Intercultural Adjustment and Adaptation of Saudi Arabian International ESL Students Enrolled on UK English Courses

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Declaration

I declare that this PhD thesis is my own work and that I have correctly acknowledged the work of others. This thesis is in accordance with University and School guidance on good academic conduct (and how to avoid plagiarism and other assessment irregularities).

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Date:

Signature:

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Abstract

This PhD thesis investigates the intercultural adjustment and adaptation of Saudi Arabian nationals enrolled on English as a second language (ESL) courses in the United Kingdom (UK), addressing their experience as reflected in three main dimensions: academic, psychological and sociocultural. The study aim is to provide as complete a picture as possible of this group of sojourners' experience in the study abroad context. The study investigates the relationships between the contributory factors suggested by Schartner and Young (2016) and Gardner (2010) and the three adaptation dimensions (academic, psychological and sociocultural) and how they affect Saudi students learning English in the UK over time.

The study was carried out in the UK with Saudi ESL students studying at a number of English language institutions in different cities. A longitudinal, mixed-methods approach was adopted in two phases. First, quantitative questionnaires were administered to 177 students early in the academic year (T1) and to 110 students from the same sample in a follow-up wave later in the year (T2). Second, three phases of qualitative interviews were conducted with 19 students to explore issues identified in the questionnaires in greater depth and students' adjustment over time. The study reveals that English language ability, attitudes towards learning, pre-arrival knowledge of the host country, emotional stability and socioemotional support are the five primary factors that influence Saudi English language learners' outcomes in the UK, reflecting the three adaptation dimensions: academic, sociocultural and psychological.

In addition, the three phases of the study exploring the students' adjustment over time present distinct patterns of positive and negative orientations. The positive orientation concerned the students' use of coping strategies and support mechanisms, which helped them make positive changes. The negative orientation concerned issues the students faced in adjustment that persisted or worsened over their sojourn. Finally, the study proposes a model for examining Saudi ESL students' intercultural adaptation and adjustment in the UK. Practical implications are highlighted for the Saudi academic sponsors, host institutions in the UK and Saudi English students.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Preface

Increasing numbers of overseas students are studying outside their home countries in higher education and there is a significant trend towards sojourns in Western English-speaking countries, such as the United Kingdom (UK), the United States (US) and Australia (Institute of International Education, 2021). Due to this, there is a growing body of literature based on a wide range of investigations concerning the phenomenon of intercultural transition, specifically in Western countries (Kim, 2017). This study addresses intercultural adjustment and adaptation among Saudi students in the UK. To study in Western countries, including the UK, students require a certain score on English language proficiency tests (depending on the course), and host universities commonly cater to international students by providing preparatory courses to meet the requirements for enrolment on postgraduate courses (British Council, 2022). Countries such as the US, UK, Australia and Canada have large numbers of international students, who are a major source of their universities' income (Choudaha, 2017).

UK universities are ranked as the most popular location for international students after the US and Australia (BBC, 2019). The latest statistics show that there were 458,490 overseas students in the UK in 2017–2018. Of these, 7,950 were Saudi students; Saudi Arabians are ranked seventh in the top ten nationalities studying in the UK and comprise the largest number of overseas students from the Middle East, with the number increasing every year (see UK Council for International Student Affairs [UKCISA], 2019).

The following sub-section provides key terms and the definitions of important dimensions in this study, namely the intercultural transition experience and what is meant by 'culture' in this work, as well as the meanings of 'adjustment' and 'adaptation' and the differences between them. In addition, it provides background concerning Saudi students studying abroad to give an indication of the various dimensions of influence related to the focus of this study, specifically the Saudi scholarship programme for study abroad, the educational system in the KSA, how English is taught and learned in Saudi Arabia, and the features of Saudi students in terms of their cultural and societal background (gender-segregated learning and society). All these dimensions are discussed with reference to previous studies and their influence on the experience of Saudi students transitioning to the study abroad context.

1.2 Key terms and definitions

1.2.1 Intercultural adjustment and adaptation

Before reviewing the literature on intercultural adjustment and adaptation (see Chapter 2), as reflected in this study, it is necessary to define the terms 'intercultural', 'adjustment and

adaptation' as applied to the experience of international students who are studying at host universities in higher education (HE). First, a distinction needs to be made between 'inter' , 'cross' and 'intra', focusing on why the term 'intercultural' is the most appropriate description for this research. Although the various terms, such as 'cross-cultural' and 'intracultural' are sometimes used interchangeably in the literature, they differ in terms of how they relate to communication and interaction between certain cultural groups. Gudykunst (2000) provided a clear differentiation between 'cross-cultural' and 'intercultural', defined as follows:

> 'Cross-cultural' and 'intercultural' are often regarded as interchangeable. They are, nevertheless, different. Cross-cultural research involves comparing behaviour in two or more cultures (e.g. comparing self-disclosure in Japan, the USA and Iran when individuals interact with members of their own culture). Intercultural research involves examining behaviour when members of two or more cultures interact (e.g. examining self-disclosure when Japanese and Iranians communicate with each other). … Understanding cross-cultural differences in behaviour is a prerequisite for understanding intercultural behaviour. (p. 314)

Thus, cross-cultural research looks into certain behaviours of certain nations separately, for example how Japanese self-disclosure differs from American and Iranian. In contrast, intercultural research looks at how groups from different cultures, e.g. Iran and Japan, communicate and express certain phenomena together.

In terms of the differences between 'intra' and 'inter', according to Samovar and Porter (2001, p. 63), 'intracultural communication' takes place between members of the same dominant culture, but with slightly different values, as opposed to 'intercultural communication', which concerns communication between two or more distinct cultures. Examining the differences set out above, 'intercultural' is the best description for this study as when Saudi students transition to the UK, they interact interculturally not cross-culturally, communicating with various other cultural groups in terms of their new academic institutions and new society, not only with one other cultural group. Moreover, the comparisons and contrasts are made between the Saudi students as a 'different cultural group' communicating and interacting in the UK with culturally different people and not their communications with each other.

What is more important is defining the term 'culture', which is especially challenging as the concept is very complex and has manifold aspects. Many anthropologists and social scientists, such as Kotthoff and Spencer-Oatey (2007), Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009), Holliday, Hyde and Kullman (2010), Spencer-Oatey (2011) and Kim (2018), have reviewed definitions based on different dimensions. For example, Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009) reviewed multidisciplinary perspectives in psychology, anthropology, international business and applied linguistics. They identified the most vital characteristics of culture as follows:

> Culture is manifested through different types of regularities, some of which are more explicit than others, culture is associated with social groups, but no two individuals within a group share exactly the same cultural characteristics, culture affects people's behaviour and interpretations of behaviour and culture is acquired and/or constructed through interaction with others. (Spencer-Oatey and Franklin, 2009, p.15)

In the same vein, historically, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952:181, cited by Berry 2004:168) offered a definition that covers many cultural dimensions, namely that:

> Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other, as conditional elements of future actions.

This definition is commonly cited in research because it provides a wider perspective on what is meant by culture. As noted by Zegarc (2008), the term 'culture' is not only reflected in physical objects, but also includes mental and physical representations of the world held by certain persons, as well as any representations that are stable and organised as practice and shared by particular social groups.

Reviewing these elements provides a good starting point to develop a general perspective on what is meant by culture and its main features in terms of communication with others. In the literature, there is considerable debate about the definition of culture. Some (e.g. Hofstede, 1980) have defined culture as a national construct based on geographical boundaries, such that groups of people share solid and stable characteristics of culture, consistent with the positivist paradigm viewing reality as fixed and determined. This perspective mainly relates to early work in terms of how research views the term culture (see Spencer-Oatey and Franklin, 2009).

In contrast, Holliday (2016, p. 23) argued that:

> [C]ulture is a socially and politically constructed concept. The study of culture therefore moves away from differences between culture and towards the question of how people construct and use culture to make sense of each other. Underlining universal cultural process imply that all of us are equally engaged in the everyday construction of and engagement with culture wherever it is found.

This perspective mainly reflects the interpretivist and constructivist paradigm, in which reality as culture is viewed as flexible, fluid and multifaceted (see Holliday and Macdonald, 2020).

Kecskes (2014) proposed a middle position, combining both approaches in the definition of culture, reporting that 'Culture has fuzzy boundaries and [should be] considered neither relatively static nor everchanging, but both. It has both a priori and emergent figures. Culture changes diachronically (slowly through decades) and synchronically (emerges on-the-spot, in the moment speech)' (pp. 4–5). Recently, researchers have tended to focus on the advantages

of each paradigm to interpret the term of culture in the field of intercultural communication (Hans, et al, 2015). This study applied this perspective to explore culture in a more holistic way than would be possibly applying one perspective alone (see Chapter 3). Culture, then, concerns what students experience in transitioning to the unfamiliar culture of the other and how. The relationship between culture and the intercultural experience, as articulated by Holliday (2016), is that it concerns 'the ability to make sense of intercultural experience in terms of one's own cultural background' (p. 319). He goes on:

> …I also define cultural travellers as people who move between cultural environments. In many ways we are all cultural travellers throughout our lives as we move through a succession of small cultures – family, schools, jobs, friendship groups, relationships and so on. However, students travelling to study in different countries will encounter the more enhanced concepts of 'home' and 'abroad'.

According to Holliday (2013), the small culture, of the home society, will have a great influence on transition in moving abroad.

In the literature on Saudi students and study abroad, many studies have discussed certain elements, such as linguistic ability, gender, society and religion, and how these effect the Saudi students' transition to English-speaking countries like the UK, the US and Australia, considering their interactions with other international students in the higher education (HE) context (see Background, 1.3). Gaining an understanding of the intercultural transition experience though adjustment and adaptation is vital as explained and discussed in the following section.

1.2.2 Adjustment and adaptation

Adjustment and adaptation are the terms that best reflect the intercultural transition experience, which comprises various components – cognitive, behavioural and emotional – during adaptation to the new environment (Kotthoff and Spencer-Oatey, 2007). Therefore, these two terms are employed to reflect the main concepts in the theoretical framework in this study. However, there is a lack of consensus in defining them in the literature. Some studies use them interchangeably as both denote the stages that sojourners experience when living abroad (Matsumoto and Hwang, 2013). Others, like Shaffer and Shoben (1956), quite commonly cited in the literature, see duration as the only difference between them, viewing adaptation as a long-term process related to survival in the new environment, whereas adjustment is a short-term reaction to the stay.

Studies also point to differences between these two concepts in relation to the psychological and sociocultural domains. For Mesidor and Sly (2016), adjustment refers to the psychological aspect, specifically as international students may undergo psychological manifestations of distress, such as depression, anxiety and loneliness, in the process of adjusting to the new

environment; in contrast, adaptation is related to social aspects, such as social support, interaction with society and length of residence, which in turn predict the process of psychological adjustment. According to Vasilopoulos (2016, p. 289), 'adjustment is a process of socialisation' undertaken as the arriving sojourners interact with the new social community, negotiating their identity.

Looking at these perspectives in defining the two concepts, it can be argued that they do not refer to adjustment and adaptation in sufficiently comprehensive way to fit the purpose of this study, which aimed to provide as complete a picture as possible related to the group of Saudi students involved. The study looked at many dimensions, not specifically psychological or sociocultural, but adjustment or adaptation refer to one or other of them only. Elements such as social support, interaction with society and negotiation of identity might not be determined to relate to either adjustment or adaptation from the psychological or sociocultural view, but rather to both. Therefore, it can be argued that these perspectives in defining the two concepts are quite narrow.

In contrast, Anderson (1994) defined 'adjustment' as reflecting a process (i.e. the experience of change) of fitting into the new environment, while Pitts (2005) defined 'adaptation' as the outcomes of the adjustment process. Schartner and Young (2020) combined these two definitions of adjustment and adaptation and differentiated between them to develop their model of the transition made by international students. They defined adjustment as the monitoring stage, measured over time, while adaptation is measured as the outcomes of adjustment. They developed a conceptual framework looking at three dimensions for each aspect: academic, psychological and sociocultural. Their perspective is best suited to this study as it is more comprehensive, with adjustment referring to the experience of change that the Saudi English language learners go through over time and adaptation referring to the outcomes of this adjustment, specifically across these three dimensions. However, building on previous research employing the model, this study looked at adjustment and adaptation across academic, psychological and sociocultural dimensions more specifically by focusing on the experience of Saudi international students as a unique group of English language learners differing from international students on postgraduate courses in general (this is discussed in further detail in Chapter 2).

1.3 Background

1.3.1 Saudi scholarship for studying abroad

Historically, since the reign of King Abudi-Aziz, who instituted the modern educational system in 1932, the Saudi government has provided scholarships for Saudi students studying abroad (Ministry of Foreign Affairs [MoFA], 2013; Ministry of Higher Education [MoHE], 2017). A

number of different programmes have provided support for Saudi students to study over the years, but this was consolidated by King Abdullah in 2005, who established the largest scholarship programme in the history of Saudi Arabia, called the King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP) (Saudi Arabia Cultural Mission [SACM] to the US, 2012). When King Abdullah died in 2015, this programme was extended into the reign of King Salman and has continued support students studying abroad to date. The programme is directed by two Saudi institutions, the Ministry of Education (MoE) in Saudi Arabia and the Saudi Cultural Bureau in the country of study (MoHE, 2010), in the case of this study the UK.

The programme has provided financial support for thousands of Saudi students, both male and female, paying their student fees and study-related travel costs from their initial arrival in the UK and covering one year of studying English language skills. Most Saudi students in the UK are enrolled in this programme. In addition, the programme enables students to travel with their families, offering scholarships for family members (see SACM, 2019). The programme aims 'to equip students with knowledge and skills needed to be future world leaders' (SACM to the US, 2013, p. 1). With this funding from the Saudi government, the number of Saudi international students has increased considerably in Western English-speaking countries, such as the UK, US, Australia and Canada (Institute of International Education [IIE], 2013).

Studies in these countries conducted with Saudi students have indicated that the factors that most lead to difficulties studying abroad include their prior experience of teaching and learning in Saudi Arabia, which is heavily teacher-centred, and the move from a gender-segregated environment to one that is mixed (e.g. Shaw, 2010; Alhazmi and Nyland, 2013; Heyn, 2013; Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone- McGovern, 2015; Alqahtani and Pfeffer, 2017; Alsharari and Teodorescu, 2019). The following sub-sections discuss these aspects in greater detail.

1.3.2 Educational system

Education in Saudi Arabia is compulsory through primary school, which comprises six grades (ages 7–12), intermediate school, which has three grades (ages 13–15), and secondary school, also with three grades (ages 16–18). Students can then continue their studies in higher education, either at college or as undergraduates and postgraduates at university. Education is provided by both the state and private sectors.

In higher education in Saudi Arabia, English is used as the medium of study in most science specialisations, such as engineering, medicine, and pharmaceutics. In other courses, such as literary, human, and pedagogical studies, Arabic (the first language) is commonly the medium of instruction, but students are required to study English as a compulsory subject to complete their courses (Alrashidi and Phan, 2015). Although English is a prerequisite for higher

education courses in Saudi Arabia, either as a means of study or as a required subject to gain the higher education certificate, a number of studies (e.g. Alqahtani, 2011; Kampman, 2011; Ankawi, 2015; Alqahtani and Hezam, 2015; Alqahtani and Pfeffer, 2017; Alfurayh and Burns, 2019; Althobaiti and Obeidat, 2020; Ankawi, 2020; Song, 2019; Althobaiti and Obeidat, 2020; Song, 2020) conducted with Saudi students studying in higher education in Western English-speaking countries such as the UK, US, and Australia, have revealed that a low level of English language proficiency is one of the main barriers faced in students' academic and social lives. To understand more about this issue, it is important to consider the context of English teaching and learning in Saudi Arabia.

1.3.3 English language teaching and learning

Originally, Saudi students started studying English as a foreign language as a compulsory subject at intermediate school (Al-Seghayer, 2005). However, there was considerable debate about whether English should be introduced as a compulsory subject at primary school, with some arguing that children can acquire a language more easily at an early age, but others arguing that introducing English early on in school could negatively affect their development in Arabic language and culture (see, Abdan, 1991). In 2004, taking the view that it was important to start learning English early on at school, the Ministry of Education (MoE) issued a decision introduce it in the sixth grade of primary school (Al-Saif, 2005) and then in 2011 decided to introduce it from grades four to six in primary school (Macmillan, 2012).

The study of English in Saudi Arabia can be described as teacher-centred, with the teacher viewed as the source of knowledge and the teacher's role being to communicate this knowledge to the students (Alrabai, 2017a, 2017b). In contrast, teaching in the UK tends to be learner-centred, with students taking part as active learners and being provided opportunities to use the language in a communicative environment, for example in group work (Alqahtani, 2011). Kampman (2011) states that one of the difficulties Saudi students encounter when studying in Western English-speaking countries is the transition from teacher-centred classes to learner-centred classes, in which they need to be independent and active in using the language for communicative purposes. Studies such as those of Ankawi (2015), Alqahtani and Hezam (2015), Alsharari and Teodorescu, 2019 have also shown that among the main issues Saudi students face in making the transition to Western universities are a lack of academic skills, such as academic writing and critical thinking, low levels of English proficiency and difficulty with the autonomy required in being an active learner. Alqahtani and Pfeffer (2017) conducted a study with Saudi female students enrolled on PhD courses in the UK and also found that the main difficulties they faced concerned their skills in relation to the language and communication, in particular their low level of English hindering communication with their

supervisors. They also identified issues with academic skills, such as research skills and critical thinking. Moreover, students need prior knowledge of the differences in the educational systems between their home and host countries; students who had experience of doing Masters' degrees in the UK and the other English-speaking countries, like the US and Australia, found that they had fewer difficulties undertaking a PhD programme in the UK.

In addition to issues with communication and active learning, Althobaiti and Obeidat (2020) found that students experience problems with a lack of academic skills and also English language proficiency in relation to reading and speaking skills. They struggle to express themselves and deliver their ideas clearly and have weak presentation skills. The core issues appear to be a fear of making mistakes and the potential for academic failure. In their study, the students were in the later stages of their programme and appreciated the opportunity to study abroad as 'having an opportunity not to memorize but to learn how to learn' (p. 421).

Ankawi (2020) showed that students face difficulties expressing themselves in terms of grammatical competence to structural differences between Arabic and English. Moreover, there are difficulties with genre arising from differences in the writing cultures concerning how to organise ideas and build arguments in writing. Such difficulties are related to students' educational background in Saudi Arabia, where the traditional methods of teaching English do not sufficiently equip students with the vocabulary, understanding of syntax, or skills in paraphrasing and using formal language to enable them to use English appropriately for academic purposes (Ankawi, 2020).

Academic issues also have a huge effect on students' psychological welling as the demands of academic study cause high levels of anxiety, particularly for students with low levels of English proficiency, which hinder participation and understanding (Brutt-Griffler et al., 2020).

1.3.4. Gender segregation in Saudi Arabia

To understand gender segregation as a cultural norm in Saudi Arabia, it is vital to understand the basis for it, namely Saudi gender identity and the distinct roles of Saudi women and men. In essence, Saudi gender identity is represented by a biological distinction between male and female, with no recognition of any other gender identities in society; in particular, identifying as transgender is illegal under Saudi law and is forbidden by Islam (see Habib, 2010). The binary gender identity, male or female, has been shaped by Saudi culture and reflects the traditions of tribal and Islamic society, mainly being performed in a family setting (see Al-Khateeb, 1998; Long, 2005; Yamani, 2005; Alhazmi and Nyland 2013; Al-Rasheed, 2013; Song, 2019). The Islamic school of Wahhabism takes the view that men and women (who are not first-degree relatives) must be segregated to avoid illicit relationships forbidden in Islam as

any relationship outside marriage is forbidden (Wagemakers, 2016). In addition, the tribal view plays a significant role in the gender segregation ideology in Saudi Arabia as men and women are responsible for their family honour and morals, and must protect against shameful actions, such as engaging in illicit relationships. To prevent such issues, mixed gender communications and interactions are avoided (Bajnaid and Elyas, 2017).

This ideology has shaped the distinct roles of males and females in society. Saudi women are expected to show loyalty to the family, first as loyal daughters, then as supportive wives to their husbands and as dutiful household managers and mothers, responsible for childcare and raise the children as righteous Muslims. Their work should be in the private domain and limited to specialisms such as childcare and education. In contrast, men have public roles in economics and politics and are also responsible for the household in terms of earning an income and paying living costs. Men are also the guardians of women in the family – the husband is the guardian of his wife and the father is guardian to his daughters – and they act in public on the women's behalf (see Al-Khateeb, 1998; Al-Marayati, 1997; Alhazmi & Nyland, 2011; Al-Rasheed, 2013). Women should wear the veil in public and there should be segregation at work to maintain their privacy and womanhood (Wagemakers, 2016). Al-Rasheed (2013) also pointed out that women are responsible for the family honour and represent the national identity of womanhood. The male members of society are responsible for the female members and the Saudi cultural interpretation of Islam in relation to gender identity legitimises the responsibility of men to represent and speak on behalf of women, with women required to remain silent in the presence of men who are not their male guardians or first-degree relatives (Al-Rasheed, 2013). Song (2019) said that among the main personality traits of Saudi women are shyness and a sense of modesty, consistent with the traditional Islamic and cultural construction of their identity as maintaining the ideal of womanhood.

This distinction between the roles and identities of the two genders is the fundamental basis for gender segregation as a cultural norm in Saudi Arabia, applied both throughout the educational system and in most places in society (Mayer, 2000; Yackley-Franken, 2007; Magliveras, 2019). In Saudi life, both private and public, one can observe gender segregation wherever people communicate and interact; there are two separate spaces for males and females, with separate entrances to buildings such as banks, restaurants, and public transportation, and in all educational institutions, including universities and schools. Communication between men and women is very formal and solely for specific purposes, for example teaching, or buying and selling (Al-Lily, 2011; Magliveras, 2019).

Gender segregation in Saudi Arabia has been discussed in the literature and has been the topic of considerable debate. The supporters of this ideology consider that gender segregation is a

duty for all Muslim men and women as part of following Islamic teaching and maintaining the ideal image of Muslims (Wagemakers, 2016). In contrast, its critics consider it an extreme form of thinking and not part of Islam religion, i.e. it represents the extreme interpretation of Islam and does not belong to Islam as a religion of moderation and justice (Meijer, 2010). Indeed, it has been argued that segregation is the product of very strict tribal traditions and political agendas and nothing to do with Islam, as in Islam the mixing of the genders is permitted (Yamani, 2005). From the perspective of women rights, the view is that Islam is not and should not define women's identity or be the justification for male guardianship; this ideology is espoused by the extreme and women have the right to equality with men (Wagemakers, 2016).

Today, in the reign of King Salman, there is a great movement in Saudi Arabia towards achieving the Saudi Vision 2030, one of the important parts of which is the transition of the role of women to one of 'great asset' (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Saudi Vision, 2030; 2016, p. 37), which would also transform their identity. Until now, women have been segregated, but the aim is now to build a new Saudi society looking towards the post-oil era and women can play an important role participating in the country's development. Several laws have been changed with a view to facilitating women's empowerment in society, increasing their engagement as decision makers and independent citizens, as well as increasing their rate of employment. Saudi women have obtained the right to a gradual easing of guardianship law and the right to drive and are step by step gaining their right to play new roles in society (Eum, 2019).

Several studies (e.g., Alfurayh and Burns, 2019; Althobaiti and Obeidat, 2020; Song, 2019, 2020) have examined Saudi students' experience of studying abroad in relation to their identity along gender, racial and religious dimensions, examining the stages in the development of their identity and how they negotiate their new roles in a mixed-gender educational environment and society. Moreover, they have shown that this is an aspect that is unique to Saudi students and one that presents additional challenges to adjustment in terms of their identity over and above those faced by other international students. Althobaiti and Obeidat (2020), examining Saudi students' intercultural experience, focused mainly on gender-integrated workplaces. Both male and female Saudi students were found to feel uncomfortable interacting and participating with each other as they came from the same gender-segregated system, whereas they felt less tense with other students from different cultures and background, such as US students.

In this regard, studies have mainly reflected the female experience and how women have negotiated their new roles. Song (2019) and Alfurayh and Burns (2019) explored students' reactions in changing their roles and their justification under the Islamic umbrella. In Song's (2019) study, the female students could be divided into two groups, one rejecting the change in

their role to keep hold of the ideal image of Saudi Muslims, and the other resisting the norm and freely choosing to change their roles without reference to Islam.

Song (2020) undertook an exploration of a Saudi female student's gender identity experience over two years in the framework of 'othering' (see Holliday et al., 2004). The study revealed that the student suffered from racial and othering-based gender issues. She felt uncomfortable and shy, predominantly in participating with Saudi students, but this dissipated over time, as she negotiated her new role in communicating with the opposite gender; she became less shy and confidently participated. To justify her new role in terms of her gender, racial and religious identity, she explained that she found this type of communication was allowed under her interpretation of Islam. She maintained her coping strategies under the Islamic umbrella, with her change in identity being to cope with the new learning environment.

Similar results were found by Alfurayh and Burns (2019), who examined changes in identity among Saudi female students in Australia. The students tried to negotiate their new roles and change their identities to adjust to the new environment. At the same time, they were trying to maintain their identities under the Islamic umbrella by reinterpreting some Islamic teachings to help them meet their requirements for the development of a new identity.

Song (2019) also examined female Saudi students' socialisation experience in a gender-segregated environment. The study revealed a division between the Saudi female students in terms of the approach to the gender identity norm. One group tried to maintain the ideal image of 'Saudi womanhood', feeling bound by this image and shy and afraid of losing this sense of their identity in front of other Saudi students as they were from the same background and that they might be judged if they did not maintain this identity. These students keep silent, did not participate and did not communicate or interacting in the second language (L2) to maintain their identity, especially in front of Saudi male students. However, the study revealed that there was a degree of ambivalence when they asked for more communicative activities, either socially or academically. In contrast, the second group of Saudi female students felt that the gender norm was part of the Islamic religion and not them. They resisted this norm as they felt it was about religious and Saudi societal constraints. These students freely participated and sought communication in the academic environment and in society to improve their L2 use.

Crucially, Alqahtani and Pfeffer (2017) pointed out that female students do not just worry about their own identity issues, but also about their children who are raised in the UK, specifically regarding their children' Islamic and Saudi identities and learning of Arabic. To cope with these issues, they were keen for their children to go to Arabic school, and communicate and interact with the Saudi community and attend national festivals.

1.3.5. Saudi society

Most Saudi citizens (with a few exceptions) are Muslim Arabs and their first language is Arabic. The country of Saudi Arabia was originally tribal, predominantly Arab (Long and Maisel, 2010). This has had a great influence on Saudi society, in addition to Islam being at the heart of life, so that the society can be considered conservative and following certain cultural norms and values, mainly based on religion (Alhazmi and Nyland, 2013). Islam and the role of the family are considered the two main sources of status and identity. Both aspects are considered a fundamental source of support and unity in Saudi society. The family has the power and authority in decision making for its members, in that the senior members and heads of households have authority approved by the religious leaders and the government (Long, 2005; Long and Maisel, 2010). There are many aspects of Western societies that are forbidden in Saudi society under Islam, such as going to nightclubs, drinking alcohol and indecent dressing (ALAsiri, 2019). Saudi society is very modern and industrialised and Saudi Arabia is famous for its riches from oil. The country's economic and industrial growth have resulted in rapid change in society in terms of the chances of employment and investment (Foley, 2019).

Many studies (e.g. Abdel Razek, 2012; Heyn, 2013; Alqahtani and Pfeffer, 2017; Ourfali, 2015) have examined Saudi students' experience of transition to other cultures, describing Saudi society as collectivist mainly influenced by Hofstede's cultural framework of individualism and collectivism. In Hofstede's theory, Saudi Arabia has a collectivist society and culture (Long, 2005, cited in Ting-Toomey and Chung, 2005) and focuses on 'the importance of the 'we' identity over the 'I' identity, group rights over individual rights, and in-group needs over individual wants and desires' (p. 60). Members of such a society endorse 'relational interdependence, in-group harmony, and in-group collaborative spirit' (Ting-Toomey and Chung, 2005, p. 60). In contrast, according to Hofstede (2001, cited in Ting-Toomey and Chung, 2005), the British culture is individualist, 'emphasizing the importance of individual identity over group identity, individual rights over group rights, and individual needs over group needs. Individualism promotes self-efficiency, individual responsibility, and personal autonomy' (p. 59). Thus, one of the main difficulties that Saudi students face in Western countries such as the US, UK and Australia is that they come from a collectivist culture and have to adapt to an individualist culture and society.

The supporters of Hofstede's (1997) model have found it useful as it represents and determines the 'national culture', defined as 'the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another' (p. 80). He suggested that people from certain nationalities share certain collective mental programming, for example specific

values, attitudes and behaviour that differentiate their culture from those of other nationalities (Hosfstede, 1991, 1997, 2001, 2011).

However, Hosfstede's cultural framework of collective and individualist societies, as well as these concepts in general, have been heavily criticised in the literature. In particular, authors have taken issue with his methodology, such as the methods of data collection, issues of subjectivity and generalisability, and the theoretical perceptions of the definition of culture and the cultural dimensions (Venkateswaran and Ojha, 2019); McSweeney, 2002). For example, Hofstede's participants were from one large multinational company – International Business Machines (IBM) – and the culture of IBM cannot be generalised to other cultures. As argued by Triandis (1988), it is difficult – if not impossible – to apply the findings from a study of values in relation to the workplace to people of the same nationality. In addition, Triandis (1988) pointed out that using a single method of data collection, i.e. a questionnaire, to investigate a complex concept such as culture is insufficient. Moreover, in relation to the gender elements, McSweeney (2002) argued that most of the participants in Hofstede's work were males and this affected the results, which would have differed had there been equal participation of males and females. Moreover, researchers have argued that the notion that one culture represents one nation is highly subjective as there may be many ethnicities with their own cultures and possibly languages, customs and beliefs in one country (see McSweeney, 2002). Furthermore, there are doubts about the extent to which Hofstede's framework can be applied in the present time, as his data were collected between 1968 and 1973 (see McSweeney, 2002).

In terms of the concepts of individualism and collectivism in general, according to Voronov and Singer (2002) the main criticism with regard to the cultural dimension is that they are overly simplistic as the study of human behaviour and interaction requires in-depth investigation; this is a complex topic and cannot be encompassed in dichotomous terms. Jackson et al. (2006) added that these terms can better be applied in a more limited sphere; for example, in psychology collectivism could be used to consider small groups, such as family members, rather than being applicable to people in society more broadly. Wong et al. (2018) also warned against using the terms collectivist or individualist in labelling societies, cultural groups, or ethnic/racial groups, as from the psychological perspective human behaviour is complex, particularly today with increased globalisation.

Within cross-national research it is apparent that increased globalisation has resulted in an opening up of information exchange and life experiences between countries. It is thus more than ever problematic to assume that one local culture represents an entire country as the whole world now has an effect on a country's culture (Voronov and Singer, 2002; Wong et al., 2018). Moreover, it cannot be assumed that one nationality speaks a single language that represents

one culture as people do not live in fixed social frameworks and might belong to many separate local cultures (Knapp et al, 2007). In addition to this, mass media has resulted in the sense of living in a global village, with people affected by each other's thinking, actions and feelings (Hinton, 2007). Recently, with the advent of social media, the world has become increasingly connected and people have become more open to each other (Wong et al., 2018). In sociolinguistics, it is up to individuals to decide whether their relations are in-group or out-group in terms of interacting with each other (Knapp et al, 2007).

Based on the above discussion, it is necessary to gain an understanding of Saudi society and how this could affect Saudi students in the study abroad context with a view to identifying the difficulties Saudi Arabian students face in the UK and the significance of these aspects in relation to sociocultural dimensions.

Looking at the literature, few studies have been conducted in the UK, two the exceptions being the works of Rich and Troudi (2006) and Alqahtani and Pfeffer (2017), which both investigated the experience of Saudi students transitioning to study in the UK. Rich and Troudi (2006) examined Saudi male TESOL students' experience of racialisation in the UK based on the 'othering' framework. The study only included men and revealed that Saudi men suffered from the experience of othering and racism, feeling that people avoided them because they were Arab and Muslims. They indicated that this was because of the negative reputation of Muslims and Saudi men due to the increase in Islamophobia in the media after the 11 September attacks in the US, as well as the recent political revolutions in the Middle East. Thus, they struggled to communicate in English and interact with society, which negatively affected their sociocultural communication and interaction with the local people. This research showed that the damage to the Saudi image is not limited to the US, as discussed in other studies (e.g. Kamrava, 2013; Hilall and Denman, 2013); it also affects students in the UK.

Research conducted only with female students by Alqahtani and Pfeffer (2017) reported that low levels of English affected communication and interaction with people outside the university as they found it difficult to improve their language skills by communicating with native speakers. In addition, the local accent was an issue faced by Saudi students, hindering communication as they could not understand the local people.

Looking at the sociocultural dimension in other studies (e.g. Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern, 2015; Young and Snead, 2017; Song, 2019; Althobaiti and Obeidat, 2020; Ankawi, 2020; Brutt-Griffler et al., 2020; Song, 2020) conducted with Saudi students in Western English-speaking countries, issues such as psychological distress, missing family, loneliness,

discrimination, and the mixed gender society were most likely to affect communication and interaction in adjusting.

In the US, Young and Snead (2017, p. 41) found that the sociocultural differences between Saudi Arabia and the US, including the biological and psychosocial context, affected the students' sociocultural adjustment. There could be challenges posed by the 'biological context' in terms of the adjustment to a new time zone and how this might affect sleeping, and to the weather, which might be very different from the home environment, as well as new foods and drinks that are unfamiliar. Moreover, psychological issues, such as discrimination and stereotyping that the students in Young and Snead's (2017) study experienced with US society, could cause social and emotional problems, leading to isolation and homesickness arising from a lack of communication and being away from the home country and culture. Another issue was the low level of English proficiency in speaking, which made meaningful communication difficult, for example in exchanging information to rent accommodation, so that students had to ask for interpreters to deal with practical matters.

Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern (2015), in their qualitative study of female students in the UK, revealed that wearing the hijab (veil) as part of their practice of Islam, led to experiences of discrimination or sometimes curiosity regarding their appearance. They found that female students had to deal with acculturation stress to a greater extent than Saudi male students. This is in contrast to the experience of male students in the UK as discussed above in the study conducted by Rich and Troudi (2006), which found that they faced issues related to their status as Saudi males and their difficulty demonstrating that they were not terrorists, countering the media image.

Considering the prior research on the Saudi transition experience and the multiple issues addressed – academic, linguistic and educational, psychological and sociocultural, gender identity – there is a need to address the practical implications for Saudi academic institutions in terms of developing preparation programmes before students' departure to prepare them psychologically and academically for their future courses abroad and also to enable the host universities to prepare to meet the needs of students coming from different cultural and educational backgrounds (Alqahtani and Pfeffer, 2017; Althobaiti and Obeidat, 2020; Brutt-Griffler et al., 2020).

Concerning studying English abroad, TESOL practitioners should be alert to students' needs in communicating using the language and the factors that may hinder them (Rich and Troudi, 2006). In addition to this, gender identity should be considered in relation to second language learners' nonparticipation (Song 2019). An implication for teachers in their pedagogical

practice is that they should consider the cultures and identities of the students in planning their teaching and learning (Song, 2020). Also, there need to be improvements in the teaching and learning of English in Saudi schools and universities to motivate students to learn the language (Ankawi, 2020). Finally, more opportunities need to be provided for Saudi students to interact and communicate inside and outside the campus (Alsharari and Teodorescu, 2019).

While the findings of previous studies are highly significant, there are certain limitations and they perhaps fail to reflect the bigger picture in terms of addressing students' academic, psychological and sociocultural dimensions together, as well as examining both male and female students' experience, more specifically in the UK and over time.

1.4 Research objectives

This research aims to investigate the experiences of Saudi English language learners enrolled in courses in the UK. The research objectives are as follows:

(1) To gain a better understanding of the intercultural experiences of Saudi students, as well as the contributory factors and other dimensions that could affect students' adaptation in the academic, psychological and sociocultural domains as reflected in their intercultural transition to the UK.

(2) To investigate the elements facilitating and hindering them in their transition and how they overcome their difficulties.

(3) To explore the students' experience of adjustment over time and how this affects the outcomes of their intercultural experience.

(4) To integrate the research findings from different perspectives (e.g. SLA and acculturation, intercultural transition in education and internationalisation) and in light of this to re-examine existing theoretical models.

1.5 Rationale for the study

Student sojourners comprise a particularly worthwhile group to study as the number of students studying abroad is growing significantly and is becoming a significant factor dominating higher education in many host countries (Gao et al., 2015). There are several benefits for both students and the institutions. For the students, the intercultural transition they make provides opportunities to open up to another culture and by communicating in another language (in this case, English) to obtain certain skills and benefits in relation to their self-development. For the universities and academic institutions offering the English language courses, students are considered to be a strong source of income through the payment of fees and they also provide

funds to the host country, both by living in the community and potentially as tourists (Baker, 2009).

However, sojourner students may also experience a number of difficulties in different dimensions, such as culture shock and difficulty in adjusting to the new educational system (Knight, 2013). Indeed, I can attest to the academic difficulties, sociocultural issues and psychological problems students may undergo based on my own personal experience when I first came to Newcastle. The difficulties I experienced in adjusting to this new environment, both in the English language course and outside class in society and how the adjustment process affected my academic achievement both positively and negatively provided the motivation to undertake this study. I thus consider it vital to conduct study in this field, not only for personal reasons, but also because of its relevance to other ESL Saudi students studying in the UK and those who teach them.

In addition, Saudi international students in particular provide an interesting sample worthy of study as they make a transition from a different educational, social and cultural background (as discussed above) to the UK. Thus, employing a model that represents their experience in a holistic way is vital (Alhazmi and Nyland, 2013; Aljohani, 2021). In addition, it is necessary to develop a model that will help understand the experience of different groups of international students specifically as internationalisation has led to a greater diversity of experience (Phan, 2016). Moreover, since the Saudi government scholarships have been established, providing a great opportunity for Saudi students, large numbers of Saudi nationals have studied abroad in many countries. According to the latest statistics, in 2018–2019, over 122,531 Saudi students were studying abroad (MoE, 2018). This number is expected to increase in the future as part of a new movement in Saudi Arabia encompassed in the 2030 Vision will provide more opportunities for Saudis to study abroad (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016). The UK is second only to the US in terms of increasing numbers of Saudi students (Denman and Hilal, 2011). The findings of the proposed study may aid the MoE and Saudi Cultural Bureau in assessing whether the aims of sending Saudi nationals to study abroad are being achieved, or alternatively may lead these Saudi institutions to amend the foreign study programme.

Furthermore, the results of this research might also serve the UK host institutions in considering certain support mechanisms that could be provided to this student segment in the early months following arrival in the UK, such as attending pre-courses specifically aimed at providing information about the academic and social environments needed by such students. What is more, the findings of this research could enhance intercultural awareness among host institutions in the UK with regard to this particular sojourner group and aid the Saudi students in developing their intercultural competence.

1.6 Research significance and contributions

This PhD thesis makes several theoretical/conceptual, empirical and methodological contributions as follows. Regarding the conceptual contribution, based on a review of the literature in the fields of intercultural transition and internationalisation, as well as SLA and acculturation, the thesis investigates the experiences of Saudi English as a second language learners enrolled on courses in the UK from the social psychological perspective. It develops Schartner and Young's (2020) conceptual model of international student adjustment and adaptation and thus could provide a new framework for conceptualising the intercultural adjustment and adaptation of Saudi ESL students.

In addition, to develop this model, the study considered examining new contributory factors concerning attitude and motivation (Gardner, 2006, 2010), providing a more fine-grained analysis of English language ability as assessed in the original model. Moreover, the study also examined the effect the different adaptation domains exert on each other as a set of factors to provide new insights into elements usually considered outcomes in previous acculturation models in the fields of social psychology and higher education. Furthermore, the study looked at non-linguistic academic outcomes for the English language learners, including motivation, lifestyle, satisfaction and achievement. This is in addition to the psychological outcomes of satisfaction and wellbeing and the various sociocultural outcomes. By doing so, the data of this study contribute conceptually to the three fields of SLA and acculturation, intercultural transition experience, and higher education and the education of Saudi students abroad.

This study provides an empirical exploration of the experience of ESL Saudi students studying in UK institutions by examining and assessing the effects of the previously identified contributory factors (see Schartner and Young, 2020), language-related factors (see Gardner, 2006, 2010) and the three adaptation dimensions (sociocultural, psychological and academic) (see Schartner and Young, 2020), on the students' experience over a period of nine months. Few studies have been conducted focusing on Saudi ESL students studying in UK institutions and investigating their intercultural adaptation from different perspectives (academic, psychological and sociocultural).

This study also makes a methodological contribution by combining two approaches: quantitative questionnaires and qualitative interviews. This integration of methods is rare in the research literature on intercultural sojourners, especially with this student segment of Saudi English language learners. Student sojourners' transition to a new educational environment is commonly investigated through a qualitative approach, reflecting in depth the students' experience and exploring details difficult to gather through a quantitative approach (Ward et al., 2001). However, in this research the relationships between factors and investigation of

particular variables were addressed through a questionnaire to provide general quantitative data. Interviews were then employed to provide qualitative data and investigate these factors and variables in depth with relation to the three dimensions of students' adaptation (academic, psychological and sociocultural).

The study examined the contributory factors and their relationship with the three adaptation domains using self-rating scales, as also used in several other studies of different scope and focus. Examining non-linguistic outcomes based on self-evaluation makes a contribution to the literature on English language and linguistic achievement, which has primarily focused on language proficiency assessed through standardised tests, such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL).

Another contribution of this study is the translation of well-known scales from English to Arabic, i.e. the short version of the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (mini-AMTB) (Hashimoto, 2002) and the sort form of the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (Short Form MPQ-SF) (Van der Zee et al., 2013).

1.7 Summary

This chapter has introduced the thesis, providing an overview of Saudi students' mobility as one of the largest bodies of international students attending host universities in the UK (see 1.1). The chapter has presented and discussed the key terms and definitions concerning the key dimensions focused on in the study. This includes the definition of culture and interculturality and a discussion of how interculturality differs from crossculturality and intraculturality. The chapter has outlined the study approach, which combines the qualitative and quantitative paradigms and adopts a middle position that encompasses fluidity (adjustment) and fixed elements (adaptation) related to the academic, psychological and sociocultural dimensions (see 1.2.1). The chapter has defined adjustment and adaptation and discussed the differences between them, primarily that adjustment represents the transition experience over time and adaptation denotes the outcomes of adjustment (see 1.2.2).

This chapter also discussed the Saudi students' background as their scholarship for study abroad, which supports students financially, covering their tuition and the cost of living with the aim of attaining knowledge from high-ranking universities as part of Saudi Arabia's development (see 1.3.1). The chapter has provided an overview of the educational system and higher education in Saudi Arabia and the importance of English as a language employed in academia and to achieve the higher education certificate (see 1.3.2). The differences between teacher-centred and learner-centred approaches to teaching and learning English and the difficulties in the study abroad context in terms of developing academic skills and low levels

of English proficiency and how this leads to psychological problems have been addressed (1.3.3).

Gender segregation in Saudi Arabia has also been discussed in terms of its history, its status as a cultural norm, current debates and its position today with a new prevailing trend towards change with the launch of the Saudi Vision 2030. In addition, it has introduced studies in the Saudi context that have examined the difficulties that Saudi students face in making the transition to a different society and culture in relation to their racial, gender and religious identity (1.3.4).

Saudi society has also been discussed with reference to the Islamic religion, family power and authority, and its characterisation as a collective society. The chapter has set out the effects these aspects have on students' sociocultural transition in the study abroad context, especially when moving to Western countries that are characterised as individualist. For example, studies have identified that Saudi students face difficulties such as missing their family, loneliness, discrimination, and communication and interaction issues in adjusting to the new society (see 1.3.5).

The second part of the chapter discussed and presented the research objectives defined for the investigation of the intercultural experience of Saudi students in relation to three domains – academic, psychological and sociocultural – and the contributory factors affecting these, as well as how students live their experience over time and overcome their difficulties, if any (see 1.4). The rationale for the study (see 1.5) is presented and addresses three key points as follows: (i) the research could aid Saudi students in understanding the transition they are about to make or are undergoing and enable them to ensure their experience of learning abroad is valuable; (ii) the study findings could be of value for host academic institutions in considering the educational and sociocultural experience of Saudi students as part of the wider international student body and potentially balancing the needs of students from different sociocultural and educational backgrounds and the services they offer; (iii) the study findings could also be of value for Saudi academic institutions and the sponsors supporting the students in studying abroad in evaluating whether the desired aims and intentions are already being achieved or whether they need to amend the foreign study programme.

The chapter has also presented and discussed the significance and contributions of the research (see 1.6) in relation to: (i) theoretical/conceptual facets, developing Schartner and Young's (2020) conceptual model of international student adjustment and adaptation; (ii) making an empirical contribution by investigating the Saudi ESL students' experience of studying in UK institutions in relation to the previous model and the language-related factors suggested by

Gardner (2006, 2010, 2020); (iii) making a methodological contribution by combining quantitative and qualitative methods and data in a longitudinal study design based on well-known scales to provide new perspectives with this sample.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter comprises a review of literature related to the study. It explores research on the experiences of English language learners in the UK and literature on the phenomenon of the intercultural adaptation and adjustment of student sojourners abroad. First, the chapter provides an overview of the internationalisation of higher education and its tensions, English language teaching and learning and neoliberalism, international students' experience, and Saudi students' experience in the study abroad context. Second, it reviews and discussed the literature relevant to the theoretical background of the study. Then, the three study dimensions – academic, psychological and sociocultural – and the contributory factors are discussed. The research gap is identified, the research questions to be addressed are defined and finally the proposed study is set out in relation to a conceptual model of Saudi ESL students' adjustment and adaptation.

2.2. The internationalisation of higher education

Before addressing the theoretical framing of the intercultural transition experience, it is necessary to understand the context of higher education (HE) in which Saudi international students study English in pre-sessional courses in preparation for their postgraduate (Masters, PhD) courses. Since its inception in the two decades following World War II, internationalisation in HE has increased with international exchange scholarships and the greater mobility of students and staff (de Wit and Merkx, 2012). Moreover, globalisation has resulted in growing interconnectivity among nations worldwide, representing a geopolitical shift towards cross-border endeavours in technology, trade, economics, with effects in the diplomatic, cultural and social spheres. Education is no exception and internationalisation has become one of the main goals of HE institutions globally (Wihlborg and Robson, 2018). More than half of international students are in western English-speaking countries (OECD, 2018), in particular the UK, the US, Canada and Australia (McCulloch, 2016; Robson 2016).

2.2.1 Internationalisation

Knight (2003, p. 2) defines the internationalisation of education as 'the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education'. Going further, de Wit et al. (2015) state that it is 'the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society' (p. 29). Importantly for the transition experience, according to Leask (2009, p. 209), the process embeds 'international, intercultural, and/or global dimensions into the content of the curriculum

as well as the learning outcomes, assessment tasks, teaching methods, and support services of a program of study'.

Internationalisation in HE represents considerable advantages academically in terms of enhancing the quality of education through opportunities for innovation and contributions of different nations through knowledge exchange, strategic partnerships, and sharing in research and teaching, as well as having economic advantages for institutions through increased income (de Wit and Merkx, 2012; Bista, 2018). Moreover, there are social and cultural advantages, as those involved can develop the flexibility to adjust to different societies and environments and the exchange of cultures and languages can lead to the development of intercultural competence (Martínez-Usarraldea et al., 2017; Dias et al., 2021). Intercultural communication among the members HE institutions can also foster political and economic relationships among countries (Dunne, 2013). For students, the intercultural experience can highlight the normality of acceptance and respect for diversity, as well as enabling them to work cooperatively on global campuses (Soria and Troisi, 2014). At the individual level, it affects the development of the whole person and identity (Jacobone and Moro, 2015).

Despite these advantages, studies in HE indicate that there is a gap between theory and practice in terms of understanding international students' intercultural transition experience (Schartner and Young, 2020). Specifically, there a gap between what international students need and what universities offer as far as how their policies aid the students (Guo and Guo, 2017). Having a high number of international students does not necessarily mean that the university applies internationalisation in its intended meaning.

Research (e.g. Ladegaard and Cheng, 2014) conducted in this regard indicates that local and non-local students tend to live separate lives and do not communicate, socialise or work together unless required to do so by their tutors. According to Ladegaard (2017), outgroup (other) prejudice and stereotypes of cultural and national backgrounds affects communication between students. International students may also experience ingroup discrimination or prejudice from the same nation and race under the umbrella of internationalisation as found by Lee et al. (2016) in South Africa. Furthermore, issues such as a lack of common interests or different lifestyles can hinder communication with local students. For example, Guo and Guo (2017) found that international students did not necessarily wish to partake in the social drinking culture typical of young Canadian students. In addition, international students face greater difficulties and challenges compared to their domestic peers, not only personal difficulties such as homesickness and loneliness (Patron, 2007; Wang et al., 2018). They experience academic, psychological, sociocultural issues in their transition to the unfamiliar academic environment (Schartner and Young, 2020). Saudi students, for example, face issues in terms of how they

negotiate their role in relation to their transition from a gender-segregated system to a mixed-gender environment (Althobaiti and Obeidat, 2020; Song, 2019, 2020).

Problems also arise on the part of the HE institutions, namely that they often do not treat international students as equal to domestic students in providing opportunities to feel that they belong. As argued by Klemenčič et al. (2017, p. 931), it is necessary for 'higher education institutions and their capabilities to create conditions in which international students – like domestic students – feel a strong sense of efficacy in influencing the university practices as well as a sense of belonging to their university and university communities'.

2.2.2 Tensions

The main reason for the issues raised in 2.2.1 discussed in the literature is an imbalance between the benefits and drivers of internationalisation. HE institutions are driven by two motivations: (i) the neoliberal, instrumental and market-driven impetus, which highlights the economic drive to compete and benefit from increased income and high ranking; (ii) the ethical, educational and human aspect, focusing on the benefits of education for quality of life, and addressing self-development and institutional development in relation to intercultural communication and experience among the students and the members of the institution as a whole (see Guo and Guo, 2017).The instrumental driver tends to take precedence over the ethical and human driver due to financial pressures and crises globally, which have had an effect on HE policies, leading them to seek profits from international students. Thus, the institutional driver supersedes a focus in HE on learning outcomes in relation to intercultural communication and internationalisation (de Wit, 2016; Choudaha, 2017).

To understand some of the financial influence of the neoliberal tendency, Choudaha (2017) provides an analysis of three waves between 1999 and 2020, illustrating the effects of events and trends in three developed countries: the US, the UK and China. According to Choudaha (2017, p. 826), 'the first two waves coincided with 9/11 and the global financial recession. The third wave is being shaped by a combination of three events – the slowdown of the Chinese economy, the 2016 UK referendum to leave the European Union (EU), and the 2016 American presidential election'. These have had a great effect on education, bringing it under the political and economic umbrella. International students have come to be treated as the main source of income and they are viewed as a material benefit (Phan, 2016). Many scholars (e.g. Brandenburg and de Wit, 2011; Robson et al., 2017; de Wit, 2016; Kearney and Lincoln, 2017; Schartner and Young, 2020; Jin and Cortazzi, 2017; Dias et al., 2021) have expressed concern about the rapid increase in the neoliberal and instrumental drive, calling for the redefinition and revisiting of internationalisation in HE and examining how institutional internationalisation can

be operationalised in terms of its intended humanitarian, ethical, educational and sociocultural role.

International students are diverse and fluid; they are not a homogeneous group. Thus re-envisioning the educational system entails looking at what students need and providing services for them that ensure equality for them on a global campus (Glass et al., 2015; Guo and Guo, 2017; Jones, 2017; Heng, 2019). Research indicates the importance of understanding their experience individually rather than assuming that all international students need the same services (Heng, 2019). Indeed, no single national group has the same characteristics and diversity within tends to be ignored (Holliday, 2012; Jones, 2017).

An integrated system of academic and sociocultural support enables transnational students to succeed (Lee et al., 2018). Research emphasises the importance of intercultural dialogue (Castroa et al., 2016), intercultural awareness (Baker, 2011, 2015, 2016), intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 2009; Hammer, 2015), and understanding of various dimensions of the self and others reflected in the members of the institutions as a whole, including local students, international students, and staff, in terms of attaining a balance between the two motives and moving towards an unbiased paradigm (Brandenburg and de Wit, 2011; Choudaha, 2017).

Examining international students' experience in depth is vital and should be a priority as 'the international student experience lies at the centre of this dynamic' (Kearney and Lincoln, 2017, pp. 823–824). In this regard, scholars (e.g. Holliday, 2017; Pitts and Brooks, 2017) emphasise understanding the 'third space' when it comes to international students, who have been in a space in their own country and are in a transitional space in the process of moving to a new environment at an HE institution in a foreign country. Holliday (2017, p. 208) argues that 'we have to give them space to be who they can be because they can't be like us unless they become Westernised'. Moreover, the complexity of international students' cultures needs to be acknowledged in their online courses (Huaa et al., 2017). Studies reflecting these perspectives will be discussed further in the following paragraphs.

2.2.3 English language teaching and learning and neoliberalism

Under the umbrella of internationalisation, English language teaching, learning and testing are also greatly influenced by the neoliberal tendency (Simpson,2018; Soto and Pérez-Milans, 2018). For international students who wish to study on postgraduate courses in an English-speaking country, the main requirement is to pass an English language proficiency test, such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), or an equivalent. Typically, HE institutions in the UK require a score of 6.5 or above on the IELTS (British Council, 2020).

Students are required to study the curriculum and textbook content in their English language courses to pass examinations based on 'standard English' criteria (mastery of linguistic forms and accurate language production). This is problematic for two main reasons. First, it emphasises the economic aspect in that standard English is global in scope, both in terms of teaching and testing, and is considered a product to sell and HE institutions compete in this (Phan, 2016; Jenkins and Leung, 2019). Second, there is an issue in adopting standard English as the model of language and communication as there is gap between the language learned in the classroom and its use in society. Students in class communicate and interact using particular forms, but when they need to communicate in real life, they face diversity in language use and unexpected situations (Badwan, 2017).

In this regard, Badwan (2021) argues that in English language education there needs to be a shift towards teaching students about real world English, which includes different varieties, fluidity, and unexpected experiences, enabling them to engage in communication that is multilingual and multicultural. In addition, Phan (2016) calls for more research, going beyond language use to investigate students' diverse experiences.

Gardner and colleagues (e.g. see Gardner, 1979, 1985, 2010, 2020) noted the importance of the social psychological element in language learning, rather than focusing on proficiency/grades/linguistical outcomes, which are prominent in research and are indicative of a neoliberal perspective. Learners' social psychological characteristics relate to the cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions of motivational and attitudinal factors and play an important role in the students' English and academic outcome.

2.2.4 International students' experience

Many qualitative studies have explored the diverse experiences of international students in HE courses (e.g. Harscha and Poehner, 2016; Holliday, 2016; Holmes et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2016; Heng, 2019), examining the dynamic process of intercultural adjustment pre, during and post their studies, and focusing mainly on the academic and sociocultural aspects of the students' experience. For example, Harscha and Poehner (2016) looked at international students' cognitive processes prior to and during their studies and after their return home in relation to teaching, learning and assessment, as well as their emotions, behaviours, negotiation of matters from different perspectives and finding solutions for them (Harscha and Poehner, 2016). It has been found that students struggle to communicate in English and there is a lack of understanding about the cultural complexity they face in their PhD programmes (Holliday, 2016).

Looking at the specific national and cultural backgrounds of European students, the multicultural project, Intercultural Education Resources for Erasmus Students and their

Teachers (IEREST), employed students' self-reflections on their intercultural experience of academic programmes from the perspective of the self and the other, namely how students understand themselves through communication with others and how this contributes to their understanding of others (Holmes et al., 2016). Heng (2019) examined the academic difficulties faced by Chinese students and their sense of belonging to the academic institutions. The study found that they wanted to be asked about their culture and have their tutors and peers show interest in their culture. Lee et al. (2016) discussed the ingroup discrimination and privilege issues confronting African students.

Many studies (e.g. Harvey, 2016; Jackson, 2016; Spencer-Oatey, 2016) have employed the qualitative narrative approach, exploring the individual experience. For example, Spencer-Oatey (2016) examined the experience of Italian students involved in the Erasmus programme studying in the UK and found that their adjustment presented up and down trajectories in relation to personal and academic dimensions. Jackson (2016) undertook a study of Chinese students engaged in second language learning in the UK and explored their intercultural development in the academic, sociocultural and psychological domains. Harvey's (2016) narrative study of Italian students studying in the UK looked at how they negotiated the boundaries between the self and the other, finding others in themselves to understand them and at the same time retaining the uniqueness of the self. The study considered the ideological process the learners went through in negotiating their relationships with others through language.

2.2.5 Saudi students' experience

Looking at studies that have examined Saudi students' transition experience in the study abroad context, specifically in the western English-speaking countries, several have been conducted in the US and Australia, focused mainly on female students and exploring their experience through a qualitative approach. These studies primarily considered gender, racial and religious aspects, for example how the gender identity of Saudi female students hinders communication in English (Song, 2019), how female Saudi students negotiate their roles in a new (mixed gender) environment (Song, 2020), the sociocultural and academic benefits of studying abroad for Saudi students (Althobaiti and Obeidat, 2020), the adjustment experiences of Saudi women (Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern, 2015), and the experience of both male and female Saudi students in moving from the gender-segregated environment to studying in a mixed-gender context (e.g. Alhazmi and Nyland, 2010, 2013, 2015).

In the UK, few studies have been conducted with Saudi students. Rich and Troudi (2006) explored Saudi male TESOL students' experience of racialisation in the UK based on the 'othering' framework. Alqahtani and Pfeffer (2017) examined Saudi female students'

experience using mixed methods, with the qualitative aspects focusing mainly on the academic difficulties and parental challenges faced in their dual roles as students and parents, and the quantitative aspect measuring the students' level of acculturation using a single scale.

Studies have also investigated the linguistic competence of Saudi English language learners in the study abroad context. Alqahtani (2011) investigated language needs in relation to linguistic competence, looking at the four skills – speaking, writing, reading and listening – as well as vocabulary and grammar. He found that in the initial stages of study abroad, Saudi English language learners were not aware of the roles they and the teacher were supposed to adopt in class and had difficulty engaging in two-way communication with their teachers as they were used to classes in which the teachers played the main role and were viewed as the source of knowledge. Indeed, Kampman (2011) found that one of the main difficulties for Saudi students studying abroad in English-speaking countries such as Australia was making the transition from a teacher-centred approach to a learner-centred classroom environment.

To investigate Saudi English language learners' intercultural experience, it is necessary to review the literature to establish the theoretical background reflecting the intercultural transition experience of sojourners specifically international students in the study abroad context.

2.3. Theoretical background to intercultural transition experience

The phenomenon of intercultural transition has been studied by many researchers and scholars in different fields, focusing on various domains – sociocultural, psychological and educational – and yielding a number of theories and models (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001). Among the theories reflecting sojourners' transition based on different dimensions are U-curve theory (Lysgaard, 1955), which concerns the psychological transition of sojourners to a new environment, the international adjustment model (Black et al., 1991), the dialectic model (Anderson, 1994), the acculturation model (Ward, 1996; Ward and Rana-Deuba, 1999; Ward et al., 2001) and the ABC model of culture shock (Ward et al., 2001). More recently, Schartner and Young (2020) have proposed an integrated conceptual model of international students' adjustment and adaptation. Based on the purpose of this study, the related theories reflecting the three dimensions of academic, psychological, sociocultural adjustment are reviewed briefly in what follows.

U-curve theory

Lysgaard's (1955) U-curve theory is a well-known model cited by many researchers in their studies in relation to the exploration of the intercultural transition experience on the part of international students studying abroad and their psychological reactions over time. It describes the stages of sojourners starting from their first arrival to their full adaptation in terms of

months, these stages being explained as follows (see Figure 2.1): the initial stage is called the 'honeymoon' phase, in which sojourners feel happy and excited; this phase is followed by disappointment and discouragement due to 'culture shock'; then there is a stage of 'adjustment', in which there is recovery; finally, the stage of 'mastery' relates to full adaptation (see Lysgaard, 1955, p. 50). The U-curve model is supported by a number of empirical studies, for example those conducted by Sewell and Davidsen (1961) and Church (1982), reflecting the adjustment processes of overseas inhabitants.

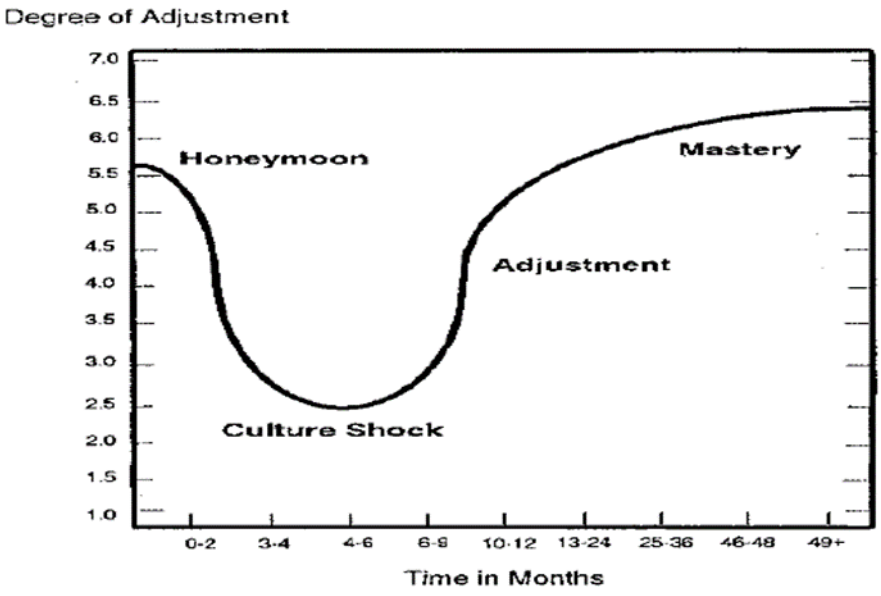

Figure 2.1. The U-curve of the intercultural adjustment model

(source: Black and Mendenhall, 1991, p. 227)

In an extension of U-curve theory, Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) discuss the W curve, which describes the case of people suffering from culture shock not only on arrival in a host country, but also when they return to their country of origin, i.e. reverse culture shock. This they process again, undergoing the same experience of adjustment, as indicated in the second part of the W curve.

Adler (1975, 1987) later rejected the traditional view of culture shock as it suggested a clinical interpretation of mental or psychological illness in that it referred to the experience of transition to the new culture as having a negative influence on people. He argued that the stress of such a life change is necessary as it provides a chance for personal development, pointing out that 'implicit in the conflict and tension posed by the transitional experience lies the potential for authentic growth and development' (Adler, 1975, p. 14). Furthermore, over time people overcome such a shock, for example by developing coping strategies. This interpretation later gave rise to the emergence of a large body of research on the strategies and means that aid

sojourners in settling down, adapting and overcoming obstacles. Some authors have associated these strategies and means with the personality dimension (see e.g. Ward and Chang, 1997; Ying and Han, 2006), whereas others have linked them to social support (see e.g. Adelman, 1988; Tanaka et al., 1997).

Other criticisms of the U-curve model were made by Ward and Kennedy (1996) and Brown and Holloway (2008), who found that the early stage of transition to the new environment is the most difficult, with students needing to adjust to very many changes. Moreover, Ward (1996) and Ward and Kennedy (1999) argued that the experience of intercultural transition experience is reflected in adjustments and adaptations which develop and are processed in different stages and follow various patterns in relation to two essential dimensions – psychological and sociocultural – as reflected in the ABC model.

ABC theory

With regard to Oberg's (1960) theory of 'culture shock', Ward et al. (2001) developed a conceptual framework based on a cultural learning approach in which they distinguished between psychological adaptation and sociocultural adaptation intercultural transition experience. This is the ABC model of cultural contact, which consists of three components (see Figure 2.2): A denotes the 'affective' outcomes of psychological adjustment related to stress and coping approaches; B denotes 'behaviour' as understood by cultural learning theory and reflected in the behavioural outcomes of sociocultural adaptation. These two dimensions are interrelated and both have cognitive outcomes (C) as reflected in identity and inter-group perceptions. Each of these aspects of the ABC model is represented by different variables (see Ward et al., 2001). In-depth discussion of the sociocultural and psychological adaptation domains is provided in section 2.4.2.

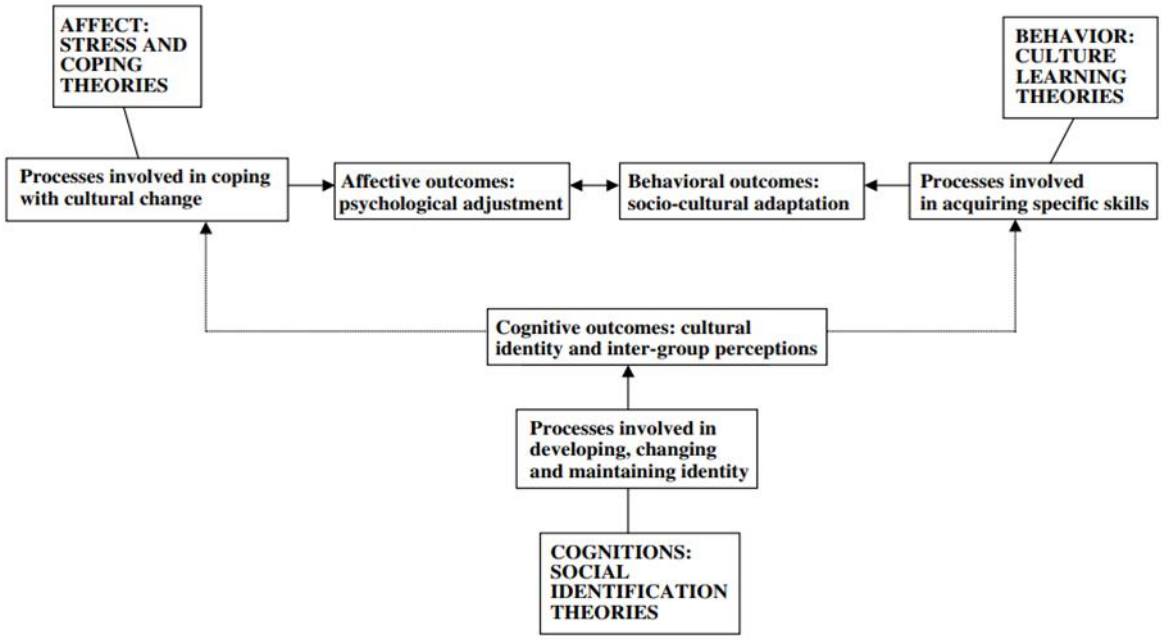

Figure 2.2. The ABC model of cultural contact (source: Ward et al., 2001)

The two approaches, namely culture learning and coping strategies, were investigated by Ward et al. (2001) in the context of three groups of travellers – immigrants, sojourners and refugees – reflecting on their psychological adaptation and sociocultural adjustment. However, Young and Schartner (2014, p. 549) argued that 'their acculturation model was not specifically tailored to the academic student sojourn'.

A conceptual model of international student adjustment and adaptation

Young and Schartner (2014, p. 549) developed 'an integrated conceptual model of academic adjustment and adaptation' (see Figure 2.3) to address international students' sojourn. They suggested that the academic adjustment and adaptation domains can be understood based on cultural learning and coping with stress: when students move to the new academic environment, they need to manage their stress, developing certain strategies to overcome it, as well as learning new and unfamiliar academic practises and skills related to the new culture of learning.

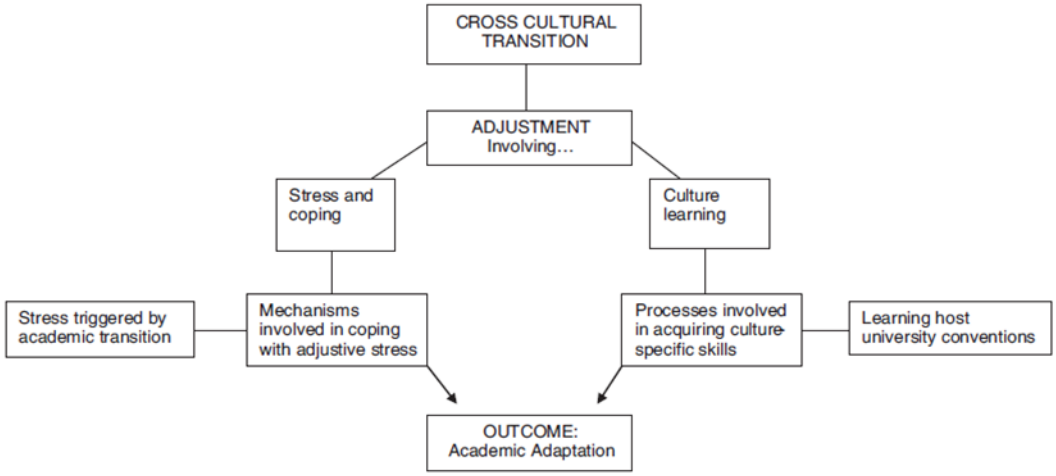

Figure 2.3. An integrated conceptual model of academic adjustment and adaptation (source: Young and Schartner, 2014, p. 549)

Schartner and Young's (2016) conceptual model covered the three dimensions of sociocultural, psychological and academic adjustment and adaptation. They conducted a longitudinal study of postgraduate international students in the UK university context. They used a mixed methods approach, comprising a quantitative self-rating questionnaire administered twice (T1 N = 108 students; T2 N = 226 students) and three stages of qualitative semi-structured interviews. They examined multiple factors that affect international students' experience of adjustment and adaptation in three main domains – sociocultural, psychological and academic – as well as differences between the adjustment processes and their outcomes.

Based on their study findings, as shown in Figure 2.4, they proposed that international students go through three stages of adjustment: the initial stage is the 'arrival stage', related to pre-sojourn factors; the second stage is 'adjustment', in which the various factors contributing to the students' adjustment experience relate to the academic, sociocultural and psychological domains; the final stage is 'adaptation', in which outcomes are identified (Young and Schartner, 2014; Schartner and Young, 2016). These three domains of adjustment and adaptation, as well as contributory factors, are discussed in the following sections in relation to the focus of the study (see sections 2.4.1, 2.4.2 and 2.5).

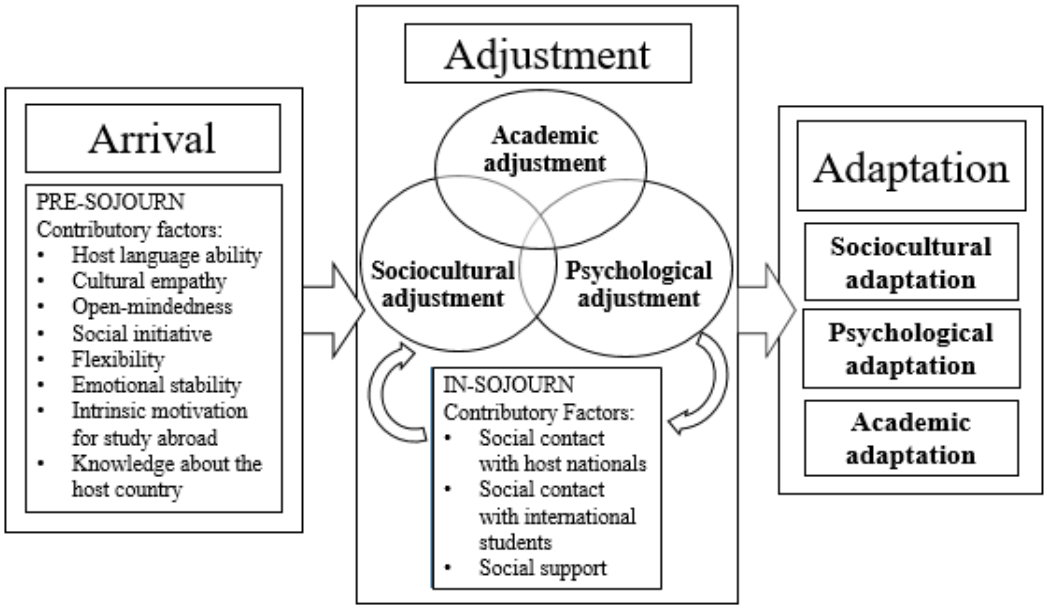

Figure 2.4. A conceptual model of international student adjustment and adaptation (source: Schartner and Young, 2016, p. 2)

Recent studies have framed and developed this model. For example, Nguyen and Larson (2017) undertook a qualitative study which investigated how Student Affairs influenced the adjustment and adaptation of Indonesian undergraduate to US institutions. The study revealed the importance of the Student Affairs function in supporting the Indonesian students, providing them with the strategies needed to help them feel more involved and welcome in university society. It also pointed to the importance of the organisation in terms of cultural and religious aspects and how these helped the students adjust.

Gopalan et al. (2019) undertook a study of 208 international students in the US university context. The study tested Schartner and Young's (2016) model by examining the phases of the international students' transition in terms of whether the arrival variable predicted adjustment domains, as well as the relationships between the variables. This study incorporated an additional variable in the model, self-efficacy, to reflect that confidence in one's ability to succeed can contribute positively to the adjustment process in the US, as well as having an indirect positive effect on satisfaction with academic aspects and leading to a greater likelihood of remaining at the university throughout the course of study. Gopalan et al. (2019) suggested that this variable related to the international students' context be added to capture the complex stages that they go through in adjusting to the new context.

The previous paragraphs have addressed the theoretical background in the field of sojourners' intercultural transition experience. The following section reviews the literature related specifically to English language learners as the group of sojourners focused on in this study.

2.3.1 Academic adjustment and adaptation

International students studying abroad go through a process of academic adjustment to achieve their aims and their academic outcomes reflect their adaptation (Schartner and Young, 2020). Academic performance reflects the extent to which educational goals have been achieved, as indicated in the students' outcomes, success and achievement (Li et al., 2010). For international students studying in an English-speaking learning environment, their language proficiency plays a vital role in completing their studies effectively and successfully (Wardlow, 1999; Li et al., 2010). In addition, satisfaction with academic performance in class is related to students' adjustment to the type of assessment, academic writing, group work, autonomy, classroom interaction and communication, as reflected in many studies concerning English language learners making a shift to task-based/communicative approaches in the second language classroom (see Ellis, 2009; Robinson, 2011; Long, 2014). This is also the situation experienced by international students making the academic adjustment to studying different subjects abroad (e.g. Brown, 2009; Schartner, 2014; Schartner and Young, 2016).

Various other factors can affect students' learning outcomes, such as learning habits and skills (Abbott-Chapman et al., 1992), learning approaches and strategies, including management, effort and ability, help-seeking behaviour and peer learning (Watkins and Hattie, 1981; Sadler-Smith, 1996; Duff et al., 2004). However, there are distinct factors related to 'academic culture shock' that Gilbert (2000, p. 14) argues international students studying outside their home countries in HE face to a greater extent than domestic students. These may result in poor academic performance and students may return to their countries having failed their courses. Such factors are related to the culture of learning, in particular the academic institutional environment, including the system of education, the ways of teaching and learning, the style of lectures, assessment and relationships between staff and students (Gilbert, 2000). In addition, Webb and Read (2000, p. 1) point to cultural factors, such as 'acquired knowledge, learned patterns of behaviour, attitudes, values, expectations, rituals and rules, a sense of identify and of history'.

Regarding Saudi students and their academic adjustment and adaptation to the study abroad context, studies such as that of Alhazmi and Nyland (2013; 2015) have examined the effect of intercultural interaction on academic performance, in particular how moving from a gender-segregated learning environment to a mixed-gender learning environment might encourage and facilitate students in achieving their aims rather than hindering them.

Alsahafi and Shin (2017) conducted a study with 100 Saudi international students studying in Sydney, Australia, aiming to investigate the factors that affected their academic experience. The study suggested that Saudi students need to develop academic skills to adjust to the mixed-

gender learning environment. Among the coping strategies that the students used to adjust to the unfamiliar learning environment were mixing with others in events outside class to improve their language and to practise adjusting to the mixed-learning environment.

Alqahtani (2011) found that in the initial stage, Saudi English language learners were not aware of the roles they and the teacher were supposed to adopt in class and had difficulty engaging in two-way communication with their teachers as they were used to classes in which teachers played the main role and were viewed as the source of knowledge. Indeed, Kampman (2011) found that one of the main difficulties for Saudi students studying abroad in English-speaking countries such as Australia was making the transition from a teacher-centred approach to a learner-centred classroom environment.

Academic attainment is commonly measured through regular assessment or examination. Grade point average (GPA) is a standardised measure widely used as an effective means of assessing a student's overall academic attainment in all subjects over a programme of study (Zeegers, 2001). In addition, examinations of English language achievement or proficiency, such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), have been used by many studies (e.g. Staynoff, 1997; Huong, 2001; Woodrow, 2006; Johnson, 2012) as standardised tests to measure the level of English. However, such tools do not assess other factors related to academic performance, such as skills, ability and motivation. Self-evaluation and self-concept, addressing the students' views of their own academic and language ability, are also important measures that cover aspects not reflected by examinations or GPA (Neumann et al., 2019).

Moreover, Anderson et al. (2016, p. 4) proposed three aspects potentially important in determining international student sojourners' academic adjustment in terms of learning outcomes: (i) academic lifestyle, (ii) academic achievement and (iii) academic motivation. 'Academic lifestyle' refers to students' perceptions of the fit between their role as students and enjoying the student lifestyle in their academic course of study, viewing it worth spending time and effort to develop their academic skills (e.g. critical thinking and research and writing skills). 'Academic achievement' concerns students' satisfaction with their achievement and progress, as well as satisfaction with their ability compared with other students in their course of study. 'Academic motivation' refers to the drive and motivation encouraging students to persevere and complete their course of study within the determined timeframe, achieving their aims in studying abroad, such as having the chance of a better life.

Other factors also affect students' academic performance. Hung (2015), for example, highlighted the importance of English learners' satisfaction with communicative and active-

oriented classes when studying abroad. This also links to their satisfaction with their ability as independent learners and their capability in taking a range of roles in class and communicating with other students, as well as satisfaction with the teacher's roles, authentic content and materials and different assessment types. Hung (2015) emphasised the importance of English language learners' self-evaluation based on their understanding and satisfaction with classroom activities and types of learning, such as communicative tasks and active learning, and how these might contribute their success or lack of success in language learning and achievement.

In addition to academic adaptation and adjustment in the language learning context, aspects of psychological and sociocultural adjustment and adaptation are key dimensions, as reflected by many scholars (e.g. Ward et al., 2001; Sumer, 2009; Schartner and Young, 2016).

2.3.2 Psychological and sociocultural adjustment and adaptation

The psychological domain refers to the affective aspect of sojourners' wellbeing or satisfaction with their life, while sociocultural adaptation refers to the behavioural side in terms of the ability to fit in and interact in the host culture. The former can be understood as related to a 'stress and coping framework', whereas the latter is explained by 'a social skills or culture learning paradigm' (Ward and Kennedy, 1999, p. 660). These two adjustment domains are interrelated, although they are conceptually different as they are influenced by varying elements over time, such as social support and the amount of contact with people from the host country (Ward et al., 2001). In addition, Ward and Rana-Deuba (1999) argue that although the initial period in the new society is usually predicated by high levels of difficulties in both dimensions, 'sociocultural problems steadily decrease and gradually level off, whereas psychological distress is more variable over time' (p. 424).

Berry (1997), in his review of intercultural transition experience and acculturation, addresses the stress and coping approach. He explains that in response to the inevitable stress imposed by moving from one environment to another – an essential part of the process of intercultural transition experience and life change – foreigners need to develop or select effective coping tactics and strategies. According to Ward (2004), the processes of implementing coping strategies and their psychological results are likely to be affected by variables at both the individual and social levels. At the individual level, demographics, personality, cultural distance, expectations and length of residence are likely to influence the use of coping strategies and in turn affect psychological wellbeing in intercultural transition adaptation. At the societal level, the discriminating characteristics of the political and social framework and demographic aspects, such as the compositions of ethnic groups and the extent of cultural variety in both the country of origin and the country of settlement will affect psychological adjustment outcomes.

The notions of stress and coping can be applied in training programmes to teach people skills for managing their stress (Ward et al., 2001).

The concept of culture learning, or social skills, was originally developed and advocated by the social psychologists Furnham and Bochner (1986). It focuses on the behavioural element of intercultural contact in which the sojourners encounter particular acts and these form a connection between them and the members of the society in the host country. It has been argued that the struggles and stress resulting from intercultural contact are mainly due to the sojourners lacking the social skills of the receiving society (Argyle, 1969). Cultural learning is 'the process whereby sojourners acquire culturally relevant social knowledge and skills in order to survive and thrive in their new society' (Ward et al., 2001, p. 51). Obtaining cultural knowledge is 'the process of seeking and obtaining a sound educational foundation about diverse cultural and ethnic groups' (Campinha-Bacote, 2002, p. 182). Prospective sojourners can prepare for transition and develop their social skills through means such as training programmes and interactive guidelines (Zhou et al., 2008).

2.4 Contributory factors in intercultural adjustment and adaptation

Reviewing the literature focusing on both second language learning and intercultural adaptation, there are a number of factors that potentially contribute to effective intercultural transition for student sojourners in general and second language learners specifically. Studies conducted among second language learners concerning acculturation have indicated that attitudinal and motivational factors affect successful and effective learning the second language will be (Masgoret and Gardner, 2003). In this regard, Gardner (1985, 2000, 2005, 2010) developed the 'socio-educational model', revising and modifying it a number of times. This model highlighted how variables of integrative orientation, attitudes towards the learning situation and motivational intensity, instrumental orientation and language anxiety positively affect language achievement. Masgoret and Ward (2006) focused on Gardner's language-related factor of integrative orientation in terms of influencing individuals to be open to the host community and social interaction, viewing foreign language proficiency and communicative competence as key aspects in integration with the host society. A number of studies in both the EFL and ESL contexts have revealed that attitudinal and motivational factors exert a great influence on language development (Gardner, 2010). In addition, Masgoret and Ward (2006) in their interactive model indicated the importance of personality type and individual differences, as represented in the 'big five' model of personality traits, exploring the association between personality type and sociocultural adaptation and the development of intercultural competence and interaction.

Schartner and Young (2020), in their model of international students' adjustment and adaptation, summarised a number of theoretical models in terms of intercultural transition dimensions, such as Berry's (2006) model of stress and coping and Ward et al.'s (2001) model of acculturation, which includes psychological and sociocultural aspects and the factors affecting them. Schartner and Young (2016, p. 3) proposed a number of contributory factors (pre-sojourn) and how they affect the psychological, sociocultural and academic dimensions of intercultural adjustment and adaptation. These factors are as follows: (i) 'host language ability', 'knowledge about the host country', 'prior overseas experience', 'autonomy in the decision to study abroad' and 'intercultural competence'; (ii) adjustment outcomes during the sojourners' experience, which include the dimensions of academic, psychological and sociocultural adjustment, as well as social contact and social support; (iii) the effect of sojourners' adaptation on the outcome of their experience.

However, this model focused in general on international students' experience in HE abroad, while this study specifically considered the experience of English language learners. As argued by Schartner and Young (2016), not one model fits all sojourner groups as they and their circumstances differ. Therefore, to suit the context of English language learners, 'autonomy in the decision to study abroad' was replaced by 'motivation in second language (L2) learning'; whereas the former emphasises the role of motivational factors in international students' decision to study abroad (Chirkov et al., 2007), the latter focuses especially on motivation according to Gardner's (2010) socio-educational model, which considers learners' motivation for studying a language to be a significant predictor of their L2 attainment. In addition, besides the integrative and instrumental types of motivation, other influential determinants of language attainment proposed in this model are language anxiety and attitudes towards the learning situation. In addition, according to Masgoret and Ward (2006) and Schartner and Young (2016), language proficiency has a great impact on the acculturation context. However, it can be argued that there are other elements related to language proficiency that might provide a more fine-grained picture of English (host) language ability. Therefore, both sets of factors discussed by Gardner (2010) and Schartner and Young (2016) will be examined and discussed in the following paragraphs.

Another aspect that it is essential to consider in determining the factors that will be examined in this study is the distinction between the levels of acculturation in a study. According to Yan and Berliner (2011), it is necessary to distinguish between two levels of investigation: the group level, referred to as macro-level acculturation, focuses on the characteristics of a group of sojourners, examining the sets of influence from two cultures; the individual level of investigation, or micro-level acculturation, concerns individual characteristics, such as age,

gender, language ability and personality. Viewed from the social psychology perspective of the macro and micro levels of acculturation, SLA theories reflect the psychological and social dimensions of learning in the social context and the language learner as an individual who experiences changes in acculturation (see Doughty and Long, 2003). Therefore, this study examines the acculturation of individual English language student sojourners at the micro level.

2.5.1 English language ability

It is necessary to differentiate between 'language proficiency' and 'language ability' in research. Language proficiency is related to testing and the outcomes of the teaching and learning experience in the classroom, which mainly form-focused and meaning-focused, in terms of mastering linguistic aspects and using them in classroom interaction accurately and avoiding mistakes (see Savignon, 2018). TOEFL is an example of a language proficiency test based on the theory of audio-lingualism originally developed by Noam Chomsky (1959), which combines cognitive and linguistic elements and provides an indication of linguistic competence based on mastery of linguistic forms (e.g. words, rules and sound) and using the language through the meaningful and accurate formation of words and sentences (see Savignon, 2018).

In contrast, language ability is more comprehensive concept that combines the use of linguistic forms with the use of language in social interaction outside class. It is thus related to the notion of communicative competence originally proposed by the sociolinguist Hymes (1972), who was interested in the use of language in society. Communicative competence comprises four main elements: i) linguistic competence (as explained previously), ii) sociolinguistic competence (understanding of the social context and its influence on the rules of language use, which affect interaction in society and are in turn affected by culture-related elements such as norms, values and beliefs), iii) discourse competence (related to the meaningful connection between sentences in the spoken and written context in relation to cultural elements), and iv) strategic competence (the ability to fit in real-life communicative situations and employing effective strategies for communication, such as problem-solving and avoiding misunderstanding) (Alptekin, 2002, pp. 57–62).

Thus, language ability entails learners being able to communicate effectively using the L2 in interactions with others in real-life situations, not just mastering linguistic forms. Rather, they will be able to use language effectively, accurately, meaningfully and strategically in real social interactions and effectively convey meaning to native speakers of the language (see Alptekin, 2002). Research also indicates that there are various stages in the development of communicative competence from basic to advanced that are referred to as pragmatic competence, denoting appropriate usage of the language in society and awareness of linguistic forms and sociocultural aspects, as reflected in norms, beliefs and values (Taguchi, 2009).

English language ability for second/foreign language learners is considered to be the ability to use the language in a meaningful manner (Bachman, 1990). Historically, second language ability referred to the capacity to master the linguistic aspects of the language (sounds, grammatical rules, words) and it was assumed that learners would be able to use the language once they had mastered knowledge of the linguistic aspects. However, in the 1970s this view was challenged: while acknowledging that linguistic aspects were important, there was a shift to ensuring that the language could be used and the notion of communicative competence was proposed (see Nunan, 2015). Ying and Liese (1991) highlighted students' ability to speak, read, write and understand English, in line with Savignon (1991, pp. 264–267), who defined language proficiency as 'the ability of language learners to interact with other speakers, to make meaning, as distinct from the ability to perform on discrete-point tests of grammatical knowledge […] and noted that such ability requires an understanding of sociocultural contexts of language use'. This definition fits the study in exploring the ability to use the language both in academic life (English courses) and in the social context (outside class in British/local society).

In the SLA literature, the ability to communicate in the language plays an important role in language learners' achievement (e.g. Fakeye and Ogunsiji, 2009; Gardner, 2010). In the literature on intercultural adaptation, host language ability and proficiency are key factors facilitating the dimensions of adaptation in terms of academic success in English-speaking institutions when studying abroad (e.g. Ying and Liese, 1990; Barratt and Huba, 1994; Daller and Phelan, 2013; Telbis et al., 2014; Geary, 2016; Schartner and Young, 2016; Anderson and Guan, 2018). Indeed, a low level of English language proficiency is considered the main issue hindering academic adaptation in classroom learning and communication and interaction (Lu et al., 2012; Son and Park, 2014).

Regarding psychological adaptation, Schartner and Young (2020) indicate that for international students who have high levels of English language, as exemplified by a score of 6.5 or above on IELTS, their self-rating of their English language ability is associated with their satisfaction with life. However, low levels of English proficiency lead to psychological issues such as feeling isolated and poor contact with society (Trice, 2007).

Researchers such as Wilson (2013) and O'Reilly et al. (2010) have suggested that high levels of English language proficiency can lead to having friends in the host society and this contributes to sociocultural adaptation. In addition, Masgoret and Ward (2006), in their acculturation model, indicate that host language proficiency is the core of sociocultural adaptation, facilitating social contact and communication. However, Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern's (2015) study conducted with Saudi students indicated that high levels of English are not necessary to facilitate friendships between Saudi female students and host

language contacts. The researchers considered that transitioning to a very different society increased the students acculturative stress as they had more difficulties in terms of contact with the opposite gender and greater independence. Indeed, transitioning to the new society in the US resulted in problems for students' sociocultural adaptation and they tried to avoid interaction with society in their initial stages of being in the country.

In terms of measuring the association between language ability and academic achievement, studies such as those of Staynoff (1997), Huong (2001), Woodrow (2006) and Johnson (2012) have used IELTS and TOEFL to test English language ability among international students and GPA to test students' academic performance and have found a strong relationship between the scores on these tests and GPA. Kerstijens and Nery's (2000) study conducted with Saudi students used the same tools but found no association between IELTS and GPA.

Indeed, many researchers (e.g. Fox, 2004; Woodrow, 2006; Daller and Phelan, 2013; Martirosyan et al., 2015) have argued that using IELTS and TOEFL as standard tests to indicate the level of English proficiency is insufficient in measuring international students' academic performance as there are other constructs that should be considered in assessing English language ability, such as social contact, motivation, academic skills (or lack of such skills), acculturation and academic adjustment. In addition, students' self-evaluation of their academic performance and ability in communication in English are important measures to be considered (Neumann et al., 2019).

2.5.2 Attitude, motivation and language anxiety

Attitude, motivation and language anxiety are considered important variables in second language acquisition/learning and have been examined by many scholars in the field of SLA (e.g. Gardner, 2000, 2005, 2010; Masgoret and Gardner, 2003; Lehmann, 2006; MacIntyre, 2010; Al-Hoorie and MacIntyre, 2019). In studying the experience of English language learners specifically, it is necessary to consider their motivation from a perspective that addresses different dimensions, for example 'intrinsic motivation' in terms of and inner desire to study abroad (Chirkov et al., 2007). International students' motivations are represented in Schartner and Young's (2020) conceptual model of international student adjustment and adaptation, which is key resource in this study. It also draws on the work of Gardner and colleagues, which has explored important motivational dimensions in the field of SLA.

Historically, Gardner and Lambert (1959) drew attention to the importance of the social psychological dimensions of motivation and non-linguistic factors as having a considerable impact on foreign and second language achievement. In their early work, they discussed integrative motivation and the need for language learners to be open to the L2 community and

willing to communicate in the target language (Gardner, 2010). Gardner (2000, 2005, 2010) developed the socio-educational model of second language acquisition, adding other factors. The latest model (see Gardner, 2010) includes the following: (i) attitude towards learning situation, (ii) motivational intensity, (iii) integrative motivation, (iv) instrumental motivation, and (v) language anxiety (inside and outside class). These are employed as variables in this study.

The reason for adopting these variables in the study is due to the need to view the students' experience from a humanitarian and educational perspective, which represents a shift away from the neoliberal position (cf. 2.2.3). As noted by Al-Hoorie and MacIntyre (2019, p. 253), by taking account of the humanitarian dimension in research, 'a renewed vibrancy has developed. With so much left to learn about the social psychology of language, the motivation process, and how people think about themselves within the larger frame of language, culture and relationships'.

In the field of motivation and second/foreign language learning, several models addressing a range of factors have been developed over the years and can be distinguished broadly in three main periods, as commonly held in the literature (Dörnyei, 2019; Mahmoodi and Yousefi, 2022). In the first phase, the concept of motivation incorporated multidimensional social psychological factors in the cognitive, behavioural and affective domains, strongly influenced by Gardner's socio-educational model (see Gardner, 2020). The main criticism of this model concerned the notion of integrativeness and the learner being open to the L2 community and developing language proficiency through communication with that community. However, this conceptualisation situates language development in relation to Western English-speaking countries and does not take account of English as a 'lingua franca' (Al-Hoorie, 2017; Mahmoodi and Yousefi, 2022).

Due to this, in the second phase, Dörnyei (2005, 2009) proposed the L2 motivational self system, a cognitive-based model that comprised the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self and the L2 learning experience: the ideal L2 self motivates the present self to work towards the ideal and developing the attributes of the ought-to L2 self (Dörnyei, 2019; Mahmoodi and Yousefi, 2022). The latest phase, to date, represents the innovative ways in which motivation emerges, for example through imagination (e.g. Norton, 2013) and vision (e.g. Dörnyei and Kubanyiova, 2014; see also Al-Hoorie, 2017; Mahmoodi and Yousefi, 2022).

Based on the review of the literature on motivation and second language learning and given the holistic approach adopted in this study aimed at gaining insights into the sociocultural, psychological and academic adaptation of the students, the study encompasses cognitive,

behavioural and affective variables related to attitudinal and motivational dimensions. This approach is endorsed by MacIntyre (2010, p. 375), who highlights the value of Gardner and Lambert's early work:

> …First, Gardner & Lambert showed that attitudes and motivation MATTER in second language acquisition […] the research tradition has combined affective and cognitive factors in a single motivational frame, describing a uniquely human motive. The model developed at moments in history when animal learning models (e.g., instincts) or 'cold cognition' (i.e., without contribution from emotion) dominated discussions of motivation in psychology. By considering the multiple social, cognitive, and affective forces that produce both linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes that feedback on each other, the socio-educational model could plausibly be proposed in the current zeitgeist as a brand new way to do research.

The study does not focus particularly on integrative motivation; rather, it considers contributory factors, namely attitude, motivation and language anxiety. Indeed, measuring integrative motivation is complex as English language communities vary and are fluid. This is beyond the scope of this study, which focuses on Saudi students studying English language as a second language in the UK, i.e. a second language community.

The following paragraphs discuss in greater details the five variables included in the latest version of the socio-educational model as important for success in learning/acquiring a language and using it (see Gardner, 2010): (i) attitude towards the learning situation, (ii) motivational intensity, (iii) integrative motivation, (iv) instrumental motivation, and (v) language anxiety (inside and outside the class).

Integrative and instrumental motivational orientations

Integrative motivation refers to learners who have a positive attitude towards the target language community and are open and willing to communicate with and integrate within the community. In contrast, an instrumental orientation denotes the drive to learn the language for practical purposes, such as to obtain a job or good grades (Gardner, 2010). As pointed out by Gardner (2010), the integrative and instrumental aspects concern orientation and are not to be confused with the other element in his model, which is motivational intensity. According to Masgoret and Ward (2006), integrativeness is a language-related variable, entailing the ability to use the language, being open to the host language society and using the language for communication. This contributes to the sociocultural adaptation of sojourners and satisfaction with their intercultural contact leads to fewer difficulties in adapting to the society. The integrative orientation has more power and influence on language learning than the instrumental orientation as the former relates to a focus on learning the language and using it for communication, whereas the latter relates to learning for practical reasons. Studies (e.g. Al-Mohanna and Dhawi, 2017; Al-Oliemat, 2019) conducted with Saudi students learning English

in Saudi Arabia as a foreign language have found that students have an instrumental orientation towards learning the language to achieve the required grades. In contrast, Alkaabi's (2016) study of Saudi students studying English in the US reported an integrative orientation and that the students were able to learn the language through their access to society. Yu (2010) conducted a study of two groups of students – Asian and European – studying Chinese as a second language in China. The study found that the Asian students tended to have an instrumental orientation to learning Chinese, while the European learners had an integrative orientation. As pointed out by Baker (1997, p. 104), the reason why an integrative motivation is desirable is that it is 'long-lasting', being related to personal development. This is more sustained than 'short-term' instrumental motivation, which is limited to the time it takes to attain the practical purpose of learning. Yu (2010) argues that the level of proficiency in the second language has an influence on learners' orientation, those with low levels of proficiency being more instrumental and those more advanced tending to be more integratively inclined.

Attitude towards the learning situation

Before defining attitude towards the learning situation, it is necessary to address what is meant by attitude more generally in social psychology. Broadly speaking, many researchers have defined attitude as 'evaluation of an object of thought. An attitude object can be anything a person discriminates or hold in mind' (Bohner and Wänke, 2002, p. 5). Attitude has three dimensions – cognitive, affective and behavioural – that can be represented together or separately (Bohner and Wänke, 2002; Gardner, 2010, 2020).

Attitudes towards learning related to motivation in this study concern students' attitudes towards the language teacher and the course of the study. These are important as positive attitudes contribute to learning and language proficiency (Gardner, 2010, 2020). As pointed out by Gardner (2004), students' evaluation of their language teachers and how they conduct the class will affect the students' desire to learn and their attitudes towards learning English. In addition, their positive evaluation of their English course in terms of how English is taught will affect their motivation and their desire to study English, which will in turn affect their success in English learning (Gardner, 2004).

Motivational intensity

Motivational intensity refers to the desire to learn all aspects of the language (Gardner, 2010). It is related to the drive to study and continue learning the language and thus to the learners' independence and autonomy (Bernaus and Gardner, 2008).

Language anxiety (inside and outside class)

Learners' level of anxiety about using the language inside or outside class contributes to learning, with low levels of anxiety enhancing learning and thus attainment of language proficiency (Gardner, 2010). Scholars (e.g. MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991, 1994; Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993; Baker and MacIntyre, 2000) have examined the effect of anxiety on the use of language in class and found that low levels of anxiety contribute to high levels of willingness to communicate using the language. Moreover, as highlighted by Tomoko et al. (2004), self-confidence increases as anxiety lowers, having a positive effect on students' communication and willingness to initiate and participate in conversations and practise the language.

2.5.3 Knowledge of the host country

Knowledge of the host country includes knowledge of the country system, culture, norms and values and educational system (Kim, 2017). Many studies have argued the importance of pre-sojourn preparation since prior knowledge of the host country facilitates the adjustment of students when studying abroad. Studies have examined pre-sojourn knowledge of the host country and its association with students' adjustment and its outcomes. For example, Schartner and Young (2020) found that pre-sojourn knowledge about the UK was an important factor that contributed to the international students' adaptation, resulting in good academic performance and positive psychological and sociocultural outcomes in the study abroad context. Xu et al. (2022) also showed that prior knowledge of the host country was associated with students' satisfaction. Conversely, a lack of knowledge of the host country – the norms and values – leads to negative outcomes and psychological issues, such as anxiety (Sumer, 2009). Insufficient knowledge about the culture and society and as a consequence to difficulties in adapting socioculturally (Berry, 2006).

In addition, knowledge of the language and the academic and educational system of the host country affects the progress of Saudi student sojourners in their course of study (Zaid, 2011). Zhang and Goodson (2011) and Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern (2015) argue that Saudi students need to attend pre-arrival courses and training before studying in Western countries such as the UK and US so that they are aware of the academic system in general and are prepared for the transition to the mixed-gender environment as this causes great acculturative stress for Saudi students.

Looking at the language learning, knowledge of the host culture and society contributes to second language acquisition; being surrounded by the target/second language helps improve students' language proficiency as well as sociocultural knowledge (see Isabelli-García, 2006). The better international students know the new culture and environment and the more they interact with society, the more they will adapt socioculturally (Chirkov et al., 2008).

2.5.4 Intercultural competence

Intercultural competence is the ability to communicate with others of different cultures and languages. The literature argues that there is a need to develop this competence to communicate effectively with those from a different culture and language background (Fantini, 2009). Research has been undertaken in various fields related to internationalisation and sojourns in Western countries (Deardorff and Jones, 2009). This ability has been described in different disciplines and thus various terms have been used to refer to it, for example intercultural communicative competence, global competence, intercultural awareness and multicultural competence (Fantini, 2009). Language proficiency is a crucial aspect of intercultural competence and the cultural learning approach; however, the ability to communicate effectively in the language (i.e. communicative competence) is not the only one required for transition to a new society as the differences between societies can lead to various difficulties (Masgoret and Ward, 2006).

The notion of communicative competence has mainly been replaced by that of intercultural communicative competence, defined by defined by Fantini (2009, p. 458) as the:

> …abilities that are required to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself. Whereas effective reflects the view of one's own performance in the target language-culture […], appropriate reflects how natives perceive such performance […].

This definition suits this study as it reflects English language learners' experience in that ability to communicate in the language is not complete without knowledge of the culture of the language and interaction in the foreign/second language context.

The 'Big Five' is a framework that explores the relationship between personality and sociocultural adaptation in affecting intercultural competence (Masgoret and Ward, 2006). In terms of examining the big five as in the five personality traits, the multicultural personality questionnaire (MPQ) developed by Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven (2000) and more recently the short form developed by Van der Zee et al. (2013) is a well-known instrument used to measure the experience of intercultural transition (Deardorff, 2009). This questionnaire measures general traits and the big five – cultural empathy, open-mindedness, social initiative, flexibility and emotional stability – viewed as predicting intercultural competence (Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven, 2000; Van der Zee et al., 2013). According to Van der Zee et al. (2013, p. 118), cultural empathy (CE) entails 'empathising with the feelings, thoughts and behaviours of culturally diverse individuals', open-mindedness (OM) denotes 'an open and unprejudiced attitude toward cultural differences', emotional stability (ES) is 'the ability to stay calm under novel and stressful conditions', social initiative (SI) is 'actively approaching social situations

and demonstrating initiative in these interactions' and flexibility (FL) denotes 'interpreting novel situations as a positive challenge and adapting to these situations accordingly'. These measures predict the sociocultural and psychological adaptation of international students with high levels of language proficiency (Van Oudenhoven and Van der Zee, 2002).

Research conducted with Saudi postgraduate students studying in HE in the UK (e.g. Alqahtani, 2011; Ziad, 2011) has found that those with high levels of English language proficiency develop intercultural competence. This is also the case for Saudi language learners in the UK, as revealed by Obaid (2015), who found that they became more culturally aware about the aspects that they needed to develop to enjoy their study of the language. In addition, cultural awareness courses are recommended for Saudi students in the initial stages of studying abroad.

2.5.5 Social contact and support

Many studies in the literature on intercultural adaptation have emphasised the importance of social contact and friendship and support for international students studying abroad, particularly as this can have a positive effect on their academic, sociocultural and psychological transition (Berry, 1985; Ward et al., 2001; Schartner, 2015; Young and Schartner, 2016). In relation to this, according to Lee and Robbins (1995) social connectedness is when the individual establishes a subjective sense of belonging and close contact with the social world. As noted by Hendrickson et al. (2011, p. 282), 'Friendship is an extremely important component for individuals in satisfying deep personal and emotional needs'.

Social support from main social ties is an important factor helping sojourners reduce the amount of stress due to the changes that they experience in their transition to an unfamiliar culture and life abroad, positively affecting their psychological and mental health (Dunkel-Schetter and Bennett, 1990; Argyle, 1992; Mallinckrodt and Leong, 1992). Ong and Ward (2005), validating the Index of Sojourner Social Support (ISSS) scale in the acculturation context, highlighted two functional aspects of support in moving to a new environment: (i) socioemotional support, not just from family and friends from the home country, but also from friends in the country, which could be more meaningful and deeper support; (ii) instrumental support in moving to the new environment to address practical needs, such as information, instructions and tangible help. Ong and Ward (2005) revealed that instrumental support is more critical for sojourners' psychological adaptation, reducing negative emotions and the potential for depression induced by moving to a new society, as they especially need ways of negotiating the new country system.

Historically, Bochner et al. (1977) developed a model describing international students' friendship networks and classified the friendship formation into three categories related to

functional support: (i) co-national contacts form the primary category, signifying connections with close friends who share the same culture of origin; (ii) host nationals as the secondary category, serving practical purposes in terms of meeting academic and professional needs; (iii) non-co-national contacts as the tertiary group, comprising other international students sharing the experience of foreignness.

This model was further developed by researchers such as Hendrickson et al. (2011) and Schartner (2015), who conducted studies with postgraduate students at overseas universities with high levels of English proficiency. Hendrickson et al.'s (2011) quantitative study was conducted with 86 international students at the University of Hawaii where the official spoken language is English. In contrast to Bochner et al.'s (1977) model of social contact and friendship, most of the students were found to have host national friends as their closest social ties, as their high level of English meant they could communicate easily. Moreover, Schartner (2015), in a longitudinal qualitative study of 20 international students in UK HE found that their primary friendship group comprised other international students, who provided them with emotional and academic support. The second closest tie comprised their co-national friends, who provided emotional support especially in the early stages, but this dropped over time as the international students began to avoid contact due to the perceived negative effect on their English language and personal development. The tertiary tie was host national friends, but here there was a lack of contact for two main reasons: first, the difficulty of making friends due to differences in interests; second, the high number of international students in the university campus and living in university accommodation.

There is a strong relationship between host language proficiency and interacting and communicating with the host language society; such contact can lead to language development as well as enhanced intercultural competence, as found by research in second language learning and acculturation (Gardner, 2001, 2005, 2006, 2010; Masgoret and Ward, 2006). However, Isabelli-García (2006) has argued that being in the second language environment and surrounded by native speakers is not enough to improve language skills; rather, social networks and friendships with native speakers contribute directly to improving learners' oral communication skills and language accuracy. Alsahafi and Shin's (2019) study of Saudi students in Australia indicated that the main issue hindering communication, contact and making friends with local people was the students' limited communicative competence in English. In contrast, Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern (2015) study of graduate female Saudi students at university in the US found that the main aspect aiding their academic and social adjustment was their high level of English language proficiency, as they felt confident about being able to communicate effectively. Nonetheless, their main social friendships and

contact and support were with their family members who lived with them abroad and their Saudi friends.

This indicates that a high level of English language proficiency may not be enough for students to make friends among the host language society, but other factors such as differences in culture and religion can be considered the main barriers for Saudi students in terms of developing contacts in the host society and the university. Studies such as those of Alhazmi and Nyland (2010), Razek (2012), Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern (2015) and Alsahafi, and Shin (2017) conducted with Saudi students studying in HE in English-speaking Western countries such as the US, UK and Australia have revealed that they have experience difficulties making contact with the host society and other international students due to religious and cultural differences.

Alhazmi and Nyland (2010, p. 6) argued that Saudi international students live a foreigner experience, 'being far away from social and friendship networks'. Razek (2012) and Alsahafi, and Shin (2017) suggested that the most difficult experience for Saudi students is discrimination based on coming from a different culture, their practice of Islam and their background in a collective society. In addition, Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern's (2015) study of Saudi students in the US found similar results in terms of difficulties making American friends because of the differences in ways of communication, religion and culture. This is not only the case for Saudi students, but also applies to other Muslim student sojourners. Indeed, Thomas and Hawes' (2019) study revealed that the practice of religion is the main difficulty in making friends among British people in society or at university as they have different interests, such as going out to clubs and drinking alcohol, which are prohibited by Islam. More broadly still, Sawir et al. (2008) indicated that other international students experience the same issue of difficulty making friends among local people due to differences in interests and culture.

Moreover, Alqahtani's (2015) study of Saudi students on English language courses in the UK found that they lacked opportunities for contact with local/British people as their programme of study mainly comprised international and Arabic students. This is not just the case in English language courses, as Schartner' (2015) study of postgraduate students also revealed a lack of communication with British students because of the high number of international students, both in the university and in university accommodation.

Researchers such as Brown and Holloway (2008), Young et al. (2013) and Schartner (2015) have argued the importance of friendships among international students in the study abroad context. In addition, Meng et al. (2017) suggest that contact with international friends

contributes to the development of global communicative competence as a result of openness and communication with those from multicultural and different country backgrounds.

Studies conducted with Saudi students have suggested that their main contacts in the study abroad context are the family members living with them (see Chapter 1) and Saudi friends, who provide both practical and emotional support. According to McLachlan and Justice (2009), Saudi students have fewer psychological issues than other international students, who experience greater loneliness and isolation due to missing their families. Midgley (2011) found that married Saudi female students' main financial and emotional support was provided by their husbands, whereas single female Saudi students' main support came from their fathers or brothers. In addition, Heyn's (2013) study of male Saudi students found their main emotional and personal support and encouragement were provided by family members and this was reflected in their academic achievement and success.

Regarding the importance of the social contact and support provided by Saudi friends and the community when studying abroad, Shaw (2010) points out that support is considered one of the Saudi cultural values and norms, so that helping each other as friends and members of the Saudi community is rather a social duty. Other studies have found similar results in terms of the main social network and source of support (e.g. Alqahtani, 2015; Alqahtani and Hezam, 2015; Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern, 2015). Alqahtani (2015) found that Saudi students prefer to make friends among other Saudi or Arabic students as they share religious and cultural occasions; this is difficult with other international students because of cultural differences, particularly with regard to entertainment (e.g. drinking alcohol) and food (non-halal).

2.6 Research gap

This chapter has reviewed the previous literature addressing the experience of international students in general and Saudi students specifically from various perspectives related to internationalisation, HE, English language learning, neoliberalism, multilingual and multicultural development, intercultural communication, acculturation and intercultural adjustment and adaptation. The review reveals certain gaps in existing research in relation to the intercultural adjustment and adaptation of Saudi English language learners in the UK.

First, the literature on L2 learning and the intercultural adaptation of international students predominantly focuses on level of L2/English language proficiency and achievement. Some studies have examined other non-linguistic variables, such as motivation, attitude and achievement, largely using quantitative methods and focusing on the psychological and sociocultural dimensions (Schumann, 1976, 1986; Gardner, 2005). However, there is a lack of integration of the academic dimension with these two domains as outcomes. Literature that has

encompassed aspects such as multilingual and multicultural development, language and intercultural communication in the analysis have mainly employed qualitative narrative studies focused on individual differences. Studies have also adopted a neoliberal, economic perspective, examining language polices and discussing standardised testing and standard English textbooks, Englishing and correctness.

Moreover, studies focused on Saudi students in Western English-speaking countries have mainly examined the experiences of those on postgraduate courses; such students have typically already been in the country for a year, studying English to meet the requirements for HE courses (MoHE, 2011). In addition, studies conducted with Saudi students have either focused on academic issues arising due to transition to the learner-centred environment or adaptation to a different society and have predominantly investigated their experiences qualitatively, focusing on diversity and fluidity in relation to the concept of culture. Other studies have addressed the transition from collectivist to individualist societies, mainly examining the experience from the quantitative perspective along the lines of Hofstede (2001, 2010). Moreover, there is a considerable focus in the literature on the role of gender related to Saudi students religious and cultural backgrounds. Literature in the Saudi context examining English language learners have primarily considered the students' academic achievement in terms of language proficiency.

Therefore, it can be argued that there is a lack of a model representing a clear picture of Saudi students' experiences based on both quantitative and in-depth qualitative data, or over time. This study aims to contribute to attaining a balance between the two approaches, in line with Kecskes (2014) and Schartner and Young (2020), who proposed a middle position between the two paradigms. It also aims to respond to the need to investigate diversity and fluidity among international students, rather than solely considering the common characteristics among certain national groups. There is also a lack of research adopting a holistic approach to studying Saudi students' experience, especially L2 students as a group of sojourners. Moreover, little attention has been paid to English language learners as student sojourners, as prior research has mainly focused on postgraduate international students in English-speaking countries.

Therefore, there is a need to fill this gap and provide as complete a picture as possible of Saudi students' experiences in English courses in the UK. This study adopts the most recent model in the field of study addressing international students and intercultural transition, namely the conceptual model of international student adjustment and adaptation developed by Schartner and Young (2020). Schartner and Young (2020) proposed that this conceptual framework could be used as a template to investigate the intercultural adaptation of international students in their studies abroad on various degree courses and across different locations.

This model is adopted for several reasons, primarily as a guide to explore the English language learners' context as a whole and that of the unique sample of Saudi students specifically (moving from an educational environment segregated based on gender to one that is mixed gender). In addition, this model summarises various theoretical models in terms of the dimensions of intercultural adaptation, such as Berry's (2006) model of stress and coping and Ward et al.'s (2001) model of acculturation, which includes the psychological and sociocultural aspects that this study emphasises. In addition, the model integrates the academic adaptation domain within the context of social psychology, representing the student sojourners.

Moreover, this study follows a longitudinal design (see Schartner and Young, 2016) as it is commonly held that learners' adaptation and adjustment should be examined over the longer time as it is difficult to achieve this in a single snapshot. The model provides a holistic approach to investigating the three adaptation domains – academic, psychological and sociocultural – as well as incorporating the contributory factors that might predict student outcomes in all of these dimensions. However, this model focuses on international students' experience in HE abroad generally, while the present study focused specifically on the experience of English language learners. Therefore, language-related variables are added to the contributory factors to provide a fine-grained picture representing the English language element in the acculturation context, as suggested by Gardner (2005, 2010, 2020) (see 2.5). To do so, this study sought to address the research questions set out in the following sub-section.

2.7 Research questions

The study investigates the intercultural transition experience of Saudi students enrolled in English language learning courses in the UK prior to postgraduate study and analyses contributory factors both pre- and post-departure. The research questions are as follows:

RQ1: What are the most significant pre- and post-departure contributory factors influencing the three dimensions of intercultural adaptation – academic, psychological and sociocultural – – among Saudi student studying on English language courses in the UK?

RQ2: What are the changes/trajectories in Saudi ESL students' intercultural adjustment experience over time in relation to the academic, psychological and sociocultural dimensions?

2.8 Towards a conceptual model of Saudi ESL students' adaptation and adjustment

Based on the literature review and drawing on Schartner and Young's (2020) conceptual model of international student adjustment and adaptation, this study proposes a framework aimed at providing as complete a picture as possible of the intercultural adjustment and adaptation of Saudi English language sojourners enrolled in courses in the UK. The research comprises an empirical study examining the students' experiences in a longitudinal design based on

qualitative and quantitative methods. This study is unique in combining the three fields of intercultural transition, SLA and acculturation and examining Saudi students engaged in English language study abroad. It offers a re-examine of a set of contributory factors related to English language proficiency and factors concerning the international students' experiences (see 2.5). In addition, it offers a test of the academic adaptation measures typically examined using GPA in the international context or IELTS and TOEFL in the English language learning context. This is an empirical study of English language learners' experience from the social psychological perspective, examining their experiences in terms of coping and stress to understand their psychological adaptation and the cultural learning approach to understand their sociocultural adaptation, as proposed by Ward et al. (2001). In addition, the study aims to understand academic adaptation based on both the coping and stress and cultural learning approaches proposed by Young and Schartner (2014). It examines the unique experiences that Saudi students have in moving from a gender-segregated environment to a mixed-gender society, both in their academic course of study and in society. In addition, this study also provides a test of scales such as the mini-AMTB, measuring attitudinal and motivational factors in the fields of SLA and acculturation, and the short-form MPQ (MPQ-SF), measuring aspects of intercultural transition experience.

The proposed model comprises two parts. Figure 2.5 represents the initial proposed conceptual framework of this study and Table 2.1 represents the approaches implemented to measure the contributory factors, adjustment and adaptation of Saudi students in this study. Figure 2.5 shows the modification to the original model developed by Schartner and Young (2016) made by Gardner (2005, 2010) in adding attitudinal and motivational factors, which potentially have a considerable positive influence on second language learners. These factors are integrative orientation, instrumental orientation and attitude towards the learning situation, motivational intensity and language anxiety inside and outside the class (see 2.5 and 2.5.2). In addition, Saudi students are supported in their programme of study abroad as they can travel with their families. Therefore, this proposed framework adds the element of family support and contact abroad as this unique to this sample. Moreover, previous studies conducted with Saudi students have emphasised the role of contact and support from their family and Saudi friends and community abroad (see 2.5.5).

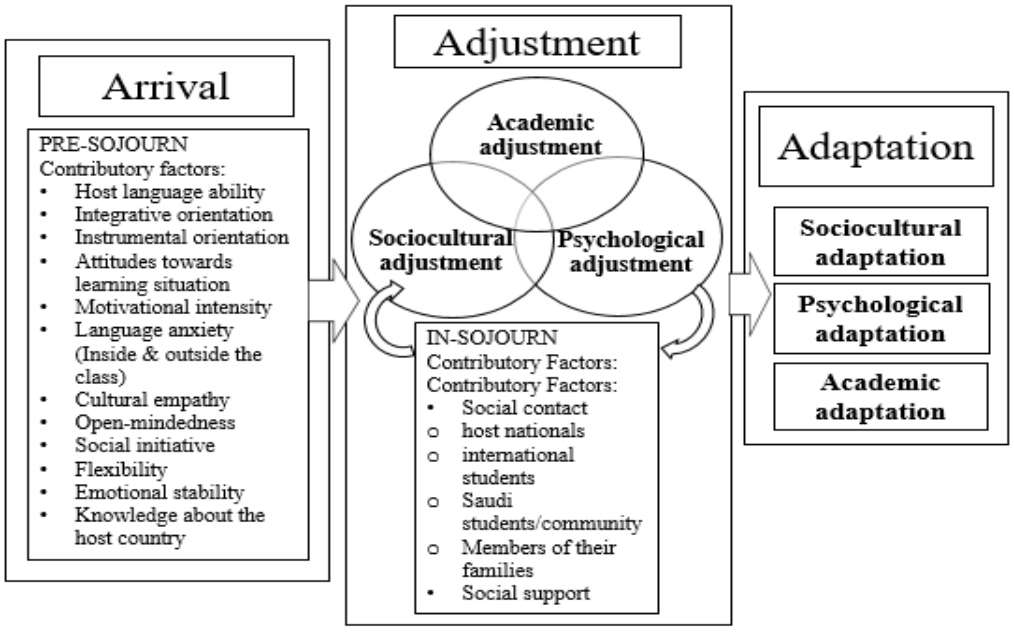

Figure 2.5. A conceptual model of international student adjustment and adaptation (Schartner and Young, 2016) and the initial proposed conceptual framework of the study

Table 2.1 illustrates the approaches taken to measure the contributory factors, adjustment and adaptation of Saudi students in this study. The study adopted a longitudinal approach to examine quantitatively the contributory factors at T1 and after eight months at T2 in relation to students' outcomes, as reflected by the three dimensions – academic, psychological and sociocultural. The surveys reflected the updated versions of the self-rating scale as reviewed in the Chapter 3 on methodology. The adjustment process was also examined qualitatively at around eight months through three waves of interviews concerning the three dimensions identified.

Pre-sojourn		**Adjustment process (8 months)**		**Adaptation**
		Interviews (x3) →		
Contributory factors (examined at T1 October/November)	T1 survey →	Contributory factors (examined at T2 June)	T2 survey →	Adaptation aspects (examined at T2 June)
English language ability *English language ability self-rating scale (Ying and Liese, 1994)* **Attitudes, motivation and language anxiety** i. Integrativeness ii. Instrumentality iii. Attitude towards learning situation iv. Motivational intensity v. Language anxiety (inside and outside the class) *mini-AMTB scale (Gardner, 2005)* **Knowledge of the UK** *Knowledge of the UK self-rating scale (Schartner, 2014)* **Intercultural competence** i. Cultural empathy ii. Open-mindedness iii. Emotional stability iv. Social initiative v. Flexibility *MPQ-short form (Van der Zee et al., 2013)*		**Social contact** **Level of social contact with the following groups:** i. Saudi students ii. British students iii. Other international students iv. British/local people outside their course v. Members of their family *(Index of social support scale (Yang and Clum, 1994)* **Social support** **Two types of social support:** i. Socioemotional ii. Instrumental *Index for Sojourner Social Support Scale (Ong and Ward, 2005)*		**Academic adaptation** i. Academic lifestyle ii. Academic achievement iii. Academic motivation *Academic adjustment scale (Anderson et al., 2016)* iv. Learners' satisfaction *English language learners' satisfaction scale (Hung, 2015)* **Psychological adaptation** Satisfaction with life *Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985)* Psychological wellbeing *RAND Mental Health Inventory (2012)* **Sociocultural adaptation** Sociocultural adaptation/perceived cultural distance *Brief Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (Demes and Geeraert, 2014)*

Table 2.1. Approaches to measuring contributory factors and the adjustment and adaptation of Saudi students

2.9 Summary

The first part of this chapter provided an understanding of the context of HE, since Saudi international students studying English in pre-sessional courses in preparation for their postgraduate courses come under this umbrella (see 2.2). Concepts such as internationalisation have been discussed in relation to the advantages (e.g. quality of education and opportunities for innovation) and the limitations (the gap between theory and practice). In addition, the chapter addressed tensions in relation to the neoliberal drive in education broadly and English language teaching and learning in particular. It then provided an overview of the intercultural transition experience of international students in general and Saudi students specifically (see 2.2.5).

The second part of the chapter presented and discussed the relevant theories in relation to the intercultural transition of sojourners (see 2.3), namely: (i) U-curve theory, which is concerned

with the psychological stages that the sojourners go through; (ii) ABC theory, which concerns the different patterns and stages of transition in terms of the sociocultural dimension (understood by the cultural learning approach) and the psychological dimension (understood by the stress and coping approach); (iii) academic adjustment and adaptation theory (understood by both the cultural learning approach and the stress and coping approach); (iv) a conceptual model of international student adjustment and adaptation that suggested a number of pre- and post-contributory factors that affect students' experience abroad in relation to the academic, psychological and sociocultural dimensions (understood based on the aforementioned approaches reflecting these three dimensions).

The third and fourth parts combined the literatures of intercultural transition (academic, psychological and sociocultural) (see 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.3.3) and contributory factors in intercultural adjustment and adaptation, as well as second language learning in the study abroad context (see 2.4). In these two parts, the discussion was related to international students in general and Saudi students in particular.

The third part in general discussed the intercultural transition dimensions, first focusing on academic adjustment and adaptation (see 2.3.1) in relation to communicative English classes (group work, assessment, autonomy and learning strategies), academic skills and performance. It addressed the factors that could affect international students in general (academic lifestyle, academic achievement, academic motivation and learners' satisfaction) and Saudi students in particular (e.g. mixed-gender learning environment, learner-centred focus, examinations such as IELTS and TOEFL).

Second, it focused on psychological and sociocultural adjustment and adaptation (see 2.3.2). This section discussed in greater depth the stress and coping framework, identifying some coping strategies to manage stress, as well as the culture learning or social skills framework, which concerns learning social knowledge and skills to adjust to the new societal environment. The fourth part presented the contributory factors to intercultural adjustment and adaptation and English language learning (see 2.4.1–2.4.5), i.e. English language ability/proficiency, attitudes and motivation and language anxiety, knowledge of the host country, intercultural competence and social contact and support.

The fifth part presented and discussed the research gap (see 2.5) identified by reviewing the existing literature on the education of Saudi students abroad, intercultural transition and second language learning. In light of this, the need for a model reflecting Saudi English language learners' intercultural experience abroad was identified. This model should reflect the three dimensions and the contributory factors that could affect transition based on the conceptual

model of international student adjustment and adaptation developed by Schartner and Young (2016). Therefore, research questions were defined (see 2.6) concerning the relationship between the contributory factors and the three dimensions of intercultural adjustment and adaptation. The section articulating a conceptual model of Saudi ESL students' adjustment and adaptation (see 2.7) explained how this study conceptually and methodologically develops the original model of international students' adjustment and adaptation. Specifically, the language-related contributory factors add conceptually to the original model; the inclusion of contributory factors and adaptation domains measured using updated scales and from a different perspective represent the methodological contribution. For example, academic adaptation was measured using a self-evaluation scale that included dimensions such as academic motivation and satisfaction, which cannot be measured using tools employed in the original model (e.g. GPA) or examinations of language proficiency (e.g. IELTS). Thus, the modified model was presented and discussed.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the following aspects: data collection methods; the research design; the pragmatic philosophical approach the participants and the context in which the research was undertaken; the research methods and the instruments used in gathering the data; the piloting of the instruments; the process and procedures followed in collecting the data; methods of data analysis; the consideration of ethical aspects.

3.2 Data collection methods

This study applied a mixed methods approach, combining various sources of qualitative and quantitative data in a single study (Bryman, 2016). This should be differentiated from a multi-methods research design, in which data collection through different methods mainly reflects one research paradigm – using either qualitative or quantitative approaches – and there is no mixing of the data in term of looking at the relationships between them (Hall, 2013).

In the literature, there is considerable debate in the field about whether qualitative and quantitative approaches can be integrated, with some scholars arguing that they represent separate paradigms and each paradigm has its own commitments in terms of ontological and epistemological stances. The epistemological position of the quantitative approach is rooted in positivism, which views reality as objective, in contrast to the qualitative approach, which reflects the constructivist and interpretive view of reality as subjective (Bryman, 2016). The main criticism of the mixed methods approach concerns its philosophical background, as it focuses on methodology and ignores the ontological and epistemological stance (Creswell, 2014).

However, there are several philosophical theories, such as pragmatism, critical realism, and postmodernism, that justify the integration of the two approaches in a mixed methods design (Shannon-Baker, 2016; Fetters and Molina-Azorin, 2017). In addition, nowadays there is a large body of research that has been conducted using the mixed methods approach, rejecting the traditional dependence on one type of method and aiming to benefit from the advantages of each approach and mitigate their limitations (Bryman, 2016; Barnes, 2019). The most popular paradigm that justifies mixing two or multiple approaches is pragmatism, which views qualitative and quantitative research as complementary not incompatible extremes (Hathcoat and Meixner, 2017). This study reflected the pragmatic perspective as the paradigm best suited to the purpose of this study and providing the appropriate philosophical foundation for the mixed methods design (see 3.4).

The significant benefit of combining qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection is that the data can be integrated and complement each other, providing insights into certain perspectives pertaining to the matter of investigation (Dornyei, 2007; Bryman, 2016). This study takes the view that using one type of research – either quantitative or qualitative – is limiting and an investigation can be strengthened by combining them, making it possible to cover more issues than can be addressed using one tool (Creswell, 2014). Paltridge and Phakiti (2015) argue that adopting both qualitative and quantitative approaches can strengthen and increase the quality of the study as they support and complement each other.

From the researcher's viewpoint, using quantitative data is useful to provide numeric data and generate generalisable results, but is limited in terms of exploring the complexity of the phenomenon under investigation, which requires more in-depth understanding. In contrast, the qualitative approach is useful for investigating people's experiences from their perspectives. It generates in-depth understanding, but is limited to small samples. Thus, combining the two provides a holistic, complementary approach, bringing 'the best of both worlds' (Dornyei, 2007: 20). Moreover, mixing data collection methods maximises the validity of certain forms of research as it offers more convincing and accurate results (McKay, 2006; Dornyei, 2007; Mackey and Gass, 2015).

However, it should be acknowledged that in applying mixed methods it is not only necessary to reflect on the philosophical foundations but also to understand the knowledge, criteria, and skills that serve to produce coherence and consistency in the study design for both the quantitative and qualitative approaches (Dornyei, 2007). Moreover, it is necessary to evaluate the two approaches in relation to how they are suitable to answer the research questions, the adequacy of the analytical stance, and the reliability of the study procedures and outcomes (Bryman, 2016).

The mixed methods design is best suited to the purpose of this study as it provides a holistic approach, combining the qualitative perspective looking at students' adjustment experience over time with the quantitative lens looking at the students' adaptation, i.e. the outcome of their experience. This combination will strengthen the study as the outcomes of the intercultural transition experience cannot be investigated only through a subjective analysis of data from a small sample and looking in depth at the complexity of the phenomenon and answering the 'why' questions cannot be served by a quantitative, objective perspective. Therefore, the mixed methods design will maximise the validity and reliability of the study.

This study is 'complementary' in design, according to Hammersley (1996, cited in Bryman, 2008, pp. 607–613), who defined three main types of mixed methods approach: 'triangulation',

with one method used to corroborate the other in measuring a specific aspect; 'facilitation', which uses one approach as a research strategy to aid the other; 'complementary', which uses the two approaches for different aspects of exploration and then combines them as complementary to each other. The complementary type best suits the purpose of this study as it explores two aspects of the intercultural experience of Saudi students: (i) adjustment, which is reflected in qualitative data presenting the students' experience of change, and (ii) adaptation, comprising the outcomes of the experience reflected in the quantitative data. This will provide as complete a picture as possible to gain a better understanding of Saudi students' intercultural adjustment and adaptation, each of which encompasses the academic, psychological, and sociocultural domains. The mixed methods approach is applied in this study because, according to Schartner and Young (2020), it is useful for studying adjustment and adaptation, using qualitative data to monitor adjustment over time and quantitative data to measure outcomes.

In addition, Kim (2001) suggests sequencing the data collection to provide integration as follows:

> …one way to integrate the etic-quantitative and emic-qualitative methods is to combine a large-sample quantitative survey study with a series of in-depth, qualitative case studies of one or more individual cases selected from the original sample. (p. 214)

Data collection in this study thus comprised two stages: first, quantitative data were obtained by administering questionnaires at two points (T1 in October 2016 and T2 in June 2017) to a sample of overseas Saudi ESL students; second, follow-up interviews were conducted with a smaller sample of students to explore the issues in greater depth using a qualitative method. The overall study design was longitudinal, as explained in the following section.

3.3 Study design

In a longitudinal study design, as explained by Kumar (2014), the participants should be contacted several times (three or more) regularly over a particular period of time. The length of this period varies from study to study: for some it is short as a week, but for most it is as long as a year. This depends on the purpose of the study and the optimal approach to obtaining the desired data. In this study, the longitudinal study design was adopted based on Schartner and Young (2020) and comprised two rounds of surveys and three waves of interviews undertaken over one academic year (see 3.6.3).

This design provides rich data as it offers the researcher the opportunity to measure patterns in changes in the relationships between variables by gathering the data on a continuous or regular basis. It entails three or more points of data collection as such data cannot be achieved at a single point in time due to the cross-sectional design (Kumar, 2014). As the main concern of

this study was to examine Saudi students' adjustment and experiences of studying in the UK, the design adopted was longitudinal. One of the main advantages of longitudinal study is that it allows the researcher to consider changes over time and enhances the validity and reliability of the data (Kumar, 2014).

One of the common drawbacks of contacting the same people on multiple occasions is that it can cause participants to lose interest or to drop out due to changes and difficulties in their circumstances (Bryman, 2016). Therefore, it is important to encourage participants by assuring them that they play a vital role in the study and there is a need for their participation because of the significance of the research. This may help retain a large number of participants in the study.

There are two common types of sampling in longitudinal design: cohort and panel. The former focuses on selecting an entire cohort or a random sample of those who share similar characteristics or a particular experience. In contrast, the latter examines data collected from different sources or kinds of cases within a specific framework, such as certain organisations, people and so on (Kumar, 2014). This study employed a cohort sample as it was best suited to the study focus, namely Saudi ESL students who share the same experience of learning ESL to meet the requirements of studies in HE (Master's or PhD). Moreover, it was more concerned with Saudi students' experiences than the whole framework of universities or English language courses, their teachers and so on, which a panel design might address. This longitudinal, mixed methods approach was designed based on pragmatism as the philosophical approach, as discussed in the following section.

3.4 The pragmatic philosophical approach

Pragmatism is considered a movement in the field of research methodology that appeared in the US in the late 19th century. It was originally developed by the 'father of pragmatism', Charles Sanders Peirce, around 1870, and was further advanced by John Dewey and William James in the 19th century (McDermid, 2006). To establish how this paradigm suits this study, it is necessary first to look at the ontological stance. These philosophers rejected the traditional theories of reality, assumptions about knowledge, and the ways of accessing it. Instead, they viewed reality in terms of how it works, constituting access to the world of knowledge, inquiry, and beliefs. They based their philosophical approach on a practical focus on the purpose of the research, putting the research problem at the centre of the design, and applying all appropriate methods to solve the problem and answer the research questions (Creswell, 2014).

Goles and Hirschheim (2000, p. 261) provide a good example for understanding the grounding of the pragmatic philosophical theory, looking at the reality in relation to the ontological stance and seeing how it differs from the traditional approaches:

> For example, upon observing an object consisting of a flat surface supported by four legs, a positivist would define it as a table, no matter how it was being used. An anti-positivist would define the object based on his or her individual perspective: if he were eating on it, it would be a table; if he were sitting on it, it would be a bench; if he were standing on it, it would be a platform, and so forth. A pragmatist would define the object based on what use it was to him. If he intended to eat, it would be a table. If he intended to sit on it, it would be a bench. If he intended to stand on it, it would be a platform. The crucial deference is that the object is not defined in terms of what it is or how it was or is being used, but rather by how it helps the pragmatist achieve his purpose.

This metaphorical example of the table illustrates that the pragmatic view focuses on the best justification based on the purpose of a certain aspect and the relation between the two, unlike the traditional positivist and anti-positivist approaches, which view the aspect as either objective or subjective.

Pragmaticism not only justifies the mixed methods design, but also argues for applying the quantitative and qualitative approaches according to the best and most practical way of answering the research questions (Biddle and Schafft, 2015). It is most commonly referred to in the literature as the optimal philosophical partner for the mixed methods approach (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009; Hathcoat and Meixner, 2017; Mitchell, 2018; Maarouf, 2019).

In mixed methods, reality can be both single and multiple, and accessed in multiple ways. The notion that reality can be accessed by only one scientific method depending on the paradigm – positivist or anti-positivist – viewed as different and opposite to each other, is rejected. More specifically, the quantitative approach is grounded in the positivists' views that reality is objective and is independent of individual experience. Positivists focus on generalisability and reliability, and employ a deductive, top-down structure. In contrast, the qualitative approach is grounded in anti-positivist perspectives, such as constructivism and interpretivism, which view reality as multiple and dependent on the experiences of individuals and how they interpret them. This paradigm follows an inductive, bottom-up strategy (Maxcy, 2003; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2009; Shannon-Baker, 2016).

This is not simply a matter of ontology; it also concerns the epistemological stance. To understand how pragmatists look at epistemology, first it is necessary to differentiate this perspective from those of the traditional approaches, looking at the relationship between the researcher and topic researched in terms of how knowledge is gained. If a researcher considers that there is a single, objective reality that can be studied from his/her own perspective, the underlying paradigm is positivist (Creswell, 2014). However, if the researcher seeks knowledge from participants, asking them to reflect on their experiences and provide their opinions, and being open to multiple interpretations of a phenomenon, reality is considered to be subjective, reflecting the constructivist or interpretivist paradigm (Creswell, 2014).

In pragmatism, the term ‘epistemology’ is not preferred; rather, the paradigm uses the term ‘theory of inquiry’, drawing on Dewey (1938, cited in Deen, 2011), to describe exploration aimed at understanding a part of reality that can change and improve (Deen, 2011). Pragmatism rejects the two extremes of subjectivity or objectivity, or even the option of a middle position. The relationship between the researcher and the researched is subjective and objective at the same time, framed as ‘intersubjectivity’, which claims that each strengthens the other and compensates for its limitations. Thus, conducting research that focuses on one of these extremes as a separate issue is considered a limitation (Creswell, 2014). Instead, pragmatic research places ‘its emphasis on shared meanings and joint actions’ (Morgan, 2007: 67).

Looking at the methodological stance, pragmatism is considered a paradigm that favours ‘what works’ in terms of methods, focusing on the practicality of the instruments and choosing those that fit the purpose of the research. It places great emphasis on the research question(s) and the optimal methods for addressing the research problem, rather than emphasising philosophical considerations as in traditional approaches (Creswell, 2014). Thus, it first considers the needs of the research as a means of inquiry to solve problems and address issues, then designs the study to meet this inquiry (Shannon-Baker, 2016). This is unlike traditional approaches, which highlight the ontology and epistemology in terms of identifying the knowledge to be sought and the best approaches for the investigation in terms of data collection and analysis (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2008).

Pragmatism is positioned as a centrist paradigm and exists on a continuum, highlighting subjective and objective aspects depending on the inquiry, and thus being a flexible, effective, and efficient approach that reflects the research problem (Morgan, 2007). It also offers flexibility in choosing the appropriate methods and research design to address certain research questions. This approach is associated with a combination of deductive and inductive reasoning that is termed ‘abductive reasoning’, which moves back and forth between the two dimensions and casts the researcher as an active agent in creating both theory and the data (Goldkuhl, 2012). In addition to this, the paradigm encompasses the criterion of generalisability, which is linked to the concept of ‘transferability’, namely that the findings can be reflected and applied in other situations (Creswell 2009). This study follows a pragmatic framework as presented in Table 3.1.

Approach	**Qualitative**	**Quantitative**	**Pragmatic**
Connection of theory and data	Induction	Deduction	Abduction
Relationship to research process	Subjectivity	Objectivity	Intersubjectivity
Inference from data	Context	Generality	Transferability

(Source: Morgan, 2007)

Table 3.1. Pragmatic framework for mixed methods research

From the previous discussion, it is apparent that the pragmatic perspective suits the purpose of this study, justifying the use of mixed methods as a practical way of addressing the objectives by putting the research problem as the central focus and prioritising what will work. It is necessary to investigate the intercultural experiences of Saudi students both qualitatively to reflect adjustment and quantitatively to address the adaptation domains, thus providing a holistic view. As the literature review showed, prior research has relied heavily on qualitative methods, addressing the individual experience, but has not combined this aspect with a quantitative perspective examining the broader dimensions of the outcomes of this experience and the relationship between the variables.

Moreover, while much research according to Holliday (2016) has viewed the concept of 'culture' as fluid and flexible, exploring it from a qualitative perspective and focusing on adjustment, it is also possible to view culture as determined and stable in line with Hofstede (1997, 2001), who represented the 'shared characteristics' amongst certain groups of people (Morgan, 2007). This aspect of culture is examined in this study through the adaptation domains and the relationships between variables. Looking at culture from these two perspectives together justifies pragmatism as the optimal paradigm, putting the research questions and what works best at the centre of the research (Creswell, 2014). This study adopted the middle position, conceptualising culture according to the works of Kecskes (2014) and Schartner and Young (2020), articulated in Chapter 1 (see 1.2.1).

It should be noted that the pragmatic approach has been critiqued, although commonly as a result of misunderstanding. The main criticism of this approach concerns its focus on 'what works', arguing that it mainly concerns methods and ignores ontological and epistemological considerations (Pratt, 2016). However, according to Morgan (2007), the pragmatic approach looks at reality from different perspectives, reflecting the practicalities of conducting research. Pragmatism has its own perspective concerning ontology and epistemology, regarding the former as what works and latter as a theory of inquiry, as discussed previously. Pragmatism primarily focuses on the methods appropriate to answer the research questions, not fully committing to a certain philosophical approach on which to base the project (Bryman, 2006).

Other researchers, such as Meixner (2017), have argued that pragmatism is not a paradigm and is anti-philosophical; thus, it should be referred to as an approach to conducting research rather than a philosophical grounding for research. Moreover, Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) consider that combining the two paradigms results in an incompatible thesis, although others take the opposing view that pragmatism results in both a complementary and compatible thesis (Hall, 2013). According to Maxcy (2003, p. 79), pragmatism 'seems to have emerged as both a method of inquiry and a device for the settling of battles between research purists and more practical

minded scientists'. Indeed, it has been argued that pragmatism came about to end the 'paradigm war' between the positivist and anti-positivist paradigms in which the supporters of each claim their superiority (Creswell, 2014).

Pragmatism has opened the door towards thinking practically, especially in the social sciences, recognising the human element of research in the field. It provides the researcher practical ways of investigating certain phenomena, avoiding the complexity of arguments concerning the traditional paradigms based on metaphysical assumptions and replacing it with the centrality of the research questions 'to find out what [the researcher] want[s] to know' (Hanson, 2008, p. 109). In addition, and support the philosophical background of this study, Hothersall (2019, p. 866) highlights the advantages of pragmatism as 'providing a more democratic focus on the use of the fullest range of human knowledge in a way that encourages autonomy, foregrounds accountability and offers the means for future research and development across a plethora of professional contexts'.

3.3 Context and participants

The study was carried out in the UK with Saudi ESL students studying at a number of English language institutions in different cities. As discussed previously (see Chapter 1), there were as many as 7,950 Saudi students in the UK in the academic year 2017–2018. With this in mind, the study sample comprised the following: 177 Saudi students participated in a self-report survey at T1 in October/November, 2016; from the same sample, 110 students participated in the survey at T2 in June 2017, at the end of the academic year: 19 students (11 male and 8 female) participated in individual semi-structured interviews at T1 (November 2016), 7 students (5 male and 2 female) participated at T2 (February, 2017) and 4 students (2 male and 2 female) participated at T3 (May, 2017) in the academic year 2016/2017 (see Table 3.2).

		Times of participation/No. of participants		
Pseudonym		**T1 (November 2016) N=19**	**T2 (February 2017) N=7**	**T3 (May 2017) N=4**
1	Maryam	Yes	Yes	Yes
2	Sahar	Yes		
3	Nahla	Yes		
4	Sara	Yes		
5	Nadia	Yes		Yes
6	Najat	Yes		
7	Azhar	Yes	Yes	
8	Nasim	Yes		
9	Yasser	Yes		
10	Muhammad	Yes	Yes	
11	Adeel	Yes	Yes	
12	Abdu	Yes		
13	Ali	Yes	Yes	
14	Adam	Yes		
15	Amer	Yes		Yes
16	Amjad	Yes	Yes	Yes

17	Faisal	Yes	
18	Hassan	Yes	Yes
19	Sami	Yes	

Table 3.2. Participants and time of participation

All the participants came to the UK to study English in order to meet the language requirements for HE (Master's or PhD); generally, prospective students are required to obtain an IELTS score of 6 or 6.5. As shown in Table 3.3, the interviewees comprised 11 males and 8 females (married and single), studying ESL courses (academic/general) in different English institutions in Newcastle in the year 2016–2017. The participants are identified using pseudonyms to maintain anonymity.

	Pseudonym*	Age	Gender/marital status	Duration of stay/English language study	Prior experience abroad	Accommodation	Institution	Future university course
1	Maryam	31	Female, married	First semester, academic English	Yes in US	Private	INTO, Newcastle	Master's in Applied Linguistics
2	Sahar	25	Female, married	One month First semester, general English	No	Private	International House	
3	Nahla	27	Female, married	Two months	No	Private	INTO, Newcastle	PhD
4	Sara	27	Female, married	A few months	Yes in Exeter	Private	International School of English	Master's
5	Nadia	35	Female, married	One month	Yes in US	University	INTO, Newcastle	PhD
6	Najat	30		One year	No	Private	INTO, Newcastle	Master's
7	Azhar	24	Female, single, living with family	A few months	Yes as a child	Private	INTO, Newcastle	Undergraduate
8	Nasim	28	Female, married	Five months	No	Private	International House	Master's
9	Yasser	23	Male, single	First semester	No	Homestay	International House	Master's
10	Muhammad	31	Male, married		Yes	Homestay	International School of English	Master's
11	Adeel	28	Male, single	Second semester	No	Homestay	INTO, Newcastle	Master's
12	Abdu	28	Male, single	Third semester	No	Homestay	INTO, Newcastle	Master's
13	Ali	29	Male, single	Second semester, academic English	No	Homestay	INTO, Newcastle	Master's
14	Adam	28	Male, single	Third semester, academic English	No	Homestay	Northumbria	Master's
15	Amer	26	Male, single	Second semester, academic English	Yes in the UK, around 1.5 years	Private	INTO, Newcastle	Master's
16	Amjad	32	Male, single	Academic English foundation year	No	Private	Sunderland University	Master's
17	Faisal	40	Male, married	First semester, academic English	No	Homestay	INTO, Newcastle	Master's
18	Hassan	32	Male, married	First semester, academic English	No	Homestay	INTO, Newcastle	Master's
19	Sami	31	Male, single	First semester, general English	No	Private	Northumbria language course	Master's

*All participants were assigned a pseudonym to protect their anonymity.

Table 3.3. Interviewee characteristics

Thus, this study used two instruments: self-completion questionnaires to obtain quantitative data and interviews to provide qualitative data.

3.4.1 Data collection instruments

Self-completion questionnaires

Self-completion questionnaires were employed as '…they are relatively easy to construct, extremely versatile and uniquely capable of gathering a large amount of information quickly in a form that is readily processible' (Dornyei, 2007, pp. 101–102). In the literature, certain disadvantages of self-report questionnaires are mentioned, such as inaccurate or unreadable answers, which might be because of second language difficulties, i.e. the participants might not fully understand questions written in a second language. To address this, Gass and Mackey (2007) suggest translating questionnaires into the participants' first language and allowing respondents to use their first language to respond. This was the preferred approach in this study to make it easier for the participants to understand the questions and provide comprehensible and comprehensive answers. Therefore, all of the participants received a copy of the questionnaire in both Arabic (the participants' native language) and English (see Appendix A).

The questionnaires were administered at two points: T1, at the beginning of the 2016/2017 academic year, i.e. in October/November 2016; T2, at the end of the academic year, in June 2017. This sequence in the longitudinal approach is in line with Schartner and Young's (2016) model of measuring contributory factors at two time points, early and later stages students' sojourn in the UK.

The questionnaire at T1 consisted of six parts (see Appendix A): (1) background information, (2) English language ability, (3) attitudes and motivation and language anxiety, (4) knowledge of the UK, (5) intercultural competence and (6) psychological adaptation. The questionnaire at T2 contained of nine parts (see Appendix B): (1) background information, (2) academic adaptation, (3) English language ability, (4) knowledge about the UK, (5) satisfaction with life, (6) psychological wellbeing, (7) sociocultural adaptation, (8) social support and (9) social contact. These are discussed in detail in the following paragraphs.

- Background information

The first part of the questionnaire sought information concerning the student's name, student number, email (to contact them in the second stage and send them the second version of the questionnaire for T2), gender, marital status (married, single, widowed, divorced), name of institution/college/university of the English language course in the UK (location), current programme of study (e.g. general English/academic English, IELTS), level of English language

proficiency in their current course (beginner, elementary, pre-intermediate, intermediate, upper intermediate, advanced; British Council, 2017), last IELTS grade (<4, 4, 4.5, 5, 5.5, 6, 6.5, >6.5), field of future study (e.g. MA, PhD), month and year of arrival in the UK, type of accommodation (private/university residence/ homestay/other).

English language ability

Ying and Liese's (1994) self-rating scale of ability to communicate in the language has been widely used by many researchers to assess learners' L2 ability (e.g. Schartner and Young, 2016; Wang et al., 2009; Yu and Shen, 2012). Therefore, based on its reliability and validity, this self-rating scale was used in this study through the question: 'At this point, how satisfied are you with your ability to communicate in the English language?' The students were asked to rate their abilities in the four language skills – (1) listening, (2) speaking, (3) reading and (4) writing – on a five-point Likert-type scale extending from 1 (not at all satisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). High mean scores represent high perceived competence in English.

- Attitudes and motivation related to English language learning

Attitudes and motivation related to L2 learning are commonly measured using the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), originally developed by Gardner (1985). This scale has been adapted in many ways over the years for different ages and levels of study, e.g. university level, school children and adults, as well as to take account of the different purposes of studies. It is thus amenable to modification concerning the aspects studied under the umbrella of motivational variables in second language. In addition, this scale has frequently been employed by researchers and scholars in the field of L2 learning and motivation (e.g. Gardner et al., 1997; Masgoret et al., 2001; Ahn, 2007; Bernaus and Gardner, 2008).

However, in its long version, this instrument contains more than 130 items and suits those studies that just focus on these aspects. Based on the aims of this study, the shorter version of the scale (mini-AMTB), developed by Gardner and MacIntyre (1993), was used. This contains 11 single-item indicators to assess each variable and has been demonstrated to have predictive validity and acceptable convergent validity (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993). In addition, Gardner (2006) stated that this measure is sufficiently flexible to allow aggregation of the measures of various aspects, depending on the research purpose and themes.

Therefore, the mini-AMTB scale was used to measure the participants' attitudes towards the learning situation, two types of motivation (integrative and instrumental), as well as language anxiety concerning learning the L2. The mini-ATMB scale consists of 11 items that focus on five dimensions of motivational constructs: (i) items 1–3 represent integrative motivation, (ii) items 4 and 5 represent attitudes towards learning, items 6–8 represent motivational intensity,

item 9 represents instrumental motivation and items 10 and 11 represent language anxiety (Hashimoto, 2002, pp. 42–43). The items are measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale, depending on the sub-scale: a) four items ranged from 1 (weak) to 7 (strong), three items ranged from 1 (unfavourable) to 7 (favourable) and two items ranged from 1 (very low) to 7 (very high). Table 3.4 presents example prompts from the mini-AMTB instrument for each scale.

mini-AMTB sub-scales				
Integrativeness	**Attitudes towards learning situation**	**Motivational intensity**	**Instrumental motivation**	**Language anxiety**
My motivation to learn English in order to communicate with English speaking people is…	*My attitude towards my English course is…*	*My desire to learn and know all aspects of English is…*	*My motivation to learn English for practical purposes (e.g. to better grades, a good job/salary) is…*	*I worry about speaking English outside class…*

Table 3.4. Mini-AMTB example prompts for each scale

- Knowledge of the UK

To assess the participants' knowledge of the UK, five questions were asked at T1, following Schartner's (2014) study: four questions concerned experience prior to overseas study, e.g. 'How much of your life have you spent living abroad, excluding holidays?'; the fifth was a single item used to measure students' perceptions of their knowledge of the UK: 'How much did you know about the UK before coming here?' (1 = very little knowledge; 5 = a lot of knowledge).

- Intercultural competence

The Multicultural Personality Questionnaire - Short Form (MPQ-SF) includes 40 items developed by Van der Zee et al. (2013), used in this study to measure students' intercultural competence. The original form of the MPQ, containing 91 items, has been used in a significant number of studies, such as those of Leone et al. (2005), Leong (2007), van Oudenhoven et al. (2007), Ponterotto (2010) and Schartner and Young (2016). These support its validity in terms of its relevance for intercultural success and competence. However, it is often not practical to use the full version of 91 items, especially in studies integrating multiple measures. Thus, the aim of developing the short form was to reduce the measurement length, while retaining indicators that considered the same aspects and range as the original version (Van der Zee et al., 2013). Recent studies have employed this tool and demonstrated its validity (e.g. Dewaele and Al-Saraj, 2015; Basow and Gaugler, 2017). Therefore, as this study aimed to encompass a multidimensional perspective (academic, psychological and sociocultural), the choice of the 40-item MPQ-SF was more practical than the full version; it covers the five intercultural competence dimensions of cultural empathy (CE, items 1–8) flexibility (FX, items 9–16), social initiative (SI, items 17–24), emotional stability (ES, items 25–32) and open-mindedness (OP,

items 33–40). Items were rated on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (totally not applicable) to 5 (completely applicable). Table 3.5 illustrates examples for each scale of the MPQ-SF questionnaire.

MPQ-SF example prompts for each scale				
CE	**FX**	**SI**	**ES**	**OP**
Pays attention to the emotions of others	*Works according to strict rules*	*Leaves the initiative to others to make contact*	*Gets upset easily*	*Starts a new life easily*

Table 3.5. MPQ-SF example statements

- Academic adaptation

The Academic Adjustment Scale (AAS), developed by Anderson et al. (2016), was used to measure the students' academic adaptation in their English language courses. This scale consists of three academic dimensions: Academic Lifestyle (AL, items 1–3), Academic Achievement (AA, items 4–6) and Academic Motivation (AM, items 7–10). It has been used in many studies (e.g. Anderson and Guan, 2018; Sheikh and Anderson, 2018; Valickas et al., 2019) to measure the academic adaptation of international students in their new learning environment, enhancing the validity of the scale as it had been used with similar samples.

In addition, learners' satisfaction (LS, items 11–16) was measured as the fourth dimension of academic adaptation using Hung's (2015) scale. This measured the students' satisfaction with their communicative English course in terms of the learning materials (content, topics and structure), use of technology and multimedia resources and their autonomy in controlling their learning. This study used the same questionnaire, but adding some elements related to the communicative approach not included in the original scale, i.e. satisfaction with the teacher's role, satisfaction with their ability to communicate in class activities, and satisfaction with the assessment tools used in the class and examinations. The reason for adding these elements was to cover the characteristics of the communicative approach as comprehensively as possible. The LS scale includes 6 elements.

The AAS uses a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (totally not applicable) to 5 (completely applicable). Table 3.6 shows examples for each scale of the AAS questionnaire.

AAS example prompts for each scale			
AL	**AA**	**AM**	**LS**
I am enjoying the lifestyle of being an English language student	*I am satisfied with the level of my academic performance, progress and achievement to date*	*I expect to complete my course successfully in the usual allocated timeframe*	*I am satisfied with my ability to take responsibility for my learning*

Table 3.6. AAS example statements

- Psychological adaptation

The two dimensions of life satisfaction and wellbeing are considered distinct concepts that represent psychological health and the experience of happiness (Pavot and Diener, 2008). A comprehensive measurement of subjective wellbeing requires separate measurements for life satisfaction and wellbeing (Diener and Seligman, 2004). Therefore, the well-known Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) developed by Diener et al. (1985) was used to assess the students' level of life satisfaction and the RAND Mental Health Inventory (2012) was used to measure psychological wellbeing (PWB). These two measures were used in the recent studies of Young et al. (2013) and Schartner (2014) to measure international students' psychological adaptation of the international students, demonstrating their reliability and validity. Moreover, this highlights their suitability for this study as it had a similar purpose in terms of measuring the psychological dimension of individuals.

The SWLS comprises 5 items, scaled from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree); an example item is *'In most ways my life is close to my ideal'.* The PWBS, which is related to the RAND mental health scale (2012), contains 7 items scaled from 1 (none of the time) to 5 (all of the time), best describing the way the participants feel over the last few weeks; an example item is *'I have felt full of energy'.*

- Sociocultural adaptation

The Brief Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (BSAS), developed by Demes and Geeraert (2014), was used in this study to measure the students' sociocultural adaptation to UK society and the environment. The scale includes 12 items, reflecting how easy or difficult the students find it to adapt to the new cultural environment (e.g. social norms, family life and practicalities). This scale is the revised version of the original scale developed by Ward and Kenney (1999). The original scale included 30–40 items, whereas the revised version comprises 12 items that summarise the aspects measured in the earlier version. This study used the revised version as it is shorter, but includes the same aspects as in the previous scale.

The BSAS consists of 12 items measuring how easy or difficult it is to adapt to life in UK, scaled from 1 (very difficult) to 5 (very easy). An example item is '*Social norms (how to behave in public, style of clothes, what people think is funny)'.*

- Social support

The Index for Sojourner Social Support (ISSS), developed by Ong and Ward (2005), was used to measure the students' social socioemotional and instrumental support. The scale comprises 17 items and respondents are asked to rate which statement most applies to them with regard to the type of support provided by the people around them. Items 1–8 represent socioemotional

support and 9–17 represent instrumental support. Items are measured on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (No-one would do this) to 5 (Many would do this). Table 3.7 shows examples for each scale of the ISSS questionnaire.

ISSS example prompts for each scale	
Socioemotional	**Instrumental**
Comfort you whenever you feel homesick	*Provide necessary information to help orient you to your new surroundings*

Table 3.7. ISSS example statements

- Social support contact

The Index of Social Support (ISS), developed by Yang and Clum (1994), was used to measure the extent of students' contact with various groups of people in their learning abroad. The original scale, designed to assess students' social contact patterns, included eight groups of contacts, both existing contacts in the home country (family, friends, relatives) and new contacts in the host country (international students, local communities). This scale was originally applied in a study of international students in the US and mainly focused on social contact. Misra et al. (2003) and used this scale, focusing not only on social contact, but also other factors that could affect social contact, such as academic stressors and life stress. Misra et al. (2003) modified the 8 items to 4, representing contact with one's own society abroad, contact with one's family, contact with the local community and contact with religious organisations. This study makes a further modification to fit the purpose of the research and the sample of Saudi students, who travel with their families (see 1.2.1). Hence, this study focuses on the degree of contact with the following groups: (i) Saudi students, (ii) British students, (iii) other international students, (iv) British people outside the university (non-students), and (v) family members. The scale assesses the degree of overall contact with these groups in the UK.

Interviews

Interviews were the second instrument used in this study. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) state that interviews are the preferred tool for gathering qualitative data as they provide the researcher with the means of exploring phenomena or experiences that are not directly observable, such as learners' attitudes and perceptions, entirely consistent with this study's aims. Based on the longitudinal design, aiming to explore changes and emergent themes over time, three phases of interviews were conducted in November, February and May 2017 (see Figure 3.3, sub-section 3.6.3). One of the advantages of conducting interviews longitudinally is that unlike normal interviews that only provide data covering a single snapshot, there is a time dimension covering process and change (Vogl et al., 2018). This suits the focus in this study on the individuals' trajectories (Thomson and McLeod, 2015).

However, one of the main issues with this approach is that its multi-dimensional focus could increase the complexity of the study, specifically concerning the data structure and analysis (Calman et al., 2013). In terms of the study focus, this research followed Schartner and Young's (2020) model as its theoretical background, focusing on the academic, psychological, and sociocultural domains in examining the students' adjustment and looking at the trajectory over time (for interview questions, see Appendices D, E, and F). In terms of the complexity of the data analysis, this study followed Vogl et al.' s (2018) analytical framework, employing thematic analysis of the data from the longitudinal qualitative study (see 3.5.2).

Semi-structured interviews were used in this study as these have benefits over structured interviews, allowing the researcher to include pre-set questions or topics for exploration and discussion and at the same time giving the flexibility for the interviewer to add follow-up questions when necessary to investigate issues in more depth (Dornyei, 2007) or for the participants to incorporate issues of importance or interest. The flexibility conferred by this kind of interview is useful in searching for further information that it would not be possible to collect via alternative data collection methods, such as questionnaires, which are more structured and have predetermined purposes. In semi-structured interviews it is possible to obtain in-depth information that the researchers deem significant and important (Cohen et al, 2011). Therefore, semi-structured interviews were conducted based on questions covering the three main dimensions of adjustment outlined previously, but also giving the interviewees the opportunity to expand on their responses and provide richer data.

3.4.2 Piloting

Questionnaires and interviews were the two instruments used in this study. This section concerns the piloting of the instruments to ensure their readiness for use in data collection in the main study. Dornyei (2007) and Mackey and Gass (2015) recommended testing research instruments prior to adopting them in the main study as this provides insights into the usefulness and effectiveness of the instruments in relation to achieving the research aims and ensuring their validity. Therefore, the English version of the questionnaire was piloted with two English language Saudi students who were at different levels of English language proficiency (intermediate and upper-intermediate) and who did not participate in the main study. It transpired that they did not understand several items in English and thus the questionnaires and interviews were conducted in both Arabic and English to avoid misunderstanding.

To ensure the validity of the translated version of the questionnaires, they were subjected to three stages based on the commonly used technique of *back translation*. Thus, as someone proficient in Arabic and English (and having taught English), I translated the established English version into Arabic in the first stage. Then, two experienced English language teachers

conducted the second stage of translation, translating the Arabic version back into English. The two English versions were then checked to ensure that they were equivalent. One of the drawbacks of back translation is that it does not correspond to the cultural context of specific nationals (see Bryman, 2016). For this reason, the format and linguistic adequacy of the questionnaire was checked by two peer research students at the researcher's University, who went through the questionnaire in both languages and gave their suggestions for improving it, as a result of which some of the items were amended. The selection of the two peers was because they work in the field of sociopsychology and second language learning and they were proficient specialists in both languages. Thus, ambiguities in technical terms and culturally unsuitable wording were addressed. To ensure the validity of the final Arabic version of the questionnaire, it was piloted with two Saudi ESL students who were volunteers and were not participants in the main study. Using the aforementioned techniques, the validity and lack of ambiguity of the scales were assured.

Regarding interviews, Mackey and Gass (2015) state that it is important to eliminate concerns regarding the participants' proficiency levels in speaking in the L2, which might affect the quality and validity of the data. Therefore, the interviews were conducted in Arabic, i.e. the Saudi students' first language. In addition, the interview protocol was piloted with one Saudi student, who did not participate in the main study, to avoid ambiguity as in the questionnaire.

3.4.3 Data collection procedures

In the initial phase (summer 2016), the gatekeepers of institutions – universities, colleges or other private institutions – were contacted to request permission to conduct the research study and gain access to their classes to introduce myself and the participants' role and to encourage students to participate. Although not all the gatekeepers allowed me access to the classes, several helped me send Saudi students links to the survey. As a result, several Saudi students were enrolled. To gain as many participants as possible, an online survey link was distributed to the many Saudi channels in the UK, via Twitter, Facebook and so on. This procedure is called the snowball technique, defined by Heckathorn and Cameron (2017) as follows:

> [Snowball sampling] proceeds through network linkages, first from the seeds to the first wave, then from the first to the second wave, and so forth as the sample expands from wave to wave in the manner of a snowball growing as it rolls down a hill. Sampling stops when the target sample size has been attained. (p. 102)

The main drawback of this technique is the possibility of bias to certain organisations or individuals as the choice of the whole sample at the initial stage of the study is random depending on the choices of the organisation (Kumar, 2014). However, Noy (2008, p. 331) argued that snowballing is a useful technique when it is difficult to reach the sample population

and this technique ‘deserves to be employed on its own right and merit, and not as a default option’. This procedure was used in this study because of difficulty in reaching the target population. In addition, the advantage of this technique was that it made it possible to reach a large number of Saudi students studying English in different cities throughout the UK, aiding generalisation of the findings as it could reduce potential bias in the sample.

Figure 3.1 illustrates the longitudinal process of data collection. In the initial stage (October and November 2017) a number of English language institutions were visited and questionnaires were distributed to several participants; at this point, 26 paper copies of the questionnaire were completed and the online version of the survey brought the sample up to 152. Therefore, in total 177 responses were received.

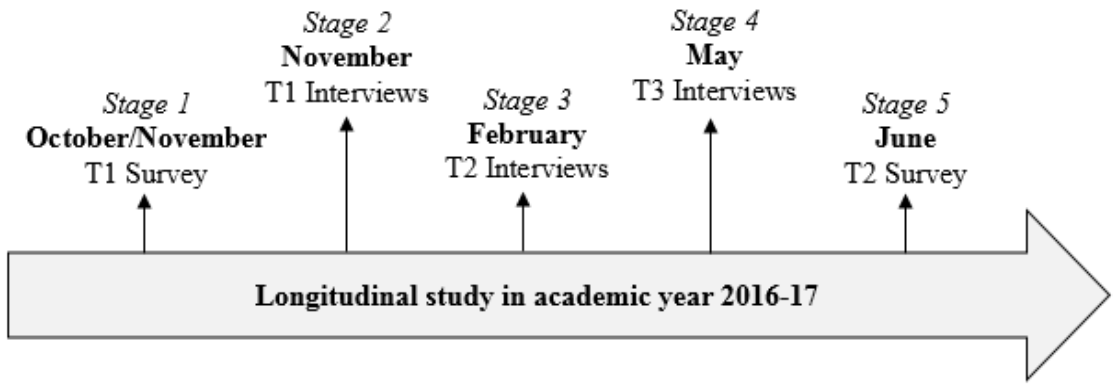

Figure 3.1. Longitudinal approach to data collection

At T2, I used the contact details (emails and mobile numbers) of students provided in the questionnaire conducted at T1, contacting them again and sending the second questionnaire in June 2017. This phase generated 110 responses. To encourage the students to participate, two weeks after initially distributed the questionnaire online, I followed up with a religious saying: ‘the most beloved of people according to Allah is he who brings most benefit to people’. The number of responses then increased, indicating that the saying had an impact on participation. I used the same technique for the questionnaire and interviews, as this could be persuasive for students from an Islamic culture and religious background.

The initial interviews were undertaken following the administration of the first questionnaire. This included a call for participation in the survey and elicited initial 86 volunteers. Of these, 21 finally participated (11 male and 10 female). The selection of the participants was based on two criteria: first, an (almost) equal number of males and females; second, those who had just arrived in the UK to study in the 2016/2017 academic year on English language courses. This would enable comparison.

The time and effort required for questionnaires is less than for interviews in terms of thinking of the answer (Opdenakker, 2006). Thus, conducting the interviews was more challenging than the questionnaires. The interviews were conducted with the individual participants at a time and in a place agreed in advance. Prior to the interviews, the participants signed written consent forms. The interviews took place in November 2016, February 2017, and May 2017, all with the same participants.

Building trust and rapport with interviewees is an important aspect in conducting research, making it possible to obtain access, generate rich data, increase the quality and the validity of the research, and enhance the interactions between the interviewer and interviewees (Duncombe and Jessop, 2002). It is vital to use the time before the interview to build trust by providing an overview of the research purpose and its significance (McGrath et al., 2019). Therefore, before the initial interview, when agreeing the time and the place, I introduced myself and the purpose of the interviews, and highlighted the importance of the project in terms of how it would serve other Saudi students in adjusting and adapting to the study abroad experience. I emphasised that they could use their voices to help others in the future. As a fellow Saudi sojourner, I was able to show them empathy and understanding regarding the initial stages of adjusting to the new environment. This building of a relationship paid off as most of the students (N=19) contacted attended the first interview.

However, arranging face-to-face interviews in the following waves (T2, T3) was more challenging. I tried to contact the participants by phone and email, but there was a drop in participation in the two following phases. The reason given by some of the participants was that they were busy with their studies and their assessments, especially at end of the year (T3). Attrition is inevitable in longitudinal research (Laher and Kramer, 2019) and it is vital to ensure that this does not lead to bias affecting the efficacy of the study (Gustavson et al., 2012).

This can be dealt with in two ways: (i) attrition can be acknowledged as one of the study limitations and signalled as a point of caution for future research, advising that alternative means be sought to avoid attrition in longitudinal studies (see 9.6); (ii) it might be possible to retain some participants by offering some kind of reward (either financial or in kind) for continuing in the study.

3.5 Data analysis

The data gathered through the questionnaires were analysed quantitatively using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The data collected in the interviews were analysed qualitatively using thematic analysis approach.

3.5.1 Quantitative data analysis

SPSS is an effective tool for analysing quantitative data and generating statistical results as it facilitates different types of measurement and analysis relevant to the specific aspects that need to be measured in quantitative research (Field, 2013). In this study, the aim was to use the questionnaire data to determine the relationships between contributory factors that affect Saudi ESL students and their adaptation. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, measuring the central tendency, as well as the association between variables.

Descriptive statistics

The data were first analysed using descriptive statistics in terms of the central tendency (mean) and standard deviation. When the standard deviation varies, the percentage of scores above the mid-point is considered to provide effective clarification (Acton et al., 2009). In addition, means were compared using paired t-tests to explore the changes that occurred between T1 and T2 and correlations were used to indicate the relationships between the variables.

Moreover, the internal consistency (reliability) of each dimension was computed using Cronbach's alpha, taking the threshold value of > .70 on a scale of .90 = excellent, .80 = good, .70 = acceptable, .60 = questionable, .50 = poor, < .50 = unacceptable (George and Mallery, 2003, p. 240). The overall consistency of the measures for the questionnaires, namely all of the scales used to measure the three dimensions of cross-cultural adaptation, at T1 was $\alpha = .88$ and for T2 was $\alpha = .90$, i.e. good and excellent respectively. The same procedure was carried out to evaluate the reliability for each of the sub-sections in the questionnaires at both T1 and T2.

Association between variables

The aim of testing the association between variables is to identify the most significant relationships between the contributory factors that are measured either at time T1 (October 2016) or T2 (July 2017) and the three adaptation dimensions – academic, psychological, and sociocultural – measured at T2. For this, two statistical tests were employed, namely bivariate correlation and linear and multiple regressions. Bivariate correlation tests were used to establish whether the variables were significantly correlated or not, and if so, in what way (direction and strength), while the regressions were used to establish the validity of the prediction whether the independent variables would predict the dependent variables at certain percentage (George and Mallery, 2003; Acton et al., 2009).

Bivariate correlation tests were used to establish whether the contributory factors were significantly correlated with the three adaptation domains or not. However, correlation cannot indicate which variables have the most significant influence (Acton et al., 2009). Thus, regressions were applied to the significant correlations between factors and their outcomes to

identify the most significant contributory factors that would predict the outcomes over time and the strength of their influence. The terms ‘predictor’ and ‘percentage values’ are only used in a statistical sense as a process for answering RQ2, which considers the relationships between the contributory factors and adaptation domains; they are not used as key terms across the thesis.

3.5.2 Qualitative data analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data from the interviews. According to Braun and Clarke (2007, p. 79), ‘thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data’. The literature provides several guides to thematic analysis (e.g. Aronson, 1995; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Joffe, 2011). This study followed the process suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) as explained in the following paragraphs.

Thematic analysis is a very useful tool to investigate the thoughts, experiences, and behaviours across a large dataset (Bryman, 2016). It is used because it fits the purpose of analysing interview data, which requires a flexible approach that does not follow a specific theoretical framework and yields detailed and rich data about complex phenomena (King, 2004). It is beneficial in examining various views and highlighting differences and similarities, as well as producing unexpected insights (Braun and Clarke, 2021).

Inductive thematic analysis is beneficial in generating themes that allow the data to speak without interference from the researcher and is mainly applied in grounded theory (Frith and Gleeson, 2004). However, inductive analysis will not necessarily reflect the research interest and could veer off track in relation to the questions asked of the participants (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Moreover, the flexibility of this approach in developing themes emerging from the data could lead to a lack of cohesion and consistency (Holloway and Todres, 2003; Nowell et al., 2017).

In contrast, in a deductive approach, the researcher takes control, keeping in mind the literature and the aspects that are relevant to the study, as well as previous theories and research the framework, while examining the data for themes related to the research focus (Bryman, 2016). However, this approach could lead to a specific focus on certain topics and risks losing the participants’ voice (Braun and Clarke, 2012). Thus, Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest it is useful to combine these two analytical lenses in a single analysis to make the most of their strengths by being open to the data and at the same time taking control and relating the analysis to the research focus and guiding literature. Some researchers (e.g. Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Friese et al., 2018) have called this approach thematic content analysis. Therefore, this study follows Braun and Clarke’s (2006) steps, conducting an inductive analysis in the initial stages and then a deductive analysis in generating the final themes (see Table 3.8).

Phase		Description of the process
1.	Familiarisation with the data	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas
2.	Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code
3.	Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme
4.	Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis
5.	Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme
6.	Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis: Selecting vivid, compelling extract examples, conducting final analysis of selected extracts, relating the analysis back to the research questions and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis

Source: Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 87)

Table 3.8. Steps in thematic analysis

The flexibility of this approach is challenging, as argued by Braun and Clarke (2007, p. 97), who note that 'it makes developing specific guidelines for higher-phase analysis difficult and can be potentially paralysing to the researcher trying to decide what aspects of their data to focus on'. In this case, the focus of the thematic analysis was on the students' comments on facilitators and hindrances in terms of successfully adjusting to the new academic and social environment (see Andrade, 2006; Young et al., 2013, Schartner and Young, 2020; Shu, 2020).

In addition to the matter of what themes should be identified, it is necessary for the researcher to make it clear what constitutes a theme and how he/she looks at it (Nowell et al., 2017). Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 82) define a theme as a 'patterned response or meaning' in the data that informs on the study questions. To generate these patterns, the data are coded and these codes contribute to generating the themes and patterns. One can differentiate between semantic meaning, which refers to the explicit and surface meaning of the words, and the latent meaning, i.e. the underlying meanings of the words, not their literal meaning, which often entails a psychological analysis of what is meant by the words (Braun and Clarke, 2006). However, this study focuses on the semantic meaning of the words, consistent with the purpose of the research, looking at what the data represents and as not what is beyond the data, in line with the view that the identification of themes should follow the research questions (Bryman, 2016).

In applying steps of thematic analysis outlined in Table 3.8, Bryman (2016) notes that it is important to look closely at what to code and how to code, as well as generating themes and identifying why they are important. Therefore, this study followed the coding technique that Braun and Clarke (2006) indicated in step 2: 'Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code' to code in a systematic fashion, categorising excerpts in the data transcripts, and searching for pattens and

themes. This makes it possible to structure data collected through semi-structured or unstructured means inductively. In terms of the matter of what to code, this study used the technique of identifying points repeated many times, aspects that were surprising or explicitly stated as important, aspects that were similar to those mentioned in previous studies, and those reminiscent of theory or concepts and any aspects that showed relevance.

In terms of step 3 (Table 3.8), 'Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme', categories were created by grouping the codes that were important (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Bryman, 2016). Then, themes were created by labelling the most relevant and connected categories (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Bryman, 2016). As discussed previously, the themes in this study concerned the facilitating and hindering aspects influencing the Saudi students' academic, psychological, and sociocultural adjustment.

Another issue that is related to the thematic approach in relation to the identification of themes is how to assess the validity and reliability, termed 'trustworthiness' in qualitative research (Nowell et al., 2017). Lincoln and Guba (1985) define this as how the researcher convinces the readers and themselves that the findings make sense in the field and are worthy of attention. Lincoln and Guba (1985) introduced the four main criteria for trustworthiness to parallel the criteria of validity and reliability in quantitative research. These are credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. Nowell et al. (2017, p. 3) argued that 'these trustworthiness criteria are pragmatic choices for researchers concerned about the acceptability and usefulness of their research for a variety of stakeholders'.

Credibility can be established based on the time that the researcher spends with the participants and the data gaining an in depth understanding about the context and the subject, as well as by having the data checked by another researcher in a process of peer debriefing (Terrell, 2016). The credibility of the interview data in this study was strengthened by the longitudinal natures of having contact with the students three times, which shaped the understanding of the data and how to identify the themes. Transferability is similar to generalisability in quantitative research, but denotes the extent to which the experience recounted in the research is representative of the experience of others more widely (Shenton, 2004). Dependability concerns the clear and logical documentation of the project, demonstrating its reliability, and whether the research would provide similar results if conducted again (Tobin and Begley, 2004). Confirmability is equivalent to objectivity in quantitative research. One of the aspects of confirmability is how the researcher looks at the data, her/his engagement in the interpretation, and how this affects the subjectivity of the research and the analytic lens; by recognising explicitly that I am a Saudi student in the UK and have been through this experience when I first arrived, the confirmability of the study is enhanced (Shenton, 2004).

In terms of applying the trustworthiness criteria in the various steps of thematic analysis conducted in this study, I applied Nowell et al.'s (2017, p. 4) framework, as shown in Table 3.9. To meet all the trustworthiness criteria, documents concerning the data analysis procedures, starting from an example of the transcripts and the coding technique, all the way through to identifying the final themes and producing the report, as well as the peer debriefing and checking, are provided in the appendices (see Appendices I and J).

Phases of thematic analysis	Means of establishing trustworthiness
1. Familiarisation with the data	Prolong engagement with data Document thoughts about potential codes/themes Keep records of all data field notes, transcripts, and reflexive journals
2. Generating initial codes	Peer debriefing Use of a coding framework Documentation of all peer debriefings
3. Searching for themes	Diagramming to make sense of theme connections Keep detailed notes about development and hierarchies of concepts and themes
4. Reviewing themes	Test for referential adequacy by returning to raw data
5. Defining and naming themes	Peer debriefing Documentation of theme naming
6. Producing the report	Peer debriefing Describing process of coding and analysis in sufficient detail Report on reasons for theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices throughout the entire study

Source: Nowell et al. (2017, p. 4)

Table 3.9. Trustworthiness criteria for thematic analysis

In addition, in the stage of the identifying the final themes, and to respond to RQ2, the study employed Vogl et al.'s (2018, p. 183) framework for analysing longitudinal interviews, adopting the 'longitudinal units' approach to identify the changes that occurred over time and allow comparison between the three phases. This aided in the final stage of producing the report, as well as maximising validity and providing solutions to deal with attrition in T2 and T3 by looking at the themes in each phase as units.

3.6 Ethical considerations

One of the problems that might be encountered concerns participant confidentiality and students' willingness to participate in the study, particularly given the use of performance data; the participants need to be assured that they will remain anonymous to enable them to be comfortable about participating (Wallen and Fraenkel, 2001). In this study, the participants were given a guarantee that their anonymity would be maintained and that their responses would remain confidential and would be used only for educational purposes. In addition, another issue was that some of the participants might refuse to be recorded during the interviews; to overcome this, note-taking could be employed instead (Bryman, 2016). The consent form, information sheet, and debriefing sheet are vital documents in conducting studies in the social sciences (Dornyei, 2007; Bryman, 2016). Regarding ethical consideration, these documents were

employed prior to and after conducting the study. For the questionnaires, the consent and information sections were the initial pages at both T1 (Appendix A) and T2 (Appendix B). In conducting the interviews, in the initial stages, the participant received the information sheet (Appendix G) and then signed the consent form (Appendix C), and then after data collection the participants received the debriefing sheet (Appendix H).

3.7 Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodological stance and choices applied in conducting the research. First, the chapter presented and discussed the longitudinal study design (see 3.2), aimed at providing a rich dataset to understand changes in Saudi English language learners' adjustment and outcomes over an academic year. The context and participants (see 3.3) were defined, namely that the study sample comprised Saudi ESL students studying at a number of English language institutions in different cities in the UK. In total, 117 students participated in the first survey and 110 in the second survey. In addition, 19 students participated in the three rounds of interviews. The mixed methods approach used for data collection and the methods were then described (see 3.4). The study combined data from quantitative questionnaires with the full sample and from qualitative interviews to provide in-depth understanding and to strengthen the findings from each dataset. In terms of data collection instruments (see 3.4.1), the chapter set out the self-completion questionnaires administered at T1 (October 2016) and T2 (June 2017), which included background information, the contributory factor scales concerning English language ability, attitudes, motivation and language anxiety, knowledge of the UK, intercultural competence, and academic, psychological, and sociocultural adaptation. The chapter then introduced the semi-structured interviews, used to supplement the questionnaires as well as assess changes in adjustment over time. The chapter discussed the piloting (see 3.4.2), in which both the questionnaires and interview questions were trialled with a similar sample to that used in the main study. The data collection procedure (see 3.4.3), namely the snowballing technique, was described; this aided in achieving an adequate sample of Saudi students studying English in different cities throughout the UK, a population that is difficult to reach. The chapter then outlined the techniques used in data analysis (3.5), i.e. SPSS for the quantitative data and thematic analysis for the qualitative data. The findings are presented in the forthcoming chapters.

Chapter 4. Descriptive Statistics – Quantitative Findings

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the findings of the quantitative data gathered through the surveys at both time points, October 2016 (T1) and June 2017 (T2), are presented and analysed in relation to the descriptive statistic of the data (see 3.5.1, Chapter 3, Methodology). The aim is to provide an overall understanding of the descriptive statistics for all the items used in the survey at both times, T1 and T2. This used as the basis for presenting the main findings in relation to the three adaptation domains that are the focus of the study. Therefore, this chapter will present and discuss the data of the contributory factors on arrival (T1 and T2) that affect the Saudi ESL students' experience, namely: English language ability, attitude, motivation and anxiety, knowledge of the UK, intercultural competence, social contact and social support; the outcomes of the students' experience in relation to academic adaptation, psychological adaptation and sociocultural adaptation (T2).

4.2 Contributory factors on arrival

4.2.1 English language ability

English language ability in the four language skills (listening, reading, writing, and speaking) was measured using the English language ability – Satisfaction (ELA-Sat) scale (see Chapter 3, Methodology) at T1. In terms of the reliability of the items measured, the score of the coefficient was $\alpha = .77$ (> .70). On a scale of 1 (not at all satisfied) to 5 (completely satisfied), the overall mean of the ELA-Sat at T1 (N = 177;October 2016) was 2.96 (SD = .693, Min = 1, Max = 5) and 26% of the responses were above the mid-point (3 = moderately satisfied), indicating that the students were relatively satisfied with their ability to communicate in English across the four language skills.

Looking specifically at students' satisfaction for each skill, Table 4.1 presents the means and standard deviations. Students' satisfaction with their listening (M = 3.13, SD = .889) and speaking (M = 3.04, SD = .928) skills were higher on average than with their reading (M = 2.95, SD = .799) and writing (M = 2.61, SD = 1.024) skills.

Language skill	Mean	SD
Listening	3.13	.889
Speaking	3.04	.928
Reading	2.95	.799
Writing	2.61	1.024

Table 4.1. Descriptive statistics for English language ability at T1 (ELA – Sat questionnaire)

This can be understood by looking at the interview data, which showed that the students were very worried about their ability to communicate in English in general in the four language skills. Their main aim was to improve their level of English to meet the university requirements for

language proficiency level. In addition, they were generally dissatisfied with their academic skills, in particular in reading and writing. This could be the reason why they rated themselves less satisfied on these two skills.

4.2.2 Students' attitudes, motivation, and anxiety

The mini-AMTB scale (see Chapter 3) was used to measure the participants' attitudes, motivation and language anxiety concerning English language learning at T1. This section reports on the motivational dimensions and the following section reports on the analysis of language anxiety.

Table 4.2 illustrates the central tendency for the attitudinal and motivational aspects on scales from 1 = weak/unfavourable/very low to 7 = strong/favourable/very much. The majority of the students responded above the mid-point for integrative motivation by (84%, *M* = 5.62, *SD* = 1.087), motivational intensity (88%, *M* = 5.72, *SD* = .958) and attitudes towards learning (83%, *M* = 5.29, *SD* = 1.077). However, instrumental motivation in learning English for practical purposes, such as obtaining higher grades, was even stronger (92%, *M* = 6.21, *SD* = 1.246). Nonetheless, despite the values for high instrumental motivation, it appears that students are motivates to learn English not just to obtain higher grades, but also to have contact with the native-speaker community and to integrate psychologically. In terms of reliability, the items were found to be highly reliable with a value for internal consistency of α = .79.

Dimensions of motivational constructs	Mean	SD	Strong motivation (%)
1. IntM (Items 1, 5, 8)	5.62	1.087	84
2. InsM (Item 4)	6.21	1.246	92
3. MI (Items 2, 3, 9)	5.72	0.958	88
4. ATL (Items 6–7)	5.29	1.077	83

Notes: IntM = Integrative motivation, InsM = Instrumental motivation, IM = Motivational intensity, ATL = Attitudes towards learning.

Table 4.2. Descriptive statistics of motivational aspects T1 (mini-AMTB sub-scales)

Language anxiety is another aspect measured by the same scale; in this case, two items were used to measure anxiety in and outside class at T1. The reliability of these items was high, with an internal consistency of α = .71.

Language anxiety (Items 10 and 11)	Very worried %	Mean	SD	*p*-value
LA-in	33	3.66	1.747	0.00*
LA-out	41	3.95	1.77	0.00*

* Significant at the .05 level; LA-in = Language anxiety – inside class, LA-out = Language anxiety – outside class.

Table 4.3. Descriptive statistics for language anxiety T1

Table 4.3 shows the percentages for severe anxiety and the central tendency for the two anxiety states in the ability to use English in class and outside class in social situations (Gardner, 2010,

p. 24). Students (*N* = 177) reporting high anxiety were more worried about speaking English outside the class (41%, *M* = 3.95, *SD* = 1.77) than in class (33%, *M* = 3.66, *SD* = 1.747).

Regarding the higher level of anxiety when speaking English outside class, the interviewees clarified that they felt people might misunderstand them in daily life interactions due to their lack of fluency or poor English-speaking ability. In contrast, in class they felt less anxious as their teachers would correct them and they were in a learning environment in which they were not so concerned with making mistakes.

4.2.3 Knowledge of the UK

Students were asked at T1 (*N* = 177) the extent to which they thought they had knowledge of the UK (KUK) before they came. The reliability of the item was high (α = .70). The majority, 97%, responded that they had little knowledge (*M* = 2.02, *SD* = .191, Min = 1, Max = 3) before arriving.

The interview data showed that the UK was not as the students expected based on what they knew from the media before arriving. They had little knowledge about life in the UK, particularly in terms of the country system and contact with people in society. They liked the country system and they mainly commented positively latterly in the interviews about how easily they were able to adjust to the society.

4.2.4 Intercultural competence

Intercultural competence was measured at T1 (*N* = 177) in terms of personal traits and attributes using the MPQ-SF subscales, which include 40 items (see Chapter 3). The MPQ-SF measures several aspects of cultural empathy (CE, items 1–8) flexibility (FX, items 9–16), social initiative (SI, items 17–24), emotional stability (ES, items 25–32) and open-mindedness (OP, items 33–40). The scales range from 1 = not applicable to 5 = highly applicable. Items were checked in terms of t heir internal reliability and achieved high consistency (α =. 80).

Table 4.4 shows the means and standard deviations of the five MPQ-SF subscales. Overall, aspects of cultural empathy (*M* = 3.73, *SD* = 0.506), flexibility (*M* = 3.55, *SD* = 0.618), social initiative (*M* = 3.36, *SD* = 0.493) and open-mindedness (*M* = 3.56, *SD* = 0.617) were rated more moderately applicable (3) and close to largely applicable (4). In contrast, emotional stability (*M* = 2.77, *SD* = 0.621) attained a slightly less than moderate rating.

	MPQ-SF subscale at T1	Mean	SD
1	**CE**	3.73	0.506
2	**OM**	3.56	0.617
3	**SI**	3.36	0.493
4	**ES**	2.77	0.621
5	**FL**	3.55	0.618

Notes: CE = Cultural empathy, OM = Open mindedness, SI = Social initiative, ES = Emotional stability, FL = Flexibility.

Table 4.4. Descriptive statistics for the MPQ-SF subscales T1

4.2.5 Social contact

Social contact was measured at T2 using the Index of Social Support Scale (ISSS) on a scale of 1 = never to 5 = always) (see Chapter 3, Methodology). Table 4.5 shows the degree of overall contact students reported having with the five groups. The highest percentage was for family contact (79%) above the mid-point, with a mean of 4.23. In addition, contact with other Saudi students was also high at 62% and with a mean of 3.75 (close to 4 = often). Contact with other international students was lower with 38% above the mid-point (M = 3.09). Moreover, reported contact with local people was lower at 18% (M = 2.32) and that with UK students very low at 7% (M = 1.85).

Social contact groups T2	'Often' and 'Always' %	Mean	SD
SC–SS	62	3.75	1.51
SC–BS	7	1.85	966
SC–IS	38	3.09	1.162
SC–BN	18	2.32	1.196
SC–FM	79	4.23	1.098

Notes: SC = Social contact, SS = Saudi students, BS = British students, IS = international students, BN = British nationals, FM = family members, PWB = psychological wellbeing, SWL= satisfaction with life.

Table 4.5. Percentages and means for students' social contacts

4.2.6 Social support

The Index of Sojourner Social Support (ISSS) scale (see Chapter 3) was used at T2, also to assess whether the students have support from their surroundings or not, on a scale of 1 to 5. The overall mean was 3.41 (*SD* = .960, Max = 1.06, Min = 5.00). On average, students reported their socioemotional support (*M* = 3.33, Max = 5, Min = 1.0) and instrumental support (*M* = 3.47, Max = 5, Min = 1) to be slightly above moderate. These two types of social support present a strongly positive and significant relationship as more socioemotional support means more instrumental support. This scale has a high level of reliability (α = .96).

4.3 Adaptation domains at T2

4.3.1 Psychological adaptation

Students' psychological adaptation was measured through two scales, satisfaction with life (SWL) and psychological wellbeing (PWB), at T2 (*N* = 110). The overall score of the

coefficient of these two scales was α = .86 (> .70), indicating the reliability of the two measures in terms of measuring the psychological adaptation domain.

Table 4.5 Descriptive statistics for psychological adaptation measures at T2

Psychological adaptation	Mean	SD
SWL	4.77	1.154
PWB	3.35	.677

Notes: PWB = psychological wellbeing, SWL= satisfaction with life.

Table 4.6. Descriptive statistics for psychological adaptation measures at T2

Table 4.6 indicates that the level of the students' satisfaction with life (SWL) had a mean score of 4.77 (*SD* = 1.154), with 60% responding over the mid-point. The means on the scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree), the students' answers were closer to 5 (slightly agree). Regarding how the students felt in terms of psychological well-being (PWB), the mean score was 3.35 (*SD* = .677) and 42% of responses were above the mid-point, whereas 46% were at the mid-point. Thus, on the scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree), the students' answers were closer to 4 (slightly agree).

Overall, both scales that measured the students' psychological adaptation indicated that the students had a good level of outcomes psychologically as they spent time abroad to studying English.

4.3.2 Academic adaptation

Academic adaptation at T2 (*N* = 110) was measured using two scales: the Academic Adjustment Scale (AAS) and the Learners' Satisfaction Scale (LSS). Table 4.7 presents the overall means and standard deviations for the AAS subscales (9 items). Of the three aspects considered, the mean for Academic Lifestyle (AL) is 3.44 (*SD* = .700), that for Academic Achievement (AA) is 3.57 (*SD* = .926) and for Academic Motivation (AM) is 3.69 (*SD* = .612).

Academic adaptation aspects at T2		Mean	SD
1	**AL**	3.44	.700
2	**AA**	3.57	.926
3	**AM**	3.69	.612
4	**LS**	3.57	.753

Notes: AL = Academic lifestyle, AA = Academic achievement, AM = Academic motivation, LS = Learners' satisfaction.

Table 4.7. Descriptive statistics for academic adaptation measures

For the satisfaction scale (LSS), the overall mean of the 6 items is 3.57 (SD = .753), i.e. between 3 = moderately applicable to 4 = largely applicable on a scale from 1= totally not applicable to 5= completely applicable. In all, 42% of the students' responses were at the mid-point and 55% of the students (N=110) responded above the mid-point, meaning that their level of satisfaction with their academic adaptation in general was high. In addition, the reliability of these scales (15 items) in measuring this dimension is α = .76 indicating internal consistency.

4.3.3 Sociocultural adaptation

The Brief Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (BSAS) was used at T2 to assess sociocultural adaptation/perceived cultural distance. The trustworthiness of this scale (12 items) in terms of measuring this dimension is α = 83, indicating that this measure is reliable.

Concerning how easy or difficult it is for students to adapt to living in the UK, the overall mean was 3.51 (*SD* = .617, Min = 2, Max = 5), on a scale from 1 = very difficult to 5 = very easy. In all, 42% of the students' responses were at the mid-point and for around half of the sample (54%) above the mid-point. Thus, around half of the students considered adaptation to life in the UK relatively easy.

Looking at the individual items, practicalities (getting around, using public transport, shopping) presented the highest mean at 4.24 (*SD* = .812) and a high percentage (84%) of respondents described this as 'easy' or 'very easy'.

In contrast, the climate (temperature, rainfall, snow) obtained a mean of 3.16 (*SD* = 1.200) and values and beliefs (what people think about religion and politics and what is right or wrong) obtained a mean of 3.13 (*SD* = .987): these two aspects present the lowest mean scores, indicating that students have difficulties with these two aspects. Indeed, the percentages of 'difficult' and 'very difficult' responses combined with regard to these two aspects were 30% and 26% respectively.

4.4 Summary

This chapter has provided an overview (see 4.1) of how the data were analysed in relation to the descriptive statistics and the internal consistency of each aspect measured, computed using Cronbach's alpha and showing reliability over the threshold of .70. The students' related that they were moderately satisfied with their English language ability (see 4.2.1). In terms of students' attitudes, motivation and language anxiety (see 4.2.2), they were strongly motivated, with integrativeness, motivational intensity and attitudes towards the learning situation rated around 80%; the instrumental orientation was even higher at greater than 90%. English language anxiety was rated above 30%, with students being more concerned about using the language outside the class than inside the class. Concerning knowledge of the UK (see 4.2.3), the students had little knowledge before coming to the UK. In terms of intercultural competence (see 4.2.4), the three elements of cultural empathy (flexibility, social initiative, open-mindedness) were rated moderately applicable and close to highly applicable for the statements reflecting the students' intercultural competence, whereas the element of emotional stability was rated as only slightly applicable. For social contact (see 4.2.5), of the five groups, the

highest percentage was for family contact at 79% and the lowest was for local people and UK students at less than 18%.

Regarding the three adaptation domains at T2, in terms of psychological adaptation (see 4.3.1), the students' rated their satisfaction with their lives and their psychological wellbeing as high. In addition to this, for academic adaptation (see 4.3.2), students highly rated the four academic adaptation dimensions, academic lifestyle, achievement, motivation, and satisfaction. Finally, for the sociocultural adaptation dimension (see 4.3.3), around half of the students considered adapting to life in the UK relatively easy.

Chapter 5. Academic Adaptation – Quantitative Findings

5.1 Introduction

The findings for the academic adaptation domain based on quantitative analysis are presented in this chapter. The aim is to demonstrate the association between the contributory factors that were measured either at time T1 (October, 2016) or T2 (July, 2017) and the academic adaptation dimension measured at T2. The academic adaptation domain was measured using the academic adjustment scale (see Chapter 3, Methodology), which has four academic adaptation dimensions: (1) academic lifestyle (AL), (2) academic achievement (AA), (3) academic motivation (AM) and (4) learners' satisfaction (LS). The contributory factors are: (1) students' English language ability (ELA), (2) attitudes, motivation, and language anxiety (AMLA), (3) knowledge of the UK (KUK), (4) intercultural competence (IC), (5) social support (SS), and (6) social contact (SC).

5.2 English language ability

The correlation test for ELA at T1 and the aspects of the academic adaptation at T2 revealed that there was a significant correlation between ELA and the two aspects of AL and LS ($p < .05$) but not AA and AM (see Table 5.1).

ELA	Academic adaptation aspects at T2							
	AL		AA		AM		LS	
	Sig.	Corr.	Sig.	Corr.	Sig.	Corr.	Sig.	Corr.
	.048	.189*	.347	.090	.927	.009	.007	.257**

Notes: * Significant at the .05 level and ** significant at the .01 level (2-tailed). ELA = English language ability, AL = academic lifestyle, AA = academic achievement, AM = academic motivation, LS = learners' satisfaction.

Table 5.1. Correlation analysis of ELA at T1 and academic adaptation aspects at T2

Subsequent multiple regression analysis revealed that ELA at T1 significantly predicted AL at T2 (β =.195, t =1.997, p = .048) and accounted for 3% of the variability in AL ($F(1, 108)$ = 3.989, R^2 = .036, adjusted R^2 = .03). Second, ELA at T1 significantly predicted LS at T2 (β = .285, t = 2.763, p = .007) and accounted for 6% of variability in LS ($F(1, 108)$ = 7.636, R^2 = .066, adjusted R^2 = .06).

This indicated that students' ability to communicate in English predicted their academic lifestyle as language learners and their enjoyment of this learning lifestyle, as well as their satisfaction with their learning of communicative teaching and learning approaches. However, students' ability to communicate in English was not associated statistically with their academic achievement in their course in relation to their level of academic performance, academic progress, or motivation to continue with their course to achieve the purpose of their study.

5.3 Students' attitudes, motivation and anxiety

The correlation analysis (see Table 5.2) reveals that there were significant associations between aspects from academic adaptation at T2 and from AMLA at T1, as follows: (1) AL was associated with IntM, MI and LA-in, but not significantly correlated with the other aspects of InsM and LA-out. (2) LS was significantly associated with IntM and ATL, but not associated with the other aspects of AMLA, these are InsM, MI and both LA-in and LA-out, while the other aspects of AA and AM were not correlated with any aspects of the AMLA at T1.

AMLA	**Academic adaptation aspects**							
	AL		**AA**		**AM**		**LS**	
	Sig.	**Corr.**	**Sig.**	**Corr.**	**Sig.**	**Corr.**	**Sig.**	**Corr.**
1. IntM	.042	.195*	.744	-.032	.614	.049	.020	.222*
2. InsM	.592	.052	.579	.053	.662	.042	.574	.054
3. MI	.041	.195*	.883	.014	.933	-.008	.060	.180
4. ATL	.118	.150	.566	.055	.948	-.006	.004	.274**
5a. LA-in	.034	-.202*	.151	-.138	.408	-.080	.122	-.148
5b. LA-out	.859	.017	.153	-.137	.222	.117	.435	-.075

Notes: * Significant at the .05 level and ** significant at the .01 level (2-tailed). IntM = Integrative motivation, InsM = instrumental motivation, IM = motivational intensity, ATL = attitudes towards learning, LA-in = language anxiety – inside class, LA-out = language anxiety – outside class, AL = academic lifestyle, AA = academic achievement, AM = academic motivation, LS = learners' satisfaction.

Table 5.2. Correlation analysis of academic adaptation aspects at T2 and the five aspects of AMLA at T1

Regression tests were conducted on aspects of AMLA at T1 and academic adaptation dimensions at T2. They revealed that LA-in at T1 is the only aspect of AMLA that significantly predicts the academic adaptation of AL at T2. As can be seen from Table 5.3, the whole model accounts for 5% of the variability in AL at T2.

AL at T2	**AMLA aspects at T1**					
	IntM	InsM	MI	ATL	LA-in	LA-out
β	.026	-.061	.115	.063	-.097	.047
t	.284	-.840	1.042	.902	-2.242	1.111
p	.777	.403	.300	.369	.027*	.269
Model Summary						
R^2		***Adjusted R^2***		***F (df)***		***Sig***
.100		.047		1.9 (6,10)		.087

Notes: * Significant at the .05 level and ** significant at the .01 level (2-tailed). IntM = integrative motivation, InsM = instrumental motivation, IM = motivational intensity, ATL = attitudes towards learning, LA-in = language anxiety – inside class, LA-out = language anxiety – outside class, AL = academic lifestyle, AA = academic achievement, AM = academic motivation, LS = learners' satisfaction.

Table 5.3. Regression analysis of AMLA aspects at T1 and the AL dimension of academic adaptation at T2

In addition, the regression test run between LS at T2 and the aspects of AMLA at T1 revealed that the whole model of these aspects significantly predicted LS and accounted for 7% of LS. However, ATL at T1 was the only aspect of AMLA that significantly predicted academic adaptation in relation to LS at T2 ($p < .05$) (see Table 5.4).

LS at T2	**AMLA aspects at T1**					
	IntM	InsM	MI	ATL	LA-in	LA-out
β	.066	-.097	.065	.183	-.043	-.023

t	.683	-1.269	.549	2.446	-.946	-.510
p	.496	.207	.584	.016*	.346	.611

Model Summary			
R2	***Adjusted R2***	***F (df)***	***Sig***
.119	.067	2.31 (6,10)	.039*

Notes: * Significant at the .05 level and ** significant at the .01 level (2-tailed). IntM = integrative motivation, InsM = instrumental motivation, IM = motivational intensity, ATL = attitudes towards learning, LA-in = language anxiety – inside class, LA-out = language anxiety – outside class, AL = academic lifestyle, AA = academic achievement, AM = academic motivation, LS = learners' satisfaction.

Table 5.4. Regression analysis of AMLA at T1 and LS dimension of the academic adaptation at T2

Both the correlation and regression tests run for LA-in and ATL indicated that these two aspects specifically affected the students' academic outcomes in terms of AL and LS. Regarding LA-in and AL, the correlation was negative and significant. Thus, the more the students enjoyed being language learners and the lifestyle, the less anxious they felt in class. Second, the association between ATL and LS was positive and significant, namely the more positive students' attitudes towards their English teachers and the language course, the more satisfied they were with their learning of the communicative way of teaching and learning.

5.4 Knowledge of the United Kingdom

Table 5.5 presents the correlation between KUK at T1 and academic adaptation aspects at T2. The analysis revealed that KUK correlated significantly with two aspects, AL and AA, of the academic adaptations, but there was no significant correlation with AM and LS. The correlation between KUK and AL was negative and significant, indicating that the less knowledge the students had about the UK, the more they enjoyed their life as English language learners. The association between KUK and AA was positive and significant; the more knowledge the students had about the UK, the more satisfied they felt about their achievement in their English course.

KUK	**Academic adaptation aspects at T2**							
	AL		**AA**		**AM**		**LS**	
	Sig.	**Corr.**	**Sig.**	**Corr.**	**Sig.**	**Corr.**	**Sig.**	**Corr.**
	.038	-.198*	.036	.200*	.609	-.049	.079	-.168

Notes: * Significant at the .05 level and ** significant at the .01 level (2-tailed). KUK = knowledge of the United Kingdom, AL = academic lifestyle, AA = academic achievement, AM = academic motivation, LS = learners' satisfaction.

Table 5.5. Correlation analysis of KUK and academic adaptation aspects

Simple linear regression analysis was run to identify the significance of associations between AL and AA and revealed that KUK significantly predicted these two aspects, accounting for 3% of both AL and AA (see Table 5.6).

	Academic adaptation at T2					
	AL			AA		
	β	***t***	***p***	***β***	***t***	***p***
KUK T1	-.728	-2.103	.038*	.97	2.12	.036*
	R^2	***Adjusted R^2***	***F (df)***	***R^2***	***Adjusted R^2***	***F (df)***
	.039	.030	4.4(1.10)	.040	.031	4.5 (1,10)

Notes: * Significant at the .05 level and ** significant at the .01 level (2-tailed). KUK = knowledge of the United Kingdom, AL = academic lifestyle, AA = academic achievement, AM = academic motivation, LS = learners' satisfaction.

Table 5.6. Regression analysis of KUK at T1 and academic adaptation aspects at T2

This indicated that the students' knowledge of the UK, albeit slight, was an important factor on arrival that predicted the students' enjoyment of the lifestyle of being a language learner and satisfaction with their academic achievement in their English course.

5.5 Intercultural competence

Table 5.7 presents the association between intercultural competence (IC) at T1 and academic adaptation at T2. The correlation test revealed that most of the aspects were correlated significantly with LS, these aspects being CE, OM, SI and F, while the AM was not correlated with any one of the IC aspects. Regarding the others, CE and OM were associated significantly with AL, whereas ES was correlated significantly with AA.

IC at T1	**Academic adaptation aspects at T2**							
	AL		**AA**		**AM**		**LS**	
	Sig.	**Corr.**	**Sig.**	**Corr.**	**Sig.**	**Corr.**	**Sig.**	**Corr.**
CE	.024	.215*	.820	.022	.532	.060	.010	.244*
OM	.046	.191*	.214	.119	.427	.076	.034	.203*
SI	.359	.088	.186	.127	.115	.151	.010	.243*
ES	.062	-.178	.025	-.214*	.203	-.122	.469	-.070
FL	.269	.106	.162	.134	.684	.039	.001	.354**

Notes: * Significant at the .05 level and ** significant at the .01 level (2-tailed). CE = cultural empathy, OM = open mindedness, SI = social initiative, ES = emotional stability, FL = flexibility, AL = academic lifestyle, AA = academic achievement, AM = academic motivation, LS = learners' satisfaction.

Table 5.7. Correlation analysis of IC (T1) and academic adaptation aspects (T2)

Multiple regression analysis was conducted on all aspects of IC at T1 and the three aspects of academic adaptation of AL, AA and LS at T2. The regression tests were run on these three aspects because they were correlated significantly with some aspects of the IC at T1, as above (see Table 5.7). Table 5.8 presents the regression test conducted between AL at T2 and IC aspects at T1 and it can be seen that none of the IC aspects significantly predicted AL at T2.

	IC aspects at T1				
AL at T2	**CE**	**OM**	**SI**	**ES**	**FL**
B	.252	.121	-.074	-.164	.050
T	1.656	.888	-.409	-1.435	.387
P	.101	.376	.683	.154	.699
Model Summary					
R^2	***Adjusted R^2***		***F (df)***		***Sig***

.084	.040	1.90 (5,104)	.100

Notes: * Significant at the .05 level and ** significant at the .01 level (2-tailed). AL = academic lifestyle, CE = cultural empathy, OM = open mindedness, SI = social initiative, ES = emotional stability, FL = flexibility.

Table 5.8. Regression analysis of the IC aspects at T1 and the AL aspect of academic adaptation at T2

Another regression test established between AA at T2 and IC aspects at T1, revealed that ES at T1 was the only aspect that predicted the AA at T2 significantly (p = .016), as regards reporting this aspect individually. This aspect is very important as the only one being significant in the model (see Table 5.9). This means that students' emotional stability in T1 increased and predicted students' satisfaction with their achievement and progress in their course, as well as satisfaction with their ability compared with other students in their course of study.

	IC aspects at T1				
AA at T2	**CE**	**OM**	**SI**	**ES**	**FL**
B	-.158	-.030	.260	-.372	.179
T	-.782	-.165	1.080	-2.454	1.034
P	.436	.869	.282	.016*	.304
Model Summary					
R^2	***Adjusted R^2***		***F (df)***		***Sig***
.081	.037		1.839 (5,104)		.112

Notes: * Significant at the .05 level and ** significant at the .01 level (2-tailed). AL = academic achievement, CE = cultural empathy, OM = open mindedness, SI = social initiative, ES = emotional stability, FL = flexibility.

Table 5.9. Regression analysis of the IC aspects at T1 and the AA aspect of academic adaptation at T2

Moreover, the multiple regression test on aspects of IC at T1 and FL at T1 was the only aspect significantly predicting LS at T2 (p = .007) when examining aspects individually. Also, the whole model regression significantly predicted LS at T2 (p = .004). The whole model accounts for 11% of LS at T2 (see Table 5.10).

	IC aspects at T1				
LS at T2	**CE**	**OM**	**SI**	**ES**	**FL**
β	.191	-.009	.070	-.111	.373
t	1.215	-.064	.376	-.937	2.761
p	.227	.949	.708	.351	.007*
Model Summary					
R^2	***Adjusted R^2***		***F (df)***		***Sig***
.153	.112		3.745 (5,104)		.004*

Notes: * Significant at the .05 level and ** significant at the .01 level (2-tailed). LS = learners' satisfaction, CE = cultural empathy, OM = open mindedness, SI = social initiative, ES = emotional stability, FL = flexibility.

Table 5.10. Regression analysis of the IC aspects at T1 and the LS aspect of academic adaptation at T2

In addition to this, students' flexibility in term of fitting into the new routines and rules in their new lives predicted that they felt satisfied about the communicative learning and teaching approaches in their language institutions.

5.6 Social contact

Of five social contact groups (T2), three of them correlated significantly (p > .05) with two aspects of academic adaptations (T2). AL was correlated with SC–BS, SC–IS and SC–FM and

LS were associated with SC–SS and SC–FM. Regarding the other aspects of AA and AM, the bivariate correlation test revealed no significant correlations between them and the SC group at T2 (see Table 5.11).

SC group at T2	Academic adaptation aspects at T2							
	AL		AA		AM		LS	
	Sig.	Corr.	Sig.	Corr.	Sig.	Corr.	Sig.	Corr.
SC–SS	.427	-.077	.369	-.086	.121	-.149	.037	.199*
SC–BS	.025	.214*	.270	-.106	.105	.156	.210	.120
SC–IS	.010	.244*	.148	.139	.083	.166	.189	.126
SC–BN	.984	.002	.489	-.067	.886	-.014	.343	-.091
SC–FM	.042	.194*	.247	-.111	.526	-.061	.043	.193*

Notes: * Significant at the .05 level. SC = social contact, SS = Saudi students, BS = British students, IS = international students, BN = British nationals, FM = family members, AL = academic lifestyle, AA = academic achievement, AM = academic motivation, LS = learners' satisfaction.

Table 5.11. Correlation analysis of SC group at T2 and academic adaptation aspects (T2)

Regression analysis was conducted on the academic adaptation aspects of AL and LS at T2 and these were reported as significantly correlated with some aspects of the SC group at T2. Multiple regression runs between AL at T2 and all the SC groups at T2 revealed that two groups of SC–IS and SC–FM significantly (p <.05) predicted AL at T2 and also the whole model significantly predicted this dimension, accounting for 11% (see Table 5.12).

AL at T2	SC group at T2				
	SC–SS	SC–BS	SC–IS	SC–BN	SC–FM
β	-.085	.142	.135	-.102	.134
t	-1.479	1.826	2.226	-1.640	2.254
p	.142	.071	.028*	.104	.026*
Model Summary					
R^2	***Adjusted R^2***		***F (df)***		***Sig***
.148	.107		3.608 (5,104)		.005*

Notes: * Significant at the .05 level. SC = social contact, SS = Saudi students, BS = British students, IS = international students, BN = British nationals, FM = family members, AL = academic lifestyle.

Table 5.12. Regression analysis of the SC group at T2 and the AL dimension of academic adaptation at T2

Another multiple regression analysis was conducted between the academic adaptation dimension of LS at T2 and all SC groups at T2. This test revealed that none of the SC groups individually predicted significantly this dimension of academic adaptation; however, the whole model regression significantly predicted LS at T2, accounting for 7% of this dimension (see Table 5.13). In this case, the whole model can be considered as it could not be assumed which aspect specifically predicted LS at T2.

LS at T2	SC group at T2				
	SC–SS	**SC–BS**	**SC–IS**	**SC–BN**	**SC–FM**
β	.098	.135	.074	-.110	.098
t	1.554	1.573	1.110	-1.613	1.492
p	.123	.119	.269	.110	.139
Model Summary					
R2	***Adjusted R2***		***F (df)***		***Sig***
.109	.066		2.534 (5,104)		.033*

Notes: * Significant at the .05 level. SC = social contact, SS = Saudi students, BS = British students, IS = international students, BN = British nationals, FM = family members, LS = learners' satisfaction.

Table 5.13. Regression analysis of the SC group at T2 and the LS dimension of academic adaptation at T2

The previous statistical test indicated that the two groups, SC–IS and SC–FM, affected the students' academic outcomes in terms of their AL. This means that the more contact students had with their families (living with them in the UK) and their international friends, the more they enjoyed their lives as English language learners, felt their education was worth time and effort, and worried less in terms of their academic skills.

5.7 Social support

The two types of social support, these being SS-SO and SS-IN at T2, were tested with the correlation test and this revealed that both of these aspects correlated significantly ($p < .05$), with only one aspect from the academic adaptation at T2, which was LS, while the other aspects of AL, AA and AM of the academic adaptation were not associated significantly with these two types of social support (see Table 5.14).

SS at T2	Academic adaptation aspects at T2							
	AL		**AA**		**AM**		**LS**	
	Sig.	Corr.	Sig.	Corr.	Sig.	Corr.	Sig.	Corr.
SS-SO	.147	.139	.285	.103	.517	.062	.003	.280**
SS-IN	.349	.090	.581	.053	.444	.074	.032	.205*

Notes: * Significant at the .05 level and ** significant at the .01 level (2-tailed). SS = social support, SO = socioemotional, IN = instrumental, AL = academic lifestyle, AA = academic achievement, AM = academic motivation, LS = learners' satisfaction.

Table 5.14. Correlation analysis for aspects of SS and academic adaptation aspects at T2

A multiple regression test was run between academic adaptation LS at T2 and these two types of support measured in T2. The whole model regression revealed that the two aspects in total predict LS, accounting for 6% (see Table 5.15). SS-SO significantly predicted LS at T2, while the other aspect of SS-IN did not. Therefore, SS-SO is considered the predictor because it makes the whole model appear significant.

SS at T2	Academic adaptation LS at T2		
	β	***t***	***p***
SS-SO	**.208**	**2.067**	**.041***
SS-IN	**-.003**	**-.032**	**.975**
Model summary			
R²	***Adjusted R²***	***F* (df)**	**Sig.**
.079	.061	4.568 (2,107)	.012*

Notes: * Significant at the .05 level. SO = socioemotional, IN = instrumental, LS = learners' satisfaction.

Table 5.15. Regression analysis of the SS group at T2 and the LS aspect of academic adaptation at T2

This test indicated that the students' emotional support from their surroundings affected their academic outcomes in terms of satisfaction with the communicative learning and teaching approach, including aspects such as their independent role in their learning and how they reacted to the teacher roles and the teaching materials used. This test indicated that emotional support was more important than instrumental supports in terms of the learners' satisfaction as one of the academic outcomes in their learning.

5.8 Summary

To sum up, there were specific contributory factors that affected the Saudi students' academic adaptation in relation to the four domains. English language ability, language anxiety (in class), knowledge of the UK, emotional stability, and social contact with other international students and their family members all predicted the students' academic lifestyle. In addition, English language ability, attitudes towards the learning situation, flexibility and socioemotional support were contributory factors that predicted the academic measure of students' satisfaction with their learning. Moreover, knowledge of the UK was the only predictor of the academic measure of students' academic motivation.

Looking at these contributory factors, most are associated with two measures of academic adaptation: academic lifestyle and learners' satisfaction. However, none of the contributory factors predicted the students' academic motivation in terms of their purpose for learning and completing their course in their allocated timeframe.

Chapter 6. Psychological Adaptation – Quantitative Findings

6.1 Introduction

This section presents the results of the quantitative analysis of the psychological adaptation dimension. The aim was to determine the relationship between the contributory factors and the students' psychological outcomes in relation to the two measures of satisfaction with life (SWL) and psychological wellbeing (PWB). The contributory factors were measured at two time points: (i) October 2016 (T1) and (ii) after around eight months, in July 2017 (T2). The factors presented are as follows: (1) students' English language ability (ELA), (2) attitudes, motivation, and language anxiety (AMLA), (3) knowledge of the UK (KUK), (4) intercultural competence (IC), (5) social support (SS), and (6) social contact (SC). Two statistical tests – correlation (bivariate) and regression (linear and multiple) – were used in the analysis.

6.2 English language ability

There was a significant positive correlation between ELA (T1) and SWL (T2) (r =.311, p = .001). The regression test revealed ELA is a significant predictor of SWL (β = .529, t = 3.403, p = .001), accounting for 8% of SWL (F(1, 108) = 11.57, R^2 = .097, adjusted R^2 = .088). The other aspect of PWB showed no significant relationships with ELA.

These tests indicate that the students' ability to communicate in English was related to one of the psychological outcome measures, namely students' satisfaction with living in the UK. However, it was not related to the other measure, psychological wellbeing (e.g., feeling calm, not depressed, and not nervous).

6.3 Students' attitudes, motivation, and anxiety

The correlation test run between the five aspects AMLA T1 and PWB T2 revealed that ATL (r = .221, p = .020) and LA-in (r = -.245, p = .010) were significantly correlated with PWB. However, the results for IntM, InsM, MI and LA-out were not significant.

The regression tests revealed that ATL (β = .133, t = 2.275, p = .025), LA-in (β = -.091, t = -2.551, p = .012) significantly predicted PWB and accounted for 9% of variance (F(2, 107) = 6.163, R^2 = .103, adjusted R^2 = .087).

This indicated that the students' positive attitudes towards their language teacher and course, as well as feeling less anxious in the class, both predicted their psychological wellbeing.

In terms of SWL at T2, the correlation test revealed that InsM (r = .262, p = .006), LA-in (r = -.221, p = .020) and ATL (r = .475, p = .00) significantly correlated with SWL (T2). The results for IntM, MI and LA-out were not significant. The regression tests showed that InsM (β = .075,

t = .820, p = .414), LA-in (β = -.126, t = -2.292, p = .024) and ATL (β = .475, t = 4.850, p = .000) were generally significant predictors (p = .00), accounting for 25% of SWL variance (F(3, 106) = 13.020, R^2 = .269, adjusted R^2 = .249).

This indicated that the students' instrumental motivation in terms of learning the language for practical purposes, feeling less anxious when communication in the language in class, and positive attitudes towards their language teacher and course, all predicted the students' satisfaction with their lives in the UK.

6.4 Knowledge of the United Kingdom

KUK T1 was correlated significantly with PWB T2, (r = -.215, p = .024) and the regression tests were also significant (β = -.765, t = -2.292, p = .024), accounting for 3.8% of variance (F(1, 108) = 5.251, R^2 = .046, adjusted R^2 = .038). In contrast, the relationship between KUK at T1 and SWL at T2 was not significantly.

This means the knowledge that the students had about the UK was a predictor for one of the psychological outcomes at T2, i.e. psychological wellbeing, for example feeling calm and less nervous. However, their knowledge of the UK was not a predictor of the other measure of psychological adaptation, i.e. satisfaction with life in the UK.

6.5 Intercultural competence

IC was measured according to five aspects: cultural empathy (CE), flexibility (FX), social initiative (SI), emotional stability (ES), and open-mindedness (OP). The correlation test between the five aspects of IC T1 and PWB T2 revealed that CE, FL, SI and OM were not significantly correlated with PWB; ES (r = .354**, p = .00) was the only aspect of IC significantly correlated with PWB T2. In addition, the regression tests revealed that ES was a significant predictor (β = -.393, t = -3.931, p = .000), accounting for 11% in variability (F(1, 108) = 15.455, R^2 = .125, adjusted R^2 = .117, p = .00).

Regarding to the SWL T2, the CE (r = .338, p = .00), FL (r = .202, p = .035), ES (r = .354, p = .00) and OM (r = .259, p = .00) were correlated significantly with it, except for SI, which was not significant. The regression analysis revealed that CE (β = .612, t = 2.800, p =.006), FL (β = .240, t = 1.307, p =.194), ES (β = -.639, t = -3.827, p =.000) and OM (β = .079, t = .415, p =.679) predicted SWL; the full model revealed that as a whole they significantly (p = .000) predicted SWL (F(4, 105) = 8.461, R^2 = .244, adjusted R^2 = .215), accounting for 21% of variability.

Thus, the students' emotional stability, such as feeling less worried, lonely, and insecure, predicted both psychological adaptation measures: psychological wellbeing and satisfaction

with life in the UK. In addition, the IC aspects of cultural empathy (feeling for and sympathising with others), flexibility of working (based on plan and rules), and open-mindedness (broadening interests and being interested in people with different backgrounds) all predicted the students' satisfaction with their lives in the UK.

6.6 Social contact

Table 6.1 illustrates the bivariate correlations for the relationship between various social contact (SC) groups T2 and the two aspects of psychological adaptation, PWB and SWL in T2. The results show that contact with Saudi students (SS) correlated positively and significantly with SWL (r = .189, p = .048) and contact with British students (BS) correlated positively and significantly with PWB (r = .217, p = .023). However, the other social contact groups – international students (IS), British nationals (BN) outside university and family members (FM) – were not correlated significantly with either of the psychological adaptation aspects (p > .05).

Social contact group	PWB T2		SWL T2	
	Sig.	Corr.	Sig	Corr.
SC–SS	.064	.178	.048	.189*
SC–BS	.023	.217*	.738	-.032
SC–IS	.082	.167	.643	.043
SC–BN	.075	.170	.410	.079
SC–FM	.077	.170	.174	.131

* Significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

Table 6.1. Correlation analysis for social contact at T2 and psychological adaptation aspects at T2

In addition, as can be seen from Table 6.2, although the whole model regression revealed that all SC groups were significant predictors of PWB (p = .021) and accounted for 7.6% of variability (F(5, 10) = 2.79, R^2 = .119, adjusted R^2 = .076). However, none of them individually predicted PWB and it cannot be established which was the predictor and made the whole model significant. Therefore, it is considered that none of these groups individually predicted PWB. Regarding SWL, none of these groups were significant predictors (p > .05) as neither the whole model and nor the individual measures were significant.

Social contact group at T2	Psychological adaptation at T2					
	PWB			SWL		
	β	***t***	***p***	***β***	***t***	***p***
SC–SS	.105	1.857	.066	.183	1.843	.068
SC–BS	.107	1.395	.166	-.122	-.905	.368
SC–IS	.036	.610	.543	.028	.265	.791
SC–BN	.067	1.088	.279	.152	1.415	.160
SC–FM	.085	1.448	.151	.106	1.027	.307
R^2		.119			.065	
Adjusted R^2		.076			.020	
F (df)		2.79 (5,10)			1.43 (5,104)	
Sig.		.021*			.217	

* Significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

Table 6.2. Regression analysis of the social support sub-groups and psychological adaptation

This indicated that none of the students' social contact groups were a predictor for either the students' satisfaction with living in the UK or their psychological wellbeing.

6.7 Social support

Two types of social support correlated positively and significantly with PWB T2, namely socioemotional (r = .456, p = .00) and instrumental social support (r = .332, p = .00). However, in terms of SWL T2, there was only a positive and significant correlation with socioemotional support, not with instrumental support (Table 6.3).

Social support	**PWB T2**		**SWL T2**	
	Sig.	**Corr.**	**Sig**	**Corr.**
Socioemotional	.00	.456**	.00	.317**
Instrumental	.00	.332**	.166	.133

** Significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6.3. Correlation analysis for aspects of social support and psychological adaptation dimensions

The multiple regression results presented in Table 6.4 show that socioemotional support types significantly (p < .05) predicted both the PWB and SWL dimensions of psychological adaptation. This type of social support accounted for 20% of variability in PWB (F(2, 10) = 14.03, R^2 = .208, adjusted R^2 = .201) and 9% of variability in SWL (F(2, 10) = 7.49, R^2 = .101, adjusted R^2 = .092).

Social support aspects	Psychological adaptation					
	PWB T2			SWL T2		
	β	t	p	β	t	p
Socioemotional	.301	5.323	.000*	.357	10.004	.001*
R^2		.208			.101	
Adjusted R^2		.201			.092	
F (df)		14.03 (2,10)			7.49 (2,10)	
Sig.		.000			.001	

* Significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

Table 6.4. Regression analysis of social support and psychological adaptation dimensions

Thus, the students' socioemotional support obtained from their surroundings, such as having people around them who listened to them, comforted them when needed, and shared some time with them, predicted their psychological adaptation in terms of both satisfaction with life in the UK and psychological wellbeing. In contrast, instrumental support, such as help dealing with practical matters, such as information and guidance, did not predict this outcome.

6.8 Summary

In summary, this chapter has shown that there are specific contributory factors that affect students' psychological outcomes in terms of psychological wellbeing and satisfaction with life. These contributory factors are as follows: (1) attitudes towards learning, (2) language anxiety in class, and (3) emotional stability, and for type of social support (4) socioemotional.

Moreover, looking specifically at each measure, psychological wellbeing was predicted by the students' knowledge about the UK, whereas satisfaction with life was predicted by English language ability, instrumental motivation, cultural empathy, flexibility, and open mindedness. Looking at these contributory factors, they were mainly associated with the students' satisfaction with life rather than their psychological wellbeing.

Chapter 7. Sociocultural Adaptation – Quantitative Findings

7.1 Introduction

This section presents the findings of the quantitative analysis of the sociocultural adaptation domain, measured using the Brief Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (BSAS). The goal was to determine the associations between the contributory factors, measured (i) in October (T1) and (ii) after around eight months, in July (T2), and sociocultural adaptation at T2 as an outcome. The contributory factors measured at T1 were students' English language ability (ELA), attitudes, motivation, and language anxiety (AMLA), knowledge of the UK (KUK), intercultural competence (IC), and at T2 were social support (SS) and social contact (SC). Two statistical tests, correlation (bivariate) and regression (linear and multiple) analysis (see Chapter 3, Methodology), were employed.

7.2 English language ability

The correlation analysis revealed that ELA was correlated significantly with sociocultural adaptation (r = 238*, p = .012) and the regression showed that ELA T1 was a significant predictor for sociocultural adaptation T2 (β = .217, t = 2.546) and accounted for 4.8% of the variability in sociocultural adaptation ($F(1, 108) = 6.480$, R^2 = .057, adjusted R^2 = .048).

Thus, students' ability to communicate in English predicted their sociocultural adaptation in terms of seeing the life in the UK as relatively easy, for example in adapting to the climate and food, as well as practicalities (e.g., using public transport, shopping, getting around).

7.3 Students' attitudes, motivation, and anxiety

The relationships between AMLA aspects at T1 and sociocultural adaptation measured at T2 are presented in Table 7.1. It can be seen that instrumental motivation (InsM) and attitude towards learning (ATL) at T1 were significantly correlated with sociocultural adaptation at T2, while the other aspects were not.

Mini-AMTB subscale at T1	Sociocultural adaptation	
	Sig.	Corr.
1. IntM	.153	.137
2. InsM	.020	.221*
3. MI	.179	.129
4. ATL	.000	.376**
5. a. LA-In	.295	-.101
b. LA-out	.212	-.120

* Significant at the .05 level and ** significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Table 7.1. Correlation analysis of AMLA and sociocultural adaptation aspects

Multiple regression analysis was run for InsM and ATL. This revealed that InsM was not a significant predictor of sociocultural adaptation (β = -.012, t = -.203, p = .839) and ATL was the only aspect of the AMLA, that significantly predicted sociocultural adaptation (β = .211, t

= 3.551, p = .001), accounting for 12% of variability (F(6, 103) = 3.592, R^2 = .173, adjusted R^2 = .125).

Thus, the students' attitudes towards their learning, such as positive attitudes towards their teacher and course of study, predicted how they viewed their life in the UK as relatively easy in terms of adapting socioculturally, including adapting to society with regard to the country system (rules and norms) and the environment (weather).

7.4 Knowledge of the United Kingdom

The relationship between KUK (T1) and sociocultural adaptation (T2) was negative and significant (r = -.242*, p = .011). KUK was found to be also a significant predictor of sociocultural adaptation (β = -.785, t = -2.597, p = .011), accounting for 5% of variability (F(1, 108) = 6.746, R^2 = .059, adjusted R^2 = .050).

Thus, even though the students had little knowledge about the UK, it significantly predicted their sociocultural adaptation to the country, including the system, norms, and environment.

7.5 Intercultural competence

Table 7.2 shows the relationships between the five dimensions of IC and sociocultural adaptation; all correlations were significant, except for FL.

MPQ-SF subscale	Sociocultural adaptation	
	Sig.	Corr.
CE	.001	.304**
OM	.005	.267**
SI	.014	.233*
ES	.007	-.257**
FL	.086	.165

* Significant at the .05 level and ** significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Table 7.2. Correlation analysis of IC (T1) and sociocultural adaptation (T2)

A multiple regression analysis was run and, as shown in Table 7.3, CE and ES were the two aspects of IC that significantly predicted sociocultural adaptation, accounting for 13% of variability. The relationship between ES and sociocultural adaptation was negative and significant, indicating that the lower the students' emotional stability, the more they adapted socioculturally.

MPQ-SF subscale	Sociocultural adaptation		
	β	***T***	***p***
CE	.255	2.004	.048*
FL	.028	.255	.799
SI	.148	.976	.332
ES	-.244	-2.551	.012*
OM	.074	.646	.520
R^2		.175	
Adjusted R^2		.135	
***F* (df)**		4.403 (5, 104)	
Sig.		.001*	

*Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 7.3. Regression analysis for IC and sociocultural adaptation

This means first, that the students' cultural empathy, in terms of aspects such as listening to, feeling, and sympathising with others, predicted their sociocultural outcomes with regard to the country system, environment, and cultural norms and values. Second, the less stability students felt in their emotions in terms of feeling anxiety, loneliness, and disappointment, the greater the effect on their sociocultural outcomes.

7.6 Social contact

Table 7.4 shows the bivariate correlations for the association between various social contact (SC) groups and sociocultural adaptation a T2. The results show that contact with Saudi students (SS), British students (BS), British nationals (BN) outside university and family members (FM) correlated positively and significantly with sociocultural adaptation. The only group not correlated significantly was international students (IS) ($p > .05$).

SC group	Sociocultural adaptation	
	Sig.	**Corr.**
SC–SS	.047	.190*
SC–BS	.005	.269**
SC–IS	.052	.186
SC–BN	.001	.302**
SC–FM	.003	.276**

* Significant at the .05 level and ** significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Table 7.4. Correlation analysis for the SC groups and sociocultural adaptation at T2

Moreover, as can be seen from Table 7.5, a multiple regression analysis established that SC with the SS, BN and FM groups was a significant predictor ($p > .05$) of the students' sociocultural adaptation at T2 and these aspects accounted for 20% of the variability in the students' sociocultural adaptation ($F(5, 104)= 6.356$, $R^2 = .234$, adjusted $R^2 = .197$). However, contact with BS and IS did not significantly predict this dimension.

SC group	Sociocultural adaptation		
	β	***t***	***p***
SC–SS	.102	2.118	.037*
SC–BS	.091	1.402	.164
SC–IS	.016	.309	.758
SC–BN	.143	2.744	.007*
SC–FM	.144	2.886	.005*
R²		.234	
Adjusted *R²*		.197	
***F* (df)**		6.356 (5, 104)	
Sig.		.000*	

* Significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

Table 7.5. Regression analysis of the SC sub-groups and sociocultural adaptation at T2

This indicated that the more contact students had with their Saudi friends, British people (outside their English course), and their family members (who they lived with), the more they feel they adapted easily socioculturally to aspects such as the UK system of rules, social norms and values, as well as to the environment, for example weather and nature.

7.7 Social support

The two types of SS, namely socioemotional and instrumental, were correlated statistically significantly with sociocultural adaptation, as shown in Table 7.6.

SS	Sociocultural adaptation	
	Sig.	**Corr.**
Socioemotional	.000	.333**
Instrumental	.021	.220*

* Significant at the .05 level and ** significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Table 7.6. Correlation analysis for aspects of SS and sociocultural adaptation at T2

The multiple regression results shown in Table 7.7 demonstrate that the socioemotional SS type significantly predicted students' sociocultural adaptation, whereas the instrumental type did not. Socioemotional support accounted for 9% of variability in this dimension ($F(2, 107) = 6.786$, $R^2 = .113$, adjusted $R^2 = .096$).

SS aspects	Sociocultural adaptation		
	β	***t***	***p***
Socioemotional	.225	2.778	.006*
Instrumental	-.033	-.410	.683
R²		.113	
Adjusted *R²*		.096	
***F* (df)**		6.786 (2, 107)	
Sig.		.002*	

* Significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

Table 7.7. Regression analysis of SS and sociocultural adaptation dimensions at T2

This indicated that the more socioemotional support students had from their surroundings in terms of people to comfort, listen and talk to them, as well as share life with them, the more likely they were to adapt socioculturally to aspects such as the country system, the culture, and the environment.

7.8 Summary

To sum up, the contributory factors that predicted the students' sociocultural outcomes were as follows: English language ability, attitude towards learning, knowledge of the UK, cultural empathy, emotional stability, knowledge of the UK, and social contact with Saudi friends, British people outside their English classes, and their family members who lived with them in the UK. Moreover, their social support was socioemotional in nature.

Chapter 8. Students' Academic Adjustment Over Time

8.1 Introduction

This section presents the findings from analysis of the qualitative data related to the academic adjustment dimension, collected at T1 (November 2016), T2 (February 2017) and T3 (May 2017) in the academic year 2016/2017. The Saudi English language learners were asked about several aspects related to their academic adjustment in their English language courses. These initial aspects concerned their transition to the UK education system, the learning environment, their English course, methods of teaching and types of assessment. All these aspects were investigated through semi-structured interviews conducted in three phases to provide as complete a picture as possible about the students' academic adjustment over time. The semi-structured format enabled in-depth exploration through follow-up questions, which encouraged the students to comment on their initial responses.

Beside reflecting on the three phases mentioned above, the students also highlighted another important phase in the interviews. This was prior to the first interviews at T1, expressed in terms such as 'at the beginning of my course', 'when I first started on this course' and 'previously'. Thus, this phase is also included in the analysis as pre-T1 (before November 2016), reflecting the students' experiences on first arriving in the UK and starting their courses.

Two key themes illustrated the students' academic adjustment experience over time. The first was 'positive orientation', which concerned the progress the students made over time with regard to the difficulties they faced with mixed-gender classes and interaction/communication, English language proficiency and the teaching/learning environment (learner-centred) and language anxiety. The progress they made was due largely to the coping strategies they developed and the support mechanisms in their surroundings. Another theme was 'negative orientation', which concerned the issues they faced that persisted or increased over time. These two main themes are discussed in the following sections, particularly indicating the changes and dynamics in each theme to reflect adjustment over time, either positively or negatively.

8.2. Pre-T1 (before November 2016, early in the English course)

In the interviews at T1, seven students remarked on this early phase in their experience. The main characteristics were that it was a difficult time for the students as they experienced problems adjusting to mixed-gender classes, new methods of teaching and learning, and a new English language teaching and learning environment. In the face of these issues, they started to build some strategies to help them adjust. Both the issues they faced in adjusting academically and the coping strategies employed are discussed in the following subsections.

8.2.1 Mixed-gender classes and interaction/communication

Saudi students, both male and female, face difficulties adjusting to mixed-gender classes, an environment that is unfamiliar to them as they come from a gender-segregated learning background. As a result, they reported experiencing difficulties with communication, participation in group work and the class in in general, manifest in negative feelings and attitudes.

In terms of negative feelings, they stated that they felt 'shy', 'embarrassed' and 'not comfortable'. This made them avoid communication and taking part in group work discussions, resulting in low participation in the class, as illustrated in the following quotations:

> I was very shy when I sat next to the male students […] When I sat with a group of only females, I felt comfortable; when there were males, I did not feel the same. (Maryam, T1)

> I can say that this affected me negatively as I did not feel comfortable in the class and I was embarrassed when I talked to them because when anyone avoids you, you feel embarrassed when you work with her in the class. In this case, it is compulsory to work in groups and it was an obstacle to my learning in the beginning. (Adeel, T1)

> In the beginning I did not like to sit next to any male students. I was careful in class to put any partition, like a chair or table, between me and any men […] I do not have the same feeling as in the beginning that they should not sit next to me. In the beginning, I was really careful in class to put a partition, like a chair or table, between me and any men. (Nahla, T1)

The students also reported negative attitudes, with both male and female students commenting on a lack of commonality in 'interests' and 'understanding' between the genders and a reluctance when it came to 'transferring and exchanging ideas', as recounted by Nahla and Azhar:

> […] The only barrier is the feeling that men will not understand correctly what you are talking about in the group work as we do not have the same interests and so if I would like to give example of anything based on my interests, they will not understand me like women would. (Nahla, T1)

> Previously, I was not calm and in the speaking exam I asked my teacher to put me in a group of all female students because I did not want my grade to be affected by this problem and I wanted to feel calm and focused. This is because in my previous English language course, they always put me in different groups and I faced difficulty in exchanging ideas with the men. I did face difficulty in transferring and exchanging ideas with the men and sometimes I do not like to interrupt them and speak about my ideas because I always feel they do not understand us and communicate effectively. I prefer communicating with women like me and even if they are not Arab, women still understand each other better, whether Saudi or international. (Azhar, T1)

8.2.2. English language proficiency and the teaching/learning environment

The second predominant set of themes related to the early stage of adjustment concerned issues with communication in class and the demands of the unfamiliar learning environment.

First, the students commented negatively on the 'high level' of English, its 'academic' nature and the 'higher level of writing skill' required in their courses. They felt they had not been placed at their correct study level linguistically as they experienced difficulty adjusting to the requirements of academic English, particular in terms of writing skills and producing essays. Instead, they felt that they needed to be entered into the general English stream to grasp the basics first and then move up. Being put in the academic English course immediately could result in a failing grade and being returned to the lower level. As one student commented.

> In the beginning, when I first started on this course, I was shocked by the way of teaching English. They put me directly in the academic English course. However, I could not adapt to this level as they require a high level of writing, like essays. I did not agree with them putting me into this high level; I felt that I needed to take the course in general English, then academic English […] I did not know the basics of the language and it was difficult […] Then at the end of the semester, my teacher realised that I was weak in writing and changed my level to the previous one. Cases like mine need to be handled with experience so as not to put students when they first come into a high level that is too difficult for them. They need to go through steps and gradually go from the easy to the difficult. (Azhar, T1)

Another problem that students faced was difficulty understanding the teachers, both because of their accents and the speed at which they spoke, which could hinder understanding in class. As Sahar put it:

> One of the factors that hindered my learning was the problem of understanding some of the teachers' accents; at the beginning of my course there was a teacher with a strong accent teaching us English and it was difficult for me to understand her. Then, after her there was a teacher who talked to us very slowly. I really understood her. (Sahar, T1)

Moreover, in terms of the transition to the UK, the students struggled to adjust to the unfamiliar learning environment, characterised by a learner-centred focus that required students play an active part in their learning. This was in contrast to their previous experience of English education in Saudi, which was teacher-centred. The students recounted that they faced difficulty adjusting because they had no foundation in this type of education. The students commented as follows:

> The learning process here in the UK relies on the students themselves around 80%. They need to work on themselves and expend effort in searching for information. I faced difficulty at the beginning in doing this. (Abdu, T1)

> In Saudi Arabia, the English teachers were responsible for our learning process. They were always asking what we should do and what not and asking us about homework and they kind of forced us to learn, while here in the UK the method of teaching English implicitly is perfect and brilliant for those students who are used to learning through it and have been founded in it from the early stages of learning. (Amjad, T1)

8.2.3 Coping strategies

Even in this early phase, the students started to develop certain coping strategies, especially to overcome the issues related to the learner-centred approach to English language classes and adjust. The core strategies were positive thinking and formulating an action plan. The former is an approach based on adopting a positive perspective, looking on the bright side and seeing how they might benefit from the situation. This approach was exemplified by Abdu, who stated:

> [Education] in the UK relies on the students themselves around 80%. […] I found this experience was effective when I made an effort in my learning and took responsibility for working on myself, then I absorbed the language. (Abdu, T1)

The latter entails students developing a plan to attain their aims and cope with their change in circumstances in the new educational context. In this regard, Amjad commented as follows:

> […] In the beginning here in the UK, my friends and I who came from Saudi were trying to teach ourselves and rebuild or correct what we had learned wrong in the language. (Amjad, T1)

8.3 T1 (November 2016)

This section reports on the findings from semi-structured interviews with 19 students at T1, in November 2016, early in the course. This was their most difficult time academically, largely for two reasons. First, there were the issues already raised in the previous section (pre-T1), most of which continued to be problematic, including mixed-gender classes and communication issues, which generated negative feelings and attitudes, as well as issues with their level of English and the change to learner-centred classes. Second, more problems arose that also gave rise to negative attitudes concerning culture and religion, as well as a lack of awareness on the students' part in terms of the major differences they would face in the UK educational system. Moreover, the students also raised issues related to communicating in English and academic skills, as well as concerns about the IELTS exam and anxiety (stress, the time and money involved, academic achievement, etc.). The students experienced a heavy load in this phase and struggled to adjust, but developed some coping strategies, such as positive thinking, gaining confidence and looking to the future.

8.3.1. Mixed-gender classes and interaction/communication

In this phase, both male and female students still commented negatively on the mixed-gender classes. Their negative feelings and attitudes towards this type of education remained an issue

and they made comments similar to those when referring to their earliest experiences (pre-T1). Their feelings are summarised by a comment from Nahla:

> In the class, when I talk or work with men, I try to think of examples or my talk will be limited and also another reason is being shy about talking to them and then I am trying to talk a lot less and my talk is limited. (Nahla, T1)

Also, they again raised the issue of a lack of understanding in communicating with the opposite gender, as pointed out by Abdu:

> […] and also there are some negative aspects in learning with the women [in a] mixed-gender environment. When I wanted to communicate and transfer ideas to the women, I found it one of the challenges because they did not understand what I was trying to say to them. (Abdu, T1)

Moreover, they provided additional reasons for their negative attitudes to the learning environment. Some of them commented that they found it 'ineffective' and repeatedly highlighted issues of 'religion' and 'culture'. Both male and female students reported avoiding communication and interaction in class with the opposite gender, particularly those from the same culture, regarding it as prohibited:

> I do not feel this type of education has any positives as I think it is ineffective, especially for us as Saudis as it is not acceptable in our culture and religion. For me, in the class I always take care not to sit next to men and in participating, I like to participate with women rather than men […] I do not prefer this at all. (Nadia, T1)

> It is difficult to adapt to this type of education and it is ineffective as we are not allowed to mix by our religion. (Adam, T1)

> Now I feel OK with the international male students, but with the Saudi students the situation is still the same. I do not like to communicate with them and the good thing about them is that they also have the same feeling; they do not like to communicate with the Saudi women and also avoid sitting next to us as they understand our culture and they do not embarrass us and sit next to us. (Nahla, T1)

The problems were worsened for some students by a lack of awareness or knowledge of the education system or culture in the UK, so they were unprepared. At worst, students might give up their studies and return home to Saudi Arabia. As Amer recounted:

> One of my friends returned to Saudi and did not continue his studies because of the mixed environment. He was not aware of the nature of this culture. He did not watch movies and also his family were very closed. Going abroad for him from this closed family to Western life was a disaster and devastating. Being closed will not let you know about and exchange cultures, learning from other people's cultures and promoting your own culture. (Amer, T1)

8.3.2. Teaching/learning environment and English language proficiency

Many students reported continuing issues with the learner-centred nature of class. Indeed, their difficulties increased as they struggled with independent learning and their perceived lack of language and academic skills. These issues are exemplified in the following quotations from the students:

> In Saudi Arabia, they did not rely on themselves in terms of working on their English to improve it; they relied on their English teachers. As if the English teachers brought the information to their students on a gold plate, so that the students spent no effort on it. (Amer, T1)

> Because of the education system in Saudi, they are not used to these methods of teaching and learning. The main problem that we as Saudi students face in our learning here is learning how to learn because we have missed out on or lack so many skills in learning; one of the most important is how we find reliable information and also the lack of research skills. (Adam, T1)

The students also still commented on their level of English as problematic, not only in terms of not being at the right level but also related to opportunities to develop their language proficiency and engage with the communicative approach to learning. Trying to interact with students at a lower level of proficiency made communication difficult and hindered their improvement:

> Also, we talk with our partners in the group work, but these partners speak in poor English in terms of the wrong pronunciation and sometimes it is hard to understand them. Therefore, how can I improve my language talking to learners who sometimes have a lower level of speaking than me and they are not good at speaking and are worse than me. (Nadia, T1)

> In the classroom we work in groups, we communicate and talk to each other. However, we are at the same language level and we do not get any benefit and learn from each other as our English language still needs to be improved. (Maryam, T1)

What is more, they remarked on feeling anxious about communicating in English both in class and outside. They were concerned about making mistakes and being misunderstood:

> The technological side used in our course is efficient and effective. There is a programme called Gold which is specifically used in learning English in this English language institution. It is a tool for distance learning so that the students can contact their teachers and the teachers can focus on many aspects of their students' language and provide them with extra time and help. […] For example, they correct the students' mistakes in the language and for me this is important as I am shy about asking the teacher to correct my mistakes in the class. (Maryam, T1)

> I feel when I talk that they do not understand me, especially when they say sorry or pardon, then I know that they misunderstood me and this made me feel slightly shy. (Nadia, T1)

> I feel less confident and afraid to say something wrong, they misunderstand me and sometimes they do not understand me. (Nahla, T1)

8.3.3. IELTS pressure

An additional critical issue that students started to raise was the influence of IELTS (or equivalent university language test). Attaining a certain score was one of the main requirements for being accepted for their chosen future course of study. Thus, the students felt very anxious and they had to adjust their study plans, dedicating time in the semester to preparing for the test. There was also a financial cost in terms of the fee for taking the test, with further fees if they had to retake the test. These points are illustrated in the following quotations:

> The most worrying aspect and what makes me stressed is the IELTS exam and how I can pass it and obtain the required score of 6.5 to enter my future course, which is pharmacy. I have got just two terms to obtain the score. (Amjad, T1)

> I have difficulty with the IELTS exam. I went for this exam, but I did not get the required score of 6.5 that I need to enter the university and start my PhD course. Due to this, I must take the next semester of this course in order to get the required score from this course as their examination, like IELTS, is accepted by the university as a qualification for entry. (Maryam, T1)

> I have to get the required score in IELTS. I am working hard to obtain the required IELTS grade to enter the university as soon as I can because my father at the same time is paying the study fees for me […]. (Yasser, T1)

Moreover, the students felt that there was no equivalence between the content of IELTS and what they studied in class. Thus, they viewed the test as invalid and unfair:

> My course relies on the IELTS exam in terms of determining the students' level at the beginning when they enter the course. I feel this is an unfair way to assess students' level and to put them in a certain level based on IELTS exam. I think the teachers should assess the students in their course by monitoring them in the class and then they can put them in the correct or appropriate level for them. (Najat, T1)

> I face difficulty in the course examination. For example, in the writing exam they gave us questions like the IELTS writing exam. There is no equivalence between the IELTS exam and what they teach in the classroom. (Azhar, T1)

8.3.4. Coping strategies

The students again reported employing certain coping strategies that helped them adjust to the issues they faced. First, despite the problems they had adjusting to the mixed-gender classes initially, some students made progress by trying to adopt the perspective that interaction between males and females was typical in everyday life in the UK, as they could observe in their communication and interactions outside class. Thus, they could focus on it also being normal in class, as well as reflecting positively on the opportunities they were being given to

understand those of the opposite gender and exchange ideas, viewing ideas from a different perspective. The following quotations from students illustrate these perspectives and the focus on the positive:

> Then, after a while of being mixed with the opposite gender outside the classroom, like on buses or in any other place where men sat next to me and I could not say anything to them as this is the country system and this is normal for them in their everyday lifestyle, I gradually changed and started to accept communicating with the men in the classroom. (Nahla, T1)

> I like mixed-gender education as when we study together we share ideas and know more about each other because one of the biggest problems in Saudi is that males do not understand females and vice versa in general in their lives. (Amer, T1)

> I think mixed-gender education is better than single gender education because some female students are more creative in their thinking than males and I prefer female teachers as they are more creative in teaching, and they have the ability to transfer ideas and knowledge effectively. They really care about the details more than the male teachers. I can see more positive aspects in mixed-gender education. (Abdu, T1)

Moreover, they started to focus on the positive aspects of communicative teaching and learning in terms of the tasks that they experienced, which were unlike those in the traditional Saudi teaching approach that focused on grammar and accuracy:

> […] If I compare it with the way of teaching English in Saudi, I will tell you that I did not like the way of teaching in Saudi because I studied the language without understanding […]. It should be taught in a meaningful way and through entertainment to let us understand it. Like here in the UK, my teacher teaches us the language through games, photos, coloured cards and conversations, things that let us understand the information very effectively […]. I wish in Saudi they taught English lessons outside the class as an activity not like the other subjects. (Sahar, T1)

> And learning grammar is not like in Saudi, where they teach the grammatical rules but we cannot use them. Here, we learn the grammatical rules within the activities, and we learn the language to communicate with it. We do activities that help you learn the language through the culture for use in everyday life. This encourages us to communicate and exchange cultures with the other students. In Saudi Arabia my grammar was OK, but I could not use the language. (Nahla, T1)

In addition, some students even developed positive attitudes to making mistakes in using the language:

> In addition, here in the UK when talking and making mistakes, the teacher always says to continue, and they do not interrupt me while I am talking. I know most of what I am saying is wrong, but they want to encourage me to talk, and I feel this builds my confidence in talking in English. (Sahar, T1)

Finally, the students also reported actively working on their approach to learner-centred, independent learning, and in turn focusing on self-development:

> In learning English, we work on ourselves in two respects: correcting what we learned wrong and building a new way of learning. (Adam, T1)

8.3.5. Support mechanism

At this time, students started to indicate that they have academic support from their international students and English teachers. Most students reported that their social contact with international students was a major advantage as they could communicate with them in English and improve their language.

> I really care about making friends of different nationalities. I have friends from Japan and France […] regarding English, I learn more when I have conversation with them, acquiring new words and phrases, and also I learn from their way of learning the language (Nahla, T1)

> Yes, I really care about having relationships with them as the means of communication between us will be English. (Amjad, T1)

Students also indicated that their English teachers were one of the support mechanisms in their academic side in learning English in term of encouraging them.

> […] through encouragement they try to break down all of the barriers. I feel my relationship with my teachers is really good (Sahar, T1)

8.4. T2 (February 2017)

At T2 in February 2017, four months into the English course, seven students participated in semi-structured interviews. The students still reported experiencing issues that arose previously (pre-T1 and T1), such as learner-centred classes and a lack of linguistic/academic skills. In addition, they continued to be concerned about communicating outside class, feeling anxious that they would be misunderstood. An additional issue raised concerned difficulties in making friends among native speakers to communicate with and thus develop their language skills.

8.4.1 Linguistic and academic issues related to the course

In this phase, as previously, the students indicated that they suffered from a lack of academic skills. The learner-centred nature of the environment, which meant that students had to rely on themselves, increased their sense of being unable to complete work due to a lack of basic skills and this worsened over time. Moreover, while previously students commented quite broadly on issues with the skills required of an independent learner and undertaking research, in this phase they remarked specifically on ‘research skills’ and ‘writing skills’, as well as ‘presentation skills’:

> Generally, I found difficulty in writing and research skills as these are difficult compared to other skills. The English course I enrolled in focus on these two skills. (Azhar, T2)

> I found difficulty in homework and presentation skills. (Amer, T2)

8.4.2. Communication and other issues outside class

Students in the previous phase (T1) reported that they had issues with communication and practising English inside and outside class due to feeling shy and anxious. In this phase, the students were less anxious about speaking in call, but outside class they had difficulty making friends among native speakers and this limited their opportunities to practise English:

> It is difficult to make friends among native speakers to practise the language. (Ali, T2)

Moreover, some students said they felt 'hesitant' about speaking to people as the language was not the formal language used in class.

> Sometimes I am hesitant because the language outside the classroom is not the same as inside the classroom. I mean slang words, all the people in the classroom are helpful and they can repeat more than one time. (Hassan, T2)

8.4.3. Coping strategies

As in T1, students commented that anxiety about being misunderstood hindered everyday communication outside class. To combat this, one student reported being alert to problems in understanding and being ready to rephrase to make the meaning clear:

> I am cautious and ready to recover most words if they do not understand my speaking. (Ali, T2)

Another student, Amjad, related an action plan he used to make friends among native speakers, which helped him develop his speaking skills in English:

> You could socialise with locals by having common factors such as hobbies. Because I love photography, I met with them weekly until we developed a friendship. So, I would suggest that anyone who wants to improve their language look for a common factor that could lead to contact with people with similar interests. (Amjad, T2)

Adeel also had an action plan to improve his language skills, i.e. starting with reading:

> […] My way of improving was reading then focusing on other language skills. Reading skills are very important to improve language because they provide strong foundations in English grammar and develop your ability to know your mistakes in the language. This is what I need to learn to improve my language. (Adeel, T2)

In terms of communication in class, in the previous stage (T1) the students had started to view communication with the opposite gender more positively, as everyday interaction that should

become normal and also providing a good opportunity to understand each other. In this phase, the students indicated that they had made further progress in adjusting to the learning environment, overcoming their earlier shyness and discomfort. As Maryam commented:

> My English course is going very well as I planned. I feel confident and not embarrassed in mixed gender learning environment. (Maryam, T2)

8.4.4. Support mechanism

They also reported that both English teachers and other international students provided support that aided academic adjustment. Working with other students provided opportunities to practise speaking in English and played an important role in helping them develop their learning:

> I like my teachers, as they are excellent and very cooperative. I really like their way of teaching […] And I have been lucky with my great teachers as they played a role in cooperating and they were helpful. I have developed a lot. (Azhar, T2).

> […] working with Chinese students improved my language skills when we had dialogue and of course the surrounding learning was easy and unexpected! (Azhar, T2)

8.5. T3 (May 2017, seven months into the English course)

In this phase, T3, four students participated in interviews. They reported experiencing successful adjustment in terms of their academic life, both inside class and outside. The main aspect that worried them was their academic results and grades and the possibility that they might not obtain the required score in IELTS or other exams. They commented on their dissatisfaction with their level and grades. More positively, they felt they had adjusted to the classroom environment and had strategies they employed to deal with communication issues and deficiencies in skills. They had also developed some coping strategies to help with communication outside class. In addition, they highlighted the support that they gained from their peers in class and their English teacher, which helped them develop their learning.

8.5.1. IELTS

The academic issue that most affected the students throughout in terms of their adjustment was passing IELTS. As they indicated previously at T2, IELTS caused them stress and was costly in terms of time and money. In this phase, the issue of academic achievement had grown worse. The students emphasised that they were worried about not having a successful outcome they were not satisfied with their grades or level, as expressed by:

> I am not satisfied with my level of English. […] Unfortunately, also my IELTS grade is the same and has not improved. My level of English is not exactly what I desired. (Najat, T3)

In particular, there was an issue with time:

> I did not achieve the target grade. I got 62 and my weakness was in reading and listening because it was difficult for me to read quickly and also to listen and write quickly in the listening task as I could not catch everything the speakers said. (Najat, T3)

> […] discontented with the exams not reflecting their achievement during the semester, especially reading tests, because there was very little time to answer all the questions. (Maryam, T3)

8.5.2. The learning environment, skills development and communication

In the previous stage (T2) students started to comment positively on communication with the opposite gender, getting over feeling shyness or embarrassment. In this phase, they commented that they now regarded such communication as 'normal' and they had adjusted to this type of education:

> Regarding the mixed-gender learning. I think I was shy in the beginning but now I've skipped the barrier and become more sociable with students. (Maryam, T3)

> I used to be shy communicating with males. But this became normal. My communication with male students now is respectful and formal. (Najat, T3)

Moreover, whereas they had faced difficulties being independent learners, they had gained confidence and this contributed to self-development:

> Opportunities to learn how to deal with different perspectives and learn how to give better answers. Freedom of expression and opinion, which increases self-confidence. (Amer, T3)

> I think the education system in England has let me be more independent and responsible for myself due to doing more tasks in the class. (Maryam, T3)

They had also made progress in developing academic skills, critical thinking and writing skills:

> I have learned better writing skills and what you said, academic skills and critical thinking. (Maryam, T3)

> I really like the positive aspect of British education as this contributed to my language improvement and they teach writing skills and critical thinking at the university and develop the students' communication skills. (Najat, T3)

Finally, the students commented positively on their progress in communicating in English. They could manage their anxiety about being misunderstood and were not afraid of making mistakes, as they were previously. In this phase, they feel more confident in class:

> I feel confident more than before. (Maryam, T3)

> Good, better than other students. (Nadia, T3)

The same was true outside the classroom:

> Good people can understand me when I am talking. (Nadia, T3)
>
> Much better. (Maryam, T3)

8.5.3. Coping strategies

Students had commented that at T1 they felt anxious about communicating in English outside class. In this phase (T3), Muhammed recounted his coping strategies, describing an action plan that he followed. First, he employed a psychological tool, appearing confident, then second he spoke clearly using terms that local people would use and understand:

> I speak confidently and use British words instead of the American words that I had learned before and I try to use a general British accent. (Muhammed, T3)

In terms of learning skills, as at T3, the students emphasised the importance of reading skills and were focused on developing these by reading books and articles.

> I think things are going better. Yes, I am very satisfied. The main factors that helped me were […] reading English books and articles. (Muhammad, T3)

In addition, they were keen to attend courses to develop their academic skills:

> I worked on my plan and I will study the pre-sessional course and then I will join the university. About the factors, there is no doubt that my English language course contributed to improving the academic and writing skills. (Maryam, T3)

Finally, the students continued to be given support by the teacher and their peers in class, which helped them academically and enabled them to develop their language skills:

> The main factors that helped me [were] teachers' cooperation in clarifying the difference between the use of academic terms and general terms and how to use each of the exercises. (Muhammad, T3)
>
> I think through this semester, I am able to help and share ideas with other students. Students are very helpful and help me a lot in the classroom interaction, clarifying what the teacher wants. (Maryam, T3)

8.6. Summary

In summary, students' academic adjustment over time was represented by two main dimensions, positively oriented and negatively oriented. The former reflected the difficulties that students went through but made positive progress in addressing them over time, namely mixed-gender classes and interaction/communication, English language proficiency and the teaching/learning environment (learner-centred) and language anxiety. They made progress by adopting certain coping strategies and gaining support from those in their surroundings. The other main dimension was the negative orientation in terms of the issues that the students

experienced which had a negative effect on their adjustment over time. These issues either persisted or increased during their sojourn.

Chapter 9. Students' Psychological Adjustment Over Time

9.1. Introduction

This section presents the findings of the qualitative analysis of the interview data for the psychological adjustment dimension related to the three periods of data collection in the 2016/2017 academic year: T1 (November 2016; 19 participants); T2 (February 2017; 7 participants); T3 (May 2017; 4 participants). The Saudi English language learners were asked about the stages of adjustment that they went through psychologically before leaving home, their pre-sojourn phase, after they arrived and through the period of living and studying in the UK. The reason for this was to provide as complete a picture as possible concerning the students' psychological adjustment over time.

Besides reflecting on the three phases mentioned above, there is a reflection on their pre-sojourn phase, a period the students highlighted as important in the interviews. They referred to this early phase using terms such as 'in the first weeks' and 'when I started', distinguishing it from the time of the interviews at T1, which they referenced using terms such as 'now' and 'after this early time'. Thus, the pre-sojourn period reflects the time before the students' departure to the UK, whereas the pre-T1 phase (before November 2016) reflects the students' post-arrival experiences, covering their early days on first arriving in the UK and starting their life and courses of study in English.

The comments in the interviews for this psychological dimension can broadly be distinguished under two main themes: the 'positive orientation' reflected the issues that the students experienced in the early stages but improved through their adjustment over time. These were negative emotions such as missing family and loneliness and worries related to both sociocultural and academic issues. The progress they made was through two main facilitators, adopting 'coping strategies' and 'support mechanisms'. The second theme was the 'negative orientation', which concerned issues the students experienced persistently over time and even increased, predominantly exam pressure, anxiety about their English language proficiency and parental stress.

9.2. Pre-sojourn (before departure to the UK)

Nineteen students participated in this phase, in which they mostly commented negatively as they found it difficult. They reported that they were 'afraid' and 'worried' about various issues in the future when they arrived in the UK. First, there were emotional issues concerning their fear of missing family and being alone. Second, they were concerned about their sociocultural and living requirements, reflected in their fear of adjusting to the new society and the stress and worry of arranging their future accommodation. Third, they were worried about academic

issues, particularly their fear of not achieving their aim in studying abroad and experiencing negative feelings affecting their motivation to study abroad.

9.2.1. Emotional worries about missing family and loneliness

Most of the students indicated that they were 'afraid' of experiencing emotional issues. A key 'worry' concerned missing their family and friends and being lonely, as noted by Nahla and Maryam:

> The aspect that worried me most was emotionally, that I would miss my family and friends […] This made me feel disappointed and the problems that I faced became greater and overwhelmed my strong desire to study in the UK. (Nahla, T1)

> […] my family, I just wanted to take the chance before I left them. I was so upset that I would leave them because I was afraid of being alone. (Maryam, T1)

9.2.2. Sociocultural and living worries

Many students reported that their psychological adjustment in the pre-departure phase was affected by two factors related to their future sociocultural and living dimensions. These factors were sociocultural acceptance and accommodation. First, the students felt 'worried' about not being accepted by British/local people due to being English language learners, which would be an issue as they would like to communicate with locals to practise their English.

> I was also worried about whether the British nationals would accept me and communicate with me or I would feel alienated. I was not excited because of these feelings. (Amjad, T1)

In addition, there was a fear of lack of acceptance of them on religious grounds as practising Muslims, as illustrated by Najat:

> I was afraid that the society would not accept me as a Muslim lady wearing a scarf and there might be some problems regarding being a Muslim and practising my religion. (Najat, T1)

Second, there were concerns about finding appropriate accommodation, especially among students who would be in the UK without their family, like Adam:

> There is no doubt that there were certain fears regarding the accommodation, which would be better, in a homestay with a British family, or private, or with students and friends and where, in terms of the location and which would be appropriate. (Adam, T1)

9.2.3. Academic aims and motivation worries

The students also commented on academic aspects and how they affected their psychological adjustment. They mentioned feeling worried about achieving their aims and expressed fear of failure, as stated by Amjad:

> When I first came, I felt very worried because of fear of the unknown, whether I would achieve what I came for or would not be able to. I would stay a couple of years then return to Saudi without achieving my aim of studying on my postgraduate nursing course. I was not self-confident. (Amjad, T1)

Some students also remarked negatively on their motivation to study, which was predominantly external and practical. They felt 'worry' and were not 'excited' as the decision to study aboard was not their own, but the wish of their family or a requirement of their job. Examples of these issues are illustrated as follows:

> To be honest, I was worried, and I was wanting any reason not to travel, even until the last minute at the airport. The reason for this was because it was compulsory for my work to study abroad due to the quality of education. Whereas for me I wanted to do my Master's degree in Saudi. (Hassan, T1)

> At that time, I had no choice […] I refused to go to the UK. […] My dad insisted that the education and the experience studying abroad was more valuable […] Actually my father decided for me to study abroad, that's why in the time I feel these feeling before travel. (Azhar, T1)

9.3. Pre-T1 (before November 2016, soon after arrival)

Of the eight students who participated in this phase, most indicated that the early stage in adjusting to the UK was the most difficult, principally due to experiencing psychological adjustment issues academically related to their English proficiency. In addition, the sociocultural and accommodation issues that were problematic in the previous phase (pre-sojourn) became worse, as did the emotional problems of missing family and friends and feeling lonely. However, there was also some positive progress in relation to their fears about adjusting to the new society and the academic element of achieving their aim in being abroad.

9.3.1. English proficiency and academic issues

Most of the students in this phase reported negative feelings, such as being 'afraid', 'depressed', 'worried' and 'lonely'. These were related to issues with their English proficiency (level and grade) and communicative competence.

Communicative competence issues

The students' low level of communicative competence made it difficult to communicate in English and this in turn led to feeling depressed and alone. Although they could communicate with fellow Arab students and friends, they expressed the need to interact more widely to improve their English language skills:

> At the beginning I felt depressed as I needed to communicate with people who would only communicate with me in English, like international students or British people. I had this depression for a while […] I knew Arabic people, but I did not want to go out with them or even communicate with them because I did not want my English language not to improve and decrease as if I speak Arabic with Arabic friends I will lose some

> skills in my English, that's why […] Then I had a period of time when I had depression and I felt lonely, especially at the weekend. (Amjad, T1)

Proficiency issues

The students' low level of English proficiency meant that they worried about achieving the grade they needed to enrol for their course of study:

> In my English course at the beginning, actually I was afraid, and I did not have confidence as my English language was poor. (Maryam, T1)

> …there was a phase when I started worrying about how I could achieve the English language score required from Sunderland University. (Amjad, T1)

9.3.2. Sociocultural and living issues

Some students in this phase experienced psychological issues due to the unfamiliar country system issues and problems with accommodation. The students had already reported feeling worried about adjusting to the sociocultural aspects of life in the UK and finding appropriate accommodation in relation to the pre-sojourn period (see 9.2.2), but there was now the additional problem of understanding the way things were done and country norms in the UK.

Acceptance issues

As well as the concerns about acceptance discussed above (see 9.3.1) having an affect on them academically in terms of being unable to improve their English language competence, they reported difficulties that were more sociocultural in terms of feeling isolated and downhearted.

Accommodation issues

In the pre-sojourn period (see 9.2.2), the students experienced fear of not finding appropriate accommodation and this continued to be a problem, as discussed by Abdu:

> The greatest problem that I faced in the first month in the UK was the accommodation as I did not find appropriate accommodation, like this issue caused a loss of concentration in the first phase, I did not adjust psychologically. (Abdu, T1)

Country system issues

Students in this phase raised issues concerning the country system in terms of adjusting to a different society and set of norms. They felt they had to careful not to make mistakes and find out how things were done in the UK:

> When I first came here to the UK, I was too conscious about committing mistakes in the system of the UK as I was in a new culture and a new system. (Amjad, T1)

> When I first came, I experienced culture shock I was starry eyed in the UK, for me there was an entire difference. I was distracted as I had to think about whatever I would need in this country, like a mobile card, a ticket to travel and so on, I was so worried and thinking about how to get them. (Adeel, T1)

9.3.3. Emotional issues of missing family and loneliness

In this phase, the worries the students had reported related to the pre-sojourn stage about being lonely and homesick (see 9.2.1) were borne out as they missed their families and friends and this affected them negatively:

> In the past, when I was waiting to start, I had that bad feeling […] I felt that I was alone, I felt the strangeness and missed my family and I felt bored. (Maryam, T1)

9.3.4. Positive progress socially and academically

In this phase, students recounted positive progress socially and academically reflecting on their psychological adjustment. In the previous phase (see 9.2.3), they were afraid of not achieving their academic aim. However, positive experiences following arrival had a beneficial effect emotionally, as mentioned by Nahla:

> When I first came to Newcastle, in the first three weeks I was excited, I liked to accomplish and achieve my aims. From when I arrived at Heathrow airport, everything in my life went smoothly. When I was at the airport, I was happy about how they treated us as foreigners. All of the aspects and the things that I arranged went OK, like renting hotel rooms and then renting the house in Newcastle went OK, all of the outside support made our lives easier, and I felt comfortable and happy. (Nahla, T1).

9.4. T1 (November 2016)

At T1, the students experienced fewer psychological issues and they indicated progress in some areas, as well as starting to build some strategies to manage their psychological adjustment. Nonetheless, they experienced the same issues as in the previous two phases (pre-sojourn and post-arrival), but the load academically was greater.

9.4.1. Emotional issues missing family and loneliness

Most of the students still commented negatively on missing their family and experiencing loneliness. They were 'homesick' and 'upset', but this went beyond just missing their family; they needed friendship and to share their lives with others:

> […] the problems started and appeared. Psychologically, I felt homesick, and I missed my family back home […]. (Nahla, T1)

> I am a very sociable person, and I was very upset and tired of being alone. I did not have close friends. I needed friends to talk to, to share this new life of being a foreigner with me and to tell them about my feelings of loneliness. (Sara, T1)

9.4.2. Academic stress

Students in the previous two phases indicated academic worries and issues with English language proficiency and communicative competence. In this phase, the students commented on study pressure and stress, especially needing to adjust to so many new elements. Abdu remarked on the load they experienced:

> It might be the accumulation of different pressures and the study stress that lead to the psychological stress because we as students need to have a more relaxing time while we study. (Abdu, T1)

9.4.3. Positive progress concerning the country system

At T1, the students reported some progress in dealing with the anxiety about adjusting to the UK and its norms they experienced previously (pre-T1) as they began to adjust and felt less stressed with greater familiarity:

> There were minor and slight things in the country system that I just needed to acknowledge to myself and adjust to them, like the system of transportation, and how to use them, what I mean is the sociocultural side of the country as I felt about these things when I first came to this country, in the first week I felt as if I was in a prison, not going out. (Adam, T1)

In addition, female students in the pre-departure stage expressed their worries about aspects of practising Islam, such as wearing the veil. However, their impression of the UK improved as they found that Islam was respected and they could practise their religion as Muslims. Being able to wear the veil without worry and finding that halal food was available helped them to adjust psychologically:

> I found living in the UK is better for me as a Muslim lady as I easily found suitable cloths that suit my veil, as well as Halal food. That's because here in the UK there is a big Muslim community. (Nadia, T1)

9.4.4. Coping strategies

The students reported various strategies that they used to help themselves adjust psychologically and emotionally. Most mentioned that keeping themselves busy was an effective way of overcoming psychological issues, such as missing their family or feeling alone. They busied themselves by focusing on their studies, doing certain sports, practising their religion and so on. They also made friends or entertained themselves by going out or watching television in their free time to distract from being alone or thinking about their family and how much they missed them:

> Actually, I just had psychological problems in my free time, that's why to overcome this I just kept myself busy by studying for most of the time and also doing sports had a really great effect on my psychological side and helped me to feel well. (Adeel, T1)

> However, one of the aspects that most helped me to overcome this feeling was studying. From when I started to now, this feeling has gradually changed as I now feel more structured in terms of my time and busy with my studies. In contrast with the past, when I was waiting to start, I had that bad feeling. Now I feel better. (Maryam, T1)

> […] and the second thing was keeping myself busy at home, like doing housework and also entertaining myself watching TV series and things like this, I kept myself busy. Then when I studied I was busy with my studies. (Sahar, T1)

> […] Or just staying in my room and studying, all my time is busy. (Nadia, T1)
>
> The way I overcome missing my family, especially my kids […] is to keep myself busy with anything. (Hassan, T1)
>
> I was missing my family and I overcame this issue by being closer to God, this is always the top solution […]. (Sami, T1)
>
> I was missing my family and I overcame this issue by […] having friends […]. (Sami, T1)
>
> […] What I did to overcome my problem of missing my family was to enrol in a gym and do sports and also go out with my friends for activities to feel better by keeping myself busy. (Muhammad, T1)

In addition, one of the students remarked on various techniques that she employed in her free time, among them colouring, which she used as a tool to manage her stress and anxiety:

> One of the things that helped me in trying to overcome my previous feeling of loneliness and missing my family was I started to focus on my aim, that is my study and use all of my time to achieve it. Another thing is that I have started to read in English, even if I do not understand or know all of the meanings of the words, I just read. Also, I brought a notebook that helps people to release their stress and anxiety. The technique of this notebook is to colour certain shapes with the required colours while listening to music, then when you complete it you see a new image. […] this notebook helps me to be calmer as I sit and think of what I need to do in the future and think positively. Also, I work on my language by reading the dictionary and so improve my vocabulary. (Sara, T1)

One of the students also mentioned returning home to Saudi Arabia to see her family in the holidays as one way of reducing the amount she missed them and at the same time encouraging her to study:

> The aspect that most made me feel happy again was when I booked my flight to return home in the upcoming middle term holiday. Now I feel better as I wanted to get rid of the previous feeling of upset. (Nahla, T1)

Both contacting – and conversely not contacting – family were techniques the students used to mitigate feelings of missing their family. They contacted their families to receive reassurance about their wellbeing and this made them feel better. In contrast, not contacting them was a means of not feeling far away from them and also not showing their family that they missed them:

> I was missing my family and I overcame this issue by […] contacting my family. (Sami, T1)
>
> […] Also I always call my family through social media and applications like Skype and I do not feel alone. (Nadia, T1)

> The main thing that I did in the beginning to overcome my psychological issues like loneliness and missing my family was not to contact them a lot as I didn't want to feel more sad that I was away from them […]. (Sahar, T1)

> The way I overcame missing my family, especially my kids was just reduce to contacting them via phone […]. (Hassan, T1)

> The first two weeks I was waiting to start my English course to study to keep myself busy because I felt great emptiness. It was a few weeks, but seemed longer. (Sahar, T1)

> […] Also, another aspect was to involve myself more in my studies here in the UK and at the same time to entertain myself, either in Newcastle or other cities in the UK, by going out and taking tours. (Faisal, T1)

Another issue was a lack of people with whom to practise their English as the students tended to have more contact with their family and Saudi friends than locals. One of the students felt they should be provided with opportunities to communicate with English speakers or find ways of doing so as this would help to improve their language skills and fulfil their goals, thus also aiding their psychological adjustment. One such means would be to find something in common, for example a hobby:

> […] however, I overcame this problem by communicating with international students and also getting to know local people. We have different cultures and customs, but I have tried to find things in common that we can share because when someone would like to have a friendship with any person, it is necessary to find things that they can share. In addition, I had a hobby in photography. When I started to go to the places where photographers meet, I started see them regularly and communicate with them. Then I had friends among them. We started to discuss and chat about photography and also about our lives for a longer time and we began to see each other regularly, having meals together and going for coffee. After a time, I felt that I had friends asking and caring about me. This provided me with the drive and motivation to engage in my studies. (Amjad, T1)

9.4.5. Support mechanisms

Students started in this phase to refer to support mechanisms that helped them adjust psychologically, such as Saudi friends, the community and the family members they lived with.

Saudi friends

Another source of support was Saudi friends, who supported them emotionally by contacting them and ensuring they did not feel alone.

> Also, there are Saudi students so I did not feel alone with them. (Nadia)

Saudi community

Most students emphasised strongly that having contact with the Saudi community in the UK was important, indeed necessary, for three reasons: (i) providing emotional support and

compensating for the lack of family support, (ii) maintaining cultural and religious practices, and (iii) giving practical support.

Regarding emotional support, they considered that the presence of other Saudi nationals could help compensate for missing their family and the lack of family support, particularly based on their shared cultural understanding and speaking the same first language, as well as common understanding of the emotional impact of living abroad:

> Yes, it is important to know others from Saudi society as we share the same feeling of missing our family and the same beliefs and ways of thinking and we support each other emotionally. (Azhar, T1)

Other types of emotional support highlighted were 'cultural' and 'religious'. They could share their cultural and religious practices with other Saudis and be supported in a way that could not be provided by those of other nationalities:

> […] We practise our religion together and I go pray together with my Saudi female friends as we need to share our practices and also with international Muslim students. (Nadia, T1)

> To be honest […] as they are from the same country and culture, I feel I belong to them, especially during our gathering time or religious meetings and they provide me with help and support me if I need them. (Adeel, T1)

The final type of support was practical. If they wanted or needed help, they could ask others from their culture and tradition to support them and they cooperated with each other in providing help:

> […] we are here to support each other and also when we communicate and have contact with each other we share things and help others put aside certain issues that they might face. (Amer, T1)

Family

Students who lived with their family members also stressed the importance of this source of support abroad. For example, they mentioned that their father, mother, husband, or wife gave them socioemotional support, but also possibly instrumental support. The valued having their families there to share their lives:

> […] my husband encouraged me to study aboard and he wanted me to go and study with him […]. (Sahar, T1)

> […] My husband and I came to study together and this made me feel comfortable (Maryam, T1)

> […] I am a married woman, I prefer to spend my time with my children and my family […]. (Sara, T1)

9.5. T2 (February 2017)

Most of the students in this phase commented on experiencing academic stress due to nearing the end of the semester and the time for examination. Moreover, they were still missing their family and feeling lonely. They also raised a new issue, the stress of being a parent and trying to study at the same time.

9.5.1. Academic stress

Most of the students commented negatively on their psychological wellbeing, highlighting the stress and worry of achieving the English language score required for them to study their desired course in the future. While they experienced stress previously, mainly related to their English proficiency and using language in communication, their concerns about their grade and fear of failure increased, as commented on by Azhar and Amjad:

> The last semester in my English language course […] I felt stressed psychologically, because of the grade and getting into the university […]. (Azhar, T2)

> My psychological side fluctuated, sometimes I felt comfortable and other times I did not, especially when I thought that I might fail and return home without achieving my aim, especially now I am in the challenging stage I need to work harder in this foundation course. (Amjad, T2)

9.5.2. Emotional issues: Missing family and loneliness

The students were still suffering from missing their families, which made them feel uncomfortable as commented on by Muhammad:

> The only thing that caused me psychological discomfort was that my family was not with me. Because of my job, I used to be away from the house like regularly, I always missed them and this feeling is upsetting […]. (Muhammad, T2)

9.5.3. Parental stress

An additional point raised in this phase concerned family. Most students had family members living with them, which was a positive aspect in that they gained family support. However, the students also raised the issue of being parents and students at the same time. Having family responsibilities on top of their studies affected their progress ad their psychological side, limiting the time they spent on their studies:

> Having my family with me limited my progress because I could spend a lot of time working in the university. In addition, I was worrying about the results as they are not guaranteed. (Amjad, T2)

Maryam also expressed difficulties balancing her roles as a parent and student. This was challenging and impacted her psychologically:

> The aspect that most hinders my comfort is that I am a mother and wife, with a mother's responsibilities apart from studying […]. (Maryam, T2)

9.5.4. Support mechanisms

The students indicated that they had practical and emotional support from their Saudi friends in this phase. This helped by providing an effective way of adjusting to the unfamiliar way of learning English and providing supportive companionship:

> I feel comfortable and I can overcome this problem because I spoke with previous Saudi students, and they provided me with some information about effective and efficient ways of learning English in the correct way. (Adeel, T2)

> In term of the psychological side, I have friends helping me to be comfortable as they are with me and I have not faced any big problems. (Hassan, T2)

9.6. T3 (May 2017)

Although the students made positive progress in some respects, such as adjusting to their English courses and a new way of learning, in others they continued to have problems, particular concerns about their grades and fear of failure. The worry about their academic outcome was thus persistent throughout.

9.6.1. Academic stress

Psychologically, the students continued to report stress and worry about achieving the English language score required for them to study their desired course in the future. While academic stress was present in all phases, here it had increased, as commented on by Amer and Nadia:

> I feel stressed because of the study pressure, in terms of lots of homework and being worried about my results for my English course. (Amer, T3)

> […] but in terms of my study, there is a little tension because I am in the last term of my English language study. (Nadia, T3).

9.6.2. Positive progress

In the last phase, the students pointed to the positive progress that they had made concerning English language learning issues and missing their family. They felt they had adjusted academically through improving their English and becoming familiar with their courses and developing learning strategies, as expressed by Hassan:

> I thank God that I can now say that I feel completely adjusted as I am used to the system here in the English course, how it runs and the way of learning. There is no doubt that my progress in English has had a positive effect on my adjustment. (Hassan, T2)

9.6.3 Support mechanisms

At T2, the students indicated that their main sources of emotional support came from family members who were with them and they reported that their family and those around them contributed to their psychological adjustment:

> I thank God, there is no problem. I feel completely adjusted and my mind is calm as I have my wife and kids with me now […] Now, I only communicate with my international friends due to lack of time. (Amjad, T3)

> The first support is from my husband and also I am very satisfied with the social support that I am surrounded by. (Maryam, T3)

9.7 Summary

This chapter reported on the difficulties students experienced in relation to their psychological adjustment over time and their reactions, which portrayed positive and negative orientations. The positive orientation reflected the positive changes that occurred over time in relation to the students' negative emotions (missing family and loneliness) and worries related to sociocultural and academic aspects. The negative orientation reflected the students' inability to deal with exam pressure and worry about their level of English language proficiency, which persisted or increased over time.

Chapter 10. Students' Sociocultural Adjustment Over Time

10.1. Introduction

This section presents the findings of the qualitative analysis of the interview data for the sociocultural adjustment dimension related to the three periods of data collection in the 2016/2017 academic year: T1 (November 2016; 19 participants); T2 (February 2017; 7 participants); T3 (May 2017; 4 participants). The Saudi English language learners were asked about their sociocultural experiences at each of the three time points. The reason for this was to provide as complete a picture as possible concerning the students' sociocultural adjustment over time, reflecting the main aspects and the dynamics in terms of change.

In addition to reflecting on the three phases as mentioned, there is a reflection in this chapter on the period prior to T1 which the students referred to using phrases such as 'in the beginning' and 'when I first came in two weeks'. For the pre-T1 phase (see 10.2) and the subsequent phases, T1, T2 and T3 (see 10.3, 10.4 and 10.5 respectively), the results are discussed under two main themes: (i) 'positive orientation', representing the difficulties that the students experienced in the early stages but then made progress in addressing, including issues with the social environment and practical issues, social issues in relation to food, eating and the environment, local people and communication issues, which were addressed through coping strategies and drawing on support from those around them; (ii) 'negative orientation', representing issues and difficulties that persisted or increased over time, including negative attitudes towards locals' values and norms (exacerbated by communication issues), as well as difficulties making native-speaker friends.

10.2. Pre-T1 (before November 2016, early sociocultural difficulties)

Six students commented on this phase in their adjustment, mainly negatively. They described three main issues: the social environment and practical issues, difficulties with local people and communication, problems coping with social norms and values.

10.2.1. Social environment and practical issues

The students remarked on difficulties adjusting to the new social environment. They found it confusing and were not sure how to go about daily activities and the practicalities of living in the UK:

> In terms of the country system, all of the places close earlier. Actually, in the first three weeks I was confused as I didn't know when I had to go or return home as the day would be finished and everything closed. (Ali, T1)

10.2.2. Local people and communication

The students had the impression that the local people did not socialise and that there was a lack of communication between them, which they found difficult:

> In the beginning I could not adjust, I felt that people did not see or talk to each other in this new society. I felt lonely. (Maryam, T1)

10.2.3. Social norms and values

The students expressed negative feelings and attitudes concerning the social norms and values in the UK in terms of what people thought and how they behaved, such as what they wore and drinking alcohol. Amjad commented on this aspect of cultural difficulty:

> In the beginning I had difficulty understanding the aspects that are not part of my culture in term of clothes and being drunk. […] The only thing that I worry about is when my kids and wife come as I think I am worried about the kids as they are still young. I do not worry about my wife because she is an adult and will know what is appropriate and what is not in accordance with our social values. (Amjad, T1)

10.3. T1 (November 2016)

Nineteen students contributed input concerning this phase. Again, most of them commented negatively on their feelings and attitudes, particularly in terms of the environment and practical issues, as well as social values and norms, and problems with communication and cultural differences.

10.3.1. Social environment and practical issues

Students continued to indicate that they were experiencing difficulties adjusting to life in the UK and the practicalities as in the previous phase (pre-T1). For example, they cited differences in the daytime routine and opening hours for shops, which affected what they could get done during the day:

> To be honest, until now I have not been able to adjust to the system in the UK, with the shops closing earlier, because you know in our country, in Saudi, the day starts later, like in the afternoon we go to take our coffee and start our day. Here I can say this is one of the things that I could not adjust to easily because we are not used to this system. […] While at the weekend, to be honest, the day goes without me getting any benefit from it. (Maryam, T1)

10.3.2. Social issues in relation to food, eating and the environment

In this period, some students raised additional issues in adjusting to the new sociocultural environment, for example as expressed by Faisal, living in a homestay family:

> I am not very satisfied with the type of food that the British family that I live with serve me as their food is different and also they have lots of cats that I cannot adjust to. (Faisal, T1)

10.3.3. Social norms and values and communication issues

In describing the previous phase, the students described difficulty adjusting to the different social values and norms in the society. In relation to this phase, many students shed light on this matter and provided more detail, indicating the communication issues they faced as English language learners.

First, there was the fear of being misunderstood, as described by Nahla:

> Sometimes I feel puzzled and very conscious about the way I treat people and I wonder whether they will understand me or consider my attitude polite or not. For example, when we went to buy our car, the person who was selling the car insisted on taking us back to our house as he also lived in our area and would take us on his way and that was nice of him. But all of our way back, me and my husband were confused whether to thank him by giving him money for the ride or whether he would think this an insult and not acceptable in his culture as in our tradition in Saudi Arabia it is unacceptable. Or perhaps it would not be nice if we did not pay him money for the ride and he might consider think us greedy and not generous like him […]. (Nahla, T1)

The students also indicated that they did not want to attend local activities or events, preferring to read about certain social events and activities such as Christmas and Halloween:

> When the teacher in class asked me to do a project about social activities linked to Christmas or Halloween I just researched them and wrote it up. I just did this for the course requirements. (Nahla, T1)

Many students expressed this and it was a factor that hindered them from getting involved and communicating with locals. They gave two reasons for this. First, there was a lack of similar interests:

> I am not interested in the idea of some events that people celebrate here. Sometimes I ask about the way of celebrating and the idea of an event […] If not suits my interests, then I do not go. (Nahla, T1)

Second, there was a conflict with their culture and religion:

> I do not care to be at these events because they do not suit our religion. I think that it is not important for us to attend them as they do not relate to our culture. If I want to know about a certain culture, I can read about it. (Nasim, T1)

> […] certain attitudes or customs which are OK in their culture but inappropriate and unsuitable in our culture and the social values that we are used to in Saudi Arabia […] inappropriate in our culture, like drinking alcohol. [...]. (Amjad, T1)

Students also raised the issue of the mixed-gender environment, which did not just hinder them from communicating in class (see Chapter 8), but was also an issue for their sociocultural adjustment:

> I do not care to attend social activities or events because they do not suit me and my culture. I do not like to go into a mixed-gender environment outside class, communicating with the opposite gender. (Sara, T1)

Finally, even those students who considered it important to have direct communication with native speakers reported that the study load hindered them from attending social events:.

> I think it is very important to adapt to society, but I cannot attend any events because of the pressure of the intensive course that I am studying. (Faisal, T1)

10.3.4. Making friends and communicating with local people

Students in this phase talked more specifically about their sociocultural adjustment, emphasising it more than their academic adjustment. In particular, they found it difficult to make local/British friends as this needed effort and someone initiating it. It was difficult to negotiate the boundaries:

> To be honest, all of us wanted to make friends among British people, but unfortunately here in the UK you do not have the chance or it is not easy to get to know or talk with British people to make friends with them. It is difficult, especially for someone with my personality as I am shy. I am living with a British family and they have a son who is the same age as me. However, it is not easy to make friends with him in spite of living in the same house. They are very nice to me and they treat me well and are very cooperative, especially as they know that I am a student, but we are not close […]. (Adeel, T1)

Sara had the impression from her everyday contacts that British people might not want to communicate with foreign students because of their poor English:

> I wish I could have friends among the local people, but I think they don't like to communicate with foreign people. I have this impression from my daily contact with them in the shops, street and so on […] especially if they see someone whose language is weak, they do not like to talk to them. (Sara, T1)

Moreover, there was the issue of accent:

> Regarding the British people, I do not have friends among them and to be honest I am not enthusiastic to be close to them as they have a strong accent and it is difficult to understand their English. (Yasser, T1)

Another reason was the difference in lifestyle:

> I have not made friends among the British people because their way of life does not suit me. They like to go out at the weekend, while I like to go out during the week […]. (Ali, T1)

10.3.5. Coping strategies

In this phase, some students started building some strategies to help them adjust, adopting a cultural learning approach in which they acquired knowledge and developed skills through their experience. This helped them develop certain action plans, for example, to deal with practical issues. Nadia found ways of practising Islamic prayer that would not affect her class attendance

and enable her to be on time as no time was allocated for prayer at the university, unlike in Saudi Arabia:

> […] Dealing with the issues that I faced, like the time of prayer. I followed the precept in Islam that there is an exception in the time for prayer based on the reason that it affects my studies. Another thing is that I know this is the country system in terms of the time and I have to accept it and try to adjust to it by sticking to the class time. (Nadia, T1)

Abdu and Adeel also tried to implement a practical strategy to adjust to the new societal system and organise their time accordingly, specifically related to shopping:

> In terms of the country system, the issue is that the day time differs from that in Saudi Arabia. I try to do my shopping earlier as the shops close earlier compare to Saudi Arabia […]. (Abdu, T1)

> […] Then I do not feel uncomfortable because the shops close early as I can do my shopping early as well. (Adeel, T1)

Moreover, their timetables as language learners helped them adjust and structure their day:

> […] I have adjusted to the lifestyle. Being a language learner, I have to go to sleep early and wake up early to go to my language course. (Adeel, T1)

> […] then I adjusted to the country system as the atmosphere in general makes you organise your time. I did this especially because I am a student, and my time needs to be arranged. (Ali, T1)

The students indicated that another aspect that helped them adjust and learn about the UK was interacting with locals, as commented on by Adam and Maryam:

> […] more about experiencing a new life and improving your knowledge by learning about a new culture and knowing about different religions than yours in this new country and living with the local people and seeing how they deal with each other and then later on when the person goes back to his/her home country after absorbing this experience, he/she will see how this experience has broadened his/her perspective and improved him/herself, not just given them the knowledge that they went for. (Adam, T1)

> Attending UK social activities, first to communicate with those of a different culture, and to discover and learn more about their culture. The other reason is to show that we are Muslim women and can attend these activities and can within our limits as conservative Muslim women and achieve a balance between the two. (Maryam, T1)

In addition, they also represented and shared aspects of their own culture:

> In addition, I care about representing our Saudi culture and the traditions, morals, religion and society that we have been raised with. (Adam, T1)

> I started the initiative to get to know my neighbours because I wanted to find out about and understand more of their society, like whether they were like our traditions. For

> example, when we cook in Saudi Arabia, we share our food with our neighbours, send them some of our food as a nice tradition […] (Maryam, T1)

10.3.6. Support mechanism

The students commented on how homestay family members supported them in adjusting to the society and culture both emotionally and psychologically, helping them with information and directing them when needed:

> However, as I lived with a British family, they were always advising me and directing me and this made me relieved and I could overcome the first phase. (Adeel, T1)

> I consider living with a British family contributed to adjusting psychologically in the UK. I did not face any real psychological problems in adjusting to the UK because the members of the British family were always with me, advising me and providing me with help when needed. (Abdu, T1)

10.4. T2 (February 2017)

Following T1, seven participants were interviewed three months later in November 2016 (T2), considered to be approximately halfway through their courses in the 2016/2017 academic year. Students in this phase mainly commented on their communication and interaction with local people in the UK. They indicated that they still had issues in terms of communication but those who found opportunities to interact with locals remarked on the positive impact and the progress they made academically and socioculturally.

10.4.1. Local people and communication issues

Some students still reported having issues in communicating with the local people as in the previous phase (pre-T1) and very much wished to form friendships with the locals (T1). In this period, the students indicated similar issues as in the two previous phases in terms of differences in lifestyle, difficulty initiating conversations and lack of shared interests, as well as a lack of communication due to being busy with their studies. These are exemplified in the following quotations.

> […] I do not take part in the gatherings at the end of the week on our course. (Ali, T2)

> [British people] aren't interactive and don't speak until you start first and they dislike talking a lot. (Amer, T2)

> I cannot say I have great social interaction. I hardly communicate with them in the coffee shop or shopping malls. (Maryam, T2)

> There is no free time because of my studies. (Amer, T2)

10.4.2. Local people and progress in communication

Other students reported that they had made progress in communicating with British/local people. In the previous phase (T1), they had improved their knowledge and skills, making it

easier to interact with the locals. In this phase, they again said they had made progress and remarked how this contributed to improving their English proficiency, developing their speaking and grammar and enabling them to gain high scores in the speaking components of IELTS:

> Communication with British people is very beneficial for developing your language and improving language skills, such as speaking. I gained 60% in my speaking skills from contact with British people. (Adeel, T2)

> I have many English friends and I spend some time with them every week. I think this has contributed a lot to developing my language and grammar. (Mohammed, T2)

> Of course, yes, I got my highest score in the IELTS speaking section because of communication with them. (Amjad, T2)

10.5. T3 (May 2017)

At T3, in May 2017, four participants were interviewed. Some students still commented negatively on their communication with local people, but there were also positive comments reporting progress.

10.5.1. Local people and communication issues

Students still commented negatively on their communication with society, for example that local/British people were not particularly sociable in their everyday interactions:

> Until now, I have not interacted because I feel that they do not want to talk a lot, very simple chatting in public areas. (Maryam, T3)

For Amjad, there was a drop in his interactions in the community as he was busy with his family and studies:

> […] my interaction in English was better than now as I am busy now with my family and study. (Amjad, T3)

10.5.2. Local people and progress in communication

The students also recounted positive progress in communicating with the locals and how this helped them in their learning the language:

> Good, I am keen to talk with my teachers when I see them in the streets and lanes and I have an English friend who is working in a store where I ate with her twice […]. I learn some words from them when I buy or sell items, I ask them the better way to say something. Sometimes I ask someone near me in the supermarket about the products and they tell me their opinions, which is an opportunity for me to talk and learn some words. (Nadia, T3)

> To break my shyness, I communicate with people, as they are trying to help you and as a result your language will improve. (Maryam, T3)

10.6 Summary

To summarise, the students' sociocultural adjustment indicated some dynamic changes over time in terms of two main themes, namely positive and negative orientation. The former reflected the positive changes concerning how students dealt with the difficulties they experienced in the early stages. They developed certain coping strategies and also drew on support from those in their surroundings. Thus, they made progress in addressing social, environment and practical issues related to food, eating and the environment, communicating with local people and communication issues more broadly. The negative orientation concerned the issues and difficulties the students experienced over time, which persisted or increased, related to differences in values and norms, communication issues and difficulties making native-speaker friends.

Chapter 11. Discussion

11.1 Introduction

The main aim of this study was to investigate the cross-cultural adaptation and adjustment of Saudi English language learners studying in UK English language institutions. To provide as complete a picture as possible of their transition, the analysis covered three main dimensions:

academic, psychological and sociocultural adaptation and adjustment. The relationships between the contributory factors and the three domains were analysed quantitatively and are discussed in terms of frequency, namely aspects that were repeatedly associated with the three domains. Adjustment over time was addressed qualitatively. The aim of this chapter is to discuss the main findings from the two data sets, linking them to the relevant literature and relating them to each research question. The main findings are thus discussed in relation to each research question and then similarities and differences between the findings from the two data sets are considered in an integrated manner.

11.2 RQ1

This section discusses the findings concerning RQ1:

What are the most significant pre- and post-departure contributory factors influencing the three dimensions of intercultural adaptation – academic, psychological and sociocultural – among Saudi students studying on English language courses in the UK?

Before exploring the association between the most significant contributory factors and the three adaptation domains – academic, psychological and sociocultural – it is necessary to discuss those highlighted in the quantitative data.

Regarding the academic adaptation domain, academic lifestyle and learners' satisfaction were the two measures highlighted in the data, in line with Hung's (2015) and Anderson et al.'s (2016) studies. These were the most important non-linguistic outcomes for the L2 learners in the academic domain as signified by their association with most of the contributory factors measured in this study. This sheds light on the importance of non-linguistical outcomes, in contrast to the literature on L2 learning and English language learning, which predominantly highlights linguistic outcomes and L2 development as a result of study abroad (Serrano et al., 2016), for example oral fluency (e.g. Segalowitz, 2016; Hern, 2018; Foster, 2020), writing and speaking proficiency and output in relation to lexical, grammatical and phenological development (e.g. Wright and Cong, 2014), listening skills (e.g. Cubillos et al., 2008; Beattie et al., 2014), reading skills (Kraut, 2017), and grammatical competence (Howard and Schwieter, 2018). For students in the study abroad context, developing their oral skills is the first aspect they tend to focus on and they also aim to attain a native-speaker-like accent (Serrano, 2010). The literature in the Saudi context (e.g. Alqahtani, 2011; Kampman, 2011) also emphasises linguistic outcomes related to studying in Western English-speaking countries.

However, the findings concerning the importance of academic lifestyle and satisfaction in the academic domain show that improved language proficiency is not the only outcome of the L2 experience. This is significant as looking at English as an L2 specifically, the neoliberal trend

tends to place great emphasis on English language proficiency as reflected in the standard textbooks and tests of proficiency, marginalising the other aspects of students' experience of intercultural development (Phan, 2016; Badwan, 2017; Jenkins and Leung, 2019).

Looking specifically at the two important elements of learners' satisfaction and academic lifestyle as academic adaptation measures for English language learners, in the literature on L2 learning, learners' satisfaction is mainly associated with academic achievement and psychological outcomes. Many studies (e.g., Suhre et al., 2007; Wach et al., 2016; Ang et al., 2019; Granel, et al., 2021) have associated it with the factors that contribute to language achievement as well as students' higher levels of satisfaction with their learning content and the more credit they had in their learning. In addition, Gopalan et al. (2019) found a strong association between satisfaction with the learning process and students' confidence and belief in themselves and their abilities to achieve their academic aims. In contrast, other studies have found that academic issues affect students' satisfaction and result in psychological distress, for example manifested through depression (Wang and Xiao, 2014) and loneliness (Sawiret et al., 2008).

Other studies, both generally (e.g. Lai and Chen, 2016; Lin and Chen, 2018; Kim and Lee, 2019) and in the Saudi context (e.g. Al-Dossary and Al-Faris, 2018; Alharbi and Alwabel, 2019), have identified English language learners' satisfaction as an important psychological outcome, specifically of communicative teaching and learning. Learners report greater satisfaction with their learning experience in the communicative approach; they have a degree of autonomy, there is cooperation with the teachers and communication is based on authentic language use in real-life situations. This study reflects the significance of communicative approaches in language learning for learners' satisfaction but goes further in contributing additionally that there is an association between most of the contributory factors measured in the study and students' satisfaction with their English language course content, which is communicatively orientated, as discussed by Hung (2015). Thus, students' satisfaction with the learning process in class as whole encompasses their ability to take responsibility for their learning, their involvement in communicative tasks, the use of authentic materials, the teacher's roles and the examination system.

In terms of academic lifestyle as an important academic outcome measure, as for learners' satisfaction, the results show it is associated with most of the contributory factors measured in the study. In the L2 literature, English language learners' lifestyle is not a widely recognised notion. While some studies have defined the main aspect of learners' lifestyle as related to enjoyment, according to Anderson et al. (2016) academic lifestyle refers to the fit between students' role as English language learners and enjoyment of their lifestyle as English language

students, considering their studies to be worth the time spent away from work or family, the development of academic skills (e.g. critical thinking and research and writing skills) and enjoyment of their time in English language institutions in the UK.

Previous studies (e.g. Noels et al., 2000; Dörnyei, 2001; Ushida, 2007; Cullen, 2019) have found that enjoyment in learning English abroad is an important factor as positive emotions lead to successful language learning outcomes. Learners who enjoy their language learning are more likely to engage fully and persist in their efforts in classroom activities, and view the L2 and culture positively (Noels et al., 2000). They will be motivated to continue their learning and higher levels of engagement and motivation are associated with higher levels of language proficiency (Dörnyei, 2001; Ushida, 2007). Enjoyment enhances learners' resilience and confidence, enabling them to participate actively in classroom tasks and seek out opportunities to develop their learning skills (Cullen, 2019).

Some studies conducted with international students (e.g. DeKeyser, 2007; Palmer and Bailey, 2018) and Saudi students studying English abroad (e.g. Al-Eryani, 2017; Alharthi, 2019; Aljohani, 2021) have found that the study abroad experience increases language learners' enjoyment of learning as it offers opportunities for communication with native speakers and real-life interaction, unlike language learning in the home country.

This study highlights the significance of enjoyment as reflected in the students' academic lifestyle since most of the contributory factors were associated with it. Thus, not only is it an important factor in the study abroad context, but crucially is an outcome of academic adjustment.

This study also highlights aspects of psychological and sociocultural adaptation as outcomes of the L2 learners' experience as in previous studies and reflects the socio-educational model developed by Gardner (2005, 2010). More specifically, the aspects of integrativeness (sociocultural) and language anxiety (psychological) reflect factors that affect language achievement (e.g. Gardner, 1985, 2000, 2005, 2010, 2020; Masgoret and Ward, 2006). It is worth examining these dimensions as outcomes of L2 learning as they provide evidence of the human and pedagogic impacts in contrast to the great emphasis on language proficiency in neoliberalism (Phan, 2016; Sealey, 2018; Badwan, 2021). Moreover, the psychological and sociocultural outcomes may not only be seen in the experience of postgraduates studying abroad (e.g. Schartner and Young, 2020) but also English language students in pre-HE.

All three outcomes – academic, psychological and sociocultural – in the Saudi students' intercultural experience have significant associations with the five contributory factors: English language ability, attitude towards learning, knowledge of the UK, emotional stability and

socioemotional support (see Figure 11.1). To answer RQ1, these factors are the 'most significant' because they are repeatedly associated with all three outcomes at the same time, while there are some factors associated with certain adaptation domains and not others. This study focuses on the most significant in terms of exerting an influence on all dimensions of intercultural adaptation since some factors have greater influence than others.

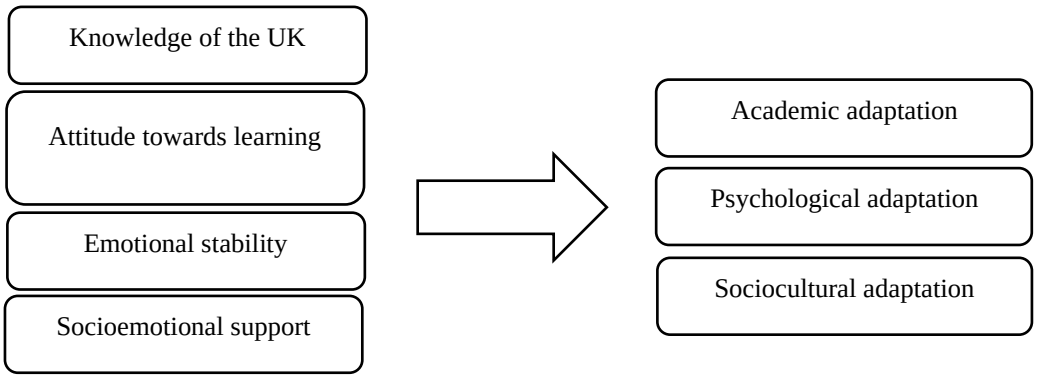

Figure 11.1. Main contributory factors significantly predicting students' intercultural adaptation

11.2.1 English language ability (ELA)

Academic adaptation

English language ability (ELA) at T1 was significantly associated with the academic adaptation measures of academic lifestyle (AL) and learner satisfaction (LS). This emphasises the importance of the self-rating approach, as indicated by many researchers (e.g. Nunan, 1991; Lai, 2011; Chen, 2013; Zhou and Lu, 2014; Schartner and Young, 2020), in terms of how students view their ability to communicate in English in all four language skills. In this study, their perceived communicative ability in the early stages contributed in later stages to the two academic outcomes academic lifestyle and learners' satisfaction.

First, academic lifestyle denotes learners' enjoyment of the learning environment and developing their academic skills, as well as their sense that their English language studies, both inside and outside class, are worth the time and effort of being abroad and away from their home countries (Anderson et al., 2016). Here, enjoyment as an academic outcome reflects their lifestyle. The literature also shows that enjoyment in the study abroad context is an important psychological factor that contributes to the ability to communicate (Brown, 2007). Moreover,

Ushida's (2007) study of Japanese English learners showed enjoyment to be a factor that contributed to linguistic development.

In addition, in this study, the ability to communicate in English predicted students' satisfaction with the whole learning process in class, including their ability to take responsibility for their learning, the communicative approach to teaching and learning, the teaching materials, the content and topics, the assessment procedures and examinations, and the teachers' roles (Hung, 2015). Thus, how students rate their ability to communicate in the language influences their satisfaction with their academic learning as an academic outcome. Previous literature (e.g. Suhre et al., 2007; Brown, 2009; Wach et al., 2016; Ang et al., 2019; Granel et al., 2021) has shown that learners' satisfaction contributes significantly to the development of language skills, but this study also emphasises that it is an important academic outcome and is influenced by students' ability to communicate in English.

Overall, the results of this study suggest that ELA is an important factor, consistent with Schartner and Young's (2020) longitudinal study conducted with international students in the UK, which also found ELA to be associated significantly with all the academic adaptation measures (GPA and self-rating of academic performance and satisfaction).

This study sheds light on how students' ability to communicate in English contributes to satisfaction and lifestyle, which it can be argued are important measures of success. In contrast, other studies focus on measuring success in terms of language proficiency (e.g. Staynoff, 1997; Huong, 2001; Woodrow, 2006; Johnson, 2012) based on standardised tests such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), or grade point average (GPA) as a measure of academic adaptation in general. The literature particularly highlights that English language proficiency is a key factor in students' academic success when studying abroad in English-speaking institutions (Barratt and Huba, 1994; Daller and Phelan, 2013; Telbis et al., 2014; Geary, 2016). Such tests are in line with the neoliberal drive to commercialise English (Phan, 2016; Sealey, 2018; Jenkins and Leung, 2019).

Other studies have indicated that a lack of English language ability is a major barrier to academic performance and adaptation to classroom interaction and communication (Lu et al., 2012; Son and Park, 2014). However, Kerstijens and Nery (2000) found no association between IELTS and GPA as measures of academic performance. According to Martirosyan et al. (2015), TOEFL and IELTS scores are inadequate predictors of international students' academic adjustment as there are other ELA constructs that such tests neglect. In this vein, students' views

of their language ability and their academic self-concept are other measures worth exploring (Neumann et al., 2019).

As Schartner (2014, p. 146) argued, 'self-rating measures of ELA could very usefully be employed as an alternative to pre-programme test scores'. This is the case for international students enrolled in different university programmes. ELA self-rating measures could be used to determine students' perceived level of English when enrolled in pre-departure preparation courses in Saudi Arabia. This would also supplement the use of GPA to measure academic achievement as a proxy for academic adaptation, as done in previous research (e.g. Plant et al., 2005; Schartner, 2014; Schartner and Young, 2020).

In the literature, it has been argued that many aspects of English language learning cannot be assessed by IELTS or any other language proficiency exam. Such aspects include the students' ability to communicate in the language, their strengths and weaknesses, and their aims (Lai, 2011; Zhou and Lu, 2014). Tests do not provide an in-depth understanding of the areas language learners need to work on and nor do they give learners confidence in certain language skills, such as writing or speaking (Nunan, 1991). What is needed is to strengthen students' motivation, recognise their achievements, foster their sense of accomplishment, and monitor their progress over time (Lai, 2011; Chen, 2013; Neumann et al., 2019).

This study sheds light on two main points in this regard and contributes to our understanding of the English language learners' experience in the study abroad context. The first aspect is that the self-rating measure developed by Ying and Liese (1991) is valuable in terms of understanding how students rate their ability to communicate in the language and it is not only language proficiency tests that reflect students' linguistic ability. In addition, the study highlights the non-linguistic, academic outcomes academic lifestyle (Anderson et al., 2016) and learners' satisfaction (Hung, 2015), which cannot be measured by IELTS or any other proficiency test. Therefore, this study employed a self-rating measure for both perceived English language ability and academic adaptation, This measure could be employed in future research focusing on the two outcomes considered in this study and contribute insights into intercultural outcomes and awareness.

Psychological adaptation

ELA at T1 also predicted students' psychological outcome of satisfaction with life at T2, but there was no significant association with psychological wellbeing at T2. Moreover, the results indicated predictability over time and if the students were satisfied with their ability to communicate in English, they were more likely to be satisfied with their lives in the UK in general. This result is in line with Schartner and Young's (2020) study of international students

enrolled in postgraduate courses in the UK, which found that students' perceptions of their ELA, self-rated, is a significant predictor of students' satisfaction with life, more so than psychological wellbeing. In contrast, some studies conducted with the same focus reported no significant association between ELA and students' satisfaction with life abroad (Young et al., 2013).

In the literature, many studies (e.g. Lee and Rice, 2007; Zhang and Goodson, 2011; Bista and Foster, 2015; Park and Choi, 2015; Wang et al., 2018) have examined English language proficiency rather than students' self-rating of their ability to communicate in English in relation to psychological adaptation. Zhang and Goodson (2011) and Wang et al. (2018) found that language proficiency was positively related to international students' psychological adaptation among Chinese students in the US and Australia respectively. Students are more likely to feel they belong to their academic society and view their social experience with the local community positively, which in turn enhances their satisfaction with their life in general in the study abroad context (Lee and Rice, 2007; Bista and Foster, 2015; Park and Choi, 2015).

In contrast, perceptions of weak ELA have been found to contribute to students feeling isolated, not having contact with society, and experiencing homesickness, thus exerting a negative influence on their psychological adaptation (Khezrlou and Ellis, 2016). Low levels of language ability can lead to frustration and anxiety, negatively affecting students' psychological well-being (Chen and Guo, 2015) and inducing stress and culture shock (Besharat et al., 2020).

The association between perceived ELA and psychological adaptation was reflected in the interview data. Looking in depth at this association in the three waves of interviews, the students commented on their fears concerning their level of English and they worked hard to improve it to achieve the grades required by the university. They mainly commented on this fear at pre-T1 and T1 and the situation had improved at T2 and T3 when students commented positively on their level of English and their adjustment to the new learning system in class. They indicated that this contributed to their psychological wellbeing, as they felt comfortable and satisfied with life in the UK. Their main aim at T3 was to progress and improve in English and develop academic skills in general and this contributed to their adjustment psychologically.

Therefore, this study highlights, based on the self-rating approach, that students' assessment of their ability to communicate in English contributes to their psychological adaptation in relation to their satisfaction with life. In addition, communicative competence plays a major role in relation to the students' psychological adaptation and satisfaction with life as an aspect of psychological wellbeing. Further research focusing on ESL learning in the study abroad context could consider this association.

Sociocultural adaptation

Perceived ELA at T1 significantly predicted sociocultural adaptation (SCA) over time. This means the students' ability to communicate in English at T1 predicted their sociocultural adaptation later, at T2, specifically concerning perceived differences in the cultural distance between Saudi Arabia and the UK related to aspects such as environmental conditions, living arrangements, and social norms and values (Demes and Geeraert, 2014). Schartner and Young's (2020) study conducted with postgraduate international students, which used similar instruments, found that while perceived ELA at T2 predicted sociocultural adaptation at T2, perceived ELA at T1 did not have an impact over time, as was the case in this study.

The interview data provided additional evidence in support of this finding. The Saudi English language learners had a strong desire to communicate with locals to improve their language skills and pass the proficiency test, likely more than those in Schartner and Young's (2020) study, who would already have passed the language proficiency test as they were enrolled in postgraduate courses. This could explain why perceived ELA at T1 predicted the students' sociocultural adaptation at T2.

In the SLA literature, various studies (e.g. Ward and Kennedy, 1994; Berry, 1997; Yashima, 2002; Chun, 2011; Kim and Solomon, 2015) have pointed to sociocultural adaptation contributing to increases in English language proficiency, for example through communicating with native speakers, learning about behaviours, values and norms in the new environment, gaining confidence and feeling comfortable. Looked at from a linguistic perspective, 'understanding the cultural context of language exchanges means knowing what is appropriate to say to whom, and in what situations, and it means understanding the beliefs and values represented by the various forms and usages of the language' (Peterson and Coltrane, 2003, p. 2).

In contrast, in other studies of Saudi learners (e.g. Alghamdi and Hawkes, 2019; Abu-Rabia and Mar'i, 2020), the findings show that prior education in a gender-segregated environment in Saudi Arabia and the large distance between the Saudi and UK contexts related to cultural and religious practices hinder development in English language proficiency. The interview data indicated some difficulties that the students experienced in communicating in English with the local/British community and this affected their sociocultural adjustment. The issues they faced included the strong local accent, difficulties initiating conversation with locals, the mixed-gender environment and communicating in English with the opposite gender. However, the students experienced improvements in these aspects over time, as reported in the interviews.

The results of this study contribute to the literature in showing that not only can sociocultural adaptation be an important factor in fostering English language proficiency but could also be viewed as an outcome and an indication of the students' intercultural development. Thus, improvements in perceived ELA are not the only outcome. Future studies in SLA and intercultural development could consider this dimension.

11.2.2 Attitudes towards learning (ATL)

Academic adaptation

The students' attitudes towards learning (ATL) in class reflected their positive attitudes towards their English teachers and the language course. This is one of the most contributory factors associated with the academic measure of learners' satisfaction (LS). Looking at the descriptive statistics, 83% of students gave positive responses, above the mid-point (M = 5.29, SD = 1.077). The regression test revealed that the association between attitudes towards learning and learners' satisfaction was positive and significant, i.e. the more positive students' attitudes were towards their English teachers and the language course evaluation, the more satisfied they were with the whole learning process in class, including their ability to take responsibility for their learning, the communicative approach to teaching and learning, the teaching materials, the content and topics, assessment procedures and examinations, and the teachers' roles (Hung, 2015).

In the field of SLA, most research (e.g. Gardner, 2010; Mojica, 2016; Al-Hoorie, 2017; Al-Hoorie and MacIntyre, 2019) has addressed the role of teachers in terms of being supportive, encouraging and helpful in enhancing learners' positive attitudes, which in turn contributes to greater proficiency. For example, Al-Hoorie and MacIntyre (2019) found a correlation between French language achievement and attitudes towards learning based on the students' views of their French teacher and their evaluation of their course of study. Studies (e.g. Dörnyei, 2009; Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2013; Pekrun and Perry, 2014) have also identified that students are keen to communicate in the language they are learning, which contributes to high levels of motivation and engagement in second language learning.

This study highlights the importance of the learners' satisfaction related to language achievement and motivation as academic outcomes. This is consistent with previous studies, such as that of Echiverri and Lane (2019), which found that students' attitudes towards their course of study in terms of content and the communicative approach to teaching English through tasks and activities contribute to their satisfaction with learning. Karami et al. (2019) also showed that positive attitudes toward the English teacher, viewed as approachable, supportive and enthusiastic, contributed to high levels of satisfaction among students. In contrast, negative attitudes towards the English teacher, considered unsupportive, difficult to

communicate with, and lacking engagement and enthusiasm, contributed to students' low levels of satisfaction with their learning (Grossman and Stodolsky, 1995; Zhang and Kenny, 2018).

This study provides a closer look at the aspects of motivation and language achievement discussed in the literature in relation to outcomes. It highlights the importance of learners' satisfaction, specifically concerning positive attitudes towards the teacher and the language course. Statistically, this is associated only with the students' satisfaction as an academic outcome and not with academic motivation and achievement. Moreover, there is a lack of association between the other contributory factors measured in this study and the two outcomes academic motivation and achievement.

Another point is that looking specifically at attitudes towards learning in Gardner's (2005, 2010) socio-educational model, the literature focuses to a great extent on the integrative and instrumental dimension, specifically in studies conducted with Saudi students (e.g. Alkaabi, 2016; Al-Mohanna and Dhawi, 2017; Al-Oliemat, 2019). In contrast, this study suggests that students' attitudes are more significant than the integrative and instrumental dimensions, which presented no association with any academic outcome measures.

For Saudi students from a teacher-centred English language learning background (Alrabai, 2017a), moving to an environment in which there is a communicative approach to teaching and learning English, it is important for them to have positive attitudes towards their teacher and course as this is related to their academic outcomes in terms of feeling satisfied with their learning.

The interview data also highlighted the association between the students' attitudes towards their English teacher and their course and their satisfaction with learning. The data indicated that students in the early stage of their English course faced difficulties in adjusting to communicative learning and teaching. However, examining their adjustment over time, as they gained experience they came to like the approach and could take responsibility for their education. They found their English teachers cooperative, supportive and encouraging and this helped them make progress. However, although the students liked this way of learning and the support from their teacher, they faced difficulties adjusting due to their lack of linguistic and academic skills. It was difficult to access academic research and find reliable information, and they lacked critical thinking, writing and speaking skills, which hindered them in producing essays and giving presentations.

The interviews were interesting in indicating that while the students were satisfied with their course of study, they were simultaneously not satisfied with their achievement in developing their linguistic skills. The students' attitudes towards their teacher constituted one of the

supportive mechanisms and their positive evaluation of their course contributed to their satisfaction with the whole learning process in class.

Therefore, this study sheds light on the importance of learners' satisfaction as an outcome. Moreover, this highlights the importance and the power of this association between evaluation of the teacher and the course in relation to the students' satisfaction and argues that these elements should be considered in the field of language education and future research.

Psychological adaptation

In the quantitative study, for ATL at T1 positive attitudes towards English teachers and the language course were important factors that were repeatedly and strongly associated with two psychological adaptation measures at T2, accounting for 25% of variance in satisfaction with life and 9% of variance in psychological wellbeing. Thus, the more positive the students' attitudes towards their English language teachers and their courses of study, the more likely they were to be satisfied with life in the UK in the later stages. As pointed out by Gardner (2010, 2020), positive attitudes towards the teacher and course of study in an L2 environment contribute to language learners' achievement. This study adds that they also contribute to psychological outcomes.

As discussed above, positive attitudes towards the English teacher and the course of the study contribute to the students' academic satisfaction with their learning experience in class. In this section, I discuss how the students' positive attitudes towards the teacher and the course contribute to their psychological outcomes, specifically satisfaction with their life as a whole (Diener et al., 1985) in the UK and psychological wellbeing, manifested in feeling happy, calm and full of energy (RAND Mental Health Inventory, 2012).

In the literature, students' positive attitudes towards English and the course of the study are associated with the psychological dimension. In terms of the course, psychological wellbeing is primarily associated with students feeling they are investing in their academic life in undertaking a challenging learning process and this contributes to high levels of engagement, motivation and achievement (Fredricks et al., 2004). Courses of study with a communicative orientation enhance positive attitudes towards the course because the approach reduces students' stress and anxiety and gives them a sense of belonging to the language community (Chen and Chen, 2019). In contrast, negative attitudes towards the English course in the study abroad context are related to various psychological issues, such as high levels of anxiety and low levels of self-esteem (Lee, 2013).

In addition, positive attitudes towards English teachers, such as viewing them as knowledgeable, supportive and encouraging, contribute to the psychological dimension in

terms of students' self-efficacy (Perry, 2016) and are also linked to students feeling more engaged and motivated (Pekrun and Perry, 2014). The influence on students' emotions has a great effect on their language learning (Dewaele, 2018; Dewaele et al., 2019). Other studies, such as those of Hiver and Dörnyei (2017) and Cho and Kim (2019), have found that positive relationships between the teacher and the students reduces the latter's stress levels and contributes to a positive academic achievement. From the opposite perspective, Getie's (2020) study found that negative attitudes towards English language teachers, such as considering them discouraging, and of lack satisfaction with their course of study contribute to psychological issues among students, for example feeling anxious and afraid of making mistakes, which hinder their use of the language and have negative effects on their English learning.

These aspects are related to the psychological impact in terms of the students' academic performance or academic achievement. This study illustrates that positive attitudes towards the English teacher and the course of the study are linked to deeper psychological dimensions of psychological wellbeing and the students' mental health, such as feeling happy, calm, peaceful and full of energy and experiencing lower levels of stress and anxiety (RAND Mental Health Inventory, 2012). In addition, this concerns feeling satisfied with their whole life in the UK, their circumstances and how they live (Diener et al., 1985), not only with their academic situation.

In addition, the interview data highlight the association between students' attitudes towards learning (English teacher and the English course) and their psychological wellbeing. Regarding their English teachers, the students commented positively on their support in terms of encouragement and understanding that they were in a very different learning system, as well as being friendly and respecting them. They emphasised that all these aspects greatly influenced them psychologically. In addition, the students in the later stages commented positively on their course of study, remarking that they felt comfortable and considered that the courses would be effective in aiding them to achieve their aim of achieving the grades in English required by the university. Therefore, the students' attitudes towards their teachers and course of study played an important role in their psychological wellbeing as well as their satisfaction with their life in the UK.

The association between attitudes towards learning and psychological adaptation, viewed from from the perspective of wellbeing (RAND Mental Health Inventory, 2012) and satisfaction with life (Diener et al., 1985) could be considered in future studies in the field of L2 and the study abroad context and could also be considered for inclusion as input in prearrival preparation courses.

Sociocultural adaptation

Attitudes towards learning predicted the students' sociocultural adaptation. The more positive the students' attitudes towards their English teacher and their course of study, the easier they found it to adjust socioculturally, adjusting to the perceived differences in the Saudi and UK contexts, i.e. cultural distance, concerning various aspects, such as environmental elements, living conditions, social norms and values.

Several studies in the literature have discussed this, noting that positive attitudes towards the teacher affects students' academic performance and increases their level of motivation. Ward and Kennedy (1993) found that English teachers who are viewed positively by their students play the role of guide, helping them navigate the new social and cultural environment. He and Wang (2021) also stated that students' positive attitudes towards their English teachers help their sociocultural adaptation inside and outside class. English teachers who apply a communicative approach to teaching, using tasks, group work and authentic materials that reflect real-life interaction, contribute to their students' sociocultural adaptation by reflecting social norms, values and practices and creating a positive atmosphere. Outside class, the teachers can contribute by providing extracurricular activities that allow the students to find out about the new society and its cultural norms, values and practices. This will give them an understanding of the differences and diversity. Critically, then, positive attitudes towards the course of study can influence the students' sociocultural adaptation as an outcome.

Conversely, negative attitudes towards the English teacher will likely have a detrimental effect on students' sociocultural adaptation, since they can feel alienated and lack the motivation to communicate with native speakers and engage with their society and culture (Huang and Huang, 2020; Singh and Mahmood, 2020).

The interview data show that the students had positive attitudes towards their English language course, which was communicatively orientated, and their supportive and encouraging teachers, who applied communicative tasks inside the class and outside the class, for example encouraging them to attend local activities at Christmas and Halloween. However, the students faced difficulties adjusting to the new cultural and social environment.

The results reported here emphasise the importance of positive attitudes towards the teacher and the course of the study, reflected in their sociocultural adaptation as an important outcome. This could be investigated further in future studies.

11.2.3 Knowledge of the UK (KUK)

Academic adaptation

Pre-sojourn knowledge of the UK (KUK) at T1 predicted two measures of academic adaptation at T2, students' academic lifestyle (AL) and academic achievement (AA). The students had little knowledge about the UK before they arrived, as shown in the descriptive statistics in which 97% of the students' responses were below the mid-point. This also affected their later academic outcomes.

The correlation between KUK and AL was negative and significant, meaning the more knowledge the students had about the UK prior to arrival, the lower their AL score in terms of providing a fit between their role as English language learners and enjoyment of their lifestyle as English language students, considering their studies to be worth the time spent away from work or family, developing academic skills (e.g. critical thinking and research and writing skills) and helping them enjoy their time (Anderson et al., 2016) in English language institutions in the UK. This is an unexpected result, as pre-arrival knowledge should contribute positively to the fit with their life as language learners and ability to develop, as found in previous studies (e.g. Zaid, 2011) which identified that greater knowledge of the education system resulted in more effective learning. The interview data shed light on the students' adjustment over time: the longer they spent in their English course and the greater their knowledge, the more difficulties they face in terms of enjoying learning due to their lack of skills. They were focused on their achievement and were working too hard to enjoy the process.

In contrast, the correlation between KUK and AA was positive and significant; the more knowledge the students had about the UK, the more satisfied they felt with their achievement in their English course in terms of academic progress and perceived ability in comparison with other students in their course of study (Anderson et al., 2016). Pre-sojourn knowledge of the UK predicted the students' academic adaptation, in line with Schartner and Young (2020), who found that prior knowledge about the UK contributed to the students' academic outcomes in terms of their GPA and their self-reported satisfaction with their achievement. In addition, Xu et al. (2022) found that pre-arrival knowledge about the host country was related to students' academic satisfaction. This study thus highlights the importance of pre-arrival knowledge of the host country and contributes to the SLA literature, pointing out English language students' satisfaction with their learning progress and academic lifestyle, as well as working hard and fear of failure. These two academic outcome measures are important considerations for preparation courses.

Psychological adaptation

Pre-sojourn knowledge of the UK (KUK) at T1 predicted one measure of psychological adaptation, that is psychological wellbeing (PWB) at T2. This means that students' pre-sojourn knowledge about the UK helped support their mental health later, manifested in aspects of psychological wellbeing such as feeling happy, calm and peaceful. In contrast, Schartner and Young's (2020) study, conducted with postgraduate international students in the UK and employing the same tools as this research, found that pre-sojourn knowledge of the UK was not associated with the students' psychological wellbeing, but was associated with the students' satisfaction with life. This is in contrast to the current study, which identified no association with students' satisfaction with life in the UK at T2.

Looking at the interview data related to students' knowledge of the UK and its association with the psychological dimension, the students were worried about the extent of their knowledge of the country system in terms of practicalities, such as transportation, and societal norms, such as what it is appropriate to say and what not. However, the students made progress in this respect over time through their interactions with society based on their motivation to improve their language skills, especially speaking. Thus, in the later stages, they felt less stressed and had greater familiarity with their environment. This could justify why the quantitative data indicated that while they had little knowledge about the UK pre-sojourn, they were latterly able to adapt and their psychological wellbeing improved; they felt happier and were less stressed in the new society and culture.

This is in line with Ward et al.'s (2001) and Schartner and Young's (2020) findings that knowledge and skills of the host society and culture build over time through interaction and communication with the host society and this facilitates psychological adaptation. Zhong et al. (2020) also found that Chinese international students' interpersonal relationships with people in the UK contributed to their psychological adaptation. Moreover, Li and Peng (2019), examining American international students, demonstrated that pre-sojourn knowledge and social contact through social media contributed to the international students' psychological adaptation, helping them become familiar with the country system and life in the host country, which led to reduced stress and increased wellbeing. Conversely, lack of knowledge about the host country leads to psychological issues with detrimental effects on wellbeing and mental health (Cleveland et al., 2014; Rousseau and Frounfelker, 2019).

In the field of SLA, studies have also highlighted that interacting with the host language society contributes to students' psychological adaptation through integrativeness and the power of being open to the host language community, communicating in the language and improving their language skills (Gardner, 2010; Kim, 2017). This study sheds light on the power of pre-

sojourn knowledge, which increases over time and affects students' psychological adaptation as well as helping to improve their language skills. This is worth considering in future research and pre-sojourn preparation programmes.

Sociocultural adaptation

Pre-arrival knowledge of the UK at T1 negatively and significantly predicted sociocultural adaptation at T2. The students' low level of knowledge before arriving significantly predicted their sociocultural adaptation to the country, including the system, norms and environment. In the literature, sociocultural adaptation is seen as an important factor related to how students contact and communicate with locals and thus learn about the culture and society; developing knowledge over time leads to better sociocultural adaptation (Ward et al., 2001; Chirkov et al., 2008), facilities positive understanding of cultural difference and reduces misunderstandings (Ward and Kennedy, 2017).

The results of this study highlight sociocultural adaptation as one of the important outcomes of the English language learners' sojourn, which is predicted by pre-arrival knowledge of the host country. Pre-arrival knowledge includes knowledge about customs, norms, social values and practicalities and can be derived from many sources, such as online resources, books, social media, contacting people (Klineberg, et al, 2018), or through prearrival preparation courses (Ward, 2004). Similarly, Schartner and Young (2020) noted the importance of pre-arrival knowledge of the host country, the UK, and its effect on sociocultural adaptation as an important outcome for postgraduate students.

This study found that low levels of pre-arrival knowledge of the UK predicted the students' sociocultural adaptation in the later stages. This association can be justified as length of residence has been highlighted as important in providing chances to interact and learn more about the society and increase knowledge, thus contributing to sociocultural adaptation (see Zhang and Goodson, 2011; Schartner and Young, 2020).

The findings of this study contrast with those of Furnham's (2018) study of international students studying in the UK and Wang and Chelberg's (2019) study of Chinese travellers visiting the US, both of which indicated that higher levels of pre-arrival knowledge led to better sociocultural adaptation and lower levels of pre-arrival knowledge resulted in low levels of sociocultural adaptation. Language learners with little pre-arrival knowledge face difficulties adjusting to the new sociocultural environment and this affects their interaction and communication with locals (Ward, 2004; Ying and Liese, 2008). This study indicated that lower levels of pre-arrival knowledge could contribute to increased sociocultural adaptation, reflected over the longer term by measuring pre-arrival knowledge at T1 and sociocultural adaptation at

T2. Therefore, the study highlights the importance of prior knowledge in contributing to the students' sociocultural adaptation. This is an aspect that should be considered in future L2 research on the study abroad context and could aid by providing input for prearrival courses.

11.2.4 Emotional stability (ES)

Academic adaptation

Emotional stability (ES) is one of the constructs of the MPQ-SF that reflects intercultural competence and denotes 'the ability to stay calm under novel and stressful conditions' (Van der Zee et al., 2013, p. 118). This study sheds light on the importance of this variable in relation not only to the students' academic adaptation but also the other adaptation dimensions, i.e. psychological and sociocultural. Regarding academic outcomes, emotional stability is related to the students' academic lifestyle, for example being able to remain calm under pressure and enjoying being language learners, reflected in their life abroad (Anderson et al., 2016).

The MPQ-SF questionnaire assesses emotional stability and other constructs and has been used in many studies in the literature to examine international students' experience of studying abroad in general, particularly in terms of their academic achievement. Hofhuis et al. (2020) undertook a study of international students enrolled in a Bachelor's programme in the Netherlands, validating the MPQ-SF with this group of students, and showed that all five constructs (CE, OM, ES, SI and FL) were significantly associated with the students' progress in international education. In addition, Schartner and Young's (2020) study of postgraduate international students in the UK found that several intercultural competence constructs, specifically CE, OM and FL, predicted students' academic achievement (GPA and self-reported achievement). These results are in contrast to the findings of this study, which primarily identified that emotional stability predicted the students' academic lifestyle, i.e. enjoyment of learning and a good fit with goals and expectations, as an outcome, not academic achievement or the learning experience in general.

Moreover, in the field of SLA, studies have found that emotional stability positively predicts high language proficiency (e.g. Kormos and Kiddle, 2013; Jung and Lee, 2014; O'Brien, et al, 2014; Dewaele and Alfawzan, 2018) and is a significant predictor of self-efficacy and language learning motivation (Bresó et al., 2011; Dörnyei and Ryan, 2015). It is also the construct in the MPQ-SF most associated with low language anxiety among students in the classroom and is an important internal factor that affects students' success (Dewaele and Dewaele, 2020).

Conversely, studies have shown that a lack of emotional stability leads to high levels of language anxiety, associated with low willingness to communicate in the L2, which then has a negative effect on students' communicative competence (e.g. Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993;

MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991, 1994; Ghonsooly et al., 2012). It is thus associated with feelings of insecurity (Williams et al., 2016).

In SLA research, emotional stability is related to enjoyment, playing role in reducing anxiety and enhancing students' willingness to communicate in the language in the class (Mackey, 2006; MacIntyre, 2017). This construct is linked to the teacher's emotional support and the types of activities and tasks; those that foster enjoyment and reduce anxiety help enhance emotional stability (Dewaele and Dewaele, 2020). This study contributes to this body of literature by illustrating that emotional stability is an important factor predicting academic lifestyle, which is a significant academic outcome for the English language learners. Here, academic lifestyle concerns enjoyment of life in general, not only of class activities as in previous studies.

The interview data shed further light on the role of emotional stability and its effect not only on students' adaptation but also their adjustment. The interviews highlighted coping strategies as a factor in the association between emotional stability and academic lifestyle. Students experience emotional issues, such as missing their family, feeling alone and experiencing stress concerning their studies and the need to pass the English course. The students reported using various coping strategies to manage their emotions, for example keeping themselves busy by focusing on their studies. Such coping strategies not only helped psychologically but also academically, which could have contributed to their self-reported rating of their enjoyment of the language learner's academic lifestyle inside and outside class.

Thus, coping strategies are important to reduce stress and anxiety. This is consistent with the findings of Alsahafi and Shin's (2017) study of Saudi students, which found they tend to develop certain strategies that help them adjust academically. Similarly, Al-Rawashdeh et al. (2021) noted that students employ certain coping strategies to support their emotional stability, such as seeking support from Saudi friends and family members living with them, or engaging in social activities, exercise and sports.

The results contribute to the literature on SLA and international students studying abroad, showing that language learners' emotional stability is important not only for attaining a high level of language proficiency, enjoyment of learning activities in the class, or academic achievement, as highlighted in the existing literature, but is also related to the students' academic lifestyle. This concerns students' enjoyment of their life in general, both inside and outside class, and a sense of fitting into their role as language learners. This association could be considered in future research, as well as reflected in preparation courses for L2 learners.

Psychological adaptation

The only aspect of intercultural competence associated significantly with the two measures of psychological adaptation at T2 was ES. Examining the descriptive statistics, the students rated this nearly at the mid-point (M = 2.77, SD = 0.621), namely moderately applicable in terms of their ability to remain calm in stressful situations. ES was the most frequent aspect predicting both psychological wellbeing and satisfaction at T2, accounting for 35% of variance in both. This indicates that the greater the students' stability in coping with strong emotional reactions under difficult and stressful situations (see Van der Zee et al., 2013), the more likely they were to have better psychological wellbeing and satisfaction with their lives.

The results of this study indicate the importance of ES over time. This is in contrast to Van Oudenhoven and Van der Zee's (2002) study of international students and their adaptation over their academic career, showing that ES is a vital predictor in the early stages, whereas after six months cultural empathy and social initiative become more important predictors.

Several studies (e.g. Al-Sowygh et al., 2016; Chiang and Lee, 2017; Huang and Brown, 2017; Lu and Zhou, 2019) have found that English language learners experience greater stress than international students already enrolled in postgraduate courses. They face specific difficulties, such as barriers in terms of communicative ability, adjusting to a new and unfamiliar cultural and social environment, and communicating and interacting with peers (Al-Sowygh et al., 2016), as well as homesickness, adjusting to the requirements of the new and unfamiliar educational environment, and the language barrier (Chiang and Lee, 2017). They can present lower academic performance due to their low language levels (Huang and Brown, 2017). Moreover, they are affected by the unfamiliar academic setting and lack of direction and academic goals may lower their motivation (Lu and Zhou, 2019). Due to these issues, they can experience many psychological issues, such as depression, anxiety, feeling alienated, and experiencing homesickness, which can be exacerbated by issues like prejudice, racism and discrimination (Al-Sowygh et al., 2016).

Research has indicated that emotional stability is crucial for language learners (Chiang and Lee, 2017). According to O'Connor and Paunonen (2007), emotional stability is a significant predictor of students' academic achievement and success. Lack of emotional instability is related to psychological and mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety (Weiss et al., 2008). This study found that emotional stability predicted the English language learners' psychological outcome, i.e. their sense of wellbeing and satisfaction with their life in the study abroad context. This is in line with the works of Schartner and Young (2020), who identified that emotional stability played an important role in international students' psychological adaptation in the UK, and Long et al. (2009), who demonstrated that emotional stability was a

positive predictor of psychological adaptation in the cross-cultural adaptation of Chinese students in the Netherlands.

Looking at the interview data in greater depth, in the early stages (T1) the students were working on solutions and strategies to adjust psychologically and reduce their emotional issues. For example, they tried to busy themselves with their studies to reduce emotional issues such as missing their families and feeling homesick; there could have been an impact on their psychological adjustment as at T2 and T3 they felt better adjusted.

Previous research has linked emotional stability with coping strategies (Carver et al., 1989) and social contact and support (Chiang and Lee, 2017). Studies of Saudi students (e.g. Alsahafi and Shin, 2017; Al-Rawashdeh et al., 2021) have also found that they tend to develop certain strategies, such as busying themselves with study and doing exercise and sports. In this study, the students drew on support from Saudi friends who share their religious and cultural beliefs and traits to help compensate for missing their family back home. Some had their family with them, which provided additional emotional stability and helped them deal with negative emotions, which could have contributed to their psychological adaptation.

Therefore, emotional stability is an important factor for psychological outcomes, namely psychological wellbeing and satisfaction with their life in general. This is important as English language learners who need to pass a course to enrol in postgraduate programmes experience more stress than those already in postgraduate education; further studies could consider this group of students in particular. In addition, research could consider language learners' psychological adaptation as a very important outcome, rather than focusing on language achievement and academic success solely as outcomes of the learning experience.

Sociocultural adaptation

Emotional stability (ES) is one of the constructs of intercultural competence and denotes 'the ability to stay calm under novel and stressful conditions' (Van der Zee et al., 2013, p. 118). Students' emotional stability at T1 predicted their sociocultural adaptation at T2. This means that the more emotionally stable the students were able to manage their stress under difficult conditions, the better they adapted socioculturally in relation to how easy they perceived it to deal with differences between Saudi Arabia and the UK (cultural distance), for example environmental elements, living conditions, and social norms and values (Demes and Geeraert, 2014).

In the literature, sociocultural adaptation in relation to the emotional stability of English language learners has primarily focused on students' contact and communication with locals to

improve their communicative competence and the ability to engage in meaningful communication with native speakers (Chen and Starosta, 1998; Rubin et al., 2009). English language learners who are emotionally stable are more likely to communicate and interact effectively with locals and have positive relationships with social contacts who are native speakers, peers who communicate in English and local host families (Chiang and Lee, 2017). Research that links emotional stability with cultural distance has indicated that higher emotional stability contributes to a greater ability to develop coping strategies and overcome difficulties and challenges arising from differences between societies and cultures, leading to better sociocultural adjustment over time (Ward and Kennedy, 2017).

However, English language learners who are unstable emotionally may struggle to adjust to the new social and cultural dimensions and feel overwhelmed by the load of differences they need to adjust to living in a new country. Due to this, they will face difficulties communicating with locals and this can lead to psychological issues and negative emotions, such as feeling lonely, isolated and depressed (Chen, 2014; Ward and Kennedy, 2017).

The results of this study indicated that the greater the emotional stability of the English language learners over time, the lower the cultural distance and the better their ability to adjust to the challenges that arose from the differences between the two cultures and societies. The sociocultural adjustment of the English language learners not only concerned their contact and communication with native speakers and developing familiarity with their cultural norms and values but also aspects of their lives and practicalities related to the country system, such as the daytime routine and shop opening hours and the food and eating environment. These elements were measured in the quantitative questionnaire and also reflected in the qualitative interview data. The students reported managing problems related to the practicalities of daily living and gaining greater emotional stability over time. In the later stages of their adjustment, they felt that they had made progress in adjusting socioculturally in relation to these elements, more so than in communicating with locals and adjusting to the cultural values and norms of the UK. Therefore, this association between emotional stability and sociocultural adaptation could be considered in future research focusing on international students and English language learners specifically.

11.2.5 Socioemotional support

Academic adaptation

Socioemotional support (SS-SO) at T2 predicted students' academic adaptation at T2 but was only associated with learners' satisfaction. In addition, socioemotional support was a more important predictor of the students' academic adaptation than other types of instrumental support. Schartner and Young (2020) also highlighted the importance of socioemotional

support in association with academic achievement as an outcome. Regression analysis indicated that the external factor of students' emotional support from their surroundings affected their academic outcomes, specifically satisfaction with their learning through the communicative approach, including aspects such as their independent role in their learning, the teachers' roles and the teaching materials used (Hung, 2015). Socioemotional support was more important than instrumental support in terms of learners' satisfaction, as also indicated in Sherry et al.'s (2010) study of English language learners studying abroad. The interview data in this study also showed the importance of social contact with their English teacher and their international friends in providing socioemotional support and enhancing their academic adjustment.

In the literature, socioemotional support is primarily linked with academic achievement, as discussed by Bemak and Chung (2019), who found it to be associated with higher levels of academic success. It is also related to engagement and motivation, as discussed by Huang et al. (2017). Their study found that the socioemotional support provided by the English teacher and peers contributed to higher levels of engagement and academic motivation, as well as self-esteem, since the students felt a greater sense of belonging and being valued in participating in class.

This study highlights learners' satisfaction as the only academic outcome associated with socioemotional support. Moreover, it considers that socioemotional support could be more important than instrumental support for the students in affecting their satisfaction with their learning. This is worth considering in future research and could also serve as input for host institutions wishing to induct international students into academic life in the UK.

Psychological adaptation

Socioemotional support at T2 predicted both personal wellbeing and satisfaction with life as types of psychological adaptation at T2. This means that students gain support from the people surrounding them in terms of sharing time with them, being listened to and receiving comfort from them (Ong and Ward, 2005). This type of support has been found to predict psychological adaptation in terms of both satisfaction with their life in general (Diener et al., 1985) in the UK and their sense of psychological wellbeing (RAND Mental Health Inventory, 2012). Moreover, regression analysis revealed no association with instrumental support, such as helping students with practical aspects like information, country rules and instruction. The regression indicated the power of emotional support over instrumental support in the students' psychological adaptation. Schartner and Young's (2020) study also emphasised socioemotional support in relation to the students' psychological adaptation. This is in contrast to Ong and Ward (2005), who found instrumental support to be more important for student sojourners in terms of attaining information and practical support in moving to an unfamiliar environment.

The results highlight that family members and Saudi friends were the students' main sources of socioemotional support, as indicated throughout the interviews in relation to their psychological adjustment. Having family members living with them contributed to their psychological wellbeing and satisfaction with their lives. Among the psychological difficulties that students face in their transition to the UK are missing their (extended) families, homesickness and other emotional problems. This clarifies why socioemotional support is associated repeatedly with psychological adaptation, to a greater extent than instrumental support (practical purposes). The valuable role of socioemotional support provided by family members is in line with previous studies, such as Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern (2015).

The students reported that Saudi friends also played a vital role in relation to socioemotional support, not just instrumental support (providing information about the country system); they maintained contact and ensured that they were not alone, which helped them adjust psychologically. This is in line with most studies of Saudi students (e.g. Alqahtani, 2015; Alqahtani and Hezam, 2015; Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern, 2015), which found similar results in terms of the social network and source of support. Alqahtani (2015) found that Saudi students prefer to make friends among other Saudi or Arabic students as they share religious and cultural occasions; this is difficult with other international students because of cultural differences, particularly with regard to entertainment (e.g. drinking alcohol) and food (non-halal). This socioemotional support contributes to psychological adaptation. Further studies could consider this type of social support as a predictor of students' psychological adaptation.

Sociocultural adaptation

Socioemotional support at T2 predicted students' sociocultural adaptation at T2, while there was no association between the instrumental type of support and sociocultural adaptation, demonstrating the significance of socioemotional support in adapting socioculturally to aspects such as the country system, the culture and the environment. This is in line with Schartner and Young's (2020) study, which highlighted the role of emotional support over instrumental support as one of the contributory factors predicting sociocultural adaptation. According to Ward and Geeraert (2016), emotional support is important for international students to mitigate the stress they experience through contact with locals, particularly in reducing perceived cultural distance, that is the differences between cultures and societies. This result highlights the importance of socioemotional support, rather than just practical support, as reflected in existing representations of cultural learning. According to Ward et al. (2001), sociocultural adjustment can be understood as the practical and behavioural side of the cultural learning

approach, reflected in the knowledge and skills acquired in the process of adjusting to a new society and culture.

The interview data showed that for those in homestay accommodation, the host family (local/British family) provided emotional support, which helped them adjust to the new society and culture. At T1, some Saudi students who were living in homestay accommodation reported that the family helped them not just with practical support, for example advising them and directing them in aspects of life in the UK, but also by providing emotional support to help them overcome the stress of the early stages in adjusting to the society. This consistent with AbuKhalifeh and Som's (2020) study of Saudi students in the UK.

As noted in the L2 literature, homestay accommodation with a host family is considered to be an important factor in students' positive experiences, such as feeling accepted, having a sense of belonging and being encouraged, as well as being a source of advice and guidance. This helps students feel more secure and happy in adjusting to the new society (Lee and Chen, 2017). A host family can also help students with linguistic outcomes, helping them develop their speaking and listening skills (Rienties and Nolan, 2014). Also, positive experiences with host families can contribute to students' interactions and communication with the host community and this in turn contributes to their sociocultural adjustment (Kim and Kim, 2020). Moreover, homestay families can help students with practical aspects, such as shopping and transportation, which can enhance their independence and confidence (Kim, 2018).

Conversely, homestay can also have a negative impact on students' emotions and sociocultural adaptation. Due to the cultural distance in social values and norms, students may experience anxiety and stress (Chen and Starosta, 1997). Moreover, they may be restricted in daily routines that are unfamiliar, leading to the students feeling frustrated and isolated and influencing their adaptation to the host society (Furnham and Bochner, 1986).

Therefore, this study sheds light on the importance of emotional support from their homestay families, not only practical support, in relation to the sociocultural adaptation dimension. This is worth investigating in future studies and consideration as the input concerning intercultural awareness and support in preparation courses.

11.3 RQ2

What are the changes/trajectories in Saudi ESL students' intercultural adjustment experience over time in relation to the academic, psychological and sociocultural dimensions?

To answer this research question, two main themes emerged that reflect the changing adjustment experience in these three dimensions. The first theme is the positive orientation that

reflects the difficulties and the problems that students faced and how they dealt with these in terms of the strategies that they developed to overcome them or the support mechanisms that helped them. The second theme is the negative orientation, reflecting the problems and the difficulties that the students faced and remained negative in their adjustment experience, either remaining as issues or increasing over time.

11.3.1 Students' academic adjustment over time

The academic adjustment of Saudi students can be understood from the perspective of three theories reflecting the three themes representing the positive orientation of the students' adjustment over time: language anxiety can be understood in relation to stress and coping approaches, learner-centred classes can be understood with reference to the cultural learning and social skills approach, and mixed-gender classes can be understood through cognitive theory. In addition, the support provided by teachers and international friends or peers plays an important role in the students' academic adjustment over time. However, the students are also influenced by a negative orientation resulting from the issues that students experience over time, namely exams and concerns about their English proficiency level.

Language anxiety and stress and coping approach

The academic adjustment of Saudi students can be understood with reference to three theories that reflect three themes in the positive orientation of the students' adjustment process over time. These themes are language anxiety, which can be understood based on stress and coping approaches, learner-centred classes, which can be understood based on the culture learning and social skills approach, and mixed-gender classes, which can be understood through cognitive theory. In addition to this, support mechanism from their teacher and international friends play an important role in the students' academic adjustment process over time. On the other hand, the negative orientation represents the issues that students experience over time, these are exams and English level.

The interview data indicated that the students faced psychological issues in the early stages study of their academic adjustment, experiencing anxiety in communicating in English in class and outside in society at T1 and T2. This was due to fear of making mistakes in class and fear of being misunderstood outside in social interaction. The Saudi students faced a major transition to the UK English education system characterised by a communicative approach to teaching and learning involving group work and learner-centred tasks, as well as being expected to take responsibility for their learning (see Alrabai, 2017a, 2017b). In the early stages, they experienced anxiety in communicating, reflecting Gilbert's (2000, p. 14) point that international students undertaking courses abroad face 'academic culture shock' in the early stages to a greater extent than domestic students due to the unfamiliar educational environment. This study

points to language anxiety as an emotional reaction that students experience in their academic transition to the study abroad context.

Before reflecting on the stress and coping approach, it is necessary to reflect on language anxiety as an important point. In the literature concerning language anxiety in L2 acquisition, most studies discuss it in terms of what it is, how it affects students, what causes anxiety and how they deal with anxiety, but there is a lack of focus on language anxiety as one of the academic transition factors related to communication in and outside class. According to Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pawlak (2017, p, 62), language anxiety is 'the main restraining force' in L2 learners' communication. Gregersen and MacIntyre (2014) state that language anxiety can destroy learners' academic performance through its multidimensional effects on emotions, and behavioural and cognitive aspects, as well as its physical effects. Early studies such as those of Zeidner (1998) and Naveh-Benjamin (1991) reflected language anxiety and physical reactions such as the heart beating faster and flushing red, behavioural reactions such as stammering, and cognitive reactions such as irrelevant thoughts impeding when doing a task.

Indeed, many studies have examined the negative effects high levels of anxiety, such as low levels of willingness to communicate in the L2, which in turn has a negative effect on the students' communicative competence (e.g. MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991, 1994; Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993; Ghonsooly et al., 2012), and the association with feelings of insecurity (Williams et al., 2016). Moreover, Baker and MacIntyre (2000) found that the lower students' anxiety concerning the use of a language, the greater their willingness to communicate in it. Students who are willing to communicate in a language are more likely to initiate conversations, communicate with others and ask teachers questions in class; they have two components of self-confidence, i.e. communicative competence and lower levels of anxiety (Tomoko et al., 2004; Williams, et al, 2016). In this regard, MacIntyre and Serroul (2015) state that learning an L2 is a frustrating process in which anxiety is reflected in changes over time. This is not only the case in class as students may well avoid talking to locals outside class due to their fear of being misunderstood (Kormos, Csizér and Iwaniec, 2014).

What causes anxiety in class is mainly a perceived lack of speaking skills. As found by Yahya (2013), the main causes of students' anxiety are the fear of making mistakes and negative feedback. Ihmuda (2014) added that students tend to lack self-confidence and fear embarrassment. Awan et al. (2010) indicated that speaking in front of the class, making grammatical and pronunciation mistakes and a lack of ability to express themselves are anxiety provoking.

This study pointed to language anxiety as one of the academic adjustment factors that affected the students in the early stages of their transition to studying abroad. The interviews showed how the students dealt with anxiety over time, reflecting the stress and coping approach proposed by Ward et al. (2001) in terms of building strategies to reduce and deal with stress. This approach is well known in the literature related to understanding psychological adjustment. Moreover, in this study, academic adjustment can be described in terms of dealing with the stress caused by the academic load and requirements in line with Young and Schartner (2014). The literature suggests some classroom activities to deal with anxiety, based on enjoyment and positive emotions, fostering an atmosphere of play and encouraging exploration of the unusual classroom setting (Mackey, 2006). It is argued that engendering positive emotions during learning could help students deal with the negative emotion of language anxiety (MacIntyre, 2017).

In this study, the English language classes required the students to communicate in the language through groupwork and they were also encouraged to communicate outside class. The students stated that to deal with the stress and anxiety they experienced, they needed to be aware of these feelings and manage them by employing certain strategies, for example being ready to rephrase to make their meaning clear in the case of misunderstanding, appearing confident and speaking clearly using local terms. Then, in the later stages, the students felt more confident in and outside class.

This study shed light on language anxiety as an important factor in the early sojourn transition stages, which can be dealt with over time through coping strategies. It is thus worth considering this in future research, particularly in relation to pre-arrival preparation courses.

Learner-centred classes and the culture learning and social skills approach

The interview data raised the culture learning and social skills approach, in which students learn about the culture and acquire certain skills in a behavioural process that helps them adjust to the new sociocultural environment (Ward et al., 2001). Young and Schartner (2014) developed this approach to reflect the academic adjustment of international students who find themselves an unfamiliar learning environment with different conventions. The students go through a process of learning about the educational culture and acquire skills that help them feel they are managing and enhance their satisfaction with their academic progress.

In this study, the Saudi students were unfamiliar with the learner-centred approach to teaching and learning in the early stages, being used to a teacher-centred environment. As noted by Saudi studies (e.g. Alrabai, 2017a), there is a lack of independent, autonomous learning for English students in class; rather, the learners rely heavily on their teachers. There is no training in self-

development or assessment. Alrabai (2017b) examined students' readiness for learner-centred classes, in which they would need to communicate and be independent, taking an active role in developing their skills. The study found that the students were far more inclined to rely on the teacher and were focused primarily on attaining the minimum grades necessary to pass their exams. They were not focused on independent learning, communicating in the language, or taking part in group work.

These Saudi studies indicate why students in the early stages experience difficulties adjusting to the new way of teaching and learning, as well as taking responsibility for their own learning. They suggest the need for students to 'learn how to learn'. In this study, the students reported building a new way of learning drawing on the communicative approach, which gave them the opportunity to learn how to be independent and work on themselves. What is more, this improved over time. The students felt they lacked important academic skills such as how undertaking research, critical thinking, academic writing and the ability to give presentations. Similarly, Alrashidi and Phan (2015) found that students in Saudi Arabia rely on memorisation of grammatical rules and vocabulary rather than understanding. This is aimed at passing exams, which leads to a lack of mastery of language skills. However, in this study, there is evidence that over time the students acquired certain skills, such as the ability to read academic texts, which in turn helped them improve their accuracy, fluency and grammar. In the later stages, they indicated that this contributed to improving their confidence and self-development.

Looking at academic adjustment over time, the early period of sojourn was a difficult experience. This can be understood with reference to the culture learning and social skills approach of Schartner and Young (2020), who note difficulties related to learning a new culture in terms of the academic system (university conventions) and acquiring specific skills in the context of international students enrolled in postgraduate courses overseas. This study reflected on a specific academic culture, one that was learner-centred, and with a specific group of students, Saudi students from teacher-centred classes, moving to an environment of English language learning classes that encouraged autonomous learning and self-development (Benson, 2007, 2012; Lee, 2016; Khulaifiyah et al., 2021), as well as the stages of adjustment to understand their experience in terms of the culture learning and social skills approach (Ward et al., 2001). Further studies could focus on this as a new perspective on autonomous and self-development adjustment over time, as well as a focus for pre-sojourner training courses.

Mixed-gender classes and social identification (cognition) theory

The interview data indicated that the students went through a cognitive process in their academic adjustment; the cultural identity of the ethnic group (in-group) changed, developed and was maintained through socialisation and communication with others (out-group) through

the process of being in an intergroup, in line with social identification (cognition) theory (Ward et al., 2001). In the literature, this theory is primarily reflected in cultural identity and development through social interaction related to sociocultural and psychological outcomes (Ward et al., 2001). However, evidence from the study suggests that being in mixed-gender classes could also be understood as a cognitive process in academic adjustment over time. First, gender segregation is considered a cultural norm that shapes the Saudi male and female cultural identity (see Habib, 2010; Al-Rasheed, 2013; Song, 2019). Many studies in the context of Saudi Arabia (e.g. Alfurayh and Burns, 2019; Althobaiti and Obeidat, 2020; Song, 2020) have examined the experience of Saudi students transitioning from gender segregation to the mixed-gender environment, primarily in the US and Australia and reflecting the experience of female students discussing the development of a new identity (Alfurayh and Burns, 2019), students' intercultural experience in the workplace (Althobaiti and Obeidat, 2020), or the experience of 'othering' (Song, 2020). This study identified a similar perspective in terms of the cognitive process of identity development among both male and female students in the UK context of mixed-gender English language classes. More importantly, it was reflected in the experience of adjustment in identity development over time.

In mixed-gender classes, the Saudi students went through a cognitive process that encompassed their experience of education Pre-T1 and at T1 and T2. The interview data indicated that both males and females felt shy, embarrassed and uncomfortable, in line with previous studies (e.g. Alqahtani and Pfeffer, 2017; Alfurayh and Burns, 2019; Song, 2019, 2020), albeit such studies have mainly focused on females. This is because they comprise an intergroup in which gender identity plays a part, largely due to being segregated in Saudi Arabia. In this study, it shaped communication in class for both male and female students who found they had different interests and lack of understanding as they are different in exchanging ideas.

The interview data indicated that being in mixed-gender classes affected the students' identity (Song, 2019). Some students indicated they adopted coping strategies to manage their adjustment. For example, they employed certain coping strategies reflecting the cognitive dimensions of evaluation and thinking of a need to locate themselves and adjust. Some students employed positive thinking, considering the ways in which this educational experience represented normal everyday life communication outside class, as well as providing the opportunity to exchange ideas and understand others, including those of the other gender. Over time, in the later stages of adjustment, the students indicated that this approach helped them experience mixed-gender classes as 'normal'. Hence, this study indicates how social identification (cognition) theory (Ward, 2001) not only reflects identity development but how

this is enacted in academic adjustment over time. This point is worth considering in future research and pre-sojourn input courses.

11.3.2 Students' psychological adjustment over time

The psychological adjustment over time can be understood based on the stress and coping approach that reflects the positive orientation of the students' adjustment over time. This is reflected in three themes related to how they manage their stress, missing their families and feeling alone, and stress related to the academic aspect of managing the new learning environment. However, there were support mechanisms that also influenced the positive orientation over time. The negative orientation was reflected in stress and worries that persisted or increased over time in relation to their examinations and grades, their dual roles as students and parents.

Worries in the pre-sojourn and early stages: Stress and coping approach

The interview data indicated that in the early stages of their sojourn, the students experienced their most difficult time, feeling worried rather than excited, represented in psychological issues. Their emotional and sociocultural problems started in the pre-sojourn period and continued in the early stage of being abroad. Emotionally, they missed their families and felt alone. They were also worried about not being accepted in the UK due to problems with communication (as language learners with poor English) and differences in terms of culture and religion. In addition, they were concerned about finding appropriate living accommodation. However, these concerns abated over time.

Academic stress: Stress and coping approach

Academic stress was the main psychological issue that the students experienced over time. They started to worry about their academic and English language proficiency in the pre-sojourn stage and continued to suffer from it over time, indeed into the later stages of their studies. They reported feeling afraid of the future, not achieving their aim in studying abroad, their fear of failure, and worries about their academic and English language grades. They were stressed about communicating in English with native speakers, which they viewed as necessary to improve their communicative competence. They were also concerned that their low level of English would hinder them from attaining their desired grades.

Stress and coping approach

To understand the students' psychological adjustment, this study draws on the stress and coping approach proposed by Ward et al. (2001). The interview data indicated that the students built certain coping strategies to manage their stress and anxiety. For example, to combat the feelings of loneliness and missing their families, the students reported keeping themselves busy with

their studies or entertainment and making friends. While some did not contact their family members, others did so to reassure themselves and their family members. Some students also focused on stress and anxiety relieving tasks.

Support mechanisms

The interview data highlighted that over time the students had emotional support from their Saudi friends and the Saudi community, which they found helpful in overcoming their psychological issues in terms of missing their families and feeling lonely. Moreover, some Saudi students had family members with them (e.g. husband, wife, mother, father), which greatly helped with psychological adjustment. A unique element of the Saudi students' experience is that they are encouraged to be accompanied by family members, especially female students who are generally accompanied by a male family member (see SACM, Dependents, 2013). Therefore, compared to other international students, they experience fewer psychological difficulties such as isolation and loneliness due to not being with their families (McLachlan and Justice, 2009). This result is in the line of previous studies conducted among Saudi students, such as those of Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern (2015) and Alqahtani (2015), who found that primary support and contact came from family and Saudi friends.

11.3.3 Students' sociocultural adjustment over time

Culture learning and social skills approach

The interview data concerning the Saudi students' sociocultural adjustment over time reflected the culture learning and social skills approach proposed by Ward et al. (2001), in that that the knowledge they gained about the host culture and the skills they developed had an influence on their behavioural outcomes. Specifically, the students acquired coping strategies through the knowledge they gained from their experience living in the UK and interacting with locals and these helped them adjust. The strategies were related to managing their lives and addressing practical issues, such as adjusting to a new daily routine and the opening hours of shops. Regarding their religious practices, they applied some exceptions to the time of prayer to accommodate class time, allowing them to adjust to university norms.

In addition, in terms of the difficulties they faced in everyday communication in the early stages due to the fear of being misunderstood and lack of common interests, their views gradually changed and they made positive progress in the later phases. They recounted that by communicating with locals they improved their knowledge and communication skills. This also benefited their academic progress, as they gained English proficiency in speaking skills and grammar, evidenced in their scores for the speaking component of IELTS and their progress in learning in general.

Lack of a host language network and friendships

The forging of intercultural friendships among the host society is vital as it develops social skills and fosters sociocultural adjustment (see Bochner et al., 1977). In addition, contact and communication with the host language society is at the heart of language proficiency and intercultural contact and competence (Masgoret and Ward, 2006). In this regard, although most of the Saudi students commented positively on communicating with British nationals in everyday social interactions, in terms of building friendships and social networks contact was very limited and this decreased over time as the students considered it too difficult to make friends among British/local people.

This lack of contact was due to several factors, such as British/local people not initiating it, the students' low levels of English proficiency, local people's strong accent and differences in lifestyle. In the later stages of study, the students were busy with their academic work and had no time for social contact. This contrasts with Alhazmi and Nyland's (2010) findings, which suggest that Saudi international students live as foreigners, keeping their distance from social interaction and friendship ties with the host society. Other studies, such as those of Abdel Razek (2012) and Alsahafi and Shin (2017), found that one of the major issues encountered by Saudi students was discrimination due to lack of language proficiency and cultural and religious differences. However, the interview data in this study indicated that the Saudi students were willing to have friendships with British/local nationals, but various factors hindered social networks or fostering friendships and discrimination was not among them.

The results of this research are thus in line with other studies conducted among Saudi student sojourners, but the reasons differ. Alqahtani's (2015) study conducted with Saudi English language students in the UK found that they lacked opportunities to meet UK students as their courses were entirely made up of international and Arabic students. In addition, Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern's (2015) study of Saudi students in the US found the lack of friendships between Saudi students and US nationals to be due to religious and cultural differences. Alsahafi and Shin's (2019) study of Saudi students in Australia identified the reasons for difficulty in making friends with locals as lack of language proficiency and differences in culture and religion in terms of practices and food and entertainment. Thomas and Hawes' (2019) study of Muslim students and the cultural challenges faced in the UK found that the reasons for the lack of friendship with locals were predominantly religious and related to entertainment, as drinking alcohol and going to clubs are forbidden in Islam.

Lack of friendships with locals is not only experienced by Saudi students, but also international students in general. Making friends in the host society is considered a challenge for most international students living and studying abroad (Sawir et al., 2008). Schartner (2015) found

that the lack of friendships and networks with UK citizens was because of the high number of international students at the university, both in class and in university accommodation.

11.4 Summary

This chapter offers an in-depth discussion in relation to both quantitative surveys, discussing the main findings, the most frequent contributory factors and their significant associations with the academic, psychological and sociocultural dimensions. In addition, it provides a discussion of the most repetitive and important themes in the qualitative interviews. Relevant implications for each aspect are highlighted. Moreover, the two data sets are integrated to investigate the aspects in depth. The following chapter provides conclusions.

Chapter 12. Conclusion

12.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research focus, the main findings in relation to the research questions and the implications. It presents and discusses the proposed model of Saudi ESL student sojourners' adjustment and adaptation, as well as highlighting the practical implications for Saudi academic institutions and sponsors, host academic institutions in the UK and Saudi English language learners. Finally, it suggests some potential directions for further research.

12.2 Research focus

The main aim of this study was to investigate the intercultural adjustment and adaptation of Saudi English language learners studying in UK English language institutions. To provide as complete a picture as possible of their transition experience, the study investigated three adjustment and adaptation dimensions: academic, psychological and sociocultural. To do so, the study developed a conceptual model of international student adjustment and adaptation, drawing on the work of Schartner and Young (2020) relevant to the study sample of 177 Saudi English language students. The study explored the students' experience longitudinally, quantitatively examining the contributory factors related to the three adaptation domains through a self-completion questionnaire administered twice: at T1 (early in the course/time abroad) and at T2 (late in the course). In addition, the study examined the students' adjustment experience qualitatively concerning the three domains by applying three stages of interviews over a period of around eight months with 19 students. The data were analysed qualitatively and quantitatively and the main findings are summarised in relation to the research questions in the following section.

12.3 Summary of the main findings and implications

This section provides a summary of the main findings and highlights a number of implications concerning the three dimensions of intercultural adjustment and adaptation. First, with regard to the first research question, addressing the most significant pre- and post-departure contributory factors influencing the three dimensions of intercultural adaptation – academic, psychological and sociocultural – among Saudi students studying on English language courses in the UK, five contributory factors were most salient as good predictors for all outcome dimensions: English language ability (ELA), attitude towards learning (ATL), pre-sojourn knowledge of the UK (KUK), emotional stability (ES) and socioemotional support (SS-SO) (see Figure 9.1).

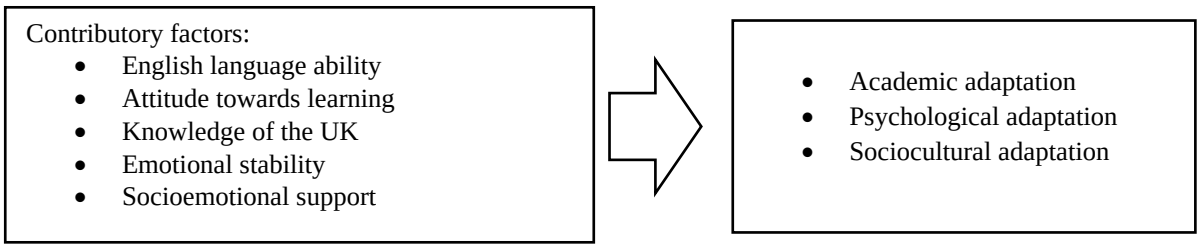

Figure 12.1. The most frequent association between the contributory factors and the three adaptation domains

There are several implications in terms of the significant associations between these contributory factors and the three adaptation dimensions found in response to the first research question related to the quantitative part of the study. Each of these contributory factors has effects on the students' outcomes in the academic, psychological and sociocultural domains.

First, English language ability (ELA) is related to two outcomes, academic lifestyle (AL) and learner satisfaction (LS), highlighting the importance of using a self-rating measure for the students' ability to communicate in English as related to their sense of fit with their role as English learners and their enjoyment of it, as well as their satisfaction with their whole learning experience. These aspects cannot be measured using linguistic tools, such as IELTS and TOEFL, advocated in English language education by the neoliberal drive. Crucially, for English language learners, attaining language proficiency is not the only important outcome; this study highlighted academic lifestyle and learner satisfaction as significant outcomes**.**

Another dimension is psychological adaptation, predicted by perceived English language ability. Again, this highlights the importance of the students' evaluation of their ability to communicate in the language in the early stages in terms of the effect on their satisfaction with life as a whole, not only academically, evinced in the later stages as an outcome of their experience. Moreover, as a psychological measure, this study highlights the greater significance of the students' satisfaction with life than their psychological wellbeing in terms of their evaluation of their communication skills in English.

The third dimension is the students' sociocultural adaptation related to how easy they perceived it to be to manage the cultural differences between Saudi Arabia and the UK. The findings show that the students' self-evaluation of their ability to communicate in English in the early stages predicted later how easy they viewed adapting to differences between the Saudi and UK cultures (cultural distance). In addition, sociocultural adaptation can be seen as an outcome of the English language learners' experience in terms of their intercultural development rather than solely being an important factor for language learning development.

The second important factor is attitude towards learning at T1, which predicted the students' satisfaction with their learning in class as a whole in the later stages of their sojourn. This highlights that positive attitudes towards the English language teacher and the course of the study led to an important outcome of their studies, namely satisfaction with the learning process as a whole and not only attainment in language proficiency. In addition, the study highlighted two aspects of attitude towards learning, integrative and instrumental orientation in language learning, both of which are also noted in the literature. Moreover, the study pointed to learners' satisfaction as an outcome, not only as an important factor in learning the language in the study abroad context. This was more salient than academic motivation and achievement in the study, both of which tend to be focused on in the literature.

The second dimension is psychological adaptation. Here, the study highlighted positive attitudes towards the English teacher and the course of the study as important factors predicting satisfaction with their learning and their language proficiency level. This aspect is also noted in the literature. However, the results show that it is an important factor influencing satisfaction with their life as a whole in the UK, as well as being important for their mental health and psychological wellbeing, namely feeling happy, calm and peaceful.

The third dimension is sociocultural adaptation. The study highlights that students' positive attitudes towards the teacher and the course of the study contribute to sociocultural adaptation in terms of how easy they find it to adapt to differences between the two cultures, Saudi and UK. Sociocultural adaptation is an outcome of language learning related to the role of the teacher and the course of the study. Specifically, the communicative approach to teaching and learning uses authentic materials and applies real-life interaction, which not only helps improve the students' language proficiency but also helps them adjust to life in society outside class.

The third factor is pre-arrival knowledge of the UK. This was associated with the English learners' academic outcomes in the later stages concerning two dimensions, academic lifestyle (students' enjoyment of their role as English language learners) and academic achievement (satisfaction with their academic achievement). This association indicates the importance of considering these outcomes, not just English language proficiency as greatly stressed in the literature. Another association that this study highlighted is that pre-arrival knowledge of the UK predicted the students' psychological wellbeing as an outcome, namely feeling calm and happy and less anxious in the later stages of their sojourn. This was due to the increased knowledge and skills they attained over time through communication with locals. Thus, such knowledge not affected the students' ability to communicate in English but also impacted their psychological outcomes. What is more, pre-arrival knowledge of the UK predicted the students' sociocultural adaptation in terms of how they coped with and adapted to differences between

the Saudi and UK cultures. This is to be expected, as the literature on SLA and English language learners identifies sociocultural adaptation as an important factor in improving language proficiency. However, this study also points to it as an important outcome.

The fourth factor is emotional stability. The results demonstrate that the students' emotional stability in the early stages of their sojourn contributed to their academic lifestyle, namely their enjoyment of being English language learners in and outside class and feeling a good fit with their new role in life in general. Here, enjoyment is an important outcome in the students' lives as a whole, not only in class activities, or in terms of reducing language anxiety or contributing to language attainment. Emotional stability also contributed to the students' psychological wellbeing and satisfaction with life in general. This psychological outcome is particularly significant given that this group of students, required to improve their English to undertake postgraduate studies, face greater stress than other students already enrolled in their desired degree courses. Thus, emotional stability is not just important for academic achievement as suggested in SLA research. The study points to the more emotionally stable the students felt over time, the lesser the cultural distance and the greater their ability to adjust to the challenges posed by differences between the two cultures and societies. Here, the sociocultural outcome not only reflected communication and contact with locals in relation to improving language skills but also concerned the practical aspects of daily life, which are not salient in the SLA literature.

The fifth factor is socioemotional support. The study shows the role of different types of social contact in providing support and demonstrates the greater importance of socioemotional support over instrumental support. Critically, socioemotional support from the English teacher and international friends predicted the learners' satisfaction with their learning experience as an academic outcome rather than academic achievement. Furthermore, socioemotional support from family and Saudi friends predicted the students' psychological adaptation. This was reflected in their psychological wellbeing and satisfaction with their lives as a whole, not just academic attainment and improved language proficiency. The third outcome predicted by socioemotional support came primarily from homestay families, as reported in the interviews, and concerned the sociocultural adaptation dimension. In this regard, the greater the positive emotional support the students received from their host families, the better they adapted to the different social and cultural environment. Sociocultural adaptation is thus an outcome for language learners, not solely a means of improving their language skills as highlighted in the SLA literature. What is more, it was reported to be more important than instrumental support.

Regarding the second research question, related to the Saudi students' academic, psychological and sociocultural adjustment, the findings highlighted two main trajectories following positive

and negative patterns. The positive orientation reflected adjustment indicating improvement and progress in relation to the issues and difficulties that the students faced in their transition to life in the UK. The negative pattern reflected the issues that the students faced from the early stages of their adjustment to the later stages; these increased over time and had a considerable negative effect on the students' transition. This provides a new perspective, since SLA studies have primarily addressed English language learners' proficiency, ability to communicate in the language and factors affecting language development. In contrast, this study examined the experience from a holistic perspective, encompassing the three dimensions of adaptation and the positive and negative effects on the English language learners' transition.

First, in terms of academic adjustment, this study draws on Ward et al.'s (2001) ABC theory, which concerns the experience of sojourners in the field of social psychology. In this study, the theory informed on the English language learners' experience under three themes – moving to a mixed-gender environment, adjusting to learner-centred classes and dealing with language anxiety – reflecting a positive orientation in the students' adjustment over time. This study addressed the students' adjustment and how they dealt with difficulties from their perspective, rather than solely identifying the problems and discussing potential solutions.

Concerning the mixed-gender classes, cognitive theory argues that students go through a process of evaluation and thinking about how they can adjust to and locate themselves in the learning environment. In this process, some students in this study employed positive thinking, trying to view the approach as something normal in the UK and consistent with educational aims, as well as reflecting normal everyday life and communication outside class. Moreover, they focused on it as a chance to exchange ideas and understand others. Over time, they came to view the mixed-gender learning environment as normal. By gaining an understanding of the students' adjustment to the mixed-gender environment, the study sheds light on this unique experience for Saudi students, focusing on the process rather than just signalling it as an issue as focused on in the literature.

The culture learning and social skills approach informs on the students' adjustment to learner-centred classes. Here, the students recounted that over time they learned how to engage in independent learning, understood the steps they needed to take to improve their reading skills and then develop other language skills, and began to focus on their academic skills, such as writing, research and critical thinking. Coming from an environment in which they relied on the teacher, in their transition to the learner-centred environment, they had to learn in a way that was unfamiliar to them. This is a different perspective from that in the literature, which focuses on the effectiveness of teaching and learning methods and how they are applied.

Language anxiety can be understood by drawing on stress and coping approaches from the literature. The students in this study developed strategies to overcome their anxiety and stress, particularly in terms of their fear of making mistakes in class. They came to recognise that this was the place where they needed to make mistakes to learn. Moreover, outside class, they were worried about being misunderstood but they learned to rephrase to make their meaning clear in English.

In providing an understanding of the Saudi English language learners' academic experience, this study offers a new perspective on the adjustment experience. In addition, in relation to academic adjustment, the study highlights that support from the teacher and international friends plays an important role in the students' academic adjustment over time. Moreover, the study points to the main issues that the students continued to face in the later stages of their academic adjustment, reflecting a negative orientation to their experience in terms of exams and concerns about their English language level.

Second, in terms of psychological adjustment over time, this study demonstrates that the students' psychological experience can be understood by drawing on the stress and coping approach (Berry, 1997; Ward et al., 2001; Schartner and Young, 2020). Here, the students' positive orientation is reflected in the three themes in terms of how they managed missing their families and feeling alone and experiencing stress academically in dealing with the new learning environment. In particular, the findings note the support from families and Saudi friends. However, there is also a negative orientation, represented by stress and worries that increased over time. These issues were related to their examinations and grades, as well as the stress of their dual roles as students and parents.

The third dimension addressed is the Saudi students' sociocultural adjustment over time, viewed from the perspective of the culture learning and social skills approach (Furnham and Bochner, 1986; Ward et al., 2001; Schartner and Young, 2020). This is a new approach, looking at this group of Saudi English language students' experience not only from the perspective of cultural distance and how they developed their language skills through communication with the target language community but also the knowledge and skills the students gained in adjusting to their new environment in terms of the practicalities of daily life and social values and norms. In this respect, for some students, homestay accommodation provided a support mechanism that contributed to their adjustment to the very different sociocultural dimensions. Their host families gave practical support, but more importantly socioemotional support, which was also reflected in the quantitative data. However, the interviews showed that some students were unable to adjust to the different social norms and values, indicating a lack of intercultural

awareness. Moreover, in terms of the negative orientation, some students experienced continuing issues with trying and failing to communicate with local people and make friends in the community, despite their wish to do so; they felt that they were hindered by misunderstandings, a lack of similar interests and different lifestyles.

The study has several implications related to the academic, psychological and sociocultural outcomes. First, it highlights that the English language experience has important outcomes other than language development and achievement. In existing research, psychological and sociocultural aspects have predominantly been treated as important factors influencing the academic outcomes of English language learners' experience of studying abroad, whereas in this study, these dimensions are important outcomes for this group of students. Moreover, the study points to the significance of non-linguistic outcomes, namely students' satisfaction with learning and academic lifestyle. This goes beyond enjoyment of classroom activities, reflecting enjoyment of life as a language learner as a whole and a good degree of fit in the trade-off between being away from home, family and friends and their academic aspirations. What is more, by examining contributory factors and their relationship with the three dimensions – academic, psychological and sociocultural – this study addresses perspectives broader than the effects on language learning and proficiency per se.

Furthermore, studies investigating the transition experience have primarily been qualitative in nature (e.g. Hofstede, 2001, 2010), while this study has also considered characteristics reflected in quantitative analysis, not just examining diversity (see Holliday and Macdonald, 2020). The approach in this study is in line with the model developed by Schartner and Young (2020), which adopts a holistic perspective to understand students' academic, psychological and sociocultural adjustment longitudinally (Chapter 2). This section has provided the implications of the research and the next discusses in greater detail the theoretical implications of the study.

12.4 Model of Saudi ESL student sojourners' adjustment and adaptation

To meet the need for a conceptual model of Saudi ESL student sojourners' adjustment and adaptation, the theoretical aim of this study was to develop such a model reflecting both the process and the outcomes. The sample was unique in terms of comprising Saudi students undertaking English language courses in the UK (see 1.2). Thus, the study developed the original conceptual model presented by Schartner and Young (2016, p. 2) of international student adjustment and adaptation presented in Figure 12.2.

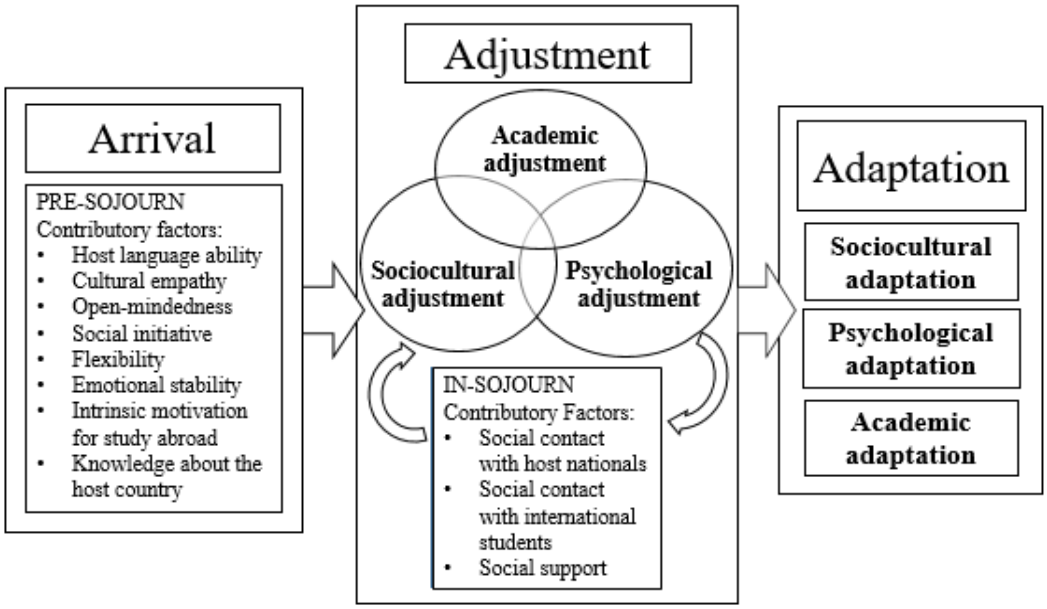

Figure 12.2. A conceptual model of international student adjustment and adaptation (Schartner and Young, 2016, p. 2)

Based on this, the study proposes a model of Saudi ESL student sojourners' adjustment and adaptation as presented in Figure 12.3.

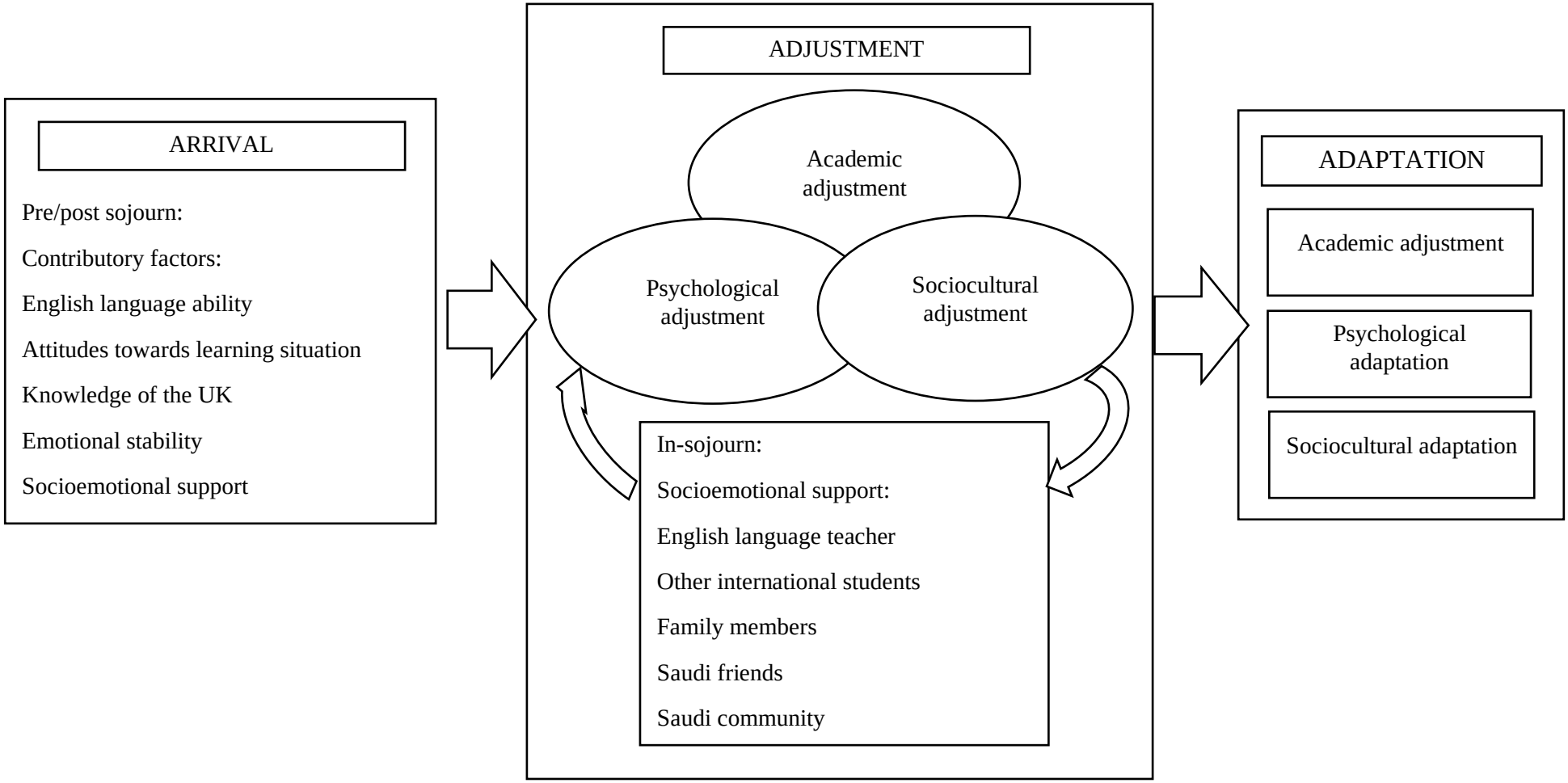

Figure 12.3. Proposed model of Saudi ESL student sojourners' adjustment and adaptation

It is apparent that there are some similarities and differences between the original model and that proposed in this study. The similarities are that both models emphasise the contributory factors of English language ability and knowledge of the host country as good predictors of the three adaptation domains to varying degrees. In terms of the differences, first, with regard to the contributory factors, this study highlights emotional stability in relation to the three main outcomes, not cultural empathy, social initiative, open-mindedness or flexibility, all of which are present as intercultural competence variables in the previous model.

In addition, this study addresses the critical role of social support as a means of socioemotional support, unlike the original model which considered both social contact and support. The proposed model also examines new contributory factors to those suggested by Gardner's (2005, 2010) socio-educational model, which include integrativeness, instrumental support, attitudes towards the situation, motivational intensity and language anxiety, reflecting a fine-grained picture of English language learning. In examining these factors, this study highlights students' attitudes towards learning as an important factor influencing the three main outcomes.

The study contributes to the field of social psychology in examining these factors in relation to psychological and sociocultural adaptation (Ward et al., 2001; Schartner and Young, 2020) and academic adaptation (Schartner and Young, 2020), offering a new perspective in relation to this group of Saudi sojourners as English language learners, since no existing model reflects their holistic journey in relation to these three dimensions. In the field of SLA, this study contributes by examining factors related to non-linguistic outcomes, unlike existing studies (e.g. Serrano et al., 2016; Kraut, 2017; Hern, 2018; Foster, 2020), particularly those influenced by the neoliberal drive which focuses on standard English that can be commercialised and evaluated through language proficiency tests, but neglects the diversity of English language learners (Phan, 2016; Badwan, 2017; Jenkins and Leung, 2019). In terms of language and intercultural communication studies (e.g. Harvey, 2016; Jackson, 2016; Spencer-Oatey, 2016), it again differs, as studies have largely examined the intercultural experience of language learners from a qualitative perspective.

Concerning literature in the Saudi context, existing studies (e.g. Alqahtani, 2011; Kampman, 2011; Alghamdi and Hawkes, 2019; Abu-Rabia and Mar'i, 2020) have focused on English language achievement and proficiency as the main outcomes for Saudi English language learners studying abroad. Some studies (e.g. Al-Eryani, 2017; Alharthi, 2019; Aljohani, 2021) have examined the difficulties that Saudis face in the study abroad context, while others (e.g. Al-Dossary and Al-Faris, 2018; Alharbi and Alwabel, 2019) have examined non-linguistic elements, such as satisfaction, language anxiety and motivation. However, all these studies

either examined the experiences of Saudi students qualitatively or quantitatively, rather than taking an integrated approach, and they lacked a framework reflecting the Saudi students' intercultural adjustment and adaptation experiences based on a holistic approach, integrating a longitudinal perspective and mixed methods to provide as complete a picture as possible.

To sum up, the proposed model was developed to encompass the experience of Saudi English language learners enrolled in UK courses. However, it might well be applicable to other Arabic students sharing a similar culture with Saudi students and could potentially be developed to consider those enrolled in postgraduate courses (Master's or PhD), as well as for long-term residents.

12.5 Practical implications

This study has a number of practical implications for Saudi academic institutions and sponsors, host academic institutions and Saudi English language learners. These are presented and discussed in the following paragraphs.

Saudi academic institutions and sponsors

As an implication for Saudi sponsors, such as the Saudi Cultural Bureau in the UK, this study stresses the importance of pre-departure preparation as an effective method that could facilitate intercultural transition to the new environment in line with previous studies. Previous studies undertaken in Western countries, such as the US and Australia, highlight psychoeducational opportunities and outreach services that could help Saudi students adjust to the new environment and enhance acceptance in the future (Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern, 2015), guidance in terms of the differences in teaching and learning methods and the educational systems (Alsahafi and Shin, 2017), and preparation related to the English language, the academic environment and society (Alsharari and Teodorescu, 2019).

Another aspect that could be considered is the content of pre-departure programmes. Al-wossabi (2019) proposed that the curriculum to be applied in Saudi universities for students aiming to study in the US should prepare them in terms of taking English courses, particularly providing a curriculum for English for academic purposes in which Saudi students would study the four language skills in an integrated manner. This way of teaching and learning English is more authentic, enabling students to communicate effectively in the language, rather than just studying separate skills. He proposed that the content of the curriculum be as authentic as possible, emphasising learning English through the study of US culture and social interaction, as well as highlighting study skills, such as understanding paragraphing and summarising main points.

Similarly, other work has highlighted the importance of intercultural training as part of official education, such as Sit et al.'s (2017) systematic review of the effectiveness of cross-cultural training programmes incorporating behavioural and cognitive components provided by HE. In such programmes, students might learn how to apply the approaches proposed in acculturation models, such as the ABC model (Ward et al., 2001).

However, previous studies have failed to address a number of important aspects with regard to official education. This research has suggested a number of aspects that could be included in the design of a new curriculum. This could be applied as an official educational programme in Saudi Arabia in collaboration with the Saudi Cultural Bureau in the UK. This curriculum would draw on the work of Al-wossabi (2019), but would go further. Rather than focusing primarily on improving English language proficiency, the curriculum would adopt a holistic perspective incorporating all three dimensions of intercultural adjustment and adaptation: academic, psychological and sociocultural. The proposed curriculum would also be linked with the intercultural training education suggested by Sit et al. (2017), drawing on Ward et al.'s (2001) ABC model and the psychological and sociocultural dimensions. It would also encompass the stress and coping strategies (Berry 1997) and social skills and culture learning (Furnham and Bochner, 1986) approaches, as reflected in Schartner and Young's (2016) model, reflecting the academic, psychological and sociocultural dimensions.

In view of previous research, acculturation models and the implications of this study, such a curriculum applied as part of official education to Saudi English language learners aiming to study in the UK should include the following components. First, it should include specific integrated teaching of the four language skills in British English (academic and general), related to real life in the UK, reflecting Al-wossabi's (2019) proposed curriculum for the US and the focus in this study on students' satisfaction with their ability to communicate in English facilitating their academic and psychological adaptation.

Second, the curriculum should include academic adaptation, addressing the mixed-gender learning environment, academic skills, communicative approaches to teaching and learning and the importance of the instrumental orientation. Moreover, there should be training on how to manage stress and adapt to an unfamiliar learning environment, as well as learning skills, reflecting Young and Schartner's (2014) academic adaptation and adjustment model.

Third, the curriculum should include an introduction to the types of social activities and events that would be suited to Saudi students, bearing in mind their cultural and religious requirements, as pointed out by Alsahafi and Shin (2017). This study shows that students should be encouraged to attend and take part in social events to learn about the society in which they are

living and the culture of the language, as well as to practise their English in authentic situations. Moreover, the curriculum should focus on knowledge of the UK and social skills, adopting a cultural learning approach to help them adapt socioculturally.

Fourth, there should be an emphasis on those factors that affect the students' psychological adaptation: satisfaction with English language ability, positive attitudes towards the learning situation (English teacher and course), low levels of language anxiety in class, managing stress in difficult times, socioemotional support, satisfaction with the entire learning process and sociocultural adaptation. All of these factors could facilitate their psychological adaptation in terms of satisfaction with life and wellbeing. In particular, the students need to learn how to manage stress and overcome psychological issues such as homesickness and loneliness, as indicated in this study and the previous work of Ward et al. (2001) and Schartner and Young (2016). Moreover, Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern (2015) suggested the provision of psychoeducational opportunities offering advice and methods of psychological adjustment and adaptation.

Another implication in this regard is that the Saudi sponsors can also use the model proposed in this study as a heuristic tool to ensure that the students are aware of the transition process and the strategies that can be used to ensure an effective study experience abroad. In addition, the proposed model might work as a frame of reference for prospective students and could be provided online.

Adaptation courses in the host country

This study also proposes the provision of courses and services in the host country. Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern (2015) suggested that the host institution could provide a consultation centre offering international students information that might facilitate their adjustment. Outreach centres might especially help international students in general – and Saudi students in particular – addressing factors linked to family life, e.g. caring responsibilities for children, as well as issues related to living in the host country. In addition, such services could help with the initial stages, especially communicating with those of the opposite gender. Also, the provision of counselling and wellbeing services would be of great value to address the issues highlighted by this study in the initial stages of transition.

This study also highlights that social events could be organised for English language learners by the host language institutions, providing them with opportunities to interact with native speakers, both within the academic institution (communicating with local students) and outside the courses (conversing with local people). This would not just facilitate their use of language in communication with native speakers but could also aid in adjusting to the new culture and

society, as pointed out by Alsahafi and Shin (2017). Overall, such interaction could address the specific difficulties that students face in terms of the language, academic studies and sociocultural dimensions, helping them overcome these issues and adjust to the new society. In terms of enabling interaction with native-speaker students and those with a higher level of English language proficiency, Alsharari and Teodorescu (2019) suggested students could work together on projects. This could also be considered for students on pre-sessional English language courses, particularly in terms of working with students in their area of specialisation on projects linked to their future postgraduate courses.

12.6 Limitations of the study

Regarding the limitations of this study, the study design was longitudinal and it is normal to have attrition in the number of students from the sample over time (see Bryman, 2016). In this study, the students were asked to undertake the questionnaire on two occasions and to take part in the interviews three times several months apart. There was a greater reduction in the number of the students taking part in the interviews (from 19 at T1, to 7 at T2 and to 4 at T3) as these were more challenging with regard to time and availability; this could put pressure on the students as they were very busy, especially at the end of the year when they were extremely worried about their results and were putting more effort into their studies. For this reason, many meetings and interviews were cancelled and some asked to withdraw from the interviews and only participate in the questionnaires. The questionnaires required less effort from them as they only had to rate statements using an online link on their mobiles. Future studies could contact a larger initial sample to reduce the effects of attrition.

The second limitation of this study concerned the interviews. As a means of encouraging the students to participate in the study, contact at T2 and T3 was entirely via email, with students responding to the questions and providing additional information electronically, rather than face-to-face or by telephone. Although this technique was an effective means of gaining data (see Bryman, 2016), it was difficult to ask and get replies to any follow-up questions as it entailed many reminder emails. If future studies faced difficulty implementing face-to-face interviews, they could use phone interviews as an alternative, as immediate two-way communication would make asking and answering follow-up questions more convenient and this could be beneficial for the research.

12.7 Directions for future research

This study has investigated the intercultural adjustment and adaptation of Saudi English language learners in the UK and has provided as complete a picture as possible of their experience as sojourners. However, there are a number of aspects worth considering as directions for future research.

First, this study considered Saudi students as English language learners in the UK and it could be difficult to generalise the findings to other Western English-speaking contexts covered by the Saudi scholarship programme and with large numbers of students, such as the US and Australia. Therefore, it would be worth exploring the impact of the contributory factors examined in this study in these other academic and sociocultural environments.

Second, this study was limited to English language learners aiming to study on postgraduate courses and further research could consider the postgraduate students themselves as English language is a major factor contributing to their academic success. In particular, such research would benefit from including attitudinal and motivational factors as in this study.

In this study, as an entirely new finding, Saudi students made a transition from viewing the mixed-gender learning environment as a serious problem to commenting on it positively, as demonstrated in the qualitative interviews. Further studies could consider this as one of the factors that might affect Saudi students' outcomes in learning English abroad.

Furthermore, while this study examined the association between contributory factors and adaptation dimensions, further research could examine the relationship between the contributory factors themselves and how they affect each other, as this could provide more insights into students' English language experience in the study abroad context.

Finally, this study highlights the importance of developing a curriculum for pre-departure education in the official context and future research could focus more on the content of this curriculum, not solely focusing on English language skills, but taking a more holistic perspective as in this study and encompassing academic, psychological and sociocultural aspects.

12.8 Summary

This chapter concludes the thesis by reviewing the focus of the study and presenting the main findings related to a summary of the research questions. In addition, the chapter has presented and discussed the proposed model reflecting the study of Saudi English language learners' sojourn in the UK. The implications of the research, particularly practical, have been provided and some directions for further research have been suggested.

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Appendix A. Questionnaire and consent form at T1 (October/November, 2016)

Project Information

This project aims to examine the adjustment experiences of Saudi students studying on English as a second language courses in UK higher education. This survey includes questions about you, your motivations and ability to communicate in English and well-being in general in the study abroad context. There are 73 short questions which should take about 15–20 minutes to complete. Before answering the questions, please read and sign the following consent form.

معلومات عن المشروع

يهدف هذا المشروع لإختبار مدى تأقلم الطلاب السعوديين في تجربة دراسة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية في التعليم العالي بالمملكة المتحدة. حيث تشمل هذا الدراسه المسحيه على أسئلة تتعلق بك ، بدوافعك و قدرتك على التواصل باللغة الانجليزية بالإضافه الى السؤال عن مدى بقاؤك على افضل حال أثناء دراستك في الخارج بصورة عامه. يحتوي هذا الاستبيان على ٧٣ سؤالاً قصيراً الذي قد يستغرق من الوقت ١٥/ ٢٠ دقيقة للإجابه عليه. يرجى قراءة إستمارة الموافقة التالية والتوقيع عليها قبل الإجابة على الأسئلة.

Consent Form
استمارة الموافقة

✓ I have been informed about the purpose of this study and I have understood the information given to me. لقد أطلعْتُ على الغرض من هذه الدراسه وفهمتُ المعلومات المقدمة لي.
✓ I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation. تم منحي الفرصة لطرح أسئلة متعلقه بالمشروع وعن مشاركتي فيه.
✓ I voluntarily agree to participate in the project. لقد وافقت بصورة تطوعيه على المشاركة في هذا المشروع.
✓ I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing, nor will I be questioned on why I wish to withdraw. أفهم بأنه يمكنني في أي وقت الإنسحاب من المشاركه في هذه الدراسه بدون تقدم أي سبب ولن تتم معاقبتي من جراء الإنسحاب ، فضلاً على أنه لا يمكن إستجوابي عن سبب إنسحابي.
✓ I understand that all responses will be treated in the strictest confidence and any personal details which would reveal my identity will not be published. أفهم بأن كافة الإجابات سوف يتم التعامل معها بثقة كاملة ، وأنه لن يتم نشر أي بيانات شخصية تساهم في كشف هويتي لدى الأخرين.
✓ I understand that the results of this questionnaire will be used as part of a PhD thesis at Newcastle University as well as for subsequent publications in academic journals and presentations at academic conferences. أفهم أن نتائج هذا الإستبيان سوف يتم استخدامها كجزء من دراسة أطروحة الدكتوراة في جامعة نيو كاسل بالإضافة إلى نشرها لاحقاً في المجلات الأكاديمية وتقديمها في المؤتمرات العلميه.

_____ _____ _____

Full Name of Participant الإسم الكامل للمشارك/ة Signatureالتوقيع Date التاريخ

Researcher's name: Fatimah Alsaadi
PhD student in Applied Linguistics, School of Education, Communication, and Language Sciences
Newcastle University, UK

اسم الباحثه : فاطمة السعدي
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Researcher Contact: f.alssadi@ncl.ac.uk:البريد الإلكتروني للباحثه

Thank you for your cooperation and participation شكراً لتعاونكم ومشاركتكم

Part 1: Background information القسم الأول: معلومات عن خلفية المشارك/ه

This part asks about your personal details. The information you provide will be treated with the utmost confidentiality, so your identity will not be revealed in any publication. These details are needed for statistical purposes only. If you feel uncomfortable providing your name, please state your student number only.

يطرح هذا القسم أسئله تتعلق بالبيانات الشخصيه. إن المعلومات التي تقدمها سوف يتم التعامل معها بالسرية التامه، لذلك لن يتم الكشف عن هويتك في أي من المنشورات العلميه . إن الحاجة لهذه التفاصيل فقط من أجل أغراض إحصائيه تتعلق بالدراسه . فإذا شعرت بعدم الإرتياح بسبب كتابة اسمك، الرجاء الإكتفاء بكتابة رقم الطالب الجامعي والبريد الإلكتروني الخاص بك.

Please fill in the blank/tick the most applicable option

يرجى ملئ الفرغات التاليه/ أختر أحد الخيارات المناسبه لك

- Name:…….....….الاسم
- Student number (if you have one): …….....)رقم الطالب الجامعي (في حالة وجوده
- Email: البريد الإلكتروني:…….
- Gender:الجنس O Female أنثى O Male ذكر
- Marital Status: الحالة الاجتماعية

O Married Oمتزوج Singleاعزب O Widowed Oأرمل Divorced منفصل

- Name of institution/college/university of your English language course in the UK:
  إسم المعهد / الكلية / الجامعة التي تدرس فيها دورة اللغة الإنجليزية في المملكة المتحدة:
  ……
- Current programme of study برنامج الدراسة الحالي :……
  (e.g. general English/academic English, IELTS) (مثلا اللغة الإنجليزية العامة ، اللغة الإنجليزية الأكاديمية ، الأيلتس)

- Level of English language proficiency in your current course: مستوى الإجادة في اللغة الإنجليزية في دورتك الدراسية الحالية

O Beginner level O مبتدئ ليس لديه خلفيه عن اللغهElementary level O لديه خلفيه بسيطه عن اللغه Pre-intermediate level O تحت المتوسط Intermediate level O متوسط Upper intermediate level O فوق المتوسط Advanced level متقدم

- Last IELTS grade (if any)(إن وجدت) آخر درجة في إختبارتحديد المستوى الأيلتس

O Less than 4 O 4.5 O 5 O 5.5 O 6 O 6.5 O More than 6.5 أكثر من درجة

- Field of future study: ……..…….. مجال الدراسة المستقبلية (e.g. MA in [subject]/PhD in [subject]) (مثلاً ماجستير, اسم التخصص) ، درجة الدكتوراة (اسم االتخصص)
- Month andyear of arrival in the UK: ……شهر وسنة الوصول للملكة المتحدة
- Type of accommodation نوع السكن

Private O خاص University residence O السكن الجامعي Homestay O الإقامة مع عائلة Other Oأخرى

If other, please specify accommodation type:……..... الرجاء تحديد نوع السكن في حالات أخرى

Part 2: English language abilityالقسم الثاني: إجادة اللغة الإنجليزية

This section asks about your level of satisfaction with your ability to communicate in English in the four language skills.

يطرح هذا الجزء أسئلة تتعلق بمستوى رضاك عن قدرتك على التواصل باللغة الإنجليزية من خلال المهارات اللغوية الأربعة.

Please circle the ONE number (1 to 5) that best describes your level of satisfaction with your English skills.

يرجى وضع دائرة على رقم واحد فقط (1 إلى 5) والذي يصف مستوى رضاك بدقة عن مهاراتك في اللغة الإنجليزي.

	Not at all Satisfied غير راضي على الإطلاق	**Slightly Satisfied** راضى إلى حد ما	**Moderately satisfied** راضي بصورة متوسطة	**Very Satisfied** راضي جداً	**Completely satisfied** راضي تماماً
Listening الإستماع	1	2	3	4	5
Speaking التحدث	1	2	3	4	5
Reading القراءة	1	2	3	4	5
Writing الكتابة	1	2	3	4	5

Part 3: Motivation in English language learning القسم الثالث: الدافع إلى تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية

This part asks how you feel about a number of aspects related to your motivation in your current learning.

هذا القسم يطرح أسئله عن ماهية شعورك تجاه عدد من الأمور المتعلقه بدافعك إلى تعلمك الحالي

Please circle the ONE number (1 to 7) for each statement that most applies to you.

الرجاء وضع دائرة حول رقم واحد فقط (1 -7) لكل عبارة تنطبق عليك

		Weak ضعيف						**Strong** قوي
1	My motivation to learn English in order to communicate with English speaking people is… دافعي لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية من أجل التواصل مع الأفراد الذين يتحدثون هذه اللغة هو..	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	My desire to learn and know all aspects of English is… رغبتي في تعلم ومعرفة كافة جوانب اللغة الإنجليزية هي..	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	My attitude towards learning English is… رأيي في أهمية تعلم اللغه الإنجليزية هي ...	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	My motivation to learn English for practical purposes (e.g. better grades, get a good job/salary) is… دافعي إلى تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية للأغراض العملية (مثل الحصول على درجات جيدة في الدراسه ، وظيفة أو راتب جيد) هو..	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
		Unfavourable غير إيجابي						**Favourable** إيجابي
5	My attitude towards English speaking people is... نظرتي وسلوكي نحو الأفراد الذين يتحدثون اللغة الإنجليزية هي ..	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	My attitude towards my English teacher is… نظرتي إلى معلمي/معلمتي في اللغة الإنجليزية هي..	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Part 4:			**Unfavourable** غير إيجابي						**Favourable** إيجابي
	7	My attitude towards my English course is… نظرتي إلى دورة اللغة الإنجليزية التي أجريها هي...	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
			Very low منخفض جداً						**Very high** عالي جداً
	8	My interest in foreign languages is… اهتمامي بتعلم اللغات الأجنبية هو...	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	9	My motivation to learn English (how hard I work) is… دافعي إلى تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية (مدى الإجتهاد) هو...	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
			Very little قليل جدا						**Very much**ك ثير جداً
	10	I worry about speaking English outside class ينتابني القلق عند التحدث بالإنجليزية خارج الفصل	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	11	I worry about speaking in my English class… ينتابني القلق عند التحدث في فصل اللغة الإنجليزي	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Knowledge of the UK

القسم الرابع: مدى معرفتك عن المملكة المتحدة

1. How much did you know about the UK before coming here?
ما هو مدى معرفتك بالمملكة المتحدة قبل القدوم إليها؟

Please rate your knowledge, circling the ONE number (1 to 5) that is most applicable to you
الرجاء تقييم معرفتك ، ووضع دائرة حول رقم واحد (1-5) و الذي ينطبق عليك بصورة كبيرة

Very little knowledge معرفة قليلة جداً			A lot of knowledge معرفة كبيرة جدا
1	2	3	4	5

Part 5: Personal traits and attributes القسم الخامس: السمات والصفات الشخصية

This section asks about you as a person. .يطرح هذا القسم أسئلة تتعلق بشخصيتك

Please indicate to what extent the following statements apply to you, circling the ONE number (1 to 5) that best describes you.. الرجاء الإشارة إلى أي مدى تنطبق هذه العبارات عليك وذلك بوضع دائرة على رقم واحد (1-5) والذي يصفك بصورة كبيرة

I am the kind of person who… …أنا شخص

		Totally not applicable لا ينطبق تماماً	**Hardly applicable** ينطبق بدرجه بسيطه	**Moderately applicable** ينطبق بصورة متوسطة	**Largely applicable** ينطبق بدرجة كبيرة	**Completely applicable** ينطبق بصورة كاملة
1	Pays attention to the emotions of others أنتبه وأراعي مشاعر الآخرين	1	2	3	4	5
2	Is a good listener مستمع جيد	1	2	3	4	5
3	Senses when others get irritated أشعر عندما يتضايق الآخرين	1	2	3	4	5
4	Gets to know others profoundly أعرف الآخرين جيداً	1	2	3	4	5
5	Enjoys other people's stories أستمتع بسماع قصص الآخرين	1	2	3	4	5
6	Notices when someone is in trouble ألاحظ عندما يقع شخص ما في مشكلة	1	2	3	4	5
7	Sympathises with others أتعاطف مع الآخرين	1	2	3	4	5
8	Sets others at ease أتعامل مع الآخرين بسهولة	1	2	3	4	5
9	Works according to strict rules أعمل حسب القوانين الصارمة	1	2	3	4	5
10	Works according to plan أعمل حسب الخطط	1	2	3	4	5
11	Works according to a strict scheme أعمل حسب البرامج و المخططات الصارمة	1	2	3	4	5
12	Looks for regularity in life أبحث عن الإنتظام في الحياة	1	2	3	4	5
13	Likes routine أحب الروتين	1	2	3	4	5
14	Wants predictability أرغب في التنبؤ	1	2	3	4	5

		Totally not applicable لا ينطبق تماماً	**Hardly applicable** ينطبق بدرجه بسيطه	**Moderately applicable** ينطبق بصورة متوسطة	**Largely applicable** ينطبق بدرجة كبيرة	**Completely applicable** ينطبق بصورة كاملة
15	Functions best in a familiar setting أعمل بصورة جيدة في البيئات المألوفة	1	2	3	4	5
16	Has fixed habits لدي عادات ثابتة	1	2	3	4	5
17	Takes the lead أخذ زمام القيادة	1	2	3	4	5
18	Leaves the initiative to others to make contact أترك للآخر زمام المبادرة من أجل التواصل	1	2	3	4	5
19	Finds it difficult to make contacts أجد صعوبة في التواصل والتعارف	1	2	3	4	5
20	Takes the initiative آخذ زمام المبادرة	1	2	3	4	5
21	Is inclined to speak out أميل إلى الإفصاح	1	2	3	4	5
22	Is often the driving force behind things غالباً ما أكون القوة الدافعة خلف الأشياء	1	2	3	4	5
23	Makes contacts easily أقوم بالتعارف والتواصل بسهولة	1	2	3	4	5
24	Is reserved أنا شخص متحفظ	1	2	3	4	5
25	Worries أنا شخص قلق	1	2	3	4	5
26	Gets upset easily أصاب بالإحباط بسهولة	1	2	3	4	5
27	Is nervous متوتر	1	2	3	4	5
28	Is apt to feel lonely أشعر بالوحدة	1	2	3	4	5
29	Keeps calm when things don't go well أحافظ على الهدوء عندما تسوء الأمور	1	2	3	4	5
30	Is insecure أشعر بعدم الأمان	1	2	3	4	5
31	Is under pressure أنا تحت الضغط	1	2	3	4	5
32	Is not easily hurt لا يمكن جرحي بسهولة	1	2	3	4	5
33	Tries out various approaches	1	2	3	4	5

		Totally not applicable لا ينطبق تماماً	**Hardly applicable** ينطبق بدرجه بسيطه	**Moderately applicable** ينطبق بصورة متوسطة	**Largely applicable** ينطبق بدرجة كبيرة	**Completely applicable** ينطبق بصورة كاملة
	أحاول تجربة طرق متنوعة					
34	Looks for new ways to attain my goals أبحث عن طرق جديدة للوصول إلى تحقيق أهدافي	1	2	3	4	5
35	Starts a new life easily أبدأ حياة جديدة بسهولة	1	2	3	4	5
36	Likes to imagine solutions to problems أحب تخيل الحلول للمشاكل	1	2	3	4	5
37	Is a trendsetter in societal developments أُساهم في التطورات الإجتماعية	1	2	3	4	5
38	Has a feeling for what's appropriate in a culture لدي شعور بالأمور المناسب فعلها في التعامل مع ثقافة ما	1	2	3	4	5
39	Seeks out people from different backgrounds أبحث عن الأفراد من ثقافات وخلفيات مختلفة	1	2	3	4	5
40	Has a broad range of interests لدي مدى واسع من الاهتمامات	1	2	3	4	5

Part 6: Satisfaction with life الجزء السادس: مقياس الرضا عنالحياة

This section asks you about your level of satisfaction with your current life in the UK.

يطرح هذا الجزء الأسئلة التي تتعلق بمدى رضائك عن حياتك الحالية في المملكة المتحدة.

Please circle the ONE number (1 to 5) for each statement that is most applicable to you.

الرجاء وضع دائرة حول رقم واحد (1-5) لكل عبارة تكون أكثر ملائمة بالنسبة لك.

		Strongly disagree غير موافق بتاتا	**Disagree** غير موافق	**Slightly disagree** غير موافق إلى حد ما	**Neither agree nor disagree** لست موافق ولا معارض	**Slightly agree** موافق الى حد ما	**Agree** موافق	**Strongly agree** موافق جدا
1	In most ways my life is close to my ideal بشكل عام تبدو الحياة التي أعيشها قريبة مما أتمناه	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	The conditions of my life are excellent ظروف حياتي ممتازة	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	I am satisfied with my life أنا راض عن الحياة التي أعيشها	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	So far I have got the important things I want in life حتى الآن حصلت على الأشياء المهمة التي أردتها	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing إذا قدر لي أن أعيش من جديد فلن أبدل أي شيئ تقريبا في حياتي	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Part 7: Psychological well-being القسم السابع: الصحة النفسية

The following statements are about how you feel and how things have been for you during the last couple of weeks since you started your course.

تتعلق العبارات التالية بماهية شعورك وتعاملك مع الأشياء خلال الأسابيع الماضية منذ بداية دورتك الدراس

Please circle the ONE number (1 to 5) that best describes the way you have been feeling.

الرجاء وضع دائرة حول رقم واحد (1-5) والذي يصف بصورة جيدة ما كنت تشعر به

		Never أبداً	**Rarely** نادراً	**Sometimes** أحياناً	**Often** غالباً	**Always** دائماً
1	I have felt full of energy شعرت بطاقة كاملة	1	2	3	4	5
2	I have been a very nervous person كنت شخصا متوترا	1	2	3	4	5
3	I have felt depressed شعرت بالإكتئاب	1	2	3	4	5
4	I have felt calm and peaceful شعرت بالهدوء والسكينة	1	2	3	4	5
5	I have had fun كنت مرحا	1	2	3	4	5
6	I have felt tired شعرت بالتعب	1	2	3	4	5
7	I have felt worn out شعرت بالإجهاد	1	2	3	4	5
8	I have been a happy person كنت شخصا سعيد	1	2	3	4	5
9	I have felt emotionally stable شعرت بالإستقرار العاطفي	1	2	3	4	5
10	I have felt like crying شعرت بأنني على وشك البكاء	1	2	3	4	5
11	I have been anxious and worried شعرت بالتوتر والقلق	1	2	3	4	5

That is the end of the survey. Thank you for your time and effort.

انتهى الإستبيان شكراً لكم على وقتكم وجهدكم في الاجابه عليه.

Note: I am also doing interviews about your adjustment experience on your journey in learning English. If you are interested and would like to participate, please kindly provide me with your contact information.

ملحوظة: أقوم بإجراء مقابلات شخصيه تتعلق بخبراتكم في التأقلم والتكيف خلال رحلتكم في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية. إذا كان لديكم رغبه بالمشاركه أرجو منكم مشكورين كتابة معلومات الاتصال الخاصة بكم.

Email:البريد الإلكتروني …… Phone number: رقم الهاتف ……

Or contact me via email: f.alssadi@ncl.ac.uk او مراسلت على البريد الإلكتروني

Appendix B. Questionnaire and consent form at T2 (July, 2017)

Project Information

This project aims to examine the adjustment experiences of Saudi students studying on English as a second language courses in the UK. There are 70 short questions which should take about 15–20 minutes to complete. Before answering the questions, please read and sign the following consent form.

معلومات عن المشروع

يهدف هذا المشروع لإختبار مدى تأقلم الطلاب السعوديين في تجربة دراسة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية بالمملكة المتحدة. يحتوي هذا الاستبيان على ٧٠ سؤالاً قصيراً الذي قد يستغرق من الوقت ١٥/ ٢٠ دقيقة للإجابه عليه. يرجى قراءة إستمارة الموافقة التالية والتوقيع عليها قبل الإجابة على الأسئلة.

Consent Form
استمارة الموافقة

✓ I have been informed about the purpose of this study and I have understood the information given to me. لقد أطلعْتُ على الغرض من هذه الدراسه وفهمتُ المعلومات المقدمة لي.
✓ I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation. تم منحي الفرصة لطرح أسئلة متعلقه بالمشروع وعن مشاركتي فيه.
✓ I voluntarily agree to participate in the project. لقد وافقت بصورة تطوعيه على المشاركة في هذا المشروع.
✓ I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing, nor will I be questioned on why I wish to withdraw. أفهم بأنه يمكنني في أي وقت الإنسحاب من المشاركه في هذه الدراسه بدون تقدم أي سبب ولن تتم معاقبتي من جراء الإنسحاب ، فضلاً على أنه لا يمكن إستجوابي عن سبب إنسحابي.
✓ I understand that all responses will be treated in the strictest confidence and any personal details which would reveal my identity will not be published. أفهم بأن كافة الإجابات سوف يتم التعامل معها بثقة كاملة ، وأنه لن يتم نشر أي بيانات شخصية تساهم في كشف هويتي لدى الأخرين.
✓ I understand that the results of this questionnaire will be used as part of a PhD thesis at Newcastle University as well as for subsequent publications in academic journals and presentations at academic conferences. أفهم أن نتائج هذا الإستبيان سوف يتم استخدامها كجزء من دراسة أطروحة الدكتوراة في جامعة نيو كاسل بالإضافة إلى نشرها لاحقاً في المجلات الأكاديمية وتقديمها في المؤتمرات العلميه.

_____ _____ _____

Full Name of Participant الإسم الكامل للمشارك/ة Signatureالتوقيع Date التاريخ

Researcher's name: Fatimah Alsaadi
PhD student in Applied Linguistics, School of Education, Communication, and Language Sciences
Newcastle University, UK

اسم الباحثه : فاطمة السعدي
طالبة دكتوراه في تخصص اللغويات التطبيقيه
جامعة نيوكاسل - المملكة المتحدة

Researcher Contact: f.alssadi@ncl.ac.uk:البريد الإلكتروني للباحثه

Thank you for your cooperation and participation شكراً لتعاونكم ومشاركتكم

Part 1: Background information القسم الأول: معلومات عن خلفية المشارك/ه

This part asks about your personal details. The information you provide will be treated with the utmost confidentiality, so your identity will not be revealed in any publication. These details are needed for statistical purposes only. If you feel uncomfortable providing your name, please state your student number only.

يطرح هذا القسم أسئله تتعلق بالبيانات الشخصيه. إن المعلومات التي تقدمها سوف يتم التعامل معها بالسرية التامه، لذلك لن يتم الكشف عن هويتك في أي من المنشورات العلميه. إن الحاجة لهذه التفاصيل فقط من أجل أغراض إحصائيه تتعلق بالدراسه . فإذا شعرت بعدم الإرتياح بسبب كتابة اسمك، الرجاء الإكتفاء بكتابة رقم الطالب الجامعي والبريد الإلكتروني الخاص بك فقط

Please fill in the blank/tick the most applicable option

يرجى ملئ الفرغات التاليه/ أختر أحد الخيارات المناسبه لك

- Name:…….....….الاسم
- Student number (if you have one): …….....رقم الطالب الجامعي (في حالة وجوده)
- Email: البريد الإلكتروني……
- Gender:الجنس O Female أنثى O Male ذكر
- Age: ..... العمر
- Marital Status: الحالة الاجتماعية

O Married متزوج O Single اعزب O Widowed أرمل O Divorced منفصل

- Name of institution/college/university of your English language course in the UK:
  إسم المعهد / الكلية / الجامعة التي تدرس فيها دورة اللغة الإنجليزية في المملكة المتحدة:
  ……
- Current programme of study برنامج الدراسة الحالي :……
  (e.g. general English/academic English, IELTS) (مثلا اللغة الإنجليزية العامة ، اللغة الإنجليزية الأكاديمية ، الأيلتس)

- Level of English language proficiency in your current course: مستوى الإجادة في اللغة الإنجليزية في دورتك الدراسية الحالية

O Beginner level مبتدئ ليس لديه خلفيه عن اللغه O Elementary level لديه خلفيه بسيطه عن اللغه O Pre-intermediate level تحت المتوسط O Intermediate level متوسط O Upper intermediate level فوق المتوسط Advanced level متقدم

- Last IELTS grade (if any)آخر درجة في إختبارتحديد المستوى الأيلتس (إن وجدت)

O Less than 4 O 4.5 O 5 O 5.5 O 6 O 6.5 O More than 6.5 أكثر من درجة

- Field of future study: ……..مجال الدراسة المستقبلية (e.g. MA in [subject]/PhD in [subject]) (مثلاً ماجستير, اسم التخصص) ، درجة الدكتوراة (اسم االتخصص)
- Type of accommodation نوع السكن

Private خاص O University residence السكن الجامعي O Homestay الإقامة مع عائلة O Other أخرى O

If other, please specify accommodation type:……..... الرجاء تحديد نوع السكن في حالات أخرى

Part 2: Academic Adaptation القسم الثاني: التكيف الاكاديمي

Please indicate the level of endorsement to which each of the following statements apply to you:

يرجى الاشاره على مستوى التأييد لكل من العبارات التاليه التي تنطبق عليك:

		Totally not applicable لا ينطبق تماماً	**Hardly applicable** ينطبق بدرجه بسيطه	**Moderately applicable** ينطبق بصورة متوسطة	**Largely applicable** ينطبق بدرجة كبيرة	**Completely applicable** ينطبق بصورة كاملة
	Academic Lifestyle: نمط الحياه الاكاديمي					
1	I am enjoying the lifestyle of being an English language student. انا مستمتع بنمط حياتي كوني طالب لغه انجليزيه	1	2	3	4	5
2	I sometimes feel as though my education is not worth time away from my work or my family. اشعر احياناً كما لو ان تعليمي لا يستحق وقتاً بعيداً عن عملي او عائلتي	1	2	3	4	5
3	I sometimes worry I do not have the academic skills (e.g. critical thinking, research and writing skills) needed to enjoy being a student. اقلق احياناً من أن لا أملك المهارات الاكاديميه (مثل التفكير النقدي و مهارات البحث والكتابه) اللازمه لكي استمتع بكوني طالب	1	2	3	4	5
	Academic Achievement: الانجاز الاكاديمي					
4	I am satisfied with the level of my academic performance, progress and achievement to date. انا راضي عن مستوى ادائي وتقدمي وانجازي الاكاديمي حتى الان	1	2	3	4	5
5	I think I am as academically able as any other student.	1	2	3	4	5

		Totally not applicable لا ينطبق تماماً	**Hardly applicable** ينطبق بدرجه بسيطه	**Moderately applicable** ينطبق بصورة متوسطة	**Largely applicable** ينطبق بدرجة كبيرة	**Completely applicable** ينطبق بصورة كاملة
	اعتقد اني قادر اكاديمياً كأي طالب آخر					
6	I am satisfied with my ability to learn at my course. انا راضي عن قدرتي على التعلم في دورتي الدراسيه	1	2	3	4	5
	Academic Motivation: الدافع الاكاديمي					
7	I expect to successfully complete my course in the usual allocated timeframe. اتوقع بان أتم فصلي الدراسي بنجاح في الفتره الزمنيه المحدده والمعتاده	1	2	3	4	5
8	The reason I am studying is to lead to a better life style. سبب دراستي هو لتقودني الى اسلوب حياه افضل	1	2	3	4	5
9	I will be disappointed if my study don't lead me to the purpose of my course learnt سوف اشعر بالاحباط اذا لم تقودني دراستي الى تحقيق هدفي من دراسة الفصل الحالي	1	2	3	4	5
10	I do not feel comfortable in a mixed-gender learning environment. لا اشعر بالارتياح في بيئة التعليم المختلط بين الجنسين	1	2	3	4	5
	Learners' satisfaction: رضا الطالب					
11	I am satisfied with my ability to take responsibility for my learning. انا راضي عن قدرتي على تحمل المسئووليه في تعليمي	1	2	3	4	5

		Totally not applicable لا ينطبق تماماً	**Hardly applicable** ينطبق بدرجه بسيطه	**Moderately applicable** ينطبق بصورة متوسطة	**Largely applicable** ينطبق بدرجة كبيرة	**Completely applicable** ينطبق بصورة كاملة
12	I am satisfied with my ability to participate in class and work cooperatively and communicatively. انا راضي عن قدرتي على المشاركه في الصف والعمل بشكل تعاوني وتواصلي	1	2	3	4	5
13	I am satisfied with the teachers' roles in the class and their teaching approaches. انا راضي عن ادوار المعلمين في الصف وطرق تدريسهم	1	2	3	4	5
14	I am satisfied with the teaching materials that teachers use in the classroom. انا راضي عن الوسائل التعليميه المستخدمه من قبل المعلمين في الصف.	1	2	3	4	5
15	I am satisfied with the content and topics of the learning. أنا راضي عن محتوى و موضوعات التعليم	1	2	3	4	5
16	I am satisfied with the assessment and exams tools. أنا راضي عن ادوات التقييم و الامتحانات	1	2	3	4	5

Part 3: English language ability القسم الثالث: إجادة اللغة الإنجليزية

This section asks about your level of satisfaction with your ability to communicate in English in the four language skills.

يطرح هذا الجزء أسئلة تتعلق بمستوى رضاك عن قدرتك على التواصل باللغة الإنجليزية من خلال المهارات اللغوية الأربعة.

Please circle the ONE number (1 to 5) that best describes your level of satisfaction with your English skills.

يرجى وضع دائرة على رقم واحد فقط (1 إلى 5) والذي يصف مستوى رضاك بدقة عن مهاراتك في اللغة الإنجليزي.

	Not at all satisfied غير راضي على الإطلاق	**Slightly satisfied** راضى إلى حد ما	**Moderately satisfied** راضي بصورة متوسطة	**Very satisfied** راضي جداً	**Completely satisfied** راضي تماماً
Listening الإستماع	1	2	3	4	5
Speaking التحدث	1	2	3	4	5
Reading القراءة	1	2	3	4	5
Writing الكتابة	1	2	3	4	5

Part 4: Knowledge about the UK القسم الخامس: المعرفه عن المملكه المتحده

How much do you feel you know about the UK so far?

ما هو مدى معرفتك بالمملكة المتحدة قبل القدوم إليها؟

Please rate your knowledge, circling the ONE number (1 to 5) that is most applicable to you

الرجاء تقييم معرفتك ، ووضع دائرة حول رقم واحد (1-5) و الذي ينطبق عليك بصورة كبيرة

Very little knowledge معرفة قليلة جداً				A lot of knowledge معرفة كبيرة جدا
1	2	3	4	5

Part 5: Satisfaction with life الجزء السادس: مقياس الرضا عن الحياة

This section asks you about your level of satisfaction with your current life in the UK.

يطرح هذا الجزء الأسئلة التي تتعلق بمدى رضائك عن حياتك الحالية في المملكة المتحدة.

Please circle the ONE number (1 to 7) for each statement that is most applicable to you.

الرجاء وضع دائرة حول رقم واحد (1-7) لكل عبارة تكون أكثر ملائمة بالنسبة لك.

		Strongly disagree غير موافق بتاتا	**Disagree** غير موافق	**Slightly disagree** غير موافق إلى حد ما	**Neither agree nor disagree** لست موافق ولا معارض	**Slightly agree** موافق الى حد ما	**Agree** موافق	**Strongly agree** موافق جدا
1	In most ways, my life is close to my ideal بشكل عام تبدو الحياة التي أعيشها قريبة مما أتمناه	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	The conditions of my life are excellent ظروف حياتي ممتازة	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	I am satisfied with my life أنا راض عن الحياة التي أعيشها	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	So far, I have got the important things I want in life حتى الآن حصلت على الأشياء المهمة التي أردتها	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing إذا قدر لي أن أعيش من جديد فلن أبدل أي شيئ تقريبا في حياتي	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Part 6: Psychological well-being القسم السابع: الصحة النفسية

The following statements are about how you feel and how things have been for you during the last couple of weeks since you started your course.

تتعلق العبارات التالية بماهية شعورك وتعاملك مع الأشياء خلال الأسابيع الماضية منذ بداية دورتك الدراس

Please circle the ONE number (1 to 5) that best describes the way you have been feeling.

الرجاء وضع دائرة حول رقم واحد (1-5) والذي يصف بصورة جيدة ما كنت تشعر به

		Never أبداً	**Rarely** نادراً	**Sometimes** أحياناً	**Often** غالباً	**Always** دائماً
1	I have felt full of energy شعرت بطاقة كاملة	1	2	3	4	5
2	I have felt depressed شعرت بالإكتئاب	1	2	3	4	5
3	I have felt calm and peaceful شعرت بالهدوء والسكينة	1	2	3	4	5
4	I have had fun كنت مرحا	1	2	3	4	5
5	I have felt tired شعرت بالتعب	1	2	3	4	5
6	I have been a happy person كنت شخصا سعيد	1	2	3	4	5
7	I have felt emotionally stable شعرت بالإستقرار العاطفي	1	2	3	4	5
8	I have felt like crying شعرت بأنني على وشك البكاء	1	2	3	4	5
9	I have been anxious and worried شعرت بالتوتر والقلق	1	2	3	4	5

Part 7: Sociocultural adaptation/perceived cultural distance القسم الثامن: التكيف الاجتماعي والثقافي/ بعد المسافة الثقافية المدركة

Think about living in the UK. How easy or difficult is it for you to adapt to.

فكر في نمط العيش في المملكه المتحده من ناحية صعوبة وسهولة التكيف

		Very difficult جداً صعب	**Difficult** صعب	**Neutral** محايد	**Easy** سهل	**Very easy** جداً سهل
1	Climate (temperature, rainfall, snow). الطقس (درجه الحراره، هطول الامطار ، تساقط الثلج)	1	2	3	4	5
2	Natural environment (plants and animals, pollution) . البيئه الطبيعيه (النباتات، الحيوانات،التلوث)	1	2	3	4	5
3	Social environment (size of the community, pace of life, noise). البيئه الاجتماعيه (حجم المجتمع ، وتيرة الحياه ، الضوضاء)	1	2	3	4	5
4	Living (hygiene, sleeping practices, how safe you feel) المعيشه (النظافه ، عادات النوم ، مدى شعورك بالأمان)	1	2	3	4	5
5	Practicalities (getting around, using public transport, shopping) الامور العمليه (التجوال ، استخدام وسائل النقل العام ، التسوق)	1	2	3	4	5
6	Food and eating (what food is eaten, how food is eaten, time of meals) الطعام والأكل (ماهو الطعام الذي يؤكل ، كيف يؤكل الطعام ، وقت الوجبات)	1	2	3	4	5
7	Family life (how close family members are, how much time family spend together) الحياه الاسريه (ما مدى قرب افراد العائله ، كم من الوقت الذي تقضيه الاسره مع بعض)	1	2	3	4	5
8	Social norms (how to behave in public, style of clothes, what people think is	1	2	3	4	5

	funny) الاعراف الاجتماعيه (كيفيه التصرف في الاماكن العامه، نمط الملابس، ما الذي يعتقده الناس مضحكاً)					
9	Values and beliefs (what people think about religion and politics, what people think is right or wrong) القيم و المعتقدات (ما الذي يعتقده الناس حول الدين والسياسه ،ماالذي يعتقده الناس صحيحاً او خاطئاً)	1	2	3	4	5
10	People (how friendly people are, how flexible people are in their behaviours, attitudes toward foreigners) الناس (مدى ودية و صداقة الناس ، مدى مرونة الناس في تصرفاتهم ، مواقفهم تجاه الاجانب)	1	2	3	4	5
11	Friends (making friends, amount of social interaction, what people do to have fun and relax) الاصدقاء (تكوين صداقات ،مقدار التفاعل الاجتماعي ،ما يفعله الناس للحصول على المتعه و الاسترخاء)	1	2	3	4	5
12	Language (learning the language, understanding people, making yourself understood) اللغه (تعلم اللغه ، فهم الناس ، تجعل من نفسك مفهوماً)	1	2	3	4	5

Part 8: Social support القسم التاسع: الدعم الاجتماعي

Please circle the ONE number (1 to 5) for each statement that most applies to you.

يرجى وضع دائره حول رقم واحد (من 1 الى 5) لكل حاله تنطبق كثيراً عليك

		No one would do this لا احد يفعل ذلك	**Someone would do this** شخص ما يفعل ذلك	**A few would do this** عدد قليل يفعل ذلك	**Several would do this** العديد يفعل ذلك	**Many would do this** الكثير يفعل ذلك
1	Comfort you whenever you feel homesick. يُريحك كلما شعرت بالحنين الى الوطن	1	2	3	4	5
2	Listen and talk with you whenever you feel lonely or depressed. يستمع ويتحدث معك كلما شعرت بالوحده او الاكتئاب	1	2	3	4	5
3	Share your good and bad times. يشارك اوقاتك الجيده و السيئه	1	2	3	4	5
4	Spend some quiet time with you whenever you do not feel like going out. يقضي بعض من الوقت الهادئ معك كلما شعرت بانك لا تريد الذهاب خارجاً	1	2	3	4	5
5	Spend time chatting with you whenever you are bored قضاء بعض الاوقات بالدردشه معك كلما شعرت بالملل	1	2	3	4	5
6	Accompany you somewhere even if he/she doesn't have to. مرافقتك الى مكان ما حتى لو لم يكن عليه/ عليها فعل ذلك	1	2	3	4	5
7	Visit you to see how you are doing. زيارتك للاطمئنان عليك	1	2	3	4	5
8	Reassure you that you are loved, supported, and cared for طمأنتك بانك محبوب ، مدعوم ،ومهتم به	1	2	3	4	5

		No one would do this لا احد يفعل ذلك	**Someone would do this** شخص ما يفعل ذلك	**A few would do this** عدد قليل يفعل ذلك	**Several would do this** العديد يفعل ذلك	**Many would do this** الكثير يفعل ذلك
9	Provide necessary information to help orient you to your new surroundings. توفير المعلومات اللازمه لتساعدك على تعرف نفسك على محيطك الجديد	1	2	3	4	5
10	Help you deal with some local institutions' official rules and regulations. مساعدتك على كيفية التعامل مع بعض القواعد والقوانين الرسميه للمؤسسات المحليه	1	2	3	4	5
11	Show you how to do something that you didn't know how to do. يريك كيفية عمل شيئا ما لم تكن تعرف فعله	1	2	3	4	5
12	Explain things to make your situation clearer and easier to understand. يشرح الامور ليجعل موقفك اوضح واسهل للفهم	1	2	3	4	5
13	Tell you what can and cannot be done in the UK. يخبرك بما يمكنك ومالا يمكنك فعله في المملكة المتحدة	1	2	3	4	5
14	Help you interpret things that you don't really understand. يساعدك على توضيح أمور لم تكن حقاً تفهمها	1	2	3	4	5
15	Give you some tangible assistance in dealing with any communication or language problems that you might face. يقدم لك بعض المساعدة الفعاله والملموسة باالنسبه لتعامل	1	2	3	4	5

		No one would do this لا احد يفعل ذلك	**Someone would do this** شخص ما يفعل ذلك	**A few would do this** عدد قليل يفعل ذلك	**Several would do this** العديد يفعل ذلك	**Many would do this** الكثير يفعل ذلك
	مع أي مشاكل قد تواجهها في التواصل أو اللغة					
16	Explain and help you understand the British culture and English language. يشرح لك ويساعدك في فهم الثقافه البريطانيه و اللغه الانجليزيه	1	2	3	4	5
17	Tell you about available choices and options. يخبرك عن الخيارات المتاحه	1	2	3	4	5

Part 9: Social Contact القسم العاشر: التواصل الاجتماعي

Please indicate the degree of overall contact you had with each of the following groups in the UK

الرجاء الاشاره على مستوى تواصلك مع المجوعات التاليه بالمملكه المتحدة في الفتره السابقه

		Never لا أبداً	**Seldom** نادراً	**About half the time** تقريباً نصف الوقت	**Often** غالباً	**Always** دائماً
1	Saudi students الطلاب السعوديين	1	2	3	4	5
2	British students الطلاب البريطانيين	1	2	3	4	5
3	Other international students الطلاب من جنسيات مختلفه	1	2	3	4	5
4	British people outside of the university (non-students) أفراد الشعب البريطاني خارج نطاق الجامعه (ليسوا طلاب)	1	2	3	4	5
5	Members of your family أفراد عائلتك	1	2	3	4	5

Are there any other comments you would like to make about yourself and your year in the UK?

هل هنالك اي تعليقات أُخرى تريد ان تذكرها عن نفسك أو عن السنه التي قضيتها في المملكه المتحده

That is the end of the survey. Thank you for your time and effort.

انتهى الإستبيان شكراً لكم على وقتكم وجهدكم في الاجابه عليه.

Appendix C. Interviewee consent form (participants over 16 years old)

استمارة الموافقة (المشاركين فوق سن 16)

I confirm that (please tick box as appropriate):

أقر على الأتي (الرجاء وضع علامة صح في المربع المناسب)

1.	I have been informed about the purpose of this study and I have understood the information given to me. لقد أطلعْتُ على الغرض من هذه الدراسه وفهمتُ المعلومات المقدمة لي.	☐
2.	I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation. تم منحي الفرصة لطرح أسئلة متعلقه بالمشروع وعن مشاركتي فيه.	☐
3.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the project. لقد وافقت بصورة تطوعيه على المشاركة في هذا المشروع.	☐
4.	I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing, nor will I be questioned on why I wish to withdraw. أفهم بأنه يمكنني في أي وقت الإنسحاب من المشاركه في هذه الدراسه بدون تقدم أي سبب ولن تتم معاقبتي من جراء الإنسحاب ، فضلاً على أنه لا يمكن إستجوابي عن سبب إنسحابي.	☐
5.	I understand that all responses will be treated in the strictest confidence and any personal details which would reveal my identity will not be published. أفهم بأن كافة الإجابات سوف يتم التعامل معها بثقة كاملة ، وأنه لن يتم نشر أي بيانات شخصية تساهم في كشف هويتي لدى الأخرين.	☐
6.	I understand that the results of this questionnaire will be used as part of a PhD thesis at Newcastle University as well as for subsequent publications in academic journals and presentations at academic conferences. أفهم أن نتائج هذا الإستبيان سوف يتم استخدامها كجزء من دراسة أطروحة الدكتوراة في جامعة نيو كاسل بالإضافة إلى نشرها لاحقاً في المجلات الأكاديمية وتقديمها في المؤتمرات العلميه.	☐
7.	I understand that other researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the total confidentiality of the data. أفهم بأن الباحثين الآخرين سوف يطلعون على هذه البيانات وذلك شريطة موافقتهم على المحافظة على السرية التامة لتلك البيانات.	☐
8.	I, along with the researcher, agree to sign and date this informed consent form. أُوافق أنا و الباحثه على توقيع و توثيق استمارة الموافقه هذة.	☐

Participant: المشارك/ة

_____ _____ _____

Name of Participant أسم المشارك/ة Signatureالتوقيع Date التاريخ

Researcher: الباحثه

_____ _____ _____

Name of Researcher أسم الباحثه Signatureالتوقيع Date التاريخ

Thank you for your cooperation and participation شكراً لتعاونكم ومشاركتكم

Appendix D. Interview questions at T1 (November, 2016)

A. Pre-departure questions

1. Please tell me about your last few weeks in Saudi before your departure and your journey to the UK.

2. Why did you choose to study English in the UK and what were your motivations for studying abroad?

3. Before coming to the UK, did you have any preparation courses for study abroad in general or about the UK specifically? If yes, please specify. If no, how important do you think preparation is for Saudi students before going to study abroad?

B. Initial sojourn period

What are your expectations and aims for this year in studying English in the UK?

1. Psychological adaptation / Wellbeing

How would you say you have been feeling over the last few weeks?

a. What are the factors that you think affect your wellbeing / psychological adaptation?

2. *Sociocultural adaptation*

How do you feel about your social and cultural experience living in the UK so far?

a. To what extent do you consider it important to attend and adapt to social activities or events in the UK environment which are outside the classroom such as Christmas parties?

b. What are the factors that you think affect your social life?

Social contact and support

a. How important is it to you to develop friendships with British people? And why?

b. How important is it to you to develop friendships with other international students? And why?

c. How important is it to you to develop friendships with Saudi people? And why?

3. Academic adaptation

In this first semester of your course, how do you feel about your academic experience in general studying in the UK so far?

a. Do you feel that you are adjusted? And how are you finding your English language course?

b. What are the factors that you think affect your academic adaptation?

4. Motivation for and attitudes to learning English language

b. What are the difficulties that you have faced in your English language study so far and how do they affect your studies? What are the strategies and techniques that you have used to overcome the obstacles?

c. What are your motivations for learning English as a second language in general?

d. How do you feel about studying English in the UK?

f. How do you feel speaking English inside and outside the class?

h. What other second language learning experiences have you had? (Residence in a non-English speaking country, study abroad, vacations, etc.)

i. Are you going to continue studying English in your current programme/institution? If yes, why and what factors are motivating you to persist? If no, why and what factors might lead to you discontinuing your course?

Transitioning from a gender-segregated to a mixed-gender learning environment

a. How do you feel about the experience of learning in a mixed-gender environment and contacting and communicating with the opposite gender in class?

Finally, is there anything else you would like to add from your side about your experience in general so far?

Appendix E. Interview questions at T2 (February, 2017)

Have there been any changes in your life since the last interview in terms of your course of study or accommodation? How did you spend your time in the Christmas break?

Psychological adjustment

How would you say you have been feeling over the last few months? What are the factors that you think affect your wellbeing/psychological adjustment? Have you had any difficulty adjusting psychologically and if so, how have you dealt with it?

Sociocultural adjustment

How do you feel about your social and cultural experience living in the UK so far? What are the factors that you think affect your social or cultural adjustment? Have you had any difficulty adjusting to life here in the UK? If so, how have you dealt with it?

Social contact and support

Tell me about your current social circle. Who do you spend most of your time with and what kinds of activities do you do with these people?

Could you describe to me the dynamics of your social circle? How has it evolved since the last interview?

Have you established some social links with local people?

Do you often interact with them? Do you think such social interaction helps you? In what way?

How much time, would you say, do you spend with each of these groups:

- Saudi students and the community?
- International students?
- British people?

How satisfied are you with the social support you receive from the people around you? And what kind of support? Who do you turn to for academic support? Who do you turn to for emotional support?

Please tell me about your interactions with British people.

What are your impressions of the local environment and the local people?

Academic adjustment

In this semester of your course, how do you feel about your academic experience in general studying in the UK so far? How are you finding your English language course?

How have things been going for you academically so far?

Have you adjusted? And please tell me about your experience of the first semester.

How did you find the new learning environment? (Teaching and learning style, assessment procedures, students' and teachers' roles in the class, relationships between students and staff)

Have you had any difficulty adjusting academically to your English course? If so, how have you dealt with it?

Motivation for and attitudes to learning English language

How would you say your English language ability has developed over the last few months?

What are the difficulties that you have faced in your English language studies so far and how have they affected your studies? What are the strategies and techniques that you have used to overcome the obstacles?

Do you feel your social interactions are helping you improve your English language competence? If yes, can you give me some examples? And what aspects of your competence do you think are improving so far?

How do you feel about speaking English inside and outside the class?

Are you going to continue studying English in your current programme/institution? If yes, why and what factors are motivating you to persist? If no, why and what factors might lead to you discontinue your course?

Transitioning from a gender-segregated to a mixed-gender learning environment

How do you feel about the experience of learning in a mixed-gender environment and having contact and communication with the opposite gender in class so far?

Finally, is there anything else you would like to add from your side about your experience in general so far?

Appendix F. Interview questions at T3 (May, 2017)

Are there any changes in your life that you have experienced since the last interview in terms of your course of study or accommodation? How did you spend your last break?

Psychological adjustment

How would you say you have been feeling over the last few months? What are the factors that you think affect your wellbeing/psychological adjustment? Have you had any difficulty adjusting psychologically and if so, how have you dealt with it?

Sociocultural adjustment

How do you feel about your social and cultural experience living in the UK so far? What are the factors that you think affect your social or cultural adjustment? Have you had any difficulty adjusting to life here in the UK? If so, how have you dealt with it?

Social contact and support

Tell me about your current social circle. Who do you spend most of your time with and what kinds of activities do you do with these people?

Could you describe to me the dynamics of your social circle? How has it evolved since the last interview?

Have you established some social links with local people?

Do you often interact with them? Do you think such social interaction helps you? In what way?

How much time, would you say, do you spend with each of these groups:

- Saudi students and the community?
- International students?
- British people?

How satisfied are you with the social support you receive from the people around you? And what kind of support? Who do you turn to for academic support? Who do you turn to for emotional support?

Please tell me about your interactions with British people.

What are your impressions of the local environment and the local people?

Academic adjustment

In this semester of your course, how do you feel about your academic experience in general studying in the UK so far? How are you finding your English language course?

How have things been going for you academically so far?

Have you adjusted? And please tell me about your experience of the first semester.

How did you find the new learning environment? (Teaching and learning style, assessment procedures, students' and teachers' roles in the class, relationships between students and staff)

Have you had any difficulty adjusting academically to your English course? If so, how have you dealt with it?

Motivation for and attitudes to learning English language

How would you say your English language ability has developed over the last few months?

What are the difficulties that you have faced in your English language studies so far and how have they affected your studies? What are the strategies and techniques that you have used to overcome the obstacles?

Do you feel your social interactions are helping you improve your English language competence? If yes, can you give me some examples? And what aspects of your competence do you think are improving so far?

How do you feel about speaking English inside and outside the class?

Are you going to continue studying English in your current programme/institution? If yes, why and what factors are motivating you to persist? If no, why and what factors might lead to you discontinue your course?

Transitioning from a gender-segregated to a mixed-gender learning environment

How do you feel about the experience of learning in a mixed-gender environment and having contact and communication with the opposite gender in class so far?

Finally, is there anything else you would like to add from your side about your experience in general so far?