angle to findings on FLL learner identity (see section 6.3).

Despite the variations in how the participants' viewed their identities and the effect of learning English on them, what remains clear is that the process of learning English and what is associated with it in terms of content, use and experiences played a role in shaping how the participants viewed themselves as people and viewed the world around them. All this supports the idea of identity as fluid, multiple and complex (Duff, 2011, 2012b; Norton, 2000, 2015; Norton & McKinney, 2011; Norton & Toohey, 2011).

It appeared that the issue of identity is quite complex not only to research but also for people to talk about. In this study, the participants view of what identity meant included identity being a reflection of a person's religion, language and nationality, a reflection of a person's beliefs and principles and a reflection of person's characteristics and personality. The term identity ignites several meanings such as personality, belonging, religion and self-perception. This may be due to the abstract nature of the term itself and this is something that should be acknowledged and taken into consideration when researching this topic (see section 6.4.1).

5.3. Learning English and imagined identities and imagined communities

The findings of this study indicated that the participants had imagined identities associated with their learning of English. Imagined identities refers to how learners see themselves in the future as a result of learning English (Norton & Toohey, 2011). There were some commonalities between the participants' imagined identities as they all aspired to be successful people. This included success in learning English and in achieving their professional and personal goals. In addition, the participants viewed themselves in the future as intellectual and wise people. Furthermore, the participants had imagined identities of being independent women in the future. The creation of these imagined identities appeared to be a deliberate attempt by the participants to present themselves in a different way, as argued by Burck (2011). For example, Fatma reported that her learning and use of English allowed her to present herself as a capable professional in job interviews and differentiate herself from other applicants. Similarly, Norton's (2000) study of the identities of immigrant women in Canada found that, through English learning and use, one of her participants was able to establish a favorable identity for herself as an educated professional. However, it needs to be mentioned that this study differs from Norton's (2000) in terms of being conducted in a foreign language setting; therefore, the nature of learners' investment in the target language and implications of proficiency in the target language may be different. In other words, Norton's participants were living in a country where they were required to use English on a daily basis. This may be reflected in higher investment on their behalf to be proficient in English because of necessity and this is also related to their need to be proficient in English for professional purposes. On the other hand, the participants in this study may not feel the same urge to learn English as it is not required for everyday interactions and although it may be beneficial for professional purposes it may not be as necessary as in SLL settings.

Learning English seemed important for the participants' imagined identities as they considered it a way for them to develop and achieve their dreams and aspirations. The participants' aspirations for independence, success and knowledge were connected to learning English in several ways. First, the participants considered English a vehicle to acquire knowledge and achieve success due to its prestigious global status. Second, the participants considered learning English beneficial to them having a career or a job as proficiency in English is desirable and even a requirement for many jobs in Saudi Arabia. For example, Reema wanted to work in an academic job related to English or as a translator, Leena wanted to work in Aramco, a company that uses English as a medium of communication, and Nora wanted to have her own business which is an English teaching and learning establishment. Third, learning English contributed to creating the imagined identity of being independent women. English media and social media

promote images of the modern woman as someone who lives alone, earns her own money and relies on herself in everything. Through the English language, the participants were able to learn about such images as their learning of English gave them the ability to engage with English media and social media.

Generally, the participants were aware of the value of English itself as a language that enables them to achieve their goals and realize their imagined identities through learning. Many have argued that imagined identities play a role in shaping the L2 learners' experience (Burck, 2011; Norton & Toohey, 2011). In the current study, the participants' imagined identities were connected to their investment or motivation for learning English for the reasons mentioned above (see section 5.8 for more details on investment). Investment has implications on the learners' success in learning English and in achieving their imagined identities.

The findings also indicated that the participants created imagined communities for how their society will be as a result of learning English. This concept was presented by Norton (2001) who argued that language learners may have aspirations to be members of the target language community, and this could have implications on them as people and learners (Norton & McKinney, 2011; Norton & Pavlenko, 2019; Norton & Toohey, 2011). The participants in this study did not report having such aspirations in terms of learning English being a way for them to be members of English-speaking communities. This could be related to the fact that they were learning English as a foreign language and therefore had no inclination to live in or fit in these communities. However, the concept of imagined communities also applies to how learners view the effect of language learning on their community in the future (Norton & Kamal, 2003). In the case of this study, the participants appeared to create a positive and negative image for Saudi society. On the positive side, they thought that Saudi society would be more developed. For example, Sara mentioned that learning English would make Saudi society more productive. The participants linked this to the changes happening in Saudi Arabia and the 2030 vision. They also attributed that to learning English as a language that allows for more communication with the world. They also viewed Saudi society as a place where women and men have equal status. The creation of this image may have been influenced by the participant's admiration for Western English-speaking societies' views of women. Kanno and Norton (2003) and Norton and Kamal (2003) argued that learning English could be associated with the creation of imagined communities as learners may consider English beneficial for the progress of their society.

However, Norton and Kamal (2003) also reported that some Pakistani learners of English were concerned about learning English endangering their local culture. This was found in this study as the participants viewed Saudi society in the future as a society that is influenced by Western English-speaking cultures. They feared that this may result in negative effects on Saudi cultural

identity. For example, they mentioned that learning English may have contributed to Saudi society becoming too open like Western English-speaking societies and losing some of its Islamic Arabic values. The participants considered learning English a vehicle that allows for the promotion of Western English-speaking cultures through media and social media. It could be argued that for Saudi people living in Saudi Arabia, their engagement and interaction with Western English-speaking people and celebrities through media and social media is a way for them to socialize in the English language. This is based on Duff's (2007; 2011) description of SLS as a process of language learners interacting with L2 speakers and as a result developing their linguistic and social cultural skills. This socialization may have contributed to some of the changes reported above in terms of Saudi people being influenced and possibly assimilating with Western English-speaking societies and cultures. Findings of a connection between learning English and westernization have also been reported by other studies conducted on English language learners within an Islamic context (Atay & Ece, 2009; Kim et al, 2010; Mustafa, 2017; Umrani, 2015). However, the finding of this study is different from those studies in terms of providing an account of how these concerns of westernization are connected to learning and socialization in English.

Pennycook (2010) and Zughoul (2003) among others noted that English learning and teaching may have an impact on local cultures and languages. They argued that English as a tool of globalization helps promote Western ideologies. Phillipson (1992), Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas (1996; 2018) and Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) warned against this and called it linguistic imperialism. They considered it a deliberate process to shape the world according to Western values. The above scholars focused mainly on the negative effects English learning and teaching may cause although the participants above mentioned that this process may result in positive change and progress. However, it needs to be mentioned that although the participants considered learning of English a factor contributing to change in Saudi society, one cannot deny that these changes also stem from government policies and decisions, especially with the 2030 vision. For example, Leena reported that the changes happening in Saudi Arabia were related to politics more than learning English. Al-Hazmi (2017) and Al-Jarf (2008) noted that Saudi people were concerned that learning English may threaten Saudi culture and identity; but they asserted that this view decreased with time as people saw that learning English did not lead to the westernization of Saudi people. Similarly, Al-Haq & Samdi (1996) in their survey study of Saudi learners of English found that learning English was not perceived to be a threat to Saudi learners' religious and national identities.

Overall, the findings presented above in terms of the participants having aspirations to assume certain identities as more developed people and being members of a more developed community signal that FLL of English was associated with the creation and possibly realization of imagined

identities and communities. These findings present new information within the context of Saudi Arabia as none of the previous studies on English learners in Saudi Arabia utilized the concepts of imagined identities and imagined communities in investigating learners' identities. Knowledge of L2 learners' imagined identities and imagined communities can be informative in FLL planning and teaching (see section 6.4.2).

5.4. Learning English, knowledge and culture

The results indicated that the participants believed learning English made them more knowledgeable and cultured people. According to them, learning English enabled them to learn new things on the linguistic and social cultural levels. They mentioned that learning English for them was a process that has a cultural element as it involved learning about language and culture. For example, the participants mentioned multiple times that they believed learning English included learning about Western English-speaking societies and cultures' systems, values and lifestyles. Similarly, Atay and Ece (2009) found that their Turkish learners thought learning English made them more culturally aware as it enabled them to learn about the cultures of Western societies. These findings highlight the connection between language learning and culture (Al Shuhail, 2020; Kim, 2003a; Kim, 2003b; Norton & McKinney, 2011; Samar & Mokhtarnia, 2012). In the SLS theory, it is argued that language learning has linguistic and cultural elements (Duff, 2007, 2011). In other words, language learning involves the learners becoming acquainted with the target language's linguistic system as well as its social and cultural code.

However, it needs to be mentioned that the nature of SLS in this setting in which English is a foreign language, appeared to be different from that reported in studies in second language settings. In studies such as Kim and Duff (2012) and Guardado (2009), the socialization process was mainly described as interactions with native speakers of the language. However, in the present study, although some of the participants talked about situations in which they interacted with native speakers of English online and during travel, their socialization mostly took place in two other ways. The first was classroom instruction, specifically through the material presented in class and the discussions that took place. For example, Nora said that she learned in the courses she was taking about phrases and expressions that are not acceptable in English-speaking societies. Similarly, Byon's (2006) study reported that instruction of Korean as a foreign language involved learning about acceptable ways to address others. Zughoul (2003) asserted the connection between FLL and the target language's society and culture, arguing that one of the goals of foreign language instruction is introducing learners to another culture and widening their views. SLS studies in foreign language settings support this notion that learners are not only taught how to speak the target language, but they are also taught how to think, behave and feel in it (Moore, 2008). For example, Moore (2004) reported, in her study of the

socialization practices of schools in Cameroon, that in teaching Arabic and French, the learners were presented with different values in terms of discipline and modernity through the different types of classroom activities. None of the participants in the current study reported that the types of activities they engaged in was a way of learning about English-speaking societies and cultures. Notwithstanding, they indicated that the content of some classes provided them with information on Western English-speaking societies and cultures e.g., Sara learning about feminism in literature class. This finding highlights that SLS inside the foreign language classroom can take place through various means such as the content itself or the types of activities.

The second form of socialization was the English-language content the participants were able to access as a result of learning English. This content included online material, books, films and shows, and social media. The participants noted that through these means they were learning the linguistic system of the language and how to use it as well as learning how people in the target language society talk, act and live. For example, Nora, Sara and Lama talked about how watching talk shows by Ellen DeGeneres and Steve Harvey taught them about American culture. Sklair (1999) argued that media is one of the tools that promote cultures. In this case, one could argue that the various forms of English-speaking media the participants were engaged with introduced them to Western English-speaking societies and cultures' values and lifestyles. Furthermore, using social media applications, such as Twitter, allowed the participants to have interactions and conversations with English speakers on various topics. This is closely related to the concept of self-directed socialization as presented by Duff and Doherty (2014). Within a foreign language setting such as Saudi Arabia, this form of socialization may be a way for the English learner to learn about the social and cultural system of English-speaking societies because opportunities for actual face to face interactions in social settings is limited if non-existent, unlike socialization in second language settings where a learner interacts with native speakers of the language and lives in its society which makes socialization more common. However, it is worth noting that socialization into English through media could also take place even if a person is not learning English or does not have proficiency in it, as people can watch English-speaking media with translation. But there could be difference in the amount and type of English-speaking media people who have proficiency English and who do not can access. For example, people who have proficiency in English can watch any content in English on YouTube while people who do not can only watch videos which are translated. Figure 5.2 below illustrates the different ways the participants socialized in English.

Figure 5.2: Socialization into English

The findings discussed above in terms of the participants' socialization into English present an informative angle to our understanding of SLS in foreign language settings, specifically in Saudi Arabia as it has not been used in this context before. The findings confirm what has been previously reported in terms of SLS taking place during foreign language instruction. They also highlight that there is another way for L2 learners in foreign language settings to socialize, or self-socialize (Duff & Doherty, 2014), into the target language and learn about its society and culture through English content, especially through media and social media. This finding could be beneficial for teachers and learners as it may encourage them to utilize such tools more in their teaching and learning (see section 6.4.2 for more details).

It is worth noting that this type of socialization and the effect of media and social media may be more relevant to the teaching and learning of English as opposed to other languages due to the spread of its use in media and social media. Another point that needs to be mentioned is that any findings this study presented regarding the nature of SLS in foreign language settings need to be supported by research focusing on that issue. Because the main aim of this study was to investigate Saudi female English learners' identities through employing SLS as a theoretical framework as opposed to investigating Saudi female learners' socialization into English.

Generally, the connection between language learning and culture cannot be separated from the connection between language and culture. Many scholars have argued that there is a two-way connection between language and culture (Ahearn, 2001; Chung Ke, 2015; Kramsch, 1998; Kramsch & Zhu, 2016). This connection can be seen in culture shaping language and language

being used to transmit culture (Ahearn, 2001; Kim, 2003a). The latter has been expressed by the participants in this study as they reported that through learning English, they were able to learn about its speakers and their social and cultural systems. In addition, the results indicated that English language learning was not only associated with acquiring knowledge of Western English-speaking societies and cultures. Some participants reported that they learned about various cultures from all over the world which was also reported by Kim (2003b). For example, Reema talked about learning about Indian culture and Nora talked about learning about Korean culture. This may be related to the international status of English and that some argue that it does not belong to one society or culture (Norton, 1997). Therefore, it may be better to refer to English-speaking speakers by using the term community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) instead of target-language community because it is more inclusive.

Overall, as argued by Al Shuhail, (2020), Kim (2003a) and Norton and McKinney (2011), language learning engaged the identities of the participants because it involved learning a new social and cultural system which had implications on their sense of self or identity. However, it is not clear whether the connection between language learning and culture and the effect of this process on learners' identities are more pronounced in second language settings than foreign language settings. One might think that living in the second language society and culture may have more of an effect than when a person learns a language in a foreign language setting. Research is needed to investigate this issue further by comparing Saudi learners of English in foreign and second language settings.

5.5. Learning English, acceptance and understanding

The findings of this study indicated that learning English was associated with the participants having higher levels of understanding and acceptance of different people and cultures than before they learned English. The participants reported learning more about other people's beliefs, views and lifestyles and this raised their acceptance of differences between people from different religions, and cultures. It could be said that the participants were less conservative and more liberal in their views. For example, Sara and Lama said they had no problem with homosexuality. These findings are similar to what has been reported by other studies; for example, Atay and Ece (2009), Kim (2003b), Kim et al (2010) and Mustafa (2017) reported that Turkish, Malay and Saudi learners of English were more open-minded as learning English presented them with different views and ideas and made them reflect on their own views and culture.

Johnson (2009) commented on the fact that English learning could break cultural barriers and help bring people from different cultures together; the participants in this study described this as learning English broadening their horizons. On the other hand, Johnson also noted that English learning could endanger other cultures by making English learners assimilate or identify with

English-speaking cultures more, which was found in this study as the participants had conflicting feelings about the changes in their views which were not in line with their native society and culture (see sections 5.2 and 5.3).

The participants linked their increased acceptance and understanding to learning English in two ways. The first is that the participants felt that learning English gave them access to content in the English language and enabled them to learn about other societies and cultures. It also allowed them to engage and communicate with people from different backgrounds through the medium of English. This cultural knowledge and communication may have resulted in changing some of the participants' views of these societies and cultures. Within the SLS theory, Duff (2007, 2011) argues that L2 learners' views, feelings and thoughts regarding their native society and culture as well as the L2 society and culture may change as a result of language learning. It could be argued that the participants' socialization into English through instruction, communication and media presented them with more information on other societies and cultures' beliefs and practices which made them have a better understanding and more tolerance for the differences between their own culture and others. Duff (2011, 2012b) also asserted that this has implications on learners' identities. In this study, some participants reported having admiration for Western English-speaking societies and identifying with or imitating English language's speakers, which in turn had implication on their identities, in terms of being westernized or hybridized as discussed in section 5.2. These findings may be especially evident in learning English as opposed to other languages because of globalization and the dominance of English as a global language and its media (Pennycook, 2010; Zughoul, 2003).

The second way in which learning English contributed to making the participants more accepting and understanding is through presenting them with a different way of thinking about the world around them. Specifically, it enabled them to view things from English-language speakers' perspective. For example, Sara and Reema mentioned that speaking English gave them a new and different outlook similar to that of people in English-speaking societies, which provided them with a better understanding of those people and their cultures. This idea is aligned with the principle of linguistic relativity, which argues that the language a person speaks shapes their view and understanding of the world (Boroditsky, 2003). Boroditsky (2003) builds on this idea, suggesting that when a person learns a L2, it may present him/her with a different way of viewing the world as well as an understanding of how other people view the world. Therefore, it is possible that as the participants were learning English they were introduced to alternative ways of thinking of various issues in their society and other societies, which affected their own opinions and views, specifically making them more accepting and understanding.

At this point, it needs to be mentioned that associating learning English with more acceptance and understanding does not necessarily mean that the participants were not accepting and

understanding before the English learning process. It merely signals that learning English may have increased this characteristic in them. It is also not possible to claim that any changes were linked only to learning English as there could be other reasons for this change e.g., age, education and politics. Furthermore, the fact that Saudi learners of English reported being more accepting is not in conflict with the notion that other Saudis who were not learning English shared their views. In addition, because the participants in this study chose to study English as their university major, they may be more liberal than others or have a more positive attitude toward English-speaking societies and cultures.

5.6. Learning English, power and confidence

The results of this study indicated that learning English was associated with increasing levels of confidence and empowerment. The participants revealed that they had more confidence as English speakers in terms of their command over the English language and their ability and willingness to use it. They also had more confidence in themselves as knowledgeable, capable, useful and social individuals. Similar findings were reported by other studies such as Alsweel (2013), Atay and Ece (2009), Kim (2003b), Kim et al (2010), Mustafa (2017) and Umrani (2015). Alsweel's (2013) study, exploring the identities of Saudi female learners of English in the United States, found that her participants reported feeling more confident as a result of learning English. Alsweel (2013) noted that this was linked to their ability to engage in various interactions in English and assume different roles and positions as educated and capable individuals within their social circle and the professional field. Similarly, the participants in this study reported that they were able to assume more powerful positions as they learned English. For example, they mentioned that because of their knowledge and ability to use English, others relied on them to perform different tasks in English which gave them a sense of pride and confidence in themselves.

In addition, the results from this study presented another aspect of English learners' increased confidence as some participants felt more confident as people in social interactions. They noted that they were able to create more social relationships with other learners as their confidence grew because of their linguistic progress and their feelings of usefulness. It could be argued that as learners progressed in learning English, they felt that they had more power to engage in interactions and perform tasks in English, which in turn created a positive image for them among their peers and the people around them. All of this contributed to their increasing feelings of confidence and allowed them to claim more powerful positions. These findings highlight the role of power in linguistic interactions as originally proposed by Bourdieu (1977, 1985) and further developed by Norton (1995, 2000) and Norton and Toohey (2011) who suggested that during language learning and use, learners find themselves in different positions of power which affects their learning and identities. Norton (1995, 2000) further argued that

confidence is a social construct and that it is affected by time, experience and different power positions. Although Norton's ideas of power and social confidence mostly revolve around how learners negotiate their roles and opportunities to speak in the target language during the learning process, it could be applicable beyond that. It could be argued that these constructs go beyond the language learning context and that being a speaker of English gives learners power and allows them to create more social relationships and improve their status in society. In this study, the social nature of confidence is evident in the fact that some participants attributed their increasing feelings of confidence to how others viewed them. In other words, the admiration Saudi people have for English and people who can speak it because of its importance and prestige as a global language gave the participants feelings of power and confidence. This finding adds to our knowledge of how the concepts of power and confidence can be applicable to situations beyond actual FLL and L2 use and interaction.

Furthermore, the results revealed that learners considered learning English empowering. This empowerment can be seen in the participants' reports that they were able to assume and be given more powerful positions because of their learning of English. These positions included having part-time employment and solving misunderstandings during travel, which was useful and helpful for them and for others around them. This empowerment was also reflected in the participants view on their status and rights as women. The empowerment associated with English has been discussed and reported by earlier research such as Atay and Ece (2009), Kim (2003b), Kim et al (2010) and Zughoul (2003). Kim (2003b) found that Malay learners of English considered English empowering because it gave them agency and the ability to take action as opposed to being passive. This empowerment can also be found clearly in research focusing on women as in Alsweel (2013), Burck (2011), McMahill (2001), Mustafa (2017), Pavlenko (2001b) and Umrani (2015). These researchers reported that women who were learning and using English reported that this empowered them. In this study, the participants reported that learning English made them learn more about feminism, which also had been reported by McMahill (2001) in her study of Japanese learners of English. This contributed to the participants refusing some social views and constraints on women which has also been reported by Mustafa (2017). Pavlenko (2001b) argued that learning English may allow women to free themselves from some of the social and cultural constraints of their culture. Having more rights and freedom was reported by Pavlenko (2001b) as a reason motivating immigrant women to learn English. Learning English also empowered the participants to establish themselves as independent women by having a career and income, which they considered English important to achieve. Similarly, it has been argued that women may have higher agency for SLL than men because they want to have higher positions in the workplace and in society in general (Burck, 2011; Gal, 1978; Pavlenko and Piller, 2001). Despite, the differences between this study and the studies mentioned above in terms of setting, they have the common feature of investigating

learners of English. English learners' sense of empowerment may be related to the capital associated with English as a global language that brings benefits on social, professional and economic levels as well as the power and prestige associated with it (see sections 2.7 and 5.8).

However, it needs to be mentioned that although the findings of this study along with previous research suggest that gender, specifically being female, may affect English learners' agency and investment in learning English as an empowering language, in this study this cannot be assumed because there were no male participants to compare with. Future research may compare Saudi male and female learners of English to shed light on this issue. Furthermore, as will the other themes, it is not possible to claim that the participants' increasing sense of empowerment was only related to learning English as several factors could have played a role in that e.g., 2030 vision.

5.7. Learning English and self-expression

The results of this study indicated that the participants associated learning English with changes in how they expressed themselves. First of all, the participants reported using English more in their speech and on a regular basis, whether inside or outside the classroom. The participants noted that they were code-switching between English and Arabic because they had difficulties at times in finding Arabic terms to express what they wanted. Several studies (Al-Rawi, 2012; Omar & Ilyas, 2018, Turjoman, 2016) asserted that code switching was common among Saudi speakers of English.

 In addition, the results indicated that the participants had a preference for using English in formal and professional settings, which was also reported by Kim et al (2010). For example, they used it in public places such as hospitals and in professional situations e.g., job interviews. This preference could be attributed to the participants viewing English as a more professional language due to its spread as a global language as well as it being used as the language of communication for many companies in Saudi Arabia (Al-Seghayer, 2012; Elyas, 2008). Atay and Ece (2009), Kim (2003b) and Umrani (2015) reported that English learners' shifts from one language to another may be done systematically to achieve certain goals such as fitting in or standing out, which is in line with the idea that linguistic identity is affected by context (Pavlenko, 2002). In the present study, some of the participants' usage of English could be related to achieving specific goals, as Sara mentioned that she used English to exclude others from her conversations and Fatma mentioned that she used English to set herself apart from other job applicants. Within the FLL, Abubakr et al (2019) reported that Kurdish learners used code-switching intentionally and unintentionally to present different aspects of their identities. Furthermore, it has been reported that code-switching can be used as a strategy of socialization in the workplace (Chui et al, 2016; De Socarraz-Novoa, 2015). Chui et al (2016) argued that code-switching could be used by newcomers and veterans in the workplace to socialize, create

relationships and establish community membership and identities. This is partly different from what the participants in this study reported as they used English to establish identities for themselves as educated professional individuals but not necessarily to socialize and establish membership. However, it needs to be mentioned that the participants in this study are students and any experience they had in the professional field was limited. Therefore, their experience may not be comparable to that of the participants in the study of Chui et al (2016).

The findings also indicated that the participants had a preference for using English for self-expression in social media applications, such as Twitter and Snapchat. This could be caused by three things. It could be related to the participants wanting to reach a larger audience in social media through using English. It could also be a form of practice for using English. Finally, it could be that the participants felt more comfortable in expressing themselves in English because it is less personal. Kim (2003b) reported that Malay learners of English considered English a neutral way of expressing themselves. This view of English being a neutral language could be related to the fact that it is not associated with one country or culture and therefore frees the person of any cultural affiliation (Norton, 1997). However, the views of the participants in this study may be different from the views of the participants in Kim's (2003b) study because in Malaysia, which is a multilingual and multicultural country, English may be a way for learners to avoid any cultural association as opposed to using other languages such as Malay, Chinese and Indian. While in Saudi Arabia, Arabic is the only native language, so there may not necessarily be any cultural association for using it within society.

Furthermore, the findings indicated that the participants felt more comfortable expressing themselves in English when expressing emotions such as anger, sorrow and other intimate feelings. According to Burck (2011), because the L2 speaker may not be as connected to the L2 as he/she is connected to his/her native language, he/she may prefer to use the L2 in expressing certain emotions. This could apply to what the participants in the study reported as they had a preference for using English to convey intense feelings such as anger and sadness. Another explanation would be that learning English empowers learners by allowing them to express emotions such as anger (Kim, 2003b). A third explanation would be related to the English language itself. Wierzbicka (2003) talked about the social distance measures that different languages have and that they are reflections of the different cultures these languages represent. She noted that social distance is viewed positively in English-speaking cultures as a sign of individuality and this is reflected in the English language itself. In Arabic cultures, such as Saudi Arabia, social distance is not as valued; therefore, people may prefer to use English to establish such distance.

Three of the participants (Fatma, Leena and Sara) attributed their usage of English to express emotions to the fact that people may not understand them when they speak English. This

supports the idea of the L2 bringing social distance to interactions. Likewise, Dewaele (2013) found that L2 speakers may feel comfortable using offensive words or insults in the L2 with people from their native community because they may not understand them. This type of code-switching could be an indication of the participants wanting to differentiate themselves which is in line with the concept of 'we-code' and 'they-code' (Gumperz, 1982) (see section 2.5). In the case of participants in this study, it could be argued that their use of English is a form of 'we-code' because English is not the majority language, and it gave them the chance to express themselves more freely and exclude others from the conversation.

However, it needs to be mentioned that other studies (see De Socarraz-Novoa, 2015) reported that language users switched to their native language when expressing raw emotions because it was more natural to them. In this study, one participant (Reema) reported that she preferred to use Arabic when expressing such emotions because it was her native language and she was more capable in it. In addition, none of the participants mentioned that they used English and Arabic to claim varying gender characteristics such as assuming a stronger personality or a friendlier personality as was reported by Burck (2011). All this highlights that there are differences in how L2 learners prefer to express themselves.

Moreover, the results revealed that the reported changes in the participants' self-expression, specifically the increased usage of English, created some feelings of guilt for the participants. The participants mentioned that they used to criticize people who used English in their speech. This may signal an inner conflict that some participants may have been feeling. The participants' feelings of guilt could also be caused by the negative reactions that some people have to their usage of English as a sign of arrogance. Other studies (Kim, 2003b; Kim et al, 2010) reported that their participants indicated that they were faced with resentment toward their use of English for things like showing off or being westernized. Similarly, Kim and Duff (2012) found that Korean learners of English socialization in English was affected by their desire to fit in with their native Korean community and this led to limited interaction. This was also found in this study as Nora mentioned that she avoided using English at times to fit in with others within her community. However, in this study as well as in Kim (2003b), participants reacted to such criticism in a different way, for example by ignoring it or using English more in resistance. Although, as mentioned above, English learners in different settings experienced resentment regarding their use of English, there may be variation in terms of the extent of that resentment and its effect on the learners' experience and identities.

The participants' feelings of guilt could also be related to them feeling that language is an indicator of their belonging. For example, Leena used the expression 'losing my people' to describe her usage of English over Arabic. This could signal that the participant viewed language as a symbol of her belonging to her society and culture. Similarly, Atay and Ece

(2009) reported that as Turkish learners were using English more, they felt that they were betraying their native Turkish identity. Kramsch (1998), Burck (2011) and Darvin (2018) asserted that language could be viewed a marker of social and cultural affiliation. This highlights the fact that a learner's choice to use one language over the other may be an indicator of change on a deeper level. Burck (2011) and Pavlenko (2006) claimed that a person's choice to express himself/herself in different languages could be a sign of changing identities (see section 5.2.2).

5.8. Learning English, investment and agency

The results revealed two important factors affecting the English foreign language learning experience of Saudi female university, which are investment and agency. These two factors also had implications on Saudi female university learners of English views of themselves and sense of identity. One point that needs to be addressed is the difference between investment and agency within research on language learning and identity. There is some ambiguity in regard to how these terms are used and the difference between them (Huang & Benson, 2013). In this study, both concepts are used; investment is used to describe the reasons motivating the participants to learn English while agency is used to describe what the participants did or did not do to learn English.

In terms of investment, first, the participants reported that learning English would make them better as people. The participants considered it important for a person to know English if he/she wants to benefit from the wealth of information available in the world, communicate with others and grow as a person. Second, it would create more opportunities for them in terms of careers. This is linked to its spread as a global language which pushed many companies all over the world to use it as an official language of communication and created a big demand for learning English as a L2 (Al-Jarf, 2008; Pennycook, 2001, 2010). In Saudi Arabia, most jobs require the applicant to have at least some proficiency in English (Al-Jarf, 2008; Al-Seghayer, 2012; Elyas, 2008; Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). Third, it would improve their social status due to its prestige because of globalization, its status as a global language and the popularity of English-speaking media, which was another reason behind the participants' love for English and desire to learn it (Al-Asmari & Khan, 2014; Sklair, 1999; Tamimi Sa'd, 2018). In fact, many of the expected benefits of English were related to English's capital as a global language that is important for communication, education, media, business and jobs (Pennycook, 2001, 2010; Zughoul, 2003). Figure 5.3 below summarizes the main reasons behind the participants' investment in learning English

Figure 5.3: Reasons for learners' investment in learning English

Overall, the participants mostly had instrumental motivation for learning English as they considered learning it a way for them to achieve their goals of being successful, professional and independent individuals (Dornyei, 2005; Gardner, 1985). The participants may also have been fueled by some type of integrative motivation because they had a love for English and its media and they also considered learning English important for them to learn about and communicate with people from all over the world (Dornyei, 2005; Gardner, 1985).

It has been reported by Aljuaid (2021), Alsweel (2013), Atay and Ece (2009), Kim (2003b), Moskovosky and Alrabai (2009), Rahman and Alhaisoni (2013) and Tamimi Sa'd (2018) that being an English speaker can be beneficial for learners personally, socially and professionally. In this study, these benefits included the participants reporting that learning English allows them to develop their knowledge, confidence and understanding. It also allows them to pursue their professional goals. Moreover, it is helpful in enhancing their position in their society. Therefore, one could argue that the participants' perception and creation of their cultured, confident, capable, professional and understanding identities is connected and influenced by their investment in learning English (see section 5.3). This echoes what has been reported by the other studies (Atay & Ece, 2009, Kim, 2003b; Mustafa, 2017). On the other hand, the results did not indicate that the participants' investment was affected by their identities as reported by Haneda (2005). This could be related to the differences between the two studies in terms of context. Haneda's participants were Canadians that were learning Japanese in Canada. One of them came from a Japanese background while the other came from an Anglophone background.

Therefore, these different aspects of their identities may have affected their investment. However, in this study all the participants had similar backgrounds in terms of being Saudis.

The participants' investment in learning English was reflected in their agency in this process. The participants reported that it was important for them to learn English and be successful at it. This made them take an active role as learners instead of being passive receivers. In the study, the participants' agency was exhibited in what they reported in terms of their engagement in the classroom, their commitment to their studies outside the classroom (assignments and examinations), their practice of different skills of English, their search for English learning material online, and their engagement with English online, in social media and media e.g., films and shows. The latter revealed the important role English media played in the participants' experiences learning and socialization in English and will be discussed in the following section.

All the forms of agency exhibited by the participants appeared to play a role in their experience of learning English and contribute to their self-perceived progress and achievement at it. This is in line with the argument made by Ahearn (2001), Duff (2012b), Fogle (2012) and Lantolf & Pavlenko (2001) in terms of agency affecting how language learning takes place. Moreover, it could be argued agency and its effects on the language learning process and its success play a role in shaping language learners' identity. This argument is based on the fact that learners' agency i.e., the various amounts and types of effort they put into language learning and progressing as language learners, affects them as people. In this study, the participants' agency contributed to them having higher proficiency in English, as they reported. This was linked to them viewing themselves as more knowledgeable, confident and to their empowerment as individuals. In addition, the participants' agency allowed them to connect with the world and broaden their horizons which made them view themselves as more cultured and open-minded individuals. It also had implications on them as people in terms of their self-expression as their agency in learning English made them use it more in different contexts. Their agency was also a way for them to achieve their professional goals and imagined identities. Xiao (2014) reported in his study that agency was influential for success in FLL and played a role in identity reconstruction, specifically achieving a professional identity. Block (2007) and Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001) assert that connection between agency and language learner identity development; they argued that the experiences a person goes through while learning a new language affect his/her identity. Moreover, as mentioned in section 5.6, there appeared to be a connection between the participants' agency in learning English and their status and aspirations as women.

However, it needs to be mentioned that the level of investment and agency may differ from one participant to another and differ within the same participant based on time and context. The results revealed that the participants' agency in learning English was not only exercised through

actions but also lack of actions such as participation or non-participation in classroom activities or using or not using English outside the classroom. As reported by Kim and Duff (2012), the participants' agency was affected by social and cultural reasons as in others' reactions to their usage of English and desire to fit in their local community. Nora, for example, mentioned that at times she did not use English so that she could avoid negative reactions from people around her. Umrani (2015) reported similar findings as she found that the agency Pakistani learners of English was not fixed but varied according to the attitudes and reactions of others around them regarding their learning and use of English. The participants' agency was also affected by instructional factors such as teaching methods, materials, and the instructor's attitude. For example, Leena and Sara mentioned that their participation in classroom activities and discussions depended on the teaching method used by the instructors and their attitude toward learners' errors. Alrabai (2016) reported that these factors were influential on Saudi learners' achievement in learning English. Canagarajah (1999) also reported that the agency of English learners in Siri Lanka was affected by the courses they were taking. However, unlike Canagarajah (1999), the participants in this study did not reject classroom practices because they included Western content. The findings also did not indicate that the participants associated any lack of interaction opportunities or chances to learn and use English with their status as women, as reported by Heller (2001) and Kourtizin (2000). This could be related to the fact that they were in female only classes and did not have male classmates to compare themselves with.

In general, all the above highlights the differences between how learners exercise their agency (Duff, 2012b) and the dynamic nature of investment and agency, as argued by Dornyei (2005), Dornyei and Ushioda (2001), Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001), Norton (2000) and Pavlenko (2002). These findings are informative within the Saudi context as none of the previous studies on the identities of Saudi women learning English utilized the concepts of investment and agency in this way.

5.9. Learning English, media and social media

The results of this study revealed that English-speaking media and social media were a major part of the participants' experience of learning English and contributed to their development as English learners and as people. First, the participants noted that English media played a part in motivating them to learn English due to its popularity. It has been argued that Western English-speaking media, specifically American media, helps promote the learning and teaching of English (Pennycook, 2010). Second, the participants noted that engaging with English media, such as watching films and shows, and social media, such as using Twitter and Instagram, was part of their agency in learning English, which has also been reported by Chan et al (2011), Oroujlou (2012) and Wang (2012).

Third, the participants mentioned that as they were learning English and becoming more proficient in it, they had more access to content in English and were able to acquire more knowledge especially on the cultural side. For example, Nora and Sara talked about how English media such as YouTube vloggers gave them a window into another society, culture and life. Such access to English-speaking media and content appeared to be one of the factors that contributed to shaping the participants' identities in terms of how they viewed themselves and their relationship with world around them. In other words, the knowledge and progress they achieved through learning English and accessing its media contributed to them viewing themselves as knowledgeable, cultured, confident and open-minded individuals. In addition, media and social media affected the participants in terms of the way they lived their lives, presented themselves and even talked. For example, Sara and Nora mentioned that their awareness of the importance of having a healthy lifestyle in terms of food and exercise came from watching American shows and following English-speaking influencers in social media. All this appears to assert the role of media in the process of language learning and in shaping the language learner's identity.

The findings discussed above are novel within research on Saudi learners of English identities and they are specifically informative because they expand our view of FLL as a process that takes place inside and outside the classroom. In addition, this may help expand what is considered input and interaction in FLL. Traditionally input and interaction were considered limited in FLL in comparison to SLL as they mostly referred to language exposure and use inside the classroom. In that sense, L2 learners in foreign language settings usually had less input and interaction in the L2. Furthermore, the quality and nature of input and interaction in foreign language settings was not natural. Ashraf (2018) reported that lack of exposure and interaction in English was problematic for Saudi learners of English. However, if one considers the use of English media and social media as part of the FLL process, then this allows learners to have more input and interaction in the L2 and in a more natural realistic way.

At this point, it needs to be acknowledged that the spread of English media and content cannot be separated from globalization in general (Pennycook, 2010; Phillipson, 1992; Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996, 2018; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000; Zughoul, 2003). Many scholars have highlighted the importance of media as a tool of globalization and language dominance. According to Zughoul (2003), American entertainment, TV and films along with other aspects of American culture and ways of living, such as fashion and food, mapped a way to becoming modern and developed. On a related note, the participants mentioned that they considered Western English-speaking cultures, such as American and British cultures, superior to other cultures due to their dominance over the world media. This could also be seen in their admiration for native speakers of English and their values that are promoted by globalization.

Pennycook (2010), Phillipson (1992), Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1996, 2018), Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) and Zughoul (2003) agree that although globalization is not related to one culture or country, one cannot ignore the notion that it may help impose Western especially American influence. Furthermore, they argued that English could be a tool of globalization specifically promoting Western political, economic and cultural values. In this study, the participants acknowledged this type of effect and that it could contribute to the westernization of Saudi society; but they also asserted that this could have a positive effect in developing Saudi society (see section 5.3). This is in line with Honey (1997), Johnson (2009) and Zughoul's (2003) assertions of the benefits learning English can bring on the social level.

5.10. Conclusion

The findings discussed above in terms of the dynamic complex nature of foreign language learners' identities and the social cultural nature of the FLL process are similar to those reported by other studies and are supported by relevant theories and therefore, they can be relevant to other participants in the same setting or other settings. However, it is not possible to make any generalizations due to the individual nature of the topic and study design. Nevertheless, the findings could be informative in understanding the issue of identity development during FLL in similar settings such as other universities in Saudi Arabia and the Arabian Gulf countries.

Furthermore, the study offers several contributions to the field of language learning and identity. First, it contributes to our understanding of the implications of language learning on learners as people, specifically their identities, in a context that has not been investigated in this way before. Second, it highlights how FLL contributes to shaping language learners' identities. It also supports the idea that SLS can occur in foreign language settings in different ways inside and outside the classroom. Third, it asserts the influence of English as a global language and its prevalence in many areas of life on the learners' experiences. All this can have implications on the teaching of English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia.

It is worth pointing out that one of the interesting things that emerged in this data-driven project is that the participants associated learning English with changing them as people in the areas discussed above. And although the idea of learning English leading to change in the participants' views of themselves emerged in the participants' self-reported data and was presented and discussed in the results and discussion chapters, the researcher wants to be careful in pointing out that that the nature of the study and its design did not allow for measurement of change due to several reasons. First, there are many factors that contribute to shaping and changing how a person views himself/ herself and it is not possible to claim that any changes the participants experienced were only caused by learning English. Second, it was not possible to follow the participants from the beginning of their experience learning English to the end and it was not possible to control the factors that affect them to measure or make claims about

change (see section 6.5). Nevertheless, as discussed above, it can be argued that the whole experience of learning English and what is associated with it in terms of instruction, use and engagement with media and social media could be one of the reasons for the change in the participants' identities or views of themselves.

Chapter six: Conclusion

6.1. Introduction

This study investigated the identities of Saudi female learners of English. In this chapter, a summary of the findings and how they answer the research questions is presented. Then, a reflection on how these findings contribute to current knowledge and research on language learning and identity is presented. This is followed by suggestions of how this study can inform and pave the way for future research. This chapter also presents recommendations for how this study's findings can inform English learning and teaching in Saudi Arabia. Next, the limitations of this study are presented and finally a reflection on this doctoral journey concludes this chapter and thesis.

6.2. Revisiting the research questions

This study had two research questions. The first question is concerned with the identities or self-perception of Saudi female learners of English. The second, which is a sub-question, is concerned with the English learning process and the factors perceived to affect it. These two questions were formulated to learn about whether and how English learning affects learners' identities and what factors affect this process.

Research question 1: How do Saudi female learners of English as a foreign language view themselves during the process of learning English?

The findings of this study indicated that Saudi female learners of English viewed themselves as more developed people as they learned English. They viewed themselves as more knowledgeable, cultured, capable, confident and empowered individuals. In addition, they viewed themselves as different from before learning English and different from people around them in terms of social, cultural and religious views, self-expression and lifestyle. All this contributed to the participants creating various forms of identities for themselves. These included having a Western identity in terms of adopting Western social and cultural values, self-expression and lifestyle. It also included having fluid multiple context-sensitive identities in terms of switching between speaking Arabic and English for various reasons. Furthermore, the participants described their identities as hybrid identities that were influenced by both the Arabic and English languages and cultures. Another form of identity the participants experienced was imagined identities. The participants viewed themselves in the future as professional, cultured and independent women. Learning English contributed to the creation of this imagined identity. In addition, the participants considered learning English instrumental to fulfilling these imagined identities. It has also been found that there are differences and variation in terms of how learners experience and talk about their identities and the influences of learning English in that regard. Generally, these findings highlight the fluidity and complexity

of Saudi female learners' identity as well as assert the relationship between FLL and identity as argued in poststructuralism and specifically SLS (Duff, 2011, 2012b; Norton, 1995, 2000; Norton & McKinney, 2011; Norton & Toohey, 2011).

Research question 1.1: What factors are perceived to influence the learning experience of English as a foreign language among Saudi female learners?

The findings of this study revealed that a variety of factors affect the English learning experience of Saudi female learners. This included the internal factors of investment, agency and anxiety. The participants' investment in learning English was related to its capital, status and prestige as a global language. All of which the participants expected to benefit them personally, socially and professionally. This was reflected in the participants' agency in learning English as they exercised their agency in different ways inside and outside the instruction context. The participants' investment and agency were influential on how the participants experienced learning English and had implications on their identity. Anxiety appeared to be less influential as the participants asserted that, in the most part, they were able to handle it and overcome it with time.

Other factors that affected Saudi female learners experience of learning English were external factors. This included the participants' background in terms of family education and travel, teaching methods, material and instructors, others' reactions toward their usage and learning of English and media and social media. These factors affected the participants' engagement in the learning process in several ways. First, the teaching methods, materials and instructors had positive and negative effects on the participants' investment and agency in learning English. Second, people's mostly positive, and sometimes negative, reactions to the participants' learning and use of English affected their investment and agency in this process. Third, media and social media affected the participants' experience of learning English as they used them as a way to learn and practice English. Fourth, the participants' background in terms of their families' knowledge of English and travel helped them in learning and most importantly using English. All this affected the participant's engagement in learning English and possibly their progress and achievement which in turn had implications on their identities.

These findings highlight the complexity of FLL as a process that is affected by many factors. Furthermore, the findings assert the importance of investment and agency as factors affecting not only language learning but also learner identity development (Dornyei, 2005; Dornyei & Ushioda, 2001; Duff, 2012b; Lantolf and Pavlenko, 2001; Norton, 2000; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Pavlenko, 2002). The findings also suggest that media and social media are influential on the experience of FLL and socialization (Chan et al, 2011; Oroujlou, 2012).

6.3. Contribution to knowledge and research

The findings of this study are aligned with what has been argued and reported in literature in terms of the dynamic complex nature of language learner identity (Duff, 2011, 2012b; Norton, 1995, 2000; Norton & McKinney, 2011; Norton & Toohey, 2011). Studies in second and foreign language learning settings reported that language learning engages and affects learners' identities (Atay and Ece, 2009; Kim, 2003b; Kim et al, 2010; Norton, 2000; Umrani, 2015). This study adds to our knowledge of this issue on a new different group of learners, in the setting of Saudi Arabia. Previous research on Saudi learners of English in second and foreign language settings reported similar findings in terms of the positive effects of learning English on the learners' identities in areas such as knowledge and confidence (Alsweel, 2013; Mustafa, 2017). The current study added to this by highlighting different aspects of those developments as well as other areas of possible change e.g., self-expression and lifestyle. It also provided accounts of how FLL contributed to all those developments and changes. Importantly, this study presented key information on how these developments and changes are related to the shaping of different forms of identities such as Western, multiple, hybrid and imagined identities. This demonstrates the complexity and multilayered nature of identity as it can be perceived and described in different ways. In addition, the study highlighted how foreign language learning goes beyond simply learning lexical items and grammar, to as far as shaping how people see themselves and the world around them. Moreover, the findings highlighted how power relations could affect English learners' and their identities not only in language learning and use but also outside of that in terms of their status in society.

On the theoretical level, the findings of this study provided new information on SLS in the foreign language context of Saudi Arabia. Utilizing SLS as a theoretical framework to investigate the identities of Saudi female learners of English has extended the scope of this theory and provided valuable insights into how these learners experienced learning English on the social cultural level and its implication on their identities or views of themselves. The findings confirmed the findings of previous studies in terms of socialization into the target language and its society and culture taking place through interaction with native speakers, and through classroom materials and activities (Byon, 2006; Duff, 2007, 2011; Guardado, 2009; Kim & Duff, 2012; Moore, 2004, 2008; Schecter & Bayley, 1997). More importantly, the findings highlighted another way in which learners could socialize in the target language and its society and culture through English-speaking media and social media which is close to the idea of self-directed socialization proposed by Duff and Doherty (2014). This form of socialization may be more relevant to learning English than learning other languages due to its dominance in media and social media. One interesting finding in terms of the social and cultural element of English learning is that the participants did not associate English with one society and culture as they considered it a global international language. This signals that learning English as a L2 is

different from other languages because it allows for socialization with various cultures from all over the world.

The findings also inform our knowledge of the English language learning and teaching process in terms of the complexity of factors affecting it. These factors include pedagogical factors such as teaching approaches and materials, social cultural factors such as people's attitudes and reactions and psychological factors such as anxiety. The intersectionality of this process affects not only progress in English learning but also affects learner identity development. This is in line with De Costa and Norton's (2016) proposal to acknowledge the interdisciplinary nature of research on language learning and identity.

6.4. Implications

6.4.1. Implication for research

This study has added to knowledge of how learners think FLL affects them as people. It has also highlighted more questions and issues that need to be investigated in the future.

The study and its findings could pave the way for more research on the identities of Saudi learners of English. Future research could compare the identities of male and female Saudi learners of English to shed light on how their experiences may be similar or different and the role of gender in that regard. In addition, future research could compare the identities of Saudi learners of English as a second and foreign language to find out the similarities and differences in their experiences, specifically whether the impact of language learning on identity is more profound in second language settings. To conduct such research, it is advisable to employ approaches to research and data collection that enable the measurement of change in the views and experiences of the participants and also account for any variation.

Another area which could be promising to investigate is code-switching among Saudi learners of English, the reasons behind the use of English in various contexts and how that relates to the learners' sense of self or identity.

The study revealed that, for several reasons, language learner identity is difficult to research. First, the term 'identity' is abstract and can have different meanings and associations. It is recommended that researchers take that into consideration and provide clear definitions for how this term is used in their research. The study also revealed the intersectionality of this topic, specifically the many factors affecting it. It can be difficult to untangle the web of factors that affect the learners' experience learning English and their identities. It is recommended that future research investigate foreign or second language learner's identity and how it is affected by individual factors. It is also advisable to investigate different forms of identity e.g., gender identity and linguistic identity instead of identity in general.

The study revealed that research on Saudi women in general and Saudi women learning English is needed. First, most of the studies on Saudi women learning English focused on university students and oversees students. There is a need for representation of Saudi women in other areas of life. Second, the accounts provided of Saudi women in literature lack depth and do not reflect the reality accurately. It is recommended that future research avoid stereotypical accounts of Saudi women.

The study showed that developing a methodology to investigate language learners' identities can be challenging. First of all, this topic deals with a person's self-perception and inner thoughts, therefore, it relies on self-reported data. It is difficult to verify this data by doing observations because they may not reflect how the learner views himself/herself. Second, it may not be possible to claim that any changes the learners' experiences in terms of learners' identities are related only to learning English as there are many factors that affect a language learner or any person's sense of self. Third, collecting longitudinal data can help researchers to follow the language learners' experience and their identity development. However, such longitudinal data is best collected along the whole trajectory of the language learning process, from the start until the end, which may not be possible due to time and financial considerations. Fourth, due to the individual nature of the topic, most research has used qualitative approaches. However, developing valid and reliable questionnaires could aid the generalizability of such research. As a researcher, I would like to use the results of this study to develop a questionnaire about the relationship between FLL and identity. Fifth, the use of diaries to investigate language learning and identity can be informative especially in terms of having data on the agency of the learners. But researchers conducting research in Saudi Arabia should be aware that their participants may not be familiar with diary writing, which could affect how much informative data they may yield.

Another promising area for research is how SLS takes place in the foreign language setting of Saudi Arabia. The findings of this study signal that socialization can take place through media and social media as well as classroom instruction and discussion and interactions with English speakers. It is recommended that research is conducted focusing on this issue as it could provide valuable information that can enhance English learning and teaching in Saudi Arabia.

While taking into consideration the rights of the participants, the anonymized original data obtained in this study can be used to conduct research on many of the topics mentioned above and many other topics. The anonymized original data may be shared if requested with fellow researchers while taking into consideration ethical issues and the rights of the participants.

6.4.2. Implications for teaching English in Saudi Arabia

The study asserted the importance and value of English and the learning of English in Saudi Arabia as a language that is associated with personal, professional and social development.

Learning English was also found to have a downside of being associated with losing connection with local language, identity and culture. Despite the fact that the educational policy in Saudi Arabia asserts the importance of Arabic, recently English has become more prevalent in Saudi Arabia. English became the medium of instruction in many schools and universities and the medium of communication in many companies and establishments (Al-Jarf, 2008; Al-Seghayer, 2012; Elyas, 2008; Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). In addition, it is not unusual now to see some Saudis speaking to each other in English or at least code-switching between Arabic and English. Furthermore, there are Saudi children who speak English as their first language. It could be argued that this may lead to the Arabic language having an inferior status to English, especially in academic and professional settings. It is important that policy makers pay attention to that and find a balance between the two languages and maintain the importance and value of Arabic.

The study highlighted the social and cultural nature of English learning and that this is something that participants valued about this process. It is recommended that English teaching curricula reflects that by incorporating social and cultural material from different cultures, such as reading comprehension articles. Teachers should also be aware of how learning English may impact learners' attitudes toward their local culture and the target language and be careful of the implications this may have on learners, especially the younger learners. In addition, media and social media were important parts of the participants' experience of learning English. It is recommended that teachers be aware of this and try to use media and social media in teaching, activities and assignments.

The study also revealed the complexity of Saudi female learners' experience of learning English; there are many factors affecting the participants' English learning experience and possibly achievement. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers take these factors into consideration and use this knowledge to help learners.

The study showed that Saudi female learners had conflicting feelings about how learning English engaged and affected their identities. They appeared to resist some of the changes they reported experiencing, especially in terms of their self-expression and social, cultural and religious views. They also experienced resentment from some people regarding their English-speaking identities and their views. This could be problematic for their progress and achievement in English as it may affect their investment and agency in learning English. It is important for teachers to be aware of this and help students find a balance between their Arabic-speaking and English-speaking identities.

6.5. Limitations

This study, as with all studies, has a number of limitations. Qualitative case study research has certain weaknesses that any researcher must be aware of. First, due to the fact that the researcher

plays an integral role in every step of the research, especially data analysis, the research process can be subjective (Holliday, 2015). Therefore, in this study, complete objectivity cannot be claimed. The researcher had direct involvement in each step of data collection and data analysis, and this is why many consider the researcher one of the tools in qualitative research (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Being a Saudi woman meant that I was an insider and may have some preconceptions about the topic under investigation. In this study, this is acknowledged and there were careful steps taken to minimize any effect this may have had on the study and maintain trust in the findings (see section 3.10.1). Furthermore, being an insider could be used as a strength in terms of being able to understand what the participants were talking about. A comprehensive discussion of the role of the researcher was presented in section 3.10.2 above.

Second, the methodology of the qualitative approach is also criticized for not being systematic and disciplined. However, Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, and St. Pierre (2007) note that although, unlike quantitative research, there is no formula to use when carrying out this type of research, this does not mean that it is not systematic. This is achieved by aligning all the research elements to carry out rigorous research. In this study, description and reasoning were provided for every step and decision made.

Third, Duff (2006) points out that researchers working with the qualitative approach need to be careful in the arguments they make based on their results; any interpretations that are made must be supported by strong evidence from the data. Since case study research looks at individuals, the researcher should not make general claims or generalizations that her study and data cannot support (Duff, 2006). Nevertheless, some general comments can be made in regard to how findings conform to relevant theories and previous studies. This study had six Saudi female learners in the English Department at King Faisal University as the focus of this investigation. Therefore, no generalizations can be made based on the findings of this study. However, using typicality in choosing the participants and providing thick descriptions of the participants and the setting allows the audience to determine whether any of the findings could be relevant to English learners in other settings. In addition, comparing the findings of this study with previous research helps in that. Furthermore, it needs to be mentioned that the English Language program the participants were studying may be different from other English FLL programs as it included learning about literature, linguistics and translation. Therefore, comparisons may be more applicable to learners in other English Language programs in Saudi Arabia and possibly the Arabian Gulf universities which have a similar content and structure

Fourth, since this study relied on volunteer participants, the researcher cannot deny that this may have some implications on the results of the study. Specifically, the participants'

investment and agency in learning English may be higher than that of others and this could have an effect on the results of this study.

Fifth, although this study had a longitudinal element as it followed the participants for a period of fourteen months, it was not possible to present the results in terms of change over time. Because there were time limitations as it was not feasible to follow the participants from the beginning of their learning of English until the end, so it was not possible to make claims in that regard. In addition, the topic of foreign language learner identity deals with inner feelings and perceptions which may not be associated or located at a certain point of time. Furthermore, the diaries which were the longitudinal tool were not that informative in yielding data in this way. In this study, the diaries' usefulness was mostly limited to having accounts of the participants' investment and agency in learning English. Although the participants were given clear and elaborate instructions in terms of content and length, the diaries the participants wrote did not have the expected content. This may have been caused by the unfamiliarity of the participants with diary writing in general. It could also have been caused by the fact that it required participants to put in time and effort, which they were not willing to do. But overall, it cannot be denied that the longitudinal element was informative in having more data on the topic which aided the analysis and understanding of the participants' experiences.

Sixth, this study relied on self-reported data in exploring the relationship between FLL and identity. This was warranted because the nature of the topic can only be investigated in this way. However, one cannot deny that this may present a one-sided account, but this was avoided by comparing the accounts of several participants which helped in providing more support for any claims that were made. Another problem with the self-reported data was the difference in the quantity and quality of the data each participant produced. Some of the participants talked more in the interviews than other participants and some participants wrote longer diaries than the others. In addition, some of the participants were more articulate than others. It was important for the researcher not to allow that to affect how the case study for each participant was conducted. However, in presenting the results in chapter four, this meant that the number of quotes used from each participant varied. But the researcher tried as much as possible to keep the difference to a minimum. This also meant that frequency could not be used to determine the importance of any theme. In future research, it is recommended to look into ways to collect data that would account for the reasons for variation of frequency between themes and participants.

6.6. Doctoral journey

The doctoral journey for me was full of learning and growth on the personal and academic levels. I will use this section to talk about my experience as a doctoral student.

Embarking on this research, I was eager to learn about how learning English affects the identities of Saudi learners especially women. In addition, I wanted to develop my research skills and pave a path for me in academia. The ups and downs I experienced during developing my study design, collecting and analyzing the data and reporting the findings, taught me to be flexible and creative. The Covid-19 pandemic also made me reflect, review and adjust some aspects of my research and work in general.

I also learned how to communicate my thoughts and ideas and most importantly how to listen. Moreover, embarking on this journey widened my horizons and enabled me to open my eyes and most importantly my mind to different perspectives. The findings of this study confirmed to me that my expectation and view of how things are, is not always accurate. This pushed me to continuously reflect on every step done as part of this research. Investigating Saudi female learners of English identities and being a person who went through a similar experience, meant that, undoubtedly, I had some preconceptions on this issue. But as I worked on this study, I learned to acknowledge and appreciate the uniqueness of every person's experience. This study also changed my outlook on qualitative research and the value it brings to learning about people's experiences that could not be captured by numbers and statistics.

During this PhD, I became more aware of the importance of maintaining one's mental health and the struggles people, especially in academia, face with anxiety and stress. I would like to use my personal experience to speak up and raise awareness about these issues and find ways to help people in that regard.

Furthermore, this process helped me to grow as a person. I became more patient and learned how to self-regulate and find a balance. I also learned how to deal with difficulties and persevere even if things were not going my way. Most importantly, this journey instilled in me the belief that hard work and dedication are a person's most important assets to achieve his/her goals and dreams.

Appendices

Appendix 1a. Information sheet and consent form for students

UNIVERSITY of York

Information Page
Title: Saudi Female Learners' Experiences of Learning EFL

Dear Madam/Miss

Muneerah Al Shuhail is currently carrying out a research project **Saudi Female Learners' Experiences of Learning EFL**. I would like to invite you to take part in this research project.

Before agreeing to take part, please read this information sheet carefully and let us know if anything is unclear or you would like further information.

Purpose of the study
The study is designed to explore how female students view their learning of English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia. How they think it allows them to view life in different ways, what they think about themselves and of their future.

What would this mean for you/your institution?
Taking part in the study would involve:
Completing a questionnaire: You will be asked to fill in a questionnaire either online or in paper-form. The questionnaire should take 15 – 20 minutes to complete.
Interviews: you may be asked to sit with the researcher for interviews to discuss issues related to your language learning experience. The interviews will take place on campus within 3-6 months.
Diaries: you may be asked to write a diary once a month to reflect on your experience of learning English. This will be done in an electronic form over a period of 6-9 months.
Classroom Observations: The researcher will observe a number of classroom sessions to get an idea of how English is taught in Saudi Arabia. This is not an evaluation of your performance in the English classroom, I am interested in how the teacher delivers the class and how English is taught in general.

Participation is voluntary
Participation is optional. If you do decide to take part, you will be given a copy of this information sheet for your records and will be asked to complete a participant information form. If you change your mind at any point during the study, you will be able to withdraw your participation without having to provide a reason. You will have up to 2 weeks by which you can withdraw the data after that it will be anonymised and non-retrievable.

Processing of your data
Under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the University has to identify a legal basis for processing personal data and, where appropriate, an additional condition for processing special category data.

In line with our charter which states that we advance learning and knowledge by teaching and research, the University processes personal data for research purposes under Article 6 (1)(e) of the GDPR:
Processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest

Special category data is processed under Article 9 (2) (j):
Processing is necessary for archiving purposes in the public interest, or scientific and historical research purposes or statistical purposes
Research will only be undertaken where ethical approval has been obtained, where there is a clear public interest and where appropriate safeguards have been put in place to protect data.
In line with ethical expectations and in order to comply with common law duty of confidentiality, we will seek your consent to participate where appropriate. This consent will not, however, be our legal basis for processing your data under the GDPR.

Anonymity and confidentiality
The data that you provide (e.g., audio recordings of the interview, questionnaire results, written diaries and notes from observations I make) will be stored by code number. Any information that identifies you will be stored separately from the data. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time during data collection and up to 2 weeks after data collection started.

Information will be treated confidentially and shared on a need-to-know basis only. The University is committed to the principle of data protection by design and default and will collect the minimum amount of data necessary for the project. In addition, we will anonymise or pseudonymise data wherever possible.

Storing and using your data
We will put in place appropriate technical and organisational measures to protect your personal data and/or special category data. Data will be stored in secure filing cabinets and/or on a password protected computer

Data will be kept for 10 years after which time it will be destroyed.

The data that I collect (audio recordings / transcripts / questionnaire responses/ written diaries/ observation notes) may be used in *anonymous* format in different ways. Please indicate on the consent form enclosed with a ☑ if you are happy for this anonymised data to be used in the ways listed.

Please note: If we gather information that raises concerns about your safety or the safety of others, or about other concerns as perceived by the researcher, the researcher may pass on this information to another person.

Sharing of data
Data will be accessible to the project team at York only.

Anonymised data may be used for future analysis and shared for research or training purposes. If you do not want your data to be included in any information shared as a result of this research, please do not sign the consent form.

Transfer of data internationally

Data will be held within the European Economic Area in full compliance with data protection legislation.

It is possible that the data is transferred internationally. The University's cloud storage solution is provided by Google which means that data can be located at any of Google's globally spread data centres. The University has data protection compliant arrangements in place with this provider. For further information see,
https://www.york.ac.uk/it-services/google/policy/privacy/

Your rights

Under the GDPR, you have a general right of access to your data, a right to rectification, erasure, restriction, objection or portability. You also have a right to withdrawal. Please note, not all rights apply where data is processed purely for research purposes. For information see, https://www.york.ac.uk/records-management/generaldataprotectionregulation/individualrights/

Questions or concerns

If you have any questions about this participant information sheet or concerns about how your data is being processed, please feel free to contact Muneerah Al Shuhail by email (maas505@york.ac.uk) or by telephone on +966135800000. You can also contact the PhD supervisor Fatma Said by email (fatma.said@york.ac.uk) or the Chair of Ethics Committee via email education-research-administrator@york.ac.uk. If you are still dissatisfied, please contact the University's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@york.ac.uk

Right to complain

If you are unhappy with the way in which your personal data has been handled, you have a right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office. For information on reporting a concern to the Information Commissioner's Office, see www.ico.org.uk/concerns

We hope that you will agree to take part. If you are happy to participate, please complete the form enclosed and give it back to the researcher.

Please keep this information sheet for your own records.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

Yours sincerely

Muneerah Al Shuhail

Title: Saudi Female Learners' Experiences of Learning EFL
Consent Form
Please tick each box if you are happy to take part in this research.

I confirm that I have read and understood the information given to me about the above named research project and I understand that this will involve me taking part as described above. ☐

I understand that the purpose of the research is to explore the language learning experience of students learning English at university in Saudi Arabia ☐

I understand that data will be stored securely in a locked filing cabinet or on a password protected computer and only Muneerah Al Shuhail and Fatma Said will have access to any identifiable data. ☐

I understand that my identity will be protected by use of a code/pseudonym
I understand that participation in this study is voluntary ☐

I understand that my data will not be identifiable and the data may be used …. ☐

in publications that are mainly read by university academics ☐

in presentations that are mainly attended by university academics ☐

in publications that are mainly read by the public ☐

I understand that data will be kept for 10 years after which it will be destroyed. ☐

I understand that data could be used for future analysis or other purposes ☐

I understand that I can withdraw my data at any point during data collection and up to 2 weeks after data is collected ☐

NAME_____

SIGNATURE_____

DATE_____

Appendix 1b. Information sheet and consent form for teachers

UNIVERSITY *of York*

Information Page
Title: Saudi Female Learners' Experiences of Learning EFL

Dear instructor

Muneerah Al Shuhail is currently carrying out a research project **Saudi Female Learners' Experiences of Learning EFL**. I would like to invite you to take part in this research project.

Before agreeing to take part, please read this information sheet carefully and let us know if anything is unclear or you would like further information.

Purpose of the study
The study is designed to explore how female students view their learning of English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia. How they think it allows them to view life in different ways, what they think about themselves and of their future.

What would this mean for you/your institution?
Taking part in the study would involve:
Classroom Observations: The researcher will observe 2-4 classroom sessions over a period of one month to get an idea of how English is taught in Saudi Arabia. This is not an evaluation of your performance as an English teacher, I am interested in getting insights into the nature of language learning and socialization in the classroom. This is not a test in how you, as the teacher, deliver the class.

Participation is voluntary
Participation is optional. If you do decide to take part, you will be given a copy of this information sheet for your records and will be asked to complete a participant information form. If you change your mind at any point during the study, you will be able to withdraw your participation without having to provide a reason. You will have up to 2 weeks by which you can withdraw the data.

Processing of your data
Under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the University has to identify a legal basis for processing personal data and, where appropriate, an additional condition for processing special category data.
In line with our charter which states that we advance learning and knowledge by teaching and research, the University processes personal data for research purposes under Article 6 (1)(e) of the GDPR:
Processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest

Special category data is processed under Article 9 (2) (j):
Processing is necessary for archiving purposes in the public interest, or scientific and historical research purposes or statistical purposes
Research will only be undertaken where ethical approval has been obtained, where there is a clear public interest and where appropriate safeguards have been put in place to protect data.

In line with ethical expectations and in order to comply with common law duty of confidentiality, we will seek your consent to participate where appropriate. This consent will not, however, be our legal basis for processing your data under the GDPR.

Anonymity and confidentiality
The data that you provide (notes from observations I make) will be stored by code number. Any information that identifies you will be stored separately from the data. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time during data collection and up to 2 weeks after data collection started.

Information will be treated confidentially and shared on a need-to-know basis only. The University is committed to the principle of data protection by design and default and will collect the minimum amount of data necessary for the project. In addition, we will anonymise or pseudonymise data wherever possible.

Storing and using your data
We will put in place appropriate technical and organisational measures to protect your personal data and/or special category data. Data will be stored in secure filing cabinets and/or on a password protected computer

Data will be kept for 10 years after which time it will be destroyed.

The data that I collect (observation notes) may be used in *anonymous* format in different ways. Please indicate on the consent form enclosed with a ☑ if you are happy for this anonymised data to be used in the ways listed.

Please note: If we gather information that raises concerns about your safety or the safety of others, or about other concerns as perceived by the researcher, the researcher may pass on this information to another person.

Sharing of data
Data will be accessible to the project team at York only.

Anonymised data may be used for future analysis and shared for research or training purposes. If you do not want your data to be included in any information shared as a result of this research, please do not sign the consent form.

Transfer of data internationally
Data will be held within the European Economic Area in full compliance with data protection legislation.
It is possible that the data is transferred internationally. The University's cloud storage solution is provided by Google which means that data can be located at any of Google's globally spread data centres. The University has data protection compliant arrangements in place with this provider. For further information see,
https://www.york.ac.uk/it-services/google/policy/privacy/

Your rights
Under the GDPR, you have a general right of access to your data, a right to rectification, erasure, restriction, objection or portability. You also have a right to withdrawal. Please note, not all rights apply where data is processed purely for research purposes. For

information see, https://www.york.ac.uk/records-management/generaldataprotectionregulation/individualrights/

Questions or concerns

If you have any questions about this participant information sheet or concerns about how your data is being processed, please feel free to contact Muneerah Al Shuhail by email (maas505@york.ac.uk) or by telephone on +966135800000. You can also contact the PhD supervisor Fatma Said by email (fatma.said@york.ac.uk) or the Chair of Ethics Committee via email education-research-administrator@york.ac.uk. If you are still dissatisfied, please contact the University's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@york.ac.uk

Right to complain

If you are unhappy with the way in which your personal data has been handled, you have a right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office. For information on reporting a concern to the Information Commissioner's Office, see www.ico.org.uk/concerns

We hope that you will agree to take part. If you are happy to participate, please complete the form enclosed and give it back to the researcher.
Please keep this information sheet for your own records.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

Yours sincerely

Muneerah Al Shuhail

Title: Saudi Female Learners' Experiences of Learning EFL
Consent Form

Please tick each box if you are happy to take part in this research.

I confirm that I have read and understood the information given to me about the above named research project and I understand that this will involve me taking part as described above. ☐

I understand that the purpose of the research is to explore the language learning experience of students learning English at university in Saudi Arabia ☐

I understand that data will be stored securely in a locked filing cabinet or on a password protected computer and only Muneerah Al Shuhail and Fatma Said will have access to any identifiable data. ☐

I understand that my identity will be protected by use of a code/pseudonym ☐

I understand that participation in this study is voluntary

I understand that my data will not be identifiable and the data may be used …. ☐

in publications that are mainly read by university academics ☐

in presentations that are mainly attended by university academics ☐

in publications that are mainly read by the public ☐

I understand that data will be kept for 10 years after which it will be destroyed. ☐

I understand that data could be used for future analysis or other purposes ☐

I understand that I can withdraw my data at any point during data collection and up to 2 weeks after data is collected ☐

NAME_____

SIGNATURE_____

DATE_____

Appendix 2. Background information form

1. Name
2. Age
3. Place of Birth
4. Place of growing up
5. Place of living
6. Marital status
7. Economic status
8. Type of school
9. Medium of instruction in school
10. Did you enroll in Any English language courses before university? If yes, where and for how long?
11. Number of years learning English before the university
12. Year of university study
13. Years of learning English including the university
14. What is your rating of your proficiency in English?
15. Do you travel outside Saudi Arabia? If yes, how often?
16. What are the countries you traveled to?
17. Have you ever lived outside Saudi Arabia? If yes, where and how long?
18. Have you ever studied outside Saudi Arabia? If yes, where and how long?
19. What are the languages you can speak?
20. What is the profession you want to work in?

Appendix 3. Diary Prompt

Dear Participant,

In order to have a record of your experience learning and using English inside and outside the classroom, you are invited to write ten diary entries (no less than 300 words) during the period from April 2019 to April 2020. You can choose to write the diary in Arabic or English.

The purpose of the diary is for you to reflect on your English learning and your linguistic and personal experience.

The content of the diary should include accounts of: your engagement in English inside and outside the classroom, any challenges you face, your linguistic progress and any effects this process may have had on you (if any).

In writing your diary, please talk about the following points if they are applicable to your experience.

1. The situations in which you used English (inside and outside the classroom) and your feelings about and during using English? why? Give examples.
2. Other people's reaction to/ thoughts about your usage of English and why? Give examples.
3. What did you do to improve your English? Give examples.
4. Did you face any difficulties while learning English? What are they? Why? Give examples
5. Have you noticed that learning English affected you on any level? If yes, what are these effects? Why? How? Give examples.

It could also be helpful to think about these points/questions when writing the diary.

6. Did you do anything specifically to use English? why? If yes, give examples
7. Did you try to use English outside the classroom? If yes give examples
8. Did anything or any factor affect you and your engagement and efforts in learning English positively or negatively? If yes, what is it? Why?

Thank you for your time and your cooperation in writing this diary. Your contribution is helpful in providing information on the English foreign language learner's experience.

Appendix 4. Semi-structured interview

<u>Part 1: Background information</u>

1. Present yourself, talk about your background, interests and hobbies.

<u>Part 2: Learning English</u>

2. Why are you learning English? Do you think learning and using English is important in Saudi Arabia? Why?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of learning English?
4. Can you talk about your experience learning English? What do you think of it?
5. Can you talk about your engagement in your studies e.g., participation…etc.
6. What are the challenges you face during learning English? What are things that help you during learning English?
7. Are there any factors that affect you positively or negatively during learning English?
8. Talk about your past and present use and engagement with English. What do you use English for? elaborate?
9. How do you feel when you use English? How do others react to your usage of English?

<u>Part 3: Effects of learning English as a foreign language on personal and social levels</u>

10. How do you describe yourself as a person? How do you describe yourself as a learner?
11. Did learning English affect you in any way (as a person, learner...)? If yes, how?
12. Can you talk to me about your future after you finish learning English?
13. How do you view the world around you (your society and culture and other societies and cultures? Were your views affected by learning English? If yes, how? Why?
14. What is identity to you? Do you think your identity could be affected by learning English? How?

Thank you for your time and your cooperation in answering the questions. Your contribution is helpful in providing information on the English foreign language learner's experience.

Appendix 5. Follow-up interview

Part 1: Clarifications of the previous interview and diaries data as needed

Part 2: Questions about their experience since the last interview: any changes in their learning, themselves, and their views.

Part 3: Discussion of the emergent findings for each participant.

Appendix 6. Sample of diaries

Reema Diary 2

The situations in which I used the language became a lot and I can't count it but the most beautiful situations when my mother asked me to help in things that she could not understand in English or asked me to help my young brothers during their studies and their reaction was very beautiful as they all met me with pride and happiness in my progress in English and how much they liked my way of pronunciation. Among the many people who supported me was my uncle, May God reward him, and my father, God bless him, if it was not for God and them, I would not have reached this stage in English. The reasons that led to my development, thank God, watching videos in English, listening to English songs, watching YouTube programs including the program (Falimha), interacting with the native speakers of the language on social media and repeating the new words until I memorize them and then start using them and look for synonyms for words I know. But of course, there were a lot of difficulties during this time and some of them when I listen to someone speaking English slang or listening to different accents in English or when I pronounce similar words in the language or when I try to translate idioms and jokes and so on. But on the other hand, the English language has greatly affected my view of different issues, for example I became interested in issues of bullying and racism, whether for color or religion, and became more open about them and how to deal with people like the likes of bullies and how to defend the oppressed in these issues. Culturally, I became interested in English books and writers in different aspects such as literature, language science, Physiognomy and personal development and I always follow new things on that.

Nora Diary 1

I've always loved using English in and outside the classroom because i believe practice makes perfect , specially during the "listening and speaking" lecture because our instructor gives us trending and controversial topics which make us excited to discuss the topics with her. When i speak English in front of people some of the react badly, they think that i'm showing off my English skills in front of them but others react wonderfully, they support me and tell me how good my accent is. I develop my American English through watching talk shows such as Ellen degenerous show and other shows also movies help me a lot and i think i still need more practice to sound like native speakers . One of the biggest difficulties that i faced through learning English was the fear of makeing mistakes which made me avoid speaking in English but i got over it by participating in English exhibitions . English has influenced me a lot because i did not only learn the language but i've learnt about new cultures and that change my views to some of my society issues , for example hiring someone in a job the employer needs to focus on more important things than focusing on the relatives relationship or the nationality . I've become knowledgeable and careful to things that really matter and all i want is to serve my country in a

useful way. Learning English change a big part in my personality i have more confident, i remember when i was young i was in a pastry restaurant ordering some doughnut , the seller asks me about something but i did not understand her then the people in row start feeling mad about me ,i was embarrassed and i got out of the restaurant . But now after learning English i'm the one who alwats order food to my family specially when we are abroad . What makes me admire the language is the native speakers because i like some of their ideas about women and how we are beautiful in our different color , sizes and races . I think we should support each other as women, and English help me to communicate with anyone around the world , this is the best gift that i earn from learning English .

Appendix 7. Sample of interviews

Researcher: First of all, if you can talk about yourself and your interests?

Sara: OK, for me, I love reading very very much. I love reading general information about things which I think is useful for me. I also like to draw, and I like to watch anime series. I spend half of my time on series, of course, and I spend some time in reading, this is what I do most of the time.

Researcher: Do you prefer reading in English or in Arabic?

Sara: Well, I'm trying to read in English. From my diaries, I was trying to improve my reading in English, and, of course, I acquired vocabulary, but this does not mean that I prefer it over the Arabic.

Researcher: Most of the time you read books in Arabic and as you mentioned, you watch series or something like that, what type of series do you watch?

Sara: The series are all about law and crime and all these things, but the other series like school dramas that are about teenagers and such topics, these are things I knew before. But I, actually, developed my language through law and crime series and things like that.

Researcher: Are there any other interests?

Sara: Twitter, I only follow my friends on Twitter, and I do not like to follow celebrities who have many followers because they affect me negatively. I often log in Twitter and talk about my day and see if I have anyone around me who hears my words and stories, I tweet about what happened to me during the day then I log out. Also, Snap, I'm photographing myself on Instagram and filming my day.

Researcher: Is there anything else?

Sara: Yes, I listen to the music a lot, Imagine Dragons, Lana Del Rey. Also, rock, hard rock, I don't know if this is obvious to you, but I am a kind of a loud person, so I like this type of songs that are all screaming. Now, all the songs I listen to are in English, and I do not listen to Arabic songs at all. I am addicted to these songs. I don't like listening to Arabic songs as much as I like English songs. I do not like Arabic songs at all, even the English series are better, and it is impossible for me to watch Arabic series, because the English series are much better.

Researcher: OK, can you tell me a little bit about your family, the number of your family members, parents and siblings.

Sara: For my family, we are seven. My mother and father, I am the eldest girl and I have two brothers and two sisters, my mother and father work, we all study, a happy happy family together

Researcher: What did your parents study?

Sara: My mother has a bachelor's degree and works as an English teacher. My father has a master's and a bachelor's degree in sociology or something like that and works as a mentor.

Researcher: Ok, do they speak English?

Sara: My mom speaks English, my dad speaks a little English.

Researcher: And your siblings?

Sara: My siblings speak English

Researcher: Do you speak English together?

Sara: No, unless we want to tell some sarcastic jokes, make fun of each other, we say them in English, and sometimes if we want to insult each other, we speak in English so that youngsters don't understand us.

Researcher: What is the opinion of your family about your studying of the English language?

Sara: My mother and my father encouraged me, and I have a brother who told me that I have a great linguistic intelligence, meaning very high. When I heard this compliment, I became very happy. You know when someone you trust his judgment tells you that your language is good and that you have linguistic intelligence, this is the thing that encouraged me the most. When I see him complimenting me even my self-confidence increased.

Researcher: With regard to travel, you mentioned that you always travel to Western countries. Do you use English while traveling?

Sara: Yes, of course.

Researcher: What do you use the English language for?

Sara: For example, in communication in general, sometimes because when we travel, we live in houses not in hotels, so there are people around us, so we have conversations with them, especially older people, we talk together. For example, I tell them the weather is beautiful and things like that, and sometimes we talk about our personal lives in English.

Researcher: How do you feel when you communicate with them?

Sara: I feel that the language, like, I feel it gave me through dealing with foreigners it gave me another perspective, like it gives you not just knowing the point of view of this person, no,

because it gives the view of the society that he is living in about a certain idea. So, when you learn about it and talk to him, this person, in English you feel like, wow, what am I missing, what are people who don't speak missing and seeing this kind of ideas. I feel it is impossible for them to appreciate and understand people more if they don't interact with them.

Researcher: So, do you feel that learning of English and your ability to have dialogues with them made you able to see other points of view?

Sara: Yes, more culture, more acceptance of people, so I accept anything I see, even if I see someone worshiping a tree, I mean, for example, when you live in Saudi Arabia, you think that you accept the difference of others, "You have your religion and I have mine". But you don't actually experience this until you see it with your own eyes, when you know the person's thoughts. When he talks to you about everything then you become more accepting. For me, I see that even if you are an educated and cultured person and you say I am accepting and I am open-minded, but when you see this person and communicate with him, here, I really believe that you accept people.

Having learned a new language, it made me able to talk to those people. If I had not learnt it, I don't expect that I would be the person who I am today in terms of acceptance. For example, if we say that my father, he does not speak English well, I see the big difference, although my father travels more than me, he goes and comes a lot. But because my mother is the one who usually speaks. My father does not want to speak, he says I am already old, I do not want to learn. So, I see the big difference between my mother's personality and my father's personality. My father's personality is more strict and more conservative and more critical, but my mother isn't. I see her as a relaxed and easy-going person.

Researcher: You mean that you associate that acceptance with contact and communication?

Sara: Yes, and because of the language too.

Researcher: What made you choose to study English?

Sara: It is the only thing I feel that I have found myself in, so I decided to study English, and thanks God, I now feel comfortable and happy. Other than it is the most used language in the world, I see that if I learn, for example, any other languages, I will learn them out of curiosity and not because I actually want to use them, so I prefer English because everything is in English and I do not need to overburden myself and I do not need to learn an additional language with it, so I prefer English because It helps me communicate more and all people speak English.

Researcher: What does it mean that everything is in English? Can you explain, or give me examples?

Sara: For example, knowledge, because as I told you I love reading. When people talk about any topics and problems online, it is all in English. Regarding problems, it is true that you can see how people talk about their problems on YouTube, especially the Americans and the British. You can see how they deal with the problem and how they solve it, sometimes we have similar problems, so I can, for example, benefit from their experience in this situation. I find that English helped me to find another solution to problems that I did not expect I could face, or even see anyone talk about them. For example, global warming, I would not know about it if I only spoke Arabic, I used to hear people say global warming, global warming, I used to hear people say the global temperature is high and so on, talk on social media, but when I search for global warming on YouTube, to discover the cause of global warming and ways to solve it, do we have a hand like we can solve it as individuals, this problem is global, but our people talk about it marginally, but in English I can find several sources, and I became more aware even of the problems that happen in the world, so that I can not only see social media who amplify things, but also I can watch YouTube where I find neutral people and they have more information about the problems, they talk about these problems from more than one point of view.

Researcher: You said I studied English because I found myself in it. What does this mean?

Sara: You know when you like become passionate about other cultures. I, because, as I said before, I loved listening to English songs, series and so on. I thought, wow, I want to understand more so since I was young in elementary school, I remember Bugs Bunny saying things and I listened to him and said one day I will speak English and understand what he says. I used to ask my mother what this means and she says this and that. But I don't want anyone to translate for me, I want to understand. So, I think since I was young, I loved learning and wanted to understand what they say, what they see.

Researcher: You also mentioned that you studied English in order to communicate? Can you explain more to me?

Sara: I mean, for example, now I see people who speak English, and I don't have to communicate with them, but I want to understand them. I have this interest. I want to understand people. I want to understand their point of view about this thing, or how they deal or solve this problem, how, for example, they dealt with this thing. How they reached this level. When I study English, I know all these things. When I learned English, even my social life has been affected and became better. I don't know if I wrote this thing in the diaries before or not, but in this semester, after I noticed that my language has developed a lot, I found girls tend to talk to me more and I don't know if this is because of my personality or because of my language, but I see English is influential in them seeing oh she is confident, she knows and so

on. This confidence and knowledge came from learning the language and knowing how people view their lives, so I think English has an effect.

Researcher: The point that girls tend to talk to you more. Can you talk about this more?

Sara: Yes, I see that it raises the position of the person, and other than that, like, you know when, for example, when you see someone in front of you, even without speaking, you say: it is clear that he is charismatic and confident. In this way, it gives you an aura. I think English adds this aura to me, as people say: oh, she is self-confident. Oh, she has a language. This increases my confidence, even me, and therefore it reflects in my personality.

Researcher: Do you think that studying English is important in Saudi Arabia?

Sara: Yes, as it is important as a global language and also as a social status. Inside ourselves if we speak English, we want to show that we know English. They consider it as a prestige, as you often find a person who speaks Arabic and suddenly speaks English in order to show you that she knows English. What's the point, if you want to learn the language, learn it in order to benefit from it.

Researcher: OK, as for studying the English language during your university period, can you give me an overview of that experience?

Sara: In general, all doctors speak English, of course, it is rare, I rarely see a doctor who speaks Arabic in the classroom. It is true, some of them, for example, their accent varies according to their nationality, but in general the accent is excellent. When I entered the university, I was upset why they bring us Saudi doctors while we are going to specialize in English, we want to acquire the accent. But as I actually started studying, I noticed that, for example, the doctors understand us. They understand us because they live with us and know our culture. They know the way we speak. They know how we think because they live with us. Then I became convinced that it is true that they do not have accent but this does not mean that I can take the accent even from foreigners because I don't always deal with them, so my benefit is often from the doctor who understands me, lives with me in my community and knows how to give us the idea because they know what we think, they know the mechanism of our thinking and they know how to deliver it to you in the best way possible , I mean a foreigner is an outsider who does not know what is the society's opinion about the idea.

Researcher: What is your opinion about your experience in studying English?

Sara: I enjoy it, especially the cultural and thoughtful classes, American criticism, poetry, novel, that we know the thoughts of people who died million thousand years ago, to know their way of thinking especially if the instructor loves this and is passionate about it, she will give you from

her heart, like how this happened, it gives you the experiences. Really, I enjoy it because of learning new things I did not expect to know.

Researcher: ok, do you feel that there are enough opportunities to use English language in the classroom?

Sara: Depending on the girl, if she wants to use the language or not, some doctors prevent you from speaking even if you are confident in yourself, there are doctors, on the contrary, they encourage you, and there are doctors who allow you according to their mood.

Researcher: How do they prevent you? Can you explain?

Sara: I mean, some doctors when they see you, they come to talk to you, laugh with you, and others are formal, and want you to be either right or wrong, really they want only the right or wrong answer, and others tell you that there is nothing right and there is nothing wrong, you give the answer that suits you.

Researcher: How would you describe your participation in the classroom?

Sara: I often participate, but because as I said there are some instructors who bring you down, not bring you down but like you either give me the right answer or you do not give me any answer, these I do not participate with, but for example, the doctor who says I appreciate the effort, this is normal, even if I make a mistake with them a million thousand times, I don't have any problem.

Researcher: Why do you participate?

Sara: I want people to notice me. I want to show people my effort. I want people to see the effort I made and how I worked on myself. Like, I don't know if this is something in people in general or in me as a character. I made efforts and worked hard on something, I want them to see that. I want to make them say, it is clear that she worked hard on herself and I feel that this motivates me to continue more.

Researcher: Can you talk about your use of English before and now?

Sara: I only used English in the songs that I listened to, I didn't even think about really using it, and my use of the language was limited only to the classroom with the instructor by saying 'yes I am', the English we studied in secondary school was simple, when I was in in school, I wasn't really thinking about going deeper in this way, but then in university I started reading and started listening to Tik Tok, and I started seeing people, I mean, I feel that it was the English that opened my brain in this way.

Researcher: Ok, how about your use of English now?

Sara: I use English more and I do code-switching in English when, for example, I speak Arabic. I use English only in the restaurants and cafes I go to because the people there are foreigners, but if he is an Arab I only speak to him in Arabic, and sometimes the person is an Arab and a Saudi, and I know that he is a Saudi, but he speaks to me in English here, I have to speak with him in English. but I do not prefer this. I love the English language and know that it benefited me greatly and my personality, but at the same time I do not want it to affect my Arabic personality.

Researcher: When do you use English?

Sara: Like when there is a problem, for example, a problem in our house, I will talk about it only in English because I feel that if I talk about it in Arabic it's impact on me will be stronger, like I don't know, maybe because English is not my mother language so when I say for example or talk about the problem in English I try to use it to make it like it is silly or easy in this way. I don't take it seriously and I don't worry about it that much, like if, for example, I talked in Arabic, I feel my expressions are strong because it is my mother tongue. When I talk about a topic in English, I use it to reduce the problem, for example, who cares or whatever so that I can feel that the problem is simple.

Researcher: Were there any difficulties or challenges you faced during your study?

Sara: How to deal with anxiety, and how to overcome my bad level in the first year, the first two years studying English even though I was confident in my language, I felt frustrated when I heard the doctors talking to us and I didn't understand especially in the beginning, the first years we were studying skills reading, listening, speaking. I didn't know how to read that well, and my grades were bad in reading, and I got a C, so I said to myself you should work on yourself, I mean, you must know how to read, and although I passed these subjects with a little bit low grade according to my standards. This is one of the difficulties I faced, but it is this difficulty that made me develop more. If I had said this was difficult and had not tried, I would not have benefited.

Researcher: Are there any things that give you a positive push forward?

Sara: Yes, when I see people around me say 'oh Praise Allah', she is good and has good language and linguistic intelligence, these things push me to learn more and I want to do the best even if I am really the best, I want to be better than that too.

Researcher: Are there any other factors that affect you positively or negatively during learning English?

Sara: Nothing comes to my mind right now.

Researcher: When you use English and speak it, how do you feel?

Sara: I feel that I can, I feel unstoppable, I feel that I can speak, and even if someone objects to me, I feel that I can respond. And this thing I feel I would not be able to reach if I wasn't fluent in English.

Researcher: Ok, what is the reaction of those around you when you speak English?

Sara: Most of them are fascinated and say did she study abroad or what. What high confidence she has, some are impressed, some are jealous, I have met people who hate me because I speak English better than them, but this is not my problem, you go and learn for yourself. Those people who are envious of you because of your level in English you can deal with them in the way of speaking more so you frustrate them more, like this is my way, you do not know, this is your problem but look at me speaking more, look at me knowing more, like die with your envy. All these things push me to develop, and as for the haters, I let them hate me, on the contrary, I find that their hatred means that I am really developing, and the people who are fascinated by me are also impressed by the development, in both cases I feel that I am really developing, those who are jealous of me or hate me do not hate me without a reason, and they are not jealous of me without a reason.

Researcher: Are there any advantages to studying English?

Sara: Of course

Researcher: Can you talk about it?

Sara: I find that it strengthens your relationships, based on my experience I found that English strengthens your relationships, strengthens your self-confidence, knowledge, confidence, more culture, even for example, food changes, as I watch some strange cooking on YouTube, I wouldn't know it, if I didn't speak English, I mean For example, someone puts flour and puts strange things and cooks strange foods, other than the food we cook in Saudi Arabia, and this makes you try new things at home.

Researcher: Are there any downsides to studying English?

Sara: I do not feel that there is anything negative in adding something to you, even if you did not learn anything, you also learned something new, so I do not find any negatives.

Researcher: Can you describe yourself?

Sara: For example, I see myself as confident, bold, and for example, if someone gives me something and tells me do it now, I can do it immediately, then yes, I can deal with things quickly and I feel smart. My mother told me when we have difficult situations, you are the only one who knows how to act, you're the only one that can hold it together.

But in terms of my negative sides, the mood, even dealing with people varies according to my mood. And I do not know if this is negative or not, but I see that in terms of my feelings, I am an indifferent person. I mean, I don't care what people think, and I don't care they love me or not. I don't care about these things, I only care about myself, I mean I tend to be selfish more than being considerate or think about the feelings of others, I don't know why I don't like this trait, but I know that it is in me.

I like to expand the knowledge that I have, I like to see, I like to acquire new skills, I like to practice new things, I like to meet new people every day, I like to learn about new cultures, new information, things that make me a better person and thus I can build my life more.

Researcher: OK, if I ask you to describe yourself as a student?

Sara: My study is the same, it depends on my mood, I do not think this is a positive thing. I feel that I am more serious during the semester, or according to the doctor, if she gives and takes or not, but often I am formal and I don't like to deal with people with my real personality. I like to be formal even with the students who are with me in the classroom, I feel that my interactions with them are very formal, but outside the classroom, Allah be praised, my personality changes 180 degrees.

Researcher: OK, let's talk about whether there are any effects learning English had on you as a person and a learner, at a point you said that your confidence has increased?

Sara: Yes, my confidence has increased, because like what I said before when people praise me, I feel that this enhances my self- confidence, but I know that this is wrong, I mean that your self-confidence does not depend on people praising you, I know that this thing is wrong, and I know one day I will be disappointed because of these things, but because people see how language affects me, and I know that the language affected me, and affected my personality. I find that my personality differed from many girls even though they study English, because I don't see them studying in the same way I study, I mean, I do not see anyone who has knowledge of things that are often known to people who are supposed to know the language. When I see them, I say to myself, look how the language affected you, made you think more positively, like it gave you some logic and logical judgments, because of English, there are some books that affected my thinking in a better way, and these books I only read in English.

Researcher: Like?

Sara: For example, a book called logical fallacies, this book is found in Arabic, but it was discussed extensively in English, where they explain fallacies and wrong intellectual things that people do and they are supposed not to do, because if they do it, they would make mistakes,

since I knew these things and learned about them, I started using it so often that it became a mechanism.

And also, the English novels give you an idea of how a person thinks. As I said before, to understand how this person thinks and I know how he can have his point of view. Or, for example, I know that this character will implement this idea, meaning that he will try to do this thing because he prefers this thing. I do not think that Arabic books or Arabic novels gave me this expansion of characters and perceptions of thinking, and I find that English books affected me more.

Researcher: Are there any other effects learning English had on you other than self-confidence, and that you became more knowledgeable in terms of information and these things?

Sara: I feel because I am a self-centered person, so I do not often care about other aspects, meaning, I learn English I learn it for myself in order to develop in order to improve, and the development and improvement for me is related to confidence and knowledge and way of dealing with people.

Researcher: the way of dealing with people, what do you mean?

Sara: Before, I did not know how to talk to people in a good way, and I did not know how to express my thoughts so smoothly and easily, but now I saw the results of reading books and speaking classes or classes in which I speak in English. But I noticed that if the doctor doesn't cooperate with me, my language will be affected and I don't know how to express myself, but if the doctor speaks and encourages me, I find that my language and everything I have acquired appear. Yes, it depends on the doctor, I think, but in general, I see that I can go on talking.

Like before, I used to talk in short answers like saying oh I feel I am smart, but now if someone says to me, why smart, I can say I am smart because of so and so and so. How, because I know how people express themselves, I know how people view themselves or how they bring up a topic in a funny way for example or a serious way. This I learned from people who talk in English, from books, from YouTube especially, the series also. So, you see how the investigator analyzes the personality of the criminal, and describes him with certain words, so you say: Oh, this word suits me, I'm not a criminal, but these words describe my condition, this is one of the ways that helped me.

Researcher: Did learning English affect you in any other areas or ways?

Sara: To see people talking about their problems comfortably and clearly, and I don't know if we do like that or not. I mean Arabs, frankly, I don't know, but in English I find people whose personality is similar to mine, and I hear them talk about their problems and see how they deal with their problems. I say, oh, this one did this when he had this problem. Maybe I can benefit

from them in this aspect or from this problem, and I can deal with it on this basis. I only knew this from people who speak English.

Researcher: You mentioned before that you were affected in terms of cooking and information about food. Can you talk about this point?

Sara: Yes, now I started leaning towards healthy food more, like now, if, for example, my family cooked kabsa (Saudi famous dish of rice with chicken or meat), mostly no, I will go and make chicken breasts or salad or something. Because I felt that I did not enter this healthy lifestyle, exercise and healthy food, if not for them, I learned how to make a balance between the healthy things and the unhealthy things, all this from foreigners. It is correct that there are Arabs who talk about healthy lifestyle and suchlike, but I started because of the English-speakers. I mean, the way I eat has changed and I eat more slowly, even though I grew up in a family that does not do that.

Researcher: What do you mean?

Sara: I mean, they love eating, and they eat quickly. When I see them at the dining table, I am the last person who finishes her food, and the least person that eats, because I eat slowly, I learned to eat slowly from people I watch on YouTube, and I drink more water because I see people drinking and they always say drink water drink water, this is my life and my healthy lifestyle.

Researcher: One of the things you mentioned is that your opinions and beliefs have been affected by studying the English language. Can you explain?

Sara: Yes, at the beginning there was the stage of doubts, for example, does God Almighty exist, is the Islamic religion correct, is Christianity better than us, why, what makes me sure? I went through all of this in the first two years of my study. Because, as I told you, I acquired knowledge and I used to see people talking, for example, Stephen Hawking. At first, I was reading about Physics, then I stopped reading about Physics because I feel that all physicists suddenly became atheists, and I am afraid for myself as I feel that I cannot live without religion, I know that our religion is true, but these doubts and questions, I do not expect that they would have happened to me if I had not been informed and read in English. Of course, these doubts can come even to a person who does not speak the language, but I see that if I did not speak English, these doubts would not come to me at this stage.

Researcher: OK, are there any other opinions or beliefs that were affected?

Sara: Hijab, for example, the face. I do not think that it is supposed to be covered, why is it covered? As for clothes, I think that it is not required to wear abaya [loose clog over your clothes], if you wear loose clothing, there is no problem, this is the most important thing and it

is not a necessary to wear abaya. The important thing is that I wear loose clothes, even if I go out without hijab, but in loose clothes, I feel there's no problem with that and music too.

After acquiring knowledge, I don't know if women's rights are all given to us or not. They started their revolution before us, and now we are beginning to understand that we have rights and it's not supposed to happen to us like that. With regard to these women's rights, I always wonder why women are forbidden to drive, this is of course before the decision of allowing women to drive, why women cannot do what they want. Look, they live their lives normally, I know that they have problems, but even we have problems, but I see them living their lives better than us, and they have problems, and we also have problems.

Researcher: Does your English study have a role in this view?

Sara: Yes, we learned things, for example, in literary criticism we learned about feminism and so on. And we studied things about racism, if I had not studied at the university, I would not have known about it. Like, people who changed the way of thinking there, why we don't have people who are known to this degree, people who made a big difference.

Researcher: You also mentioned earlier that you have become more open because of your study of English, and you have become accepting of difference. What examples do you have in mind on this?

Sara: Yes, clothes, hijab, women, being veiled or not, it is up to her. In general, people see women who smoke shisha (water pipe) or cigarettes as impolite and shameless women. I see foreign women drinking and smoking and this does not affect their personality or morals. So, our girls who smoke shisha or cigarettes, they also have their personalities, this is one aspect and I should not judge them from this aspect, so I should not despise her because of the things she does, regardless these things are halal or not, if it does not affect me personally, you have the freedom in that thing. Before I entered university, I used to see girls who smoke cigarettes and shisha that they are making a big mistake, but after I studied English and acquired knowledge and made friends with foreign girls who smoke cigarettes and shisha, so now, when I see girls smoking, I say she has the right to do what she wants.

Researcher: In the diaries, you mentioned that you became cautious about expressing your opinions on these matters. Why?

Sara: Yes, because here they want you to be a copy of them

The researcher: Who are they?

Sara: The society around you, like you to be that girl who is not bold, who does not raise her voice to men, who is afraid, afraid for herself, does not try and take a step forward to take her right even in the simplest things. For example, when you are buying you don't argue with the

man because like it is shameful although it is her right. These things I don't express, but in reality if I had a problem with a man and had to argue, I will argue. But if the girls started talking, oh, look, this woman raised her voice with men and so on, I will not speak, but in reality whatever happened to me I will face it.

Researcher: Does studying English have a role in making you this way?

Sara: Yes, because I saw examples of how women are fighting for themselves to prove their presence. I think that if we do like them, we will succeed in obtaining our rights.

The researcher: You mentioned that you learned about topics such as racism… Can you elaborate?

Sara: Maybe racism against black people, I remember once a doctor spoke about Nelson Mandela, I think this was his name. Before I studied, I knew Nelson Mandela from films, the person who fought for rights, but then we started discussing more about him. I learned that he was imprisoned, I think but I'm not sure, and I learned about things I didn't expect that it could happen.

Also, homosexuality, homosexuality I still believe it is haram (not allowed) but from my studying of it, we have an instructor, praise God, brings anything, anything, any issue in the world she would bring it up, she was talking about LGBTQ+. I feel now that I am starting to accept them although I still consider it haram (sin). But I learned that they faced struggles and so on. So, as long that they did not affect me psychologically, it is your haram (sin) and it is between you and God.

Researcher: OK, can you talk about the future after completing the study of the English language?

Sara: Being independent, having a job, I always meet with my family because I love my family, and I feel that if they did not support me, I would not have reached what I have reached now, so I prefer to stay close to my family, my father, especially my mother and my brothers. I see myself as the girl who studied and got employed far from Al-Ahsa, but is still connected to her family and friends who live in Al-Ahsa. I see myself as someone who can be depended on, in the job, I see myself as strong and bold. For example, I see my friends who drive when they have an accident, they call their fathers 'come and save us'. I do not want to be like that, when I have an accident, I want to be the strong one who does not need her father to come to help her, although thank God my father supports me a lot, but I do not want to be weak or afraid, I want to show people that I am confident, when they see that I am educated and learned English.

Researcher: Can you talk more about this point?

Sara: I started to think that I want this type of the independent American woman's life, who lives alone in an apartment and works and provides for herself alone without depending on anyone. I want it to be like that, I want myself to be like that in the future. I mean I want my personality to be independent. I want to live in an apartment on my own, an employee and I have my car and I have everything, and I go to work every day, then I go back to buy my food and spend on myself, this happens here, but we don't do that, woman gets married and can help her husband, I see my mother helping my father, I don't want to be like that, I don't see myself as a life partner, I see myself as a single person more.

Because I see this way of life in their societies, it is true that I know that the life of women there is difficult because of racism, and that there is even no equality between women and men in terms of salaries and other things, but I feel that this gives me more freedom than what our Arab society gives me, I want to do this is as much as possible, even with pressures, limits, and so on. I want to do this because I feel that I am fulfilling myself in this way, I feel that I express myself more, and have more freedom without being restricted by anything, and I am not committed to a husband, children, or anything else. It may change in the future, but at the moment I am not thinking about this.

Researcher: Does your study play a role in this?

Sara: Yes, a lot, because it made me see role models, there is a black American woman, this person, I watch her videos on YouTube and I see how confident she is and how she speaks, how she lives alone, so I say oh she lives alone and faces great racism because she is Muslim, black and American.

The researcher: Who is she?

Sara: Her name is Shahad, she's more into make-up, like she loves fashion and these things. But she is living alone. I see myself like that like living alone, providing for myself, I have my work and at the same time I am surviving in the face of all the racism, for example for my color or religion and whatever. I want to be that person who faces struggles but overcomes them and stands strong

Researcher: You mentioned more than once that you became more familiar with them, their culture and their society during your study of the English, what do you mean?

Sara: Mostly, Western people that speak English, I understand how they think, what goes on inside them, now I even understand the hidden meaning of sentences they say, which only natives can understand. For example, in our culture when we say something as a joke, no one can understand it except us.

Researcher: Regarding our society, you mentioned that during the study of English language, your opinion about some things changed… Can you talk about this point?

Sara: Because I am only thinking about myself and about developing myself more, I became able to say, you must work on yourself and acquire more culture. I saw how groups, especially the girls' groups, are full of gossip, what did she do and where did she go. These habits of gossiping and talking about people behind their backs that happen in gatherings I used to participate in them, and I used to say look what this girl did, this girl where did she go, what did she eat. But after studying English after having this huge amount of access to things like I had, I know, for example this topic and this topic, so instead of gossiping and talking about people behind their backs and so on, no I have issues to talk about, not always political issues or serious things mostly it is things like make-up and fashion, it depends on the girls with me. But I noticed that the kind of girls I sit with changed. The people who are gossiping and talking about people behind their backs, I get away from them not from a religious point of view but because I came to dislike this thing, I came to dislike this habit.

Researcher: How about your views of your society, were they affected by learning English?

Sara: With the openness and globalization that is happening, I expect that our society will change I don't know if it will change positively or negatively, but yes it will change. I see that we started a little bit to be open to each other, we started to accept differences a little bit, like there are people who are different to you.

Researcher: Can you explain this point to me?

Sara: People are often more preoccupied with themselves, I feel that people are destined for this thing more, I see people heading towards the idea that we must accomplish in our day, we must do something useful, even if it is, for example drawing or any other hobby, now I find that some people have started, they are interested in thinking about deep things. I have a friend who, like me, was interested in series and anime, but after she studied with me, she now started asking about things about the universe, how did the explosion happen, what is quantum theory. I feel those things came from our learning of the language and the people who speak the language and the scholars themselves, yeah, this openness will change people.

Researcher: Anything else?

Sara: I noticed that we Arabs don't celebrate our holidays as often as they do, they celebrate their holidays, they have Christmas and Halloween, we celebrate Christmas and Halloween and we do not celebrate our holidays, I noticed that Western society has affected us in terms of family disintegration, for example, people do not like holidays and do not like to see their families and sit with them, but why on Halloween and Christmas they visit their families and

meet their families , our society and all our customs encourage family ties, so why do you give up this thing in order to imitate them, you know that this thing is wrong and our religion says so, This thing bothered me a lot. Why do you care about Christmas and Halloween, I honestly have no problem with people who celebrate Halloween and Christmas, they have the freedom to do what they like, I just feel like my heart is broken because our family is basically separated, I mean, my uncles and aunts are all separated, I used to see people on Eid al-Fitr and other holidays, they gather with their family, I say that it will be a fun thing if we gather with our family, but now I see people who are spending Eid alone and they say that they enjoyed spending the day alone, why? Why?

Researcher: What is the reason?

Sara: Because of the English language, I mean the English-speakers have imposed themselves economically, politically and culturally on us, and this is why we are affected by their culture

Researcher: How?

Sara: I mean, I see people now, I mean, these countries control us and control the things that come to us and the things that do not come to us, but we do not give them anything but oil, and we are fascinated by them because they know how to do things, and because we are fascinated by them, we started imitating them because we always have tendencies to imitate the best or the thing, we think is better. Because we consider them better than us, we prefer them over us. As I said a while ago, now we see girls or even boys speak English and consider that speaking English gives them prestige, because they feel that they are better than us, and they feel that this language is better. I do not know why, but they think that they are better than us, and they tell you Arabic is the language of the Qur'an, but I do not see them speaking the standard Arabic and the Arabic we speak, they have to insert English in their speech because it gives them a social status. Society thinks that a person who speaks English is an educated person.

Researcher: Do you have this view?

Sara: I don't think that a person is better if he speaks English, but I would love to have more discussions with him.

Researcher: Why?

Sara: Because if he has reached this stage of fluency in a language that is not his mother tongue, this certainly indicates that he is a very knowledgeable, cultured and experienced person, so why don't I take advantage of him and make more conversations with him, why don't I discuss with him more, I want to know more. But if the person has the same experience and the same qualifications and does not have an accent, I will not be into talking with him

Researcher: What does the word identity mean to you?

Sara: Individuality, like the uniqueness of the person, independence, a person who lives his life alone, happy with himself and proud of himself, I think it is like that.

Researcher: Do you think that your identity can be affected by the study of the English language?

Sara: Yes. like, before I studied and entered this specialty, I used to find girls who were only thinking about relationships, marriage and formation of a family, and I had no problem with marriage and forming a family, but now even my idea of my identity has changed. I mean, I see myself, Sara, I introduce myself as, I am Saudi, I am Muslim, now no. If someone asks me what your identity is, I tell him that I am an independent person who thinks for herself, meaning I make my own decisions. I do not like to be associated with anything, I like to have my own unique personality, I like to be a mixture between this and that, I like to be an authentic Arab and at the same time I have this acceptance and openness that I took from them.

Researcher: OK, thank you Sara for your time and cooperation, I apologize if I for any inconvenience.

Appendix 8. Sample of coding

Data extracts	codes
I was like I was, I had a lot of tensions, if I got any bad results, it affects me the entire day or even the entire week. Even in like I used to like dream about it, I had a lot of nightmare about that. But right now I'm not affected by each bad results I receive, it gives me you know the strong vibes to like keep going, and try to prove to others I'm not quitter.	Stress about studies and grades Overcoming anxiety and stress perseverance
Like confidence, it makes my abilities good, higher like trying to get whatever I'm thinking about easily, like even like dealing with others, even like it builds your experience too even the confidence.	Confidence for having better capabilities
Sometimes like I feel I became open-minded, it's free even like I think if I had the chance to travel I will do this and I will do this yeah, but like the fastest I go back to my past or old mentality	Open-minded Resistance to change/preserving identity
I used to look at the anti-hijab person like is not good, or she is not even the girl that she is showing a part of her hair like for sports, I don't know why they are doing this, like they are trying like to catch just like we can say like the uncover sweet they are trying to catch things but like I don't know why they are doing this. Right now my mentality changed, everyone has his opinion, everyone has his point of view, I can't judge the person from the his look, yeah maybe the religious person will be bad not like vice versa so yeah maybe the anti-hijab or uncovered girl will be better than that	Open-minded/change in religious views/hijab Different/new mentality

religious yeah so I cannot judge, you know that affects me in that way.	
I discovered like a lot of natives that are better or they are thinking better than Muslims in general, yeah even their attitude, even their like dealing or their behaviours toward women. they're so kind so respectful more than Muslims. I've got the knowledge due to the things that I've watched, the things that I've heard, so yeah they are better.	admiration for people from English-speaking societies English-speaking societies views of women learning about English-speaking societies through media
they are respectful, the natives the foreign people they respect the women more than ours.	English-speaking societies views of women
I don't know maybe it's really funny and like weird thing, I looked at the person that he liked I don't know another gender, maybe because due to my watching of the movies that I watched, they're accepting the idea it's okay this gender, they love whatever they love, like even maybe because I'm really into Ellen Show, and like it is really a lovely person, lovely personality and she is not a regular female, because she is married with another female, so I don't know but I think I'm trying I think now I'm accepting that thing, and it's wrong, like maybe because due to my I used to watch this show yeah I think so, that affects to be open-minded person.	Open-minded/change in views toward homosexuality learning about English-speaking societies through media
Studying English makes me like as I said makes me feel open-minded person I remained the best person, the usual one, the cultural mentality you know the things we're used to, we're born with. So, yeah, it opens	Open-minded Resistance to change/preserving identity

things but, like, you soon return. Sometimes I said like I said to myself like if I had the chance to study abroad, maybe something bad will happen thank God! may be like due to my mentality, my new mentality it will be no, I will be like a different person.	Different/new mentality

Appendix 9. Summaries of case reports

1. Nora

Nora is a second-year student in the English Language Department at King Faisal University. She is nineteen years old. She was born and has lived all her life in Al-Ahsa, a city in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia, where King Faisal University is located. According to her, she comes from a middle-class family and has five siblings. Her parents are both university graduates and are described by her as having limited to average proficiency of English. The father learned English through personal efforts and the mother was able to learn some English words to communicate with housemaids from other countries. Her siblings learned English in schools. Before joining the university, she studied in Saudi public schools where the medium of instruction was Arabic. During that time, she received instruction in English for seven years. She traveled sometimes outside Saudi Arabia and when she did, she visited nearby Arabian Gulf countries. She mentioned that she tried to use English as much as she could while traveling. She expressed a love for languages as she previously learned Korean and now wants to learn French. She aspires to be an academic or a translator after graduating from the university with a bachelor's degree in English language. She also dreams of opening an English language learning and teaching institute where she can help people learn English in non-traditional ways.

Nora appeared to be highly invested in learning English for several reasons. The first was her love for learning languages, specifically English. The second was her desire to acquire knowledge and be able to communicate with people from all over the world. The third was achieving her future goals of finding a job and having her own business which may have been more influential than the other reasons on her experience. Nora considered English as a global language and its prestige important for her to achieve these goals and claim an educated, professional, respected and respectful identity.

This participant's investment in learning English was reflected in her agency as she put various efforts to learn English. In addition to the efforts she made in regard to the courses that she was studying in the university e.g., doing assignments and participating in classroom activities, Nora mentioned that she did other things to achieve her goal of learning English. She talked about how she spent a lot of time during vacations learning English on her own using a notebook, a board, YouTube and Instagram. She also immersed herself in English by switching her mobile phone to English and trying to use English as much as possible e.g., while traveling and shopping. Furthermore, she read books and articles in English to improve her reading comprehension, vocabulary and writing. Nora said that she also worked on improving her listening and speaking through watching media in English.

Nora mentioned that while learning English, she experienced some difficulties in some courses due to the books or the materials used in teaching. For example, she mentioned that in some courses, there was a need for more realistic examples for students to practice the different skills. Nora also pointed out that she suffered from anxiety at times because of her fear of making mistakes. Furthermore, she revealed that she faced resentment from some people for her usage of English at times which made her reluctant to use English in certain contexts. However, she noted that her knowledge and usage of English were mostly viewed positively, especially by her family as they were supportive and proud of her. This, along with her being a hard-working determined person, helped her overcome any difficulties she faced in learning English.

As a result, she was able to improve her English language skills which gave her a sense of accomplishment and pride. In addition, as she learned English, she was able to learn new things on many levels because it enabled her not only to learn through courses, but also gave her access to content in English whether through reading, watching movies and shows, YouTube or social media. She felt that, in this way, learning English enabled her to widen her horizons and become more culturally aware, which is something that she valued about this process. As a result, she was able to establish herself as a cultured and educated person among her peers and family. Moreover, having good command over English made her family depend on her in various situations which made her feel capable and useful. All this contributed to increasing her confidence in herself. Furthermore, Nora associated her English learning with feeling more empowered. She mentioned that all the changes she experienced while learning English made her more aware and outspoken about her rights as a woman.

Learning English appeared to be influential in terms of Nora's social and cultural views as she reported changes in the way she thinks of some religious, social and cultural issues, specifically she reported that she became more accepting of people who are different from her locally and from other cultures. She described herself as being more open-minded in her views which she linked to the cultural knowledge she acquired through learning and using English. Nora asserted that for her learning was the base that enabled her to access content in English, specifically in media and social media, which allowed her to engage with and learn more about Western English-speaking cultures' systems, values, lifestyles and even problems. For example, she pointed out that watching talk shows, such as the ones by Ellen DeGeneres and Steve Harvey, allowed her to learn about how people in the United States of America talk and behave. She emphasized that through all this she was able to learn how to deal with people in a better way. This why for her learning English was cultural process and was not only about acquiring the linguistic skills of the English language. It was also about having access to information through the medium of English. It also involved contact with other cultures including American and British cultures. This also affected her in other aspects of her life such as being healthy.

Moreover, Nora noted that the effect of this cultural communication because of learning English may contribute to change in Saudi society as it becomes similar to Western English-speaking societies, which she considered as something that has advantages in terms of development and disadvantages in terms of disconnection with the native culture's identity.

Another area where Nora reported experiencing changes is her self-expression. She pointed out that, for her, speaking English reflected a different type of thinking and thoughts than speaking in Arabic. She also mentioned that speaking English allowed her to express some emotions such as anger more freely. Nora's usage of English in her everyday life created some feelings of guilt on her side. This along with being more open-minded created an image for Nora of being westernized. Nora mentioned that some people thought learning English may have resulted in her having a Western identity and possibly abandoning her native cultural identity. Nora was against this view as she viewed this change in her positively and did not consider it a threat to her Saudi, Islamic and Arabic identity. She pointed out that, for her, identity is related to a person's values and behavior as well as religion. And she asserted that she does not like to be associated or linked to any group based on religion or nationality as she thought that every person represents himself/herself. She said that having a hybrid identity might be a better description of her as she believed that both the Arabic and English languages and cultures influenced her sense of self or who she is as a person.

2. Fatma

Fatma is a twenty-two-year-old, second-year student in the English Language Department. She was born and has lived all her life in Al-Ahsa in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia. She comes from a middle-class family and is the youngest of six siblings. Due to the age difference between her and the other members of her family, she did not have much connection to them except for one of her sisters. She traveled sometimes to neighboring Arabian Gulf countries, where she occasionally used English. All her school education was in Saudi public schools. During that time, she received seven years of instruction in English. After graduating from secondary school, she enrolled in a general management institute where she got a diploma in human resources. After that she joined the English Language Department at King Faisal University. She hopes to work in the field of human resources.

Fatma appeared to be a dedicated and hard-working learner who viewed learning English as a means of achieving her goals. Fatma's motivation to study English at university level was fueled by her love for the language from an early age, the importance of English for knowledge and communication and its importance in Saudi society, especially with the 2030 vision. In other words, she was highly invested in learning English because of personal passion and most importantly to achieve her professional and personal aspirations. Fatma considered English important to achieve her professional goal of working within the field of human resources as she

mentioned that proficiency in English was needed and would give her an advantage over others. Generally, Fatma noted that globalization, the spread of English and its media have played a role in her investment in English due to its superiority as a language as well as the superiority of its cultures.

Fatma's agency in learning English was exhibited in the various efforts she made during the learning process. Fatma mentioned that along with her dedication to the courses she was taking at university, which differed according to the type of the course and the attitude of the teacher, she also downloaded English learning programs on her phone to practice various skills in English as well as watching series and YouTube educational videos. Furthermore, she tried to practice using English whenever she could in places like restaurants, with foreigners living in Saudi Arabia and during travel. All this resulted in Fatma reporting progress in her command of English which prompted her to use English more. Although she mentioned that she was sometimes anxious about using English because she did not want to make mistakes. This anxiety decreased with time.

According to Fatma, her usage of English was mostly met by positive compliments on her English from others, which in turn increased her confidence in speaking English. It also made her feel accomplished and proud of herself. The prestige associated with learning English may also have been influential in that regard. Fatma declared that not only her confidence as an English speaker increased, but also her confidence in herself as a person and in social situations increased. She noted that the progress she achieved while learning English allowed her to create more social relationships, especially with her classmates. It also helped her establish herself as a capable and useful person. This was also linked to the knowledge she acquired in various areas through reading in English, watching media, communicating with people from different countries in English and using English online and in social media. This included social and cultural knowledge which contributed to her increased awareness and acceptance of differences. Fatma thought that this type of knowledge played a role in Saudi society changing and becoming less conservative. Fatma was concerned about that as she considered the spread of the English language and its cultures through English teaching and media influential in the westernization of Saudi society. Personally, she noted that her way of living was affected by that as she was incorporating elements of Western lifestyle in her everyday life. For example, through watching English-speaking social media influencers she started using walking as a way of relieving her anxiety and stress.

Overall, Fatma viewed learning English as process of acquiring proficiency in a global language that is important for her future career. But it also appeared that she considered it important for her as a person to grow and develop. This growth is linked to the knowledge, experience and awareness a person acquires through learning English, which includes social and cultural

elements. Fatma believed that the development she experienced in her confidence, knowledge and capabilities empowered her to be an independent person who does not rely on others. Fatma also noted that learning English empowered her to refuse some constraints that her family imposed on her in terms of working with men. She mentioned that she had more confidence to engage in discussions with them about these issues and express her opinions.

One area in which Fatma appeared to experience a lot of change personally was her self-expression. Fatma noted that as she was learning English, she started to use English in her everyday life sometimes intentionally and unintentionally. This usage came in different ways, for example, code-switching between Arabic and English and using English in expressing herself on social media, specifically the expression of intimate feelings such as sorrow. Overall, Fatma loved using English because it allowed her to communicate with more people as well as giving her more options to express herself.

On the level of identity, Fatma associated learning English with having a hybrid identity because she thought her native cultural identity was affected by English as she changed and developed as a person during this process. At the same time, she asserted that her beliefs as a Saudi Arabic Muslim woman did not change. Furthermore, Fatma had an imagined identity of being an independent and professional person that learning English contributed to as well.

3. Leena

Leena is a twenty-one-year-old third-year student in the English Language Department at King Faisal University. She was born and has lived all her life in Al-Ahsa. She comes from a middle-class family. She is divorced and has one child. Leena lives with her family, which consists of her parents and five siblings. Some of her family members have some level of proficiency in English. She studied in Saudi public schools before joining the university. In school, she received instruction in English as a foreign language for seven years. She traveled occasionally to Arabian Gulf countries where she sometimes used English. She wants to work in Saudi Aramco, one of the biggest oil companies in Saudi Arabia and the world.

Leena was invested in learning English for personal and professional aspirations. First and foremost, she wanted to learn English because she considered it an important qualification that would enable her to achieve her professional dream of working in Saudi Aramco as this company uses English as medium of communication. In addition, she mentioned that she had wanted to learn English since she was a child because she loved watching English-speaking films. This participant's investment also had a link to the spread of English as a global language and its media all over the world. It was also associated with the higher status English gives to its speakers. Leena reported having high levels of agency in learning English through the effort and time she was putting into being successful at learning English. Leena worked on learning

English outside of the instruction context through watching films, series and YouTube videos and using English learning social media accounts. In addition, she was always trying to improve her proficiency in English through constant participation in classroom activities. Leena pointed out that her agency in classroom activities was affected by the chances for interaction and discussion in these classes. She pointed out that she loved courses where there were a lot of chances to interact in English. On the other hand, she had problems with classes where there was a lack of interaction and practice. Because, for her, practice was important for her progress in English and this is why she mentioned that she tried to speak English wherever it was possible in public places, social media and during travel. Furthermore, Leena noted that she suffered from anxiety while learning English, which revolved around making mistakes and exams. But she asserted that this did not hinder her from pursuing her goal of learning English.

As a result of all these efforts and with the support of her family and friends, Leena reported that she was becoming better at English, an accomplishment she was proud of. In addition, she felt empowered because she felt more capable to handle any situation which also made her feel more useful to others inside and outside the college. This was also triggered by the fact that she felt she had a higher status and people respected her more because of her knowledge of English. All this made her feel more confident as a person and on the social level.

Furthermore, as she learned English, she acquired more knowledge, especially about different societies and cultures through movies and series, reading, social media and YouTube. She also learned about that through the courses' materials, books and discussions. This knowledge included learning about how people in Western English-speaking societies think, talk, behave and live. This made her more open-minded as she felt that she has more acceptance of differences between cultures. This could be linked to the participant's admiration for Western English-speaking societies because she considered them more open and developed. For example, Leena pointed out that she started to adopt certain trends that were common in these societies such as the minimalistic and healthy lifestyle. But at the same time, Leena appeared to be resisting some of the openness that is taking place in Saudi society and the fact that she thought it was becoming like Western societies.

Another area where Leena reported experiencing changes as a person was in her self-expression. Leena felt that she was becoming more fluent and confident as an English speaker. She also felt that she was also becoming better at organizing and expressing her thoughts. She noted that she was using English more in her everyday life e.g., in social media and public places. She was also using English while speaking Arabic as she had difficulties at times to find the Arabic word to express what she wanted. For Leena, this made her feel that she was losing connection with her people and culture. In fact, Leena pointed out that her usage of English was resented by some people as they thought it was a sign of arrogance. Furthermore, Leena revealed that using

English made her more comfortable in expressing her intimate and private emotions because others may not understand what she was saying. For example, she pointed out that she preferred using English insults because she felt they were less disrespectful and not as tangible for her as Arabic insults.

Overall, Leena reported that learning English had an effect on who she is as a person in several ways. It allowed her to create an identity for herself as a capable, cultured and confident person. It also created a different identity for her from others as she considered her identity a hybrid that incorporates both Arabic and English languages and cultures. Furthermore, Leena had an imagined identity for who she wanted to be as a result of her English learning process. She aspired to be a professional and independent woman who did not need anyone to function and live her life.

4. Reema

Reema is a twenty-year-old, third-year student in the English Language Department at King Faisal University. She was born and has lived all her life in Al-Ahsa. She comes from a middle-class family. She described herself and her background as conservative. Her parents are both university graduates. She has nine siblings, and she is the sixth and the oldest one still living at home; she mentioned that she has a lot of responsibilities due to her age and position in the family. Among her siblings, her older sister is the closest to her as they have a lot in common because they both majored in English language. She sometimes travels with her family to countries like Malaysia, Egypt and Siri Lanka where she used English regularly. Before joining the university, she learned English as a subject in school for seven years. She aspires to be an academic or a translator.

Generally, Reema has a high level of investment in learning English for several reasons. Her motivation to learn English mainly stemmed from its importance as a global language for communication and its importance in the job market in Saudi Arabia. She also has a love for learning languages in general with English being her favorite. Globalization and the spread of English may have played a role in Reema's investment as she mentioned multiple times that English has a superior status to other languages because of that. The participant's investment was reflected in her agency in learning English, which was exhibited in the various efforts she put into her learning and development. The first was her dedication to her studies in the college and participation in classroom activities, which was at times affected by the nature of the course and the instructor. Outside the college, she immersed herself in English and worked on developing her English using different strategies e.g., using English in public places, social media, with friends and family and during travel, reading in English, watching films, series and YouTube videos.

Reema mentioned that in the earlier stages of learning English, she suffered from some anxiety about learning and using English. But being a positive determined person, along with the support she received from her family, teachers and friends, helped her to overcome that. Her sister in particular helped her a lot because they have the common experience of majoring in English language. As a result, she was happy with the improvement in her overall proficiency in English. This resulted in changes to her self-expression. She mentioned that, as her fluency in English increased, English was becoming part of her and her life as she found herself using it a lot, consciously and unconsciously. For example, she mentioned that she preferred to use English to express emotions such as happiness. Furthermore, as her proficiency increased, she started to practice some of her hobbies in English e.g., reading novels.

Reema noted that learning English enabled her to acquire more knowledge. This is linked to the information she learned in class as well as the content she was able to access through the medium of English, such as reading articles and watching documentaries. Her increased knowledge and proficiency created a positive reaction from people around her and she was able to gain more respect and admiration from them. Reema also linked that admiration and respect to the prestige associated with the English language due to its global status. Furthermore, the participant's progress created a sense of accomplishment and pride in herself which increased her confidence. This was also related to the fact that the participant's proficiency in English made her more capable and useful for others, especially in situations where knowledge of English was required.

Reema stated that as a result of learning English, she was also able to acquire more knowledge of other societies and cultures in terms of their values and lifestyle and that this was not limited to Western societies. She valued this aspect of learning English and mentioned that it allowed her to have awareness about issues such as racism and bullying. On a related note, Reema believed that learning English not only helped her to learn about other societies better because it enabled her to access content on that, but also that speaking another language allowed her to learn how speakers of that language view life, which in turn made her understand them better. All this made her more respectful, understanding and open-minded. However, she also had fears as a conservative person that some of these changes may have a negative effect on Saudi society in terms of westernization.

All these changes Reema reported experiencing contributed to the participant viewing herself as a successful, confident, cultured and capable person. It also made her more independent and demand more respect as a person and a woman for her rights and opinions. All this signals that learning English was associated with creating and possibly realizing an imagined identity. Moreover, the participant acknowledged that being an English learner and speaker allowed her

to combine the knowledge she acquired from both the Arabic and English cultures to create a different identity that could be described as a hybrid identity.

5. Sara

Sara is a twenty-two-year-old, fourth-year student at the English Language Department in King Faisal University. She was born and has lived all her life in Al-Ahsa. She described her economic background as above average. She is the oldest of seven siblings. Her mother is an English teacher, and her father has a master's degree in sociology and works as an advisor. All her family have some proficiency in English. She received all her education in Saudi public school. During that time, she received instruction in English as a foreign language for seven years. She often traveled abroad to countries in Europe and Asia where she used English all the time. Sara did not have clear professional goals in terms of what kind of career she wanted to pursue after her graduation, but she mentioned that she wanted to have a job to provide for herself.

Sara's investment in English was mainly related to her view that it would help her as a person to learn, grow and develop in terms of abilities, knowledge and communication. It was also triggered by her love for English from an early age because of media. Sara was also aware of the importance of English for professional reasons but since she did not have specific job aspirations this may not have been as influential on her. Sara's investment is exhibited in her agency in learning English as she asserted that she was committed to achieving her goal through patience and dedication. Sara mentioned that her efforts to improve her proficiency in English and succeed in her studies included reading articles and books, watching series and YouTube videos, participation in classroom activities and using English as much as possible especially online and while traveling. Sara mentioned that during her studies her investment and agency were affected by the courses she was studying. For example, she pointed out that she enjoyed classes that had cultural content. On the other hand, she disliked some courses where the instructor had a negative attitude toward learners' errors.

Sara appeared to be happy and more confident because of the improvement she made in terms of her command over English in several aspects, which helped her overcome some anxiety she had about using English. This was also fueled by the compliments and support she was receiving in that regard. Nevertheless, Sara noted that sometimes her usage of English was met by negative reactions from some people because they considered it arrogant. Sara felt that these reactions were because those people were jealous of her level in English and that made her use English more to tease them. Generally, Sara found herself enjoying using English more in her life whether in the form of code-switching or simply speaking in English. She asserted that this was related to the fact that learning English helped her learn how to express herself in a better and more sophisticated way whether in conversations or in social media. She also attributed this

to the fact that English made her more comfortable talking about problems and some emotions such as anger or sadness because it made them feel less real or serious than if she talked about them in Arabic. Furthermore, her preference was also triggered by the fact that others may not understand as in the case of using English insults. However, this constant usage of English made Sara feel guilty at times.

Sara was also able to gain more knowledge as a result of learning English and all the things she did to improve herself. This knowledge, specifically the cultural knowledge she acquired was also related to English giving her a window into the lives and beliefs of people from other cultures through interacting with them. It was also acquired through media and instruction. Sara asserted that this knowledge and communication with Western English-speaking societies may affect Saudi people and society as they adopt aspects of these societies. This included positive change such as being more productive and negative change in terms of losing some of Saudi society's family values.

Personally, Sara valued this cultural knowledge and communication as it made her feel more open-minded and less conservative in her views e.g., acceptance of LGBTQ rights. It also set her apart from others. She felt different from people in terms of her knowledge, views and preferences. She also felt that this made her more charismatic and attracted people to socialize with her. This is linked to the superior status of English as a global language. According to Sara English gives its speaker a higher status and more respect from others. Sara had a desire to live a life similar to the life she believed women in Western English-speaking societies live in terms of independence, which could be a sign of the participant creating an imagined identity. Sara mentioned that her views of her rights and role as a woman were affected by learning English, especially English content as well as some courses in which she learned about feminism. She also felt more capable and stronger as a woman to take control of her life. All this increased her confidence and capabilities and empowered her.

Sara pointed out that she was careful about sharing some of the changes in her thinking, views, interests and goals with others around her. This could be related to the fact that it could be a sign of westernization. For example, Sara said that, as she learned English and accessed content in it, she experienced a period of doubt in her Islamic faith, which she was concerned about as she did not want to lose her native cultural identity and have a Western identity. Sara reported that the best way to describe her identity is as a hybrid because she valued the influence of both the Arabic and Western English-speaking cultures on her identity.

6. Lama

Lama is a twenty-four-year-old, fourth-year student in the English Language department in King Faisal University. She was born and has lived all her life in the city of Al-Ahsa, in the

eastern region of Saudi Arabia. She described her family as a middle-class family. She has nine siblings; she is the second youngest and the only one still living at home. Most of her family members have some level of proficiency in English. Because her parents are old and the majority of her siblings are much older than her, married and busy with their lives, she reported feeling not understood and not having much connection to them. She sometimes travels outside Saudi Arabia and when she did, she used English for communication. Her previous education was in a Saudi public school where the medium of instruction was Arabic. During that time, she studied English language as a subject in school for seven years. After that, she joined a technical college where she obtained an accounting diploma. Subsequently, she joined King Faisal University to study for a bachelor's degree in the English language. Lama was not sure of what she wanted to do after her graduation, but she mentioned that she aspirations to continue her education by working as an academic and pursuing a PhD degree.

Lama was highly invested in learning English mostly because of her love for the language. She noted that her desire to learn English was related to the important and prestigious status of English as a global language. She considered English important for her to develop and grow as a person in terms of knowledge and communication abilities. It was also important for her desire to travel and study abroad. Lama asserted her passion and dedication for learning English. There are several things she did in that regard that revealed she had high agency in learning English such as participation in classroom activities, reading books and articles, listening to songs and watching films. In addition, Lama emphasized that she tried to utilize any chance she had to use in English in social media, in public places and during travel.

As she learned English, Lama sometimes felt that she was not interested in some classes due the method of teaching used by some instructors which was boring and lacked interaction opportunities. She also struggled with anxiety at times, which was related to her usage of English, her studies and her personality. These feelings were also triggered by getting bad results in some of the courses and peer-pressure. But through her commitment, positive attitude and compliments and support from others, especially her instructors, Sara was eventually able to overcome these feelings. This made her more confident personally and socially. Her improved confidence could also be linked to the higher status people gave her because of her proficiency in English. Lama wanted to establish herself as a successful, intellectual, wise person who earned the respect of others around her. She considered English a means of achieving that and setting herself apart from others.

The efforts that Lama put into learning English not only helped her improve her command of English but also gave her access to more information and increased her knowledge in many fields. Through reading books, watching movies and learning about literature and theories, she was able to learn many new things and feel as an intellectual person. In addition to that, while

learning English in the college, Lama took different courses, met many people with different personalities and all this had implications on her as a person in terms of having more experience and capabilities. All this increased her confidence and empowered her personally and on the social level.

This whole experience of learning English and gaining knowledge through English was also influential in terms of Lama's social and cultural views as she reported that she became more open-minded. This can be seen in the fact that she reported becoming more accepting of people with different beliefs than her such as the LGBTQ community and women who do not wear hijab. This change in views could be triggered by her exposure to the more open American and British societies and cultures through reading and watching movies and shows. It could also be fueled by her love for the English language and admiration for its native speakers and their values, such as freedom and feminism. This also had implications on the way she lived her life in terms of the things she liked to do with her time e.g., listening to English songs.

Lama reported that, as she was learning English, she found herself using it more and more in her everyday life which is something she enjoyed. She reported that English was better at releasing her thoughts and emotions. Furthermore, she felt that her self-expression was better in English than in Arabic. This could be related to the fact that speaking English reflected her personality better than Arabic and that English was becoming part of her as a person. However, this preference for using English was met by resentment from some people around her as they considered it arrogant.

All these reported changes may have led the participant to feel that she had two identities, one in Arabic and one in English. Furthermore, she reported that she felt that English resembled her identity better. Nevertheless, the participant appeared to be concerned about this change in her identity, specifically in terms of having a Western identity. This could be seen in the fact that she always asserted that she still had her original cultural identity and beliefs. Lama was afraid of being westernized and losing her own beliefs and values due to her involvement with English and interest in its societies and cultures. This is possibly why she was keen on asserting that she had her own identity that was not a copy of anyone else's. Lama pointed out that her identity could be described as hybrid because it incorporated both her English-speaking and Arabic-speaking identity.

Appendix 10. Definition of themes

Theme	Assigned definition for this project
Investment in learning English	The various reasons that motivated the participants to learn English which include personal, professional, academic, and social reasons. In addition, it is also related to the value and prestige of English as a global language.
Agency in learning English	The efforts the participants put into learning English and improving their proficiency inside and outside the classroom. It also refers to the lack of efforts or engagement in learning and usage of English in certain situations.
Anxiety in learning English	Language learners experiencing feelings of uneasiness and stress during their learning and use of the English language
Types of instruction and instructors	The types of courses the learners where studying in, the teaching approaches, activities and material used. It also refers to the instructors' attitudes, approaches and characteristics.
Learners' background	Elements of the English learners' life and family background that affected their learning of English. It includes their family's knowledge and use of English and any travel experiences in which they used English.
Attitudes and reactions from others	Other people's feelings and reactions toward the participants' learning and usage of English
Media and social media	The participants' engagement with the English language through films, shows and other forms of media as well as social media e.g., Twitter.
Learning English as a social and cultural process	Learning English being viewed as a process that involves contact with other societies, cultures and people. This contact takes place through courses, interaction in person and online, and usage of media and social media.
Knowledge and culture	The increase in knowledge of various types of information, specifically knowledge of English, literature and linguistics, and knowledge of other societies and cultures during learning English.
Confidence and empowerment	The increase in self-confidence during learning English which helps in claiming and having more powerful positions. This includes having more confidence while using English, having more confidence because of the increase of knowledge, having more

	confidence because of development of abilities and having more confidence to engage in social interactions and relationships.
Acceptance and understanding	Becoming more accepting and understanding of different people, societies and cultures during learning English. It includes being more open-minded and change in views of religious, social and cultural issues.
Self-expression	The differences in the way of talking and interacting with others during learning English. It includes code-switching between Arabic and English and preference to use English in certain contexts and development in self-expression abilities in general.
Lifestyle	The differences in interests, activities and way of living during learning English.
Dynamic, complex Identity	The different ways learners viewed themselves during learning English. It includes having Western identities, hybrid identities and multiple identities. It also includes the learners' imagined identities which refers to the creation of a future image of how the learner might be after learning English.

Appendix 11. Mind map

Mind map for the overall process of English learning and identity development
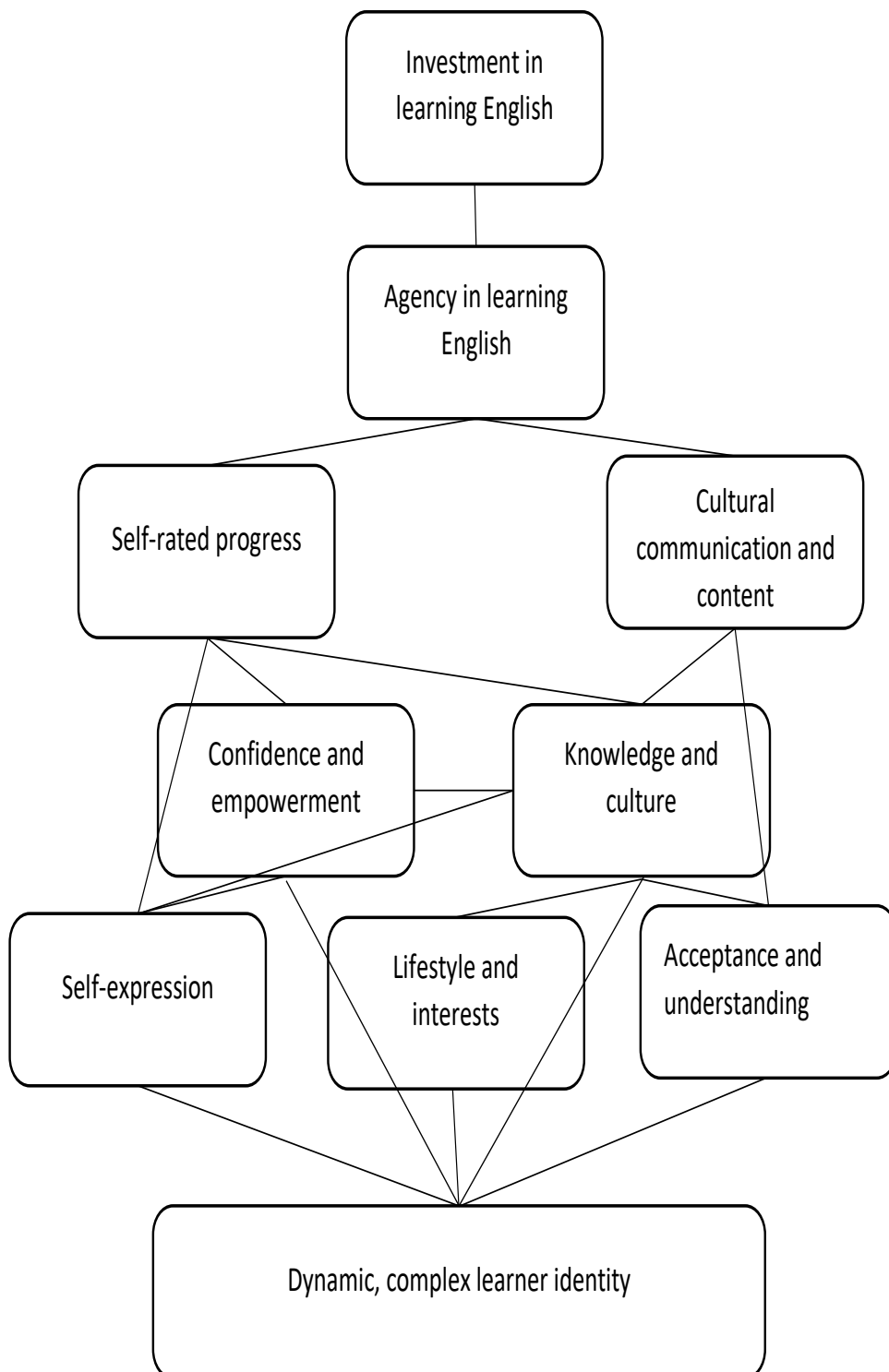
List of abbreviations

FLL: Foreign Language Learning

SLL: Second Language Learning/Acquisition

L2: Second/Foreign Language

SLS: Second Language Socialization

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