

## Motivational and Self-identity Changes Experienced by Saudi EFL Students in USA

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### Abstract

This research investigated potential changes in motivation of Saudi students studying English as their L2 in USA. It investigated whether the beliefs and motivations of Saudi students studying EFL in USA change during their learning experience, and the pedagogical implications of such a change, not only for the teaching of English to Saudi students in USA, but also for the teaching of English in Saudi higher education institutions. It aims to ascertain the reasons behind such changes in motivation as well as any impact it may have on students' attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language. The data for the study was collected by using interviews. The subjects of the study are newly arrived Saudi students (3 PhD and 29 MA) in different fields; Linguistics, Applied Linguistics and Translation studying at (4) different universities in USA. The conceptual framework is primarily based on Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System theory and Dörnyei & Ushioda's framework of motivation and L2 self (2009). The results of the study showed that the participant's experienced motivational changes and self-identity changed after they moved to study in USA. The findings of the study showed that changes in motivation are usually accompanied by changes in the students' involvement in classrooms, attitudes towards the target language and positive or negative impacts on the students' results and language competencies.

**Keyword:** motivation, self-identify changes, attitudes, EFL Saudi students

### INTRODUCTION

Recently, EFL learning has become a significant research concern in Saudi Arabia due to globalization of the English language. The growing interest in the language learning field and the establishment of English language centers and preparatory year programmes in Saudi universities has imposed a need to adopt more learner-centered approaches. This was associated with a genuine need to examine the self-identity changes of Saudi students at all levels (Al-Shehri, 2009).

Previous researches had indicated that ESL Saudi learners are utilitarian: they learn English to meet certain job-related needs (Alhuqbani, 2005). Al-Jarf (2009) finds that the instrumental motivation of Saudi ESL learners means that they have definite goals

and intentions to achieve in their language studies, although in many cases the language courses available are not adequate to meet these goals.

Many researchers considered students' attitude and motivations to be vital elements in contributing to the failure or success of the language learning process (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991). Unfortunately, Rababah (2005) and Khan (2011) observe that Saudi English language students who continue their studies at undergraduate and post-graduate levels display disappointing levels of vocabulary and syntax acquisition, as well as a lack of communicative confidence and competence. Al-Jarf (2009) notes that the majority of Saudi students studying in Britain are learning English to meet defined professional needs. Unfortunately, Al-Jarf (2009) observes that the majority of students seem to experience problems in attaining a level of comprehension and understanding sufficient to allow them to communicate confidently and competently with native speakers of English. Moreover, many Saudi students prefer to communicate amongst themselves in Arabic and do not extend their practice of English outside the classroom.

A foreign language learner has been observed to experience changes in his/her perception of self-identity, such as personal competence; in the way of communication, values and ideals, ideas about acceptable or appropriate behaviour, or overall personality in terms of attitude and behaviour. Generally, these changes depend on a learner's gender, age, motivation to learn English, the age at which the learning of English a foreign language started, and the attitude towards English as a language. These factors can be regarded as the driving force bringing about the changes in self-identification practices (Al-Shehri, 2009).

A number of studies had examined students' motivation and self-identity changes connected with L2 learning. For example, Bron (2007) conducted a study on Japanese students learning Swedish as an L2. These learners experienced self-identity changes that involved the physical and mental process of continuous becoming. Gardner et al. (2004) examined the motivational changes in a number of Canadian students who learnt French as an L2. They used Gardner's (1985) Attitude and Motivation Battery in order to measure five important factors in L2 acquisition: (a) integrativeness, (b) attitude towards the learning setting, (c) motivation, (d) language anxiety, and (e) instrumental orientation. The findings of this study revealed that there were important changes in the domains of class anxiety, motivational intensity, and teacher evaluation. Ushioda (1998) found that Irish college students perceived learning French as a positive experience given that participants allotted a high status to French language skills, encouraging students to sustain continuous involvement in L2 learning. A more recent study conducted by Liu (2007) to examine the motivation and attitudes of Chinese undergraduates towards EFL learning. The study comprised 202 students in the English Language Department at Xiamen University in China. All students showed a positive attitude towards learning English with a high motivation for learning. They were intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to learn English.

It is this inability to express opinions and ideas more confidently in an English speaking setting, that sometimes does not only hold back the real potential of a Saudi student, but also affects the social life and contribution to one's professional development.

Moreover, in a cosmopolitan setting where people from diverse backgrounds live in harmony, like in the USA, English becomes all the more important as a medium of interaction amongst people speaking different languages. This study, therefore, investigates the extent to which a representative sample of Saudi students, both male and female, interact and integrate with native speakers of English in order to gel in with the culture more easily as well as climb the career ladder higher.

### **Problem of the Study**

With the advent of globalization, the labour markets have become highly competitive in the local and international forums. In this regard, a number of elements are considered of which language expertise is of great importance. Being bilingual increases employability in the local as well as international markets. This holds true for Saudi nationals residing in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as well as those seeking education and pursuing career development in international regions, like USA. Language skills, which includes advance level speaking and writing skills in English, is an imperative feature and when students are immersed in an L2 environment, they develop different perspectives of the language and communication due to the social, cultural, and educational context that are presented when a learning the target language.

Having mentioned the significance of acquiring English as a second language, the basis of the rationale for this research paper has been set. There is also a need to understand how language is acquired and the different approaches that explain how this happens. Also, it is important to understand the factors and stages that affect language acquisition. Whilst recent studies addressed the issue of Saudi students' initial motivation and inter-cultural experiences for studying English both at home and abroad (Al Qahtani, 2015), no study has yet addressed the impact that immersion in an L2 teaching and learning environment has on students' motivation. Whilst studies on Saudi student motivation carried out in UK (Kampman, 2011) and Australia (Alhazmi, 2010), as well as Saudi students' motivational stimuli based on gender and university major differences (Javid et al., 2012), none had been carried out in USA.

The paucity of research in the area of self-identity and L2 learning leads this study to investigate whether the self-identity of Saudi students studying ESL in the USA changes during or as a result of their learning experience. In addition, this study will be the first to address the specific issue of changes in student self-identity as a result of immersion in an L2 culture and the impact of this change on the students' attitude towards the new language.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study is designed to examine whether beliefs about and motivations for learning EFL held by Saudi students studying English in USA change as a result of their learning experiences. This investigation is confined to Saudi students studying in USA for the purpose of learning English and will first establish these students' beliefs about, motivation for and attitudes towards learning English. The researcher aimed to investigate students' attitudes towards the English language and English culture,

including the extent to which the students interact with native speakers of English outside the classroom.

## Research Questions

The research is attempting to answer the following questions:

1. What are the original motivations and attitudes of Saudi students studying English as a foreign language in USA?
2. How are these motivations and attitudes influenced by students' attitudes towards the target culture?
3. What is the process of change that takes place during the students' time in USA and to what extent do Saudi learners of English in USA interact with native speakers outside the classroom?
4. To what extent does the immersion of Saudi students studying English as a foreign language in the American culture have an influence on the Saudi students' performance?

## Significance of the study

The results of this study will be important to educational decision-makers as they will enable teaching methods and curriculum content to be adapted to boost educational outcomes or at least giving insight for education field workers to help their students in learning a second language. If motivation impacts EFL students' learning habits and attitudes, which in turn affects the quality of their level of English and their perceptions of self-identity, the study results are clearly important, revealing that success in changing students' motivation can impact on their entire L2 education process. The analysis of the direct link between perceptions of self-identity and the ability to acquire new skills could help underscore that the confidence which a student feels in class whilst expressing his/her opinion could help shape a more focused thinker and speaker in the long run. It is expected that the impact of such research could bring about the change that will not only achieve the curriculum's targets and teaching methodologies, but also impact the framework of L2 learning strategies across the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Motivation

Motivation 'determines the extent of active, personal involvement in L2 learning' (Oxford & Shearin, 1994, p. 12). Harmer (2001, p. 51), states that motivation is 'an internal drive which pushes someone to do things in order to achieve something. Brown (2000: 160) adds that motivation is 'catch-all term for explaining the success or failure of virtually any complex task'. Dornyei, (2001, p. 8) states that motivation implies the reason for doing something, how hard the individuals will pursue it, and how much time they will allocate to keep the activity. Even if a learner's motivation is strong, other variables exist, including the changing of motivation type over time, which can impact on learning (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991).

Some researchers had investigated the relationship between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Ryan and Deci (2000) differentiated between the two types of motivation by declaring that extrinsic motivation refers to the performance of an activity in order to attain outcomes outside of oneself in contrast to intrinsic motivation, which refers to doing an activity for the inherent satisfaction of the activity itself. Although Deci and Ryan (2000) distinguished between the two types of motivation, they suggest that the same factors that enhance and promote self-determined intrinsic motivation can also promote self-determined extrinsic motivation and vice versa

Language learning motivation (LLM) was initially studied by social psychologists in light of its role in developing an acceptable attitude to learning a language (Dörnyei, 2003). Krashen (1981) then became interested in the affective aspects of LLM, and developed the Monitor Model, followed by Schumann (1986) who created the Acculturation model. Eventually, Gardner (1985) developed the socio-educational model, in which he states that motivation is “a combination of efforts plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitudes towards learning the language” (p. 10). Gardner split motivation into integrative (focused on the desire to understand the language and the ability to use it confidently in communication with native speakers) and instrumental (external goal to be achieved such as getting a job or a promotion), with more focus on the former. For Gardner (1985), motivation refers to the inner force that pushes the learner to exert effort and show enjoyment in doing so, whilst orientation refers to the reasons for studying a language. Gardner’s theory was criticised by Dörnyei (2003), where he stated that the notion of integrative motivation has no parallel in mainstream motivational psychology.

### **Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System**

Dörnyei (2005) has developed a new concept called *the L2 Motivational Self System* in response to difficulties facing the concept of integrativeness. In fact, *the L2 Motivational Self System* is based on the Higgins’s (1987) self-discrepancy theory, in which he differentiated between the ideal self, which represents all what we would like to be after achieving all our desires and dreams, and the ought-to self that represents the duties and responsibilities that one must accomplish without necessarily wanting to (Dörnyei, 2009). According to Higgins (1987), motivation is produced because of the desire to bridge the gap between the ideal self and the actual self. According to Dörnyei (2005), *the L2 Motivational Self System* consists of three parts:

#### **1- Ideal L2 self.**

This is based on the fact that individuals have an image of their ideal self, which is usually superior to their actual self. One seeks to achieve the image of one’s ideal self at all times, and if this image includes speaking an L2, it will provide a significant motivator for the actual self to learn the language and master it, to get closer to the image of the ideal self. Traditionally integrative and internalised instrumental motives would typically belong to this component (Ryan, 2009).

## **A- Integrativeness**

The term 'integrativeness' was coined by Gardner and Lalonde (1985, p. 6). This term points to the readiness of the learner to learn a second language to be part of the target language community. Integrativeness is described as the desire of the learner to generally move towards the other language community. Integrativeness always involves two important components: (1) the willingness to join and to be connected to the new community with esteem for the culture and the new life that will be experienced in that community; and (2) the integration and knowledge of the new culture. In addition, Gardner (2001: 12) described integrativeness as, 'the emotional identification with another cultural group.' So, integrativeness involves a positive attitude towards the new culture and to the new community in general.

## **B- Cultural Interest**

Learning a language may equip learners with positive attitudes towards both the language and its native speakers, regardless of any historic tension between the learners' culture and the L2 culture. Significantly, learning English has much to do with overseas cultures, behavioural norms, and cultural values, which constitute one's self-identity (Boonchum, 2009). In Tremblay et al. (1996) study, Jewish students that successfully studied Arabic possessed a positive attitude towards the language and its speakers, despite the political tension and hostility between the two nations. However, low achievers did not have the same level of acceptance of the language or culture. This indicates that successful achievements can strengthen the L2 learning motivation.

## **C- Attitudes towards L2 speakers**

Instrumentality and attitude towards L2 speakers were found to be the direct antecedents of integrativeness (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005). Moreover, the Ought-to L2 self-element of the L2 Motivational Self System contradicts what Dörnyei (2009) found in another study: which was that most language learners are more motivated to learn an L2 not because of family encouragement, but as a result of the successful engagement with L2 speakers, which propels the learner to achieve more success in this area.

## **2- Ought-to L2 Self**

### **A- Instrumentality**

This is concerned with the effort and sacrifice that an individual makes in order to generate a positive outcome and avoid drawbacks. This is regarded as being a more extrinsic type of instrumental motivation. On the other hand, the ought-to L2 self-element of this theory suggests that a learner is obliged to see himself in such a way so as to meet the expectations of his/her teacher, boss, parents and friends. In a comparative study undertaken in Japan, China and Iran (Taguchi et al., 2009), the family was seen as playing a very important role in influencing children - providing a major instrumental motive that limits the ought to L2 self. It could be argued that what others expect from and desire for an individual may block an authentic 'ideal L2 self' for some learners, which may then become a secondary need in comparison with what parents want.

### 3- L2 Learning Experience

This element is linked to the immediate learning environment and experiences, such as the classroom, course books, instructors, and classmates. This component overlaps with the other two components. Dörnyei (2009) provided the dimension of L2 learning experience that involves the mechanisms that constitute the daily motivation such as the effect of the teacher and the effect of the learning context.

Dörnyei' model is inclusive for other models. It provides motivation elements involving the desire to integrate into the target language community and the nature of the learning context, both of which are closely associated with the socio-educational model. Moreover, Dörnyei's framework also concentrates on individual learner factors, involving the learner's need for achievement, their self-confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy.

### Self-Identity Changes

Motivation has always been described as the most significant factor in language achievement. Language achievement has been categorized into linguistic outcomes and non-linguistic outcomes. 'In Gardner's classical social psychological model of language learning (Gardner, 1985), there is a set of "non-linguistic outcomes" where self-identity changes belonged" (Gao, 2005, p. 39). One of the non-linguistic outcomes that this study is concerned with is the self-identity changes that EFL learners may experience after being immersed in an L2 environment.

Based on these studies, Saudi EFL students may experience changes in their self-confidence and competency levels. This idea is supported in many EFL contexts. Self-identity changes were seen as a natural outcome after being immersed in an L2 environment, regardless of the type of self-identity change that learners undergo. The learning situation in USA is certainly different from the learning situation in Saudi Arabia in terms of the culture, the way of life, the values, beliefs, and behaviours. So, Saudi students may experience changes in self-identity after moving to a different culture.

Studies on self-identity change had been mainly conducted in EFL contexts. Gao et al. (2005) investigated the issue of self-identity changes that Chinese undergraduate students experienced. Their study comprised more than two thousand students across mainland China. The results of the study showed that the most remarkable changes amongst the Chinese students were the self-confidence changes followed by zero change. The study regarded self-confidence as a change resulting from English language learners and not from factors affecting English language learners. The researchers claimed these changes occurred as a result of the students being in an EFL context. Students in EFL settings have a limited exposure to the second culture. Additionally, students have a higher perception of English language learning affecting their competence, rather than their cultural identities (Gao et al., 2005, p. 50).

The biggest change that occurred was the change in the students' self-confidence and the cultural identities of the students. About half of the students claimed that they experienced productive changes, suggesting that self-identity changes are not limited to

the best foreign language learners only. Gao et al. (2007) showed that the best English language learners (as selected by their classmates in China) exhibited a stable level of productive bilingualism. Furthermore, the students showed that they had experienced additive changes, which mean that the students' first language and first culture are maintained. Also, they stated that the changes that happened in their ideas, values, behaviours, and beliefs were positive changes. Very few students see the changes they experience as a kind of cultural conflict. Subtractive and split changes were less noticeable in the students. However, these changes still exist. Cultural conflicts are not necessarily a negative issue, but may be a developmental stage for those students that have a limited knowledge of the language and culture. When the learners' knowledge of the language and the culture are enriched, they might perceive the changes as being positive (Gao et al., 2005).

The present study is focused on uncovering the reasons for this change and the impact this has on the outcome. Thus, it will involve students that have similar ideas of and reasons for learning motivation near the start of their L2 course. The next section will reiterate the research objectives and detail the methodology that was used in order to meet the main aim of the study.

## **METHOD**

### **Sample Selection**

The nature of this research is mainly qualitative. In this research, (32) participants were selected to take part in this study, assessing their motivations for learning EFL, and tracking any changes to these motivations along the course of their study in USA universities. The participants were made up of (29) MA and (3) PhD students studying in different locations, all of whom have very similar backgrounds with regard to language aspects. The subjects of the study are newly arrived Saudi students in different fields; Linguistics, Applied Linguistics and Translation studying at 4 different universities in USA. This was intentionally designed as a way to ensure the uniformity and consistency of the data collected from the subjects.

The postgraduate's Saudi students who study English in the USA are selected by the Saudi Cultural Bureau in USA and in cooperation with other educational authorities in USA. The researcher had a list of the students studying English in USA. Additionally, the researcher has reached the students through his presence in USA and had managed to directly communicate them.

It was very important to get a homogeneous group of participants to guarantee an accurate measurement of motivation changes during the course of their studies. For the same reason, the subjects were selected according to certain criteria. The first and most important was that they had completed their study in Saudi Arabia throughout all stages and had not attended another English Language course abroad in an NES country. Moreover, participants should have similar language proficiency results at the beginning of the study, which was achieved by acquiring a record of their English language levels benchmarked against an IELTS exam that ranged between bands 6.5 - 8 in terms of score.



The selected subjects were from both genders, with (24) males and (8) females making up the study. Most participants were in the age category of between (24) and (38). The Saudi Cultural Bureau in USA was approached to supply names and specialties of Saudi students in USA universities undergoing English programs for postgraduate majors in the year 2017/2018. In addition, a number of students' clubs were approached as it was assumed that some of the nominated subjects would refuse to participate in the study. Altogether, (46) subjects were included at the start of the study, but for various reasons some of the subjects were later excluded.

The researcher contacted and arranged meetings with different groups of participants within the different university premises. Most of the subjects did not voice any concerns during the briefing regarding what was required from them as participants in the study; however, some participants later proved very difficult to get hold of, because of absence, leaving the course or disinterest in the study, which disqualified them automatically from the study sample.

All participants were briefed about the requirements of the study and approval from the Humanities Ethics Committee of the university was gained. All the required pre-risk assessments and anticipated problems were discussed with the Ethics Committee and the subjects were briefed and signed a consent form to confirm they were happy to participate in the study.

### **Data Collection**

The data collection from the participants was carried out through the semi-structured interview. The interview consisted of (11) questions that were designed based on the research questions. This was carried out in order to measure changes in motivation and attitudes of the Saudi students towards studying English in the USA, as they immersed themselves in the culture through the duration of the course and the present study.

These interviews took place in (4) universities and involved participants from each university that was involved in the study. After each set of interviews, transcriptions were produced to explore changes in feelings, attitude, and behaviour in future interviews.

The interviews were conducted on (2) phases with the participants. This means that the participants were interviewed (2) times in order to track the changes that happened in their motivations and self-identity after being moved to study in USA. The whole interviews were conducted over (6) months. The first phase of the interview was conducted on November 2017 and the second phase of the interviews was conducted on April 2018. As previously stated, Phase 1 of the interview questions is aimed at understanding the motivations very shortly after arrival in USA to study English. The purpose is to examine the earliest stage of motivation, essentially the reasoning for pursuing the studies in the first instance. Phase 2 examines a point in time further along with their studies; the questions are slightly tweaked to represent having been in the USA for a passage of time.

The questions of the interviews consisted of eleven questions in each phase. All the participants were asked to respond in each phase. In other words, each participant gave

two responses in the two phases. For the purpose of analysis, each participant name was given a code in order to show the phase of the participants' response. For example, (*Lubna 1*: means that that this statement is the response given by Lubna in phase one. *Lubna 2*: means that that this statement is the response given by Lubna in phase two. Also, (*Omar 1*: means that that this statement is the response given by Omar in phase one. *Omar 2*: means that that this statement is the response given by Omar in phase two.

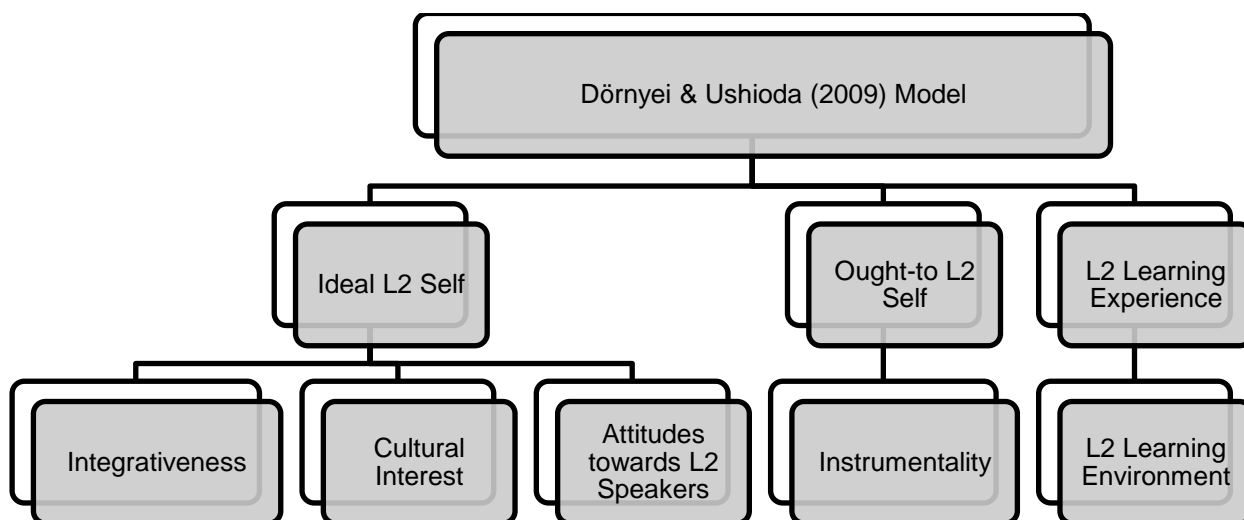
The researcher verified the validity of the interview by submitting it to a number of experts who evaluated it as suitable for data collection. Also, the intra-rater reliability was used by the researcher for a pilot interview with (3) homogenous participants and no noticeable variations were noticed.

## Analysis

Interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. The goal of thematic analysis is to introduce patterns of meaning throughout a dataset that yield results to the study questions being addressed. In thematic analysis, the researcher provides a number of themes that adequately represent their textual data. The analysis is based on patterns that are generated through a sequenced process of data familiarisation, data coding, and theme development and revision (Boyatzis, 1998). The data gathered from interviews were organized thematically, with the researcher organizing responses related to motivation, attitudes, and other themes such as external engagement (integration related to the society). The thematic analysis was done through NVivo software.

## FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

The below part shows the findings of the interviews that were conducted with the participants in order to identify their motivations to learn English and the changes that they experienced in their motivation and attitudes to learn English after having been immersed in an L2 context. The interview is structured into two phases in order to track the changes that the participants have experienced and their attitudes towards the new culture. The responses to the interview questions are analyzed according to the three major themes indicated in the model of Dörnyei & Ushioda (2009).



**Figure 1.** Schematic Representation of the Dörnyei & Ushioda (2009) Model

## **Ideal L2 Self**

Under this theme, the focus is on three sub-themes which are integrativeness, cultural interest, and attitudes towards L2 speakers. Integrativeness means the need to learn an L2 of a valued community in order to be able communicate with the community members and sometimes even to become like them. Cultural interest means that the learners are interested to know the values, customs, and traditions of the new culture. Attitudes towards L2 speakers mean the perception of the speakers of the second language and the issue of liking or disliking them. The findings showed that students expressed that they imagined themselves speaking English as if they were native speakers of this language

### ***Integrativeness***

All the participants expressed that their life in their home country continued to play part in their current study. The majority of the participants expressed that their work in their home country entails that they pursue their study in USA. For example,

Yes it does, because I am a lecturer and my job demands me to go to USA for my studies, my family still encourages me (Omar 1)

Yes of course it does, because my job depends on it, to pursue my education until a PhD phase in order to continue with my job (Ahmed 1).

Some of the participants revealed that the language of their family members has improved since they come to USA to visit the student.

My father is here now and now he can go to the supermarket and run errands on his own. When he first came his language was very poor and gradually it has improved even without joining a language course (Amal 2).

In addition, the study findings suggest that the importance that L2 learners attached to being involved in contact situations contributed towards the effort that they put into L2 learning. This adds more support to previous studies which have asserted that there is a relationship between experiences (direct or indirect) and learners' L2 motivation; for example, Csizér and Kormos (2008) and Dörnyei et al. (2006).

### ***Cultural Interest***

The participants have shown their interest in the new culture since it is the first time for the majority of them to move to USA. The participants have shown that enjoyed the experience of being in a new culture and that they knew new perspectives of the culture that they have always heard about.

The participants mentioned that they were initially interested in learning English language due to its popularity in the world. English is the language of business, finance, technology, education, and all life fields. This was mentioned by (Ahmad) when he expressed his first interest in English.

Actually I learned English because I was interested in English not because it was important for me to be a worker or use it in my career I

mean. I am interested in English because it is getting more and more important in my country. Almost it is all in English at the moment. So, it is a worldwide language. So, actually it is strike both sides I am interested and because it is an important language (Ahmad 1)

The participants expressed that they experienced some problems in the communication with the native speakers since they have not mastered the native language yet. As time passes, the students have improved in the language and became more familiar with the language. In other words, the students have developed linguistically, personally, and socially. The existence in the new culture for a period of time has helped the non-native learners to acquire the implications of the new culture and to have another mentality than what they have developed in their country.

The participants have experienced changes in their confidence and their sociality. In other words, the students are now more able to speak confidently with the native speakers, communicate, negotiate, and discuss issues with them. Also, the students are now more open to engage in pair or group dialogues with native speakers. This contradicts with the students' learning experiences in their home country in which communication is given a little attention in the learning process and in which openness and sociality are weakly addressed.

The student (Fawzia) mentioned that she became more confident and that she can now speak with the native speakers and non-native speakers. Also, she expressed that she became more social than her beginning in USA. For example,

Yes, I do feel different now like more confident when speaking to others. I do enjoy my time here, I have my family here, and I taught things that I like to do. I do have lots of neighbors, Saudi neighbors, we do meet almost weekly and we walk sometimes and I have social attractive (Fawzia 2)

The student (Yasser) expressed that he was shocked at the beginning in the new culture, but as time passes, he became more familiar with the new culture. For example,

Yes at the beginning there was a cultural shock though I have some background about the culture because I always watch movies. It was difficult in the beginning to cope with the difference but when I went to Saudi for vacation and come back to the USA I felt that it is much better and I am more acceptable to the difference (Yasser 2).

(Aziz) revealed that his language proficiency has improved after he lived in USA for study. He expressed that he can speak with her foreign friends and can speak with the native speakers easily. For example,

My life in USA changed more since I arrived, I because I used to speak English with my friends, and also with my foreign friends, if I meet someone who is a native speaker, I tried to speak with him or her (Aziz 2)

In the above mentioned findings, it is shown that the participants have developed an interest in the English language due to the popularity of the English language and its importance in the world. Also, the Saudi students had a desire to know more about the

new culture and how the native speakers communicate, act, and think. The students have experienced changes in their ability to use the English language fluently, in their confidence to speak with the native speakers, and in their openness to the values of the new culture. In other words, the Saudi students have experienced changes at the linguistic, personal, and social levels. This study adds to the body of evidence that such a psychological state is common for cross-cultural travelers e.g. Warden and Lin (2000), and Chen et al (2005). Therefore, policymakers at the Saudi study abroad programmes should pay more attention to crucial psychological state which may play a decisive role in sojourners' experience and attempt to address it with an appropriate strategy.

### ***Attitudes towards L2 Speakers***

The findings showed that all the students have developed positive attitudes towards L2 speakers. It is shown that the contact with L2 speakers have enhanced their confidence to speak and communicate with others. For example,

Yes, it is very good experience in general, informative, taught English in a native speaking country, e.g. to communicate in this native country , give you the chance to get the accent , my children learn English appropriately and they acquire the language and its accent . Maybe learning the language from the native speaking country let them imitate the language of course (Amal 1).

Also, the students expressed that after they have spent a period of study in USA, their language has improved and they became better able to understand, talk, and perform their daily issues in the second language. For example,

Actually after 8 months after being here in the USA, I think my language , my accent improved, I do better when I speak with English people when they talk I understand better although they have different accents because in Saudi we study in only one accent the American accent . With experience and practicing the language, I do better understand the American accent very well (Fahad 2).

The findings showed that their contact with L2 speakers have contributed to their linguistic proficiency and their personal development. Also, the findings showed that the students became more immersed in the new culture and that they are able to understand the native speakers without any problems. For example,

Well, it's better than I had expected because it is safe and I'm doing things better than I do in my country. I can go alone, walk alone, and go to transportation alone. I can rely on myself more (Wael 2).

Overall, the attitudes of the participants towards the L2 learning environment fluctuated from being enthusiastic and excited about the new and different learning environment on arrival to complaining about various aspects of the L2 learning environment towards the middle of their language learning period. Their attitudes once again became positive towards the end of their first year when they had succeeded in obtaining the required IELTS score and securing their foundation level places for the following year. This corresponds with Gao et al (2007) and Kampman (2011) who reported that EFL students develop proficiency in the foreign language when they are

immersed into an L2 setting due to the much exposure to the foreign language and the rich learning environment.

### **Ought-to L2 self**

Under this theme, the focus is on the sub-theme of instrumentality. Instrumentality refers to the concrete benefits that language proficiency might yield (e.g. job opportunities, promotion, salary, etc.). The findings showed that the students expressed that they have to study English in order to communicate effectively, to find a job, and to pursue their graduate studies. The students were motivated to learn English in order to fulfill different needs which include cultural needs, learning needs, and life needs.

### ***Instrumentality***

All the students expressed that their motivations to learn English have changed from integrative reasons at the beginning of their study to instrumental reasons after they have spent a period of time in USA. In other words, the students initially mentioned that they started studying English out of their interest in the language itself and out of their eagerness to know more about the new culture. Later, their motivations to learn the language have changed to their desire to have a job, to pursue their study, and to obtain high marks.

The students expressed that their motivations have changed in the later phases of the study. (Lubna 2) mentioned that he studies English in order to get a job and in order to get PhD. (Haya 2) mentioned that he learns English in order to get a future career and for M.A & Ph.d. (Huda 2) mentioned that she learns English to get good grades and to pass in her Ph.D. (Ahmad 2) mentioned that he learns English in order to avoid teacher's punishment and to pass.

Also, Aziz has mentioned that her motivation to learn English is to find a job in the future.

After graduation from the university, I was looking for a job and I faced a problem that my English was not fluent. Now, I am trying to push up my English fluency so, I can get a job in the future (Aziz 1).

The student (Adwa) is an example of the motivational change from an integrative motivation to an instrumental motivation in her study of English. Firstly, she stated to learn English in order to fulfill a communicative function.

It is important for me to speak English for me especially for my children because I want them to speak English perfectly. So, if I don't speak English, I don't expect them to speak it. Most of the time I communicate with them in English and they are perfect now in English and faster in acquiring the language (Adwa 1)

But later, her motivations to learn English have developed to find a job.

My job .this is the first reason. The second reason is my children. I would speak the English in order to allow my children to learn it the right way (Adwa, 2)

The above findings show that the motivations of the Saudi students studying in USA have changed from integrative motivations (interest in the American culture, speaking with L2 speakers, and to communicate fluently in the language) to instrumental motivations (to get a job, to pursue PHD or MA study, and to get high academic numbers).

## **L2 learning Experience**

Under this theme, the focus is on the sub-theme of L2 learning environment. Second language learning environment refers to the components of the leaning milieu in which the second language is learnt. This theme includes components such as the curriculum, teaching resources, the classroom, group works, etc.

### ***L2 Learning Environment***

All the participants agreed that they did not dislike their English language classes in their home country. They expressed that their English language classes in their home country were poor in terms of the old curriculum, poor teaching methods, and weak usage of teaching resources. For example,

I didn't like it much because at that time when I was at school, we were studying old curriculum where there is a passage and then questions to practice certain structures and then learn a grammatical point here and a grammatical point there. I think it was much better if we have more pictures and more dialogues like that, but I didn't depend on that book to watch series on the television and then I would correlate between the new words that I hear and the translation that were on the subtitle and try to learn words through them and listen to English songs and learn accents and try to imitate. I knew that in hearing things is one of the ways of learning English (Lubna 1).

After being moved to study in USA, they participants had different views about English language classes. The participants expressed that they expressed different learning experiences in terms of the resources, teaching methods, curriculum, and the attitudes towards the second language. In other words, they revealed that learning English in USA has shaped their personality and enhanced their language proficiency. For example,

I see them much different from the experiences that we have back home. Although I have a limited time experience 6 months until now, I still feel the impact of this experience is a kind of shaping my personality, my attitudes again and I don't know why but maybe because the methods of teaching , having such a resource, libraries, having such a rich library , this is some we missed actually in our country. But I have not been into a class of English in my PhD because I am doing my PhD modules. I can't tell what is like in EFL language classes (Lubna 2).

Also, one of the differences between learning English at the home country and USA is the teacher. The participants expressed that teachers in USA were better than the teachers in their country in terms of the linguistic abilities and the motivational factors. For example,

Well, I enjoyed translation classes, at school; I had good teachers who like their subjects, motivating us to learn and listen to English media, to expose ourselves to English to improve our language. I completely agree that the teacher plays a great role in learning English motivation (Manal 1).

Moreover, the participants stressed that the teacher in their L2 setting are more supportive than their home country teachers. For example,

What I like the most regarding teachers, I like the supportive teachers that help to learn more, to motivate me more. I like the supportive teacher. (Amal 2).

The participants informed that the teachers in their L2 setting are distinguished in terms of the provision of research assistance and solving the students' problems with references. For example,

They are helpful and help you to find references and in selecting your research topic or whenever you encounter a problem. For example when I was confused about the thesis topic my teacher suggested references and books for me to read (Khlood 3).

The students expressed their motives that are related to their immediate learning environment. These motives were:

- The curriculum: the curriculum is shorter
- Resources: the availability of libraries, online data bases, research-based study
- Group work: students are given the opportunity to interact with their classmates and their professor.

The student (Amani) explained that she continued in her study in USA despite the difficult situations she experienced there due to the American accent and due to personal reasons such as the travel distance and the program duration.

USA, first of all there is academic and personal reasons as well. I like American accent and this is from the academic side. Personal side it is near to KSA so it is a kind of to be easier for me to come and go and also for my parents. Also, the duration of the programme itself (Amani 1).

However, in a later phase, the same student expressed that if were given the chance to choose again where to study, shed would have chosen to study in USA for academic and social reasons.

If I have the opportunity to continue my studies in the USA, I will prefer to go there. Why? For many reasons. They treat students much better and people are more sociable. So, they would help you to be exposed better to the English language (Amani 2).

All students expressed that the teacher's encouragement has enhanced their motivation to study in USA. They expressed that the teachers have always motivated them to perform well. For example,

Tutors here always motivate us to research and to do things on our own which sparks our motivation more and more to achieve better performance. In Saudi there weren't enough attention paid to English in



the past when we were little and the best thing they can use at classrooms was blackboards. But nowadays things started to change to the better. Now they have better classes, projectors and modern syllabuses (Haya 1).

In a later phase, the same student (Haya) mentioned that the teachers' encouragement has become lower than the beginning since the students became more self-reliable.

In addition, L2 learning environment has been shown to be one of the main factors that affect the students' motivation. Therefore, L2 learning environment is likely to be an important factor that should be considered in L2 motivation studies, as was previously pointed out by L2 motivation scholars like Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011), Macintyre et al. (2009b), Noels et al. (2000), Deci and Ryan (1985), and Gardner (1985).

### **Motivational and Self-identity Changes**

The findings of the interviews showed that the Saudi students have experienced motivational changes. The students came to USA and their initial motivations were to learn English in order to communicate effectively with native and non-native speakers and in order to know more about the new culture. However, after the students have spent periods of time in USA and have engaged in their PHD or MA studies, their motivations have changes and new things have become visible to them. Their perceptions and realizations about the world have changed. They realized that English is the world language and that they need the language in order to find a job or in order to be able to pursue their study.

The Saudi student (Abdullah) has stated that his first motivation to learn English was to be able to speak another language.

Well, at the end of the university level when I decided to join the English language department at that time. It was prestigious to speak another language. This is one of the motivations at that time, but later on, I became convinced that it is important. It is the language of knowledge in general (Abdullah 1).

Then, he said that his motivation to learn English has changed from being able to speak another language to be able to find a job and to get a social status. For example,

Motivation? Again, to have a better choice, job, and also the social prestige. It makes difference (Abdullah 2).

From phase one to phase three, the student (Asma) has experienced changes in her motivation to learn English. Her first motivations to learn English was to understand others and to learn another language other than her mother tongue which is Arabic. For example,

That was my 1<sup>st</sup> motivation. My 1<sup>st</sup> motivation to learn English is to understand people who speak English and I know that when I know English, I can read more in English and I am not limiting myself to my language which is Arabic. I can get boarder knowledge by reading English, watching TV in English so I have 2 options Arabic and English (Asma 1).

Later, her motivation has changed and she became motivated to learn English for the purpose of her study and her job.

Current mot? To get a job (Asma 3)

On the other hand, (Deemah) started to learn English and her motivation was her love for the language in general

My first motivation is learning the language in general. I love English language (Deemah 1)

After she spent a period of time in USA, her motivations changed from her love of the language to her desire to get a job and to pursue her study.

My own desire to complete my study for my job (Deemah 2)

The student (Ahmad) mentioned that his interest in the English culture, represented in the English club players, was his first motivations to learn English. For example,

I used to read a lot in English about the players, the club. So, that was also a kind really push me to learn the language (Ahmad 1).

In phase three, (Ahmed) mentioned that his motivations have changed from the interest in the English culture to find a job and to pursue his study.

Motivation? I am very interesting about learning English and knowing English since an earlier age and specially now my work it has motivated me more to finish my master. So, it is more personal and for my work (Ahmad 3)

The student (Fatmah) mentioned that she started to learn English in order to know more about the new culture and the new civilization.

My main motivation until now is getting to know new cultures and learning new language that get me through the gates of other cultures and getting benefit from them without affecting my own identity (Islamic/Arab identity). I am a big believer of culture universality; everyone should keep his identity and be proud of his cultural, religious, civilization heritage but in the same time be willing to understand and deal with others' cultures peacefully (Fatmah 1)

Her later motivations to learn English has changed since she realized the importance of English language in her study and in her future career. For example,

I am looking you know to be a native speaker because it is an international language, I am always doing lots of discussions and communication with other people outside the university because they are native speakers and others have native like levels which I don't have but I try to find the right words to use I try to be like them in the language level I want to express my ideas in a better context and be more expressive (Fatmah 3)

The students expressed that their motivations have increased to learn English as they spend time studying in USA. The student (Amani) was firstly motivated to learn English to be a good teacher. For example,

Increase, because I work at the university. So, It is really encouraging me to increase my motivation to the best. I want to be a good teacher. So, I need to be really perfect in English (Amani 1).

In later phases, her motivations have increased from just to be a good teacher to be able to make research and assignment and to get high marks. For example,

Increased? Increased because when one lives here you don't have the opportunity to deal with other languages other than English which is really encouraging. Doing research and doing assignments also (Amani 2).

The majority of study students expressed that the good grades motivate them to continue in L2 learning. The findings showed that the students experienced self-identity changes. Below is a description of the self-identity changes:

1. *Self-confidence change*: all the students showed their ability to speak automatically after their study in USA. They got the confidence to interact and to speak with others.
2. *Additive change*: the findings showed that all the students mastered the English language besides their first language (Arabic).
3. *Subtractive change*: the findings showed that the students did not experience subtractive change. They learnt the target language and culture while maintain their first language and culture. The two students showed that they still maintain their first language and culture.
4. *Productive change*: it is shown that the command of the target language and that of the native language positively reinforce each other.

In general, the students experienced self-identity changes which can be seen in the changes in the students' self-confidence, their ability to interact and to work in groups, and their ability to self-learn. In other words, students perceived the effective users as their potential future selves and were motivated about that potential. As Al-Shehri (2009) advocates, the strength of motivation is dependent on the learners' capability to develop a vivid image of a skillful ideal L2 self. Thus, the EFL teachers can motivate the learners by setting up opportunities for the learners to be exposed to some real, successive English users that the learners can identify themselves with (Gao et al., 2005).

## CONCLUSION

The above findings show that the Saudi EFL students have experienced motivational changes and self-identity changes after being moved to study in USA. This study found that aspects of motivation most likely to change were those associated with the language learning environment. This was common across participants. Factors that contributed to Language related enjoyment were those that changed negatively during the semester and each factor (e.g., challenging teachers or enjoyment of coursework) was connected to the micro context of the learning environment. However, the findings of this study show that negative experiences did not always result in overall

demotivation. Overall demotivation was most likely avoided when participants consciously distanced themselves from the demotivating experience. It may be that by attributing demotivating experiences to the learning environment, participants protected their self-confidence. As the students spend time in their L2 context (USA), they become more confident in the language, more familiar with the new culture, and experience new learning environment in terms of activities, teaching methods, curriculum, and teaching technologies.

## IMPLICATIONS

The current study suggests that stakeholders (e.g., researchers, teachers, decision makers, etc.) of language education institutes, especially in EFL contexts, should arguably should pay attention not only to the linguistic, but also to the non-linguistic outcomes of FL learning. The totality of the findings of this study are in line with other studies in this thread; and yield that individual difference variables like self-identity changes in EFL contexts are more important and even more subtle than EFL contexts. Regarding the pedagogical practice, four implications were suggested: First, EFL stakeholders, especially EFL teachers, must arguably be aware of the fact that non-linguistic outcomes of learning English deserve as much attention as that which is paid to the EFL learners' English skills and proficiency. This is because these two important outcomes of language learning are interrelated and reveal the complex nature of foreign language learning and teaching beyond the scope of just a pedagogic activity, especially when it comes to the issues like changes, crises, and hybridity in FL learners' identities.

Second, as the result indicated that learners' integrative and instrumental orientations have the major effect on learners' sense of self-confidence, teachers should use different types of learner motivation to build up on the learners' self-confidence in learning and they should try to tie the instrumental, short-term objectives of the learners with the long-term integrative goals which hopefully result in the learners' sense of self-efficacy, autonomy and more importantly the agency for maximum attainment. Third, teachers and language assessors must arguably pay attention to the high state of learners' sensitivity to identity changes.

Third, teachers and language assessors must arguably pay attention to the high state of learners' sensitivity to identity changes. Therefore, it is incumbent upon them to take the advantage of learners' immediate achievements (positive feedback, high test scores, anticipation of reward, etc.) to help learners raise their sense of self-confidence by carefully monitoring and channeling the situational needs of the learners to avoid possible negative effects on learners' identity changes

The last pedagogical implication addresses culture in the classroom. The results of this study provide useful practical information. For example, it shows that having a clear sense of purpose is important in promoting students' academic motivation, suggesting that teachers arguably should be more conscious of the relationship between class contents and their students' future lives and careers.

## SUGGESTIONS

Arguably the most important revelation of this particular study has been the complex relationship between Ought-to L2 Self and the Ideal L2 self, the distinction between which must be collapsed and considered anew. However, since the present space is concerned with recommendations, the most pressing offerings that could be presented are the following:

1. Nurture a sense of autonomy in the student cohort, causing them to precisely self-examine their intentions in studying L2 English.
2. Modify study abroad programs that meet students' respective expectations, particularly with respect to the issues of marketing the programs in question.
3. Create a culture where mutuality is augmented to such a degree that the L2 learning experience is one that is wholly positive.

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**Appendix (A)****Interview Questions**

1. Can you tell me a bit about where you are from and your home life in Saudi Arabia? Where did you live? What type of jobs did your parents do?
2. How important was English in your family life? Do any of your family members speak English (what level) and/or has your family ever worked/lived in an English-speaking country?
1. Do any of your family members speak English (what level)? All of them speak English high.
2. Have your family ever worked/lived in an English-speaking country since you began your studies?
3. Can you tell me about your English language classes and teachers in Saudi Arabia? What did you enjoy or dislike most about your English learning experiences at home?
4. Is this the first time you've been to the USA and/or an English-speaking country? Is it how you expected?
5. When did you realize the importance of English language in your life and/or career?
6. What was your first motivation for learning English language?
7. Have you ever faced a situation that demotivated you from learning English?
8. Why did you decide to continue your English studies in USA? (Keep completely open-ended, no leading).
9. Does teachers' encouragement in the classroom ignite your motivation? Can you explain?
10. With time did your learning motivation increase or decrease? Can you explain?
11. What do you think is the main reason behind your interest in English?