

# **Effects of Acculturation Factor on Saudi Arabian English Language Learners: A Contextual Comparison Study**

Nasser Saad Alasmari  
MA in Applied Linguistics  
(University of Newcastle, Australia)

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor  
of Philosophy in the School of Humanities and Social Science at the  
University of Newcastle, Australia

SEPTEMBER, 2013

# *Declaration*

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

Nasser Alasmari

(Signed): ..... (Candidate)

Date: 03 SEPTEMBER, 2013

# *Dedication*

*To my mother and father,*

whose prayers and patience have given me the hope  
and strength to pursue my goals.

*To my first teacher, Mr Mussa Alhaj Yosuf,*

who taught me the alphabets of life, whose imprint will last forever

*To My wife and two sons,*

who gave me the courage and love to accomplish my achievement

# *Acknowledgements*

I first and last thank Allah, the Almighty, for giving me the inspiration, patience and strength to finish this work.

Secondly, I would like to extend my thanks to my brothers and sisters, family members and friends who supported me during this journey. I am grateful to all of them and apologize for being unable to keep in touch with them over the last few years.

I give a special acknowledgement to my supervisors, lecturers and teachers at the University of Newcastle and other institutes throughout my life; I am grateful for their encouragement, patience, care, and the hope they have given me.

My greatest debt of gratitude is owed to my principal supervisor, Dr Jean Harkins; happiness is not the only gift she gave me. The greatest gift is that she taught me every day how to be a human. Illness meant she was unable to supervise the final stages of my thesis; however, her spirit, emanating love and hope, continued to inspire me in completing this work.

I am also grateful to Dr Bill Palmer, my co-supervisor, and Professor Peter Peterson, my acting supervisor, who took over research supervision during Dr Jean's long service leave. I am grateful for their support, insightful comments and kindness at that critical stage of my study.

I would like to express sincere appreciation and gratitude to my two best friends in Australia, Abdullah Almatrafi and Mohammed Albadi. It was a great blessing to have such friends giving their support, sincere advice and generous help to encourage me to complete my study.

I am indebted to all participants in this study for their positive contribution, time and willingness to share their opinions and information. I am also thankful to Dr Mansour Alhazmi, Dr Fahd Alolaqi, and Dr Saud Alsulami from King Abdulaziz University, and Mr Saeed Abdulrahman Alghamdi from Bishah College of Technology for their endless assistance throughout this work.

Finally, my very sincere special thanks and appreciation go to my brother, Shaikh Fayez Bin Saad Alasmari, for his continuous prayers, encouragement and help in accomplishing our goals.

# *Content*

<b>Declaration</b>	<b>II</b>
<b>Dedication</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>Acknowledgment</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>Contents</b>	<b>VI</b>
<b>List of tables</b>	<b>XI</b>
<b>List of figures</b>	<b>XIII</b>
<b>List of appendices</b>	<b>XV</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>XVI</b>
<b>Chapter One: Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Thesis structure	3
1.2 Statement of the problem	5
1.3 Significance of the current study	6
1.4 Objectives of the study and research questions	8
1.5 Definitions of terms and abbreviations	10
<b>Chapter Two: The Literature Review</b>	
Introduction	12
Section One	
2.1 Social & psychological models of second-language acquisition	14
2.1.1 The acculturation model	14
2.1.1.1 An empirical look at the acculturation model	15
2.1.1.2 Acculturation model critique	16
2.1.2 The intergroup model	17
2.1.2.1 An empirical look at the intergroup model	18
2.1.2.2 Intergroup model critique	19
2.1.3 The socio-educational model	20
2.1.3.1 An empirical look at the socio-educational model	21
2.1.3.2 Socio-educational model critique	22
2.1.4 The Social context model	23
2.1.4.1 An empirical look at the social context model	24
2.1.4.2 Social context model critique	24
2.1.5 Interpretive summary and conclusion	25
Section Two	
2.2 Social and pedagogical profile of Saudi Arabia	27
2.2.1 A historical look at the Saudi Arabian social structure	27
2.2.2 A look at the Saudi Arabian educational system	32
2.2.3 Current issues in teaching English in Saudi Arabia	36
Section Three	
2.3 English language learning in the study abroad (SA) context	40
2.3.1 ESL vs. EFL	42
2.3.2 Studying English in Australia	43
2.3.3 Cultural and academic adjustment of Saudi international students	48

Section Four	
2.4 The concept of acculturation	54
2.4.1 The concept of acculturation	54
2.4.2 Acculturation model early steps	55
2.4.3 Levels of acculturation	57
2.4.4 Types of acculturation	58
2.4.5 Social and affective variables	58
2.4.6 Review of earlier attempts and related views	65
2.4.7 Critique of the theory	69
2.5 Summary of chapter two	70
<b>Chapter Three: Research Methodology</b>	
Introduction	72
Section One	
3.1 Justifying for use mixed methods approach	73
Section Two	
3.2 The current study	76
3.2.1 The survey	77
3.2.2 Interviews	81
3.2.3 The language testing	82
3.2.4 The research sites	82
Section Three	
3.3 Data collection and data analysis	83
3.3.1 Data collection	83
3.3.2 Data analysis	87
3.3.2.1 For the quantitative data	87
3.3.2.2 For the qualitative data	87
3.3.2.3 Marking of the language testing	88
Section Four	
3.4 Participants	90
3.4.1 Saudi context sample	90
3.4.1.1 Gender and age	91
3.4.1.2 Level of English	91
3.4.1.3 Prior English training and travelling experience	92
3.4.2 Australian context sample	93
3.4.2.1 Gender and age	93
3.4.2.2 Level of English	94
3.4.2.3 Prior English training and travelling experience	95
<b>Chapter Four: Quantitative Data Analysis and Results</b>	
Introduction	97
Section One	
4.1 Findings of the Saudi context quantitative data	98
4.1.1 Normality of data	98
4.1.2 Stage one: Findings of the rejection scale	100
4.1.2.1 Subsection 1: Resistance toward learning English	102
4.1.2.2 Subsection 2: Preference for Arabic language and culture	107
4.1.2.3 Subsection 3: Cultural resistance	113

4.1.2.4 Analysis: Cross tabulation	118
4.1.2.4.1 Level of English vs. level of rejection	118
4.1.2.4.2 Age vs. level of rejection	120
4.1.2.4.3 Travelling vs. level of rejection	122
4.1.2.4.4 Prior English training vs. level of rejection	123
4.1.3 Stage Two: Findings of the integration scale	125
4. 1.3.1 Subsection 4: Orientation to language learning	127
4. 1.3.2 Subsection 5: Orientation to culture learning	133
4. 1.3.3 Subsection 6: Engagement	138
4. 1.3.4 Analysis: Cross tabulation	143
4. 1.3.4.1 Level of English vs. level of integration	143
4. 1.3.4.2 Age vs. level of integration	145
4. 1.3.4.3 Travelling vs. level of integration	146
4. 1.3.4.4 Prior English training vs. level of integration	148
4.1.4 Stage three: Findings of the assimilation scale	150
4.1.4.1 Subsection 7: Life style	152
4.1.4.2 Subsection 8: Western culture and custom	157
4.1.4.3 Subsection 9: Adoption	162
4.1.4.4 Analysis: Cross tabulation	168
4.1.4.4.1 Level of English vs. level of assimilation	168
4.1.4.4.2 Age vs. level of assimilation	170
4.1.4.4.3 Travelling vs. level of assimilation	171
4.1.4.4.4 Prior English training vs. level of assimilation	173
4.1.5 Language testing results	175
4.1.5.1 Relation between degree of rejection and the results of the language test	175
4.1.5.2 Relation between degree of integration and the results of the language test	176
4.1.5.3 Relation between degree of assimilation and the results of the language test	176
4.1.5.4 Correlation	177
Section Two	
4.2 Findings of the Australian context quantitative data	179
4.2.1 Normality of data	179
4.2.2 Stage One: Findings of the rejection scale	181
4.2.2.1 Subsection 1: Resistance toward learning English	184
4.2.2.2 Subsection 2: Preference for Arabic language and culture	189
4.2.2.3 Subsection 3: Cultural resistance	194
4.2.3 Stage Two: Findings of the integration scale	199
4.2.3.1 Subsection 4: Orientation to language learning	201
4.2.3.2 Subsection 5: Orientation to culture learning	206
4.2.3.3 Subsection 6: Engagement	211
4.2.4 Stage Three: Findings of the assimilation scale	216
4.2.4.1 Subsection 7: Life style	218
4.2.4.2 Subsection 8: Western culture and custom	223
4.2.4.3 Subsection 9: Adoption	228
4.2.5 The impact of the demographic data on dependants variables	234
4.2.5.1 H1: Level of English	234

4.2.5.2 H2: Age of participants	235
4.2.5.3 H3: Prior English training	236
4.2.5.4 H4: Frequency of travelling	237
4.2.5.5 Correlation	238
4.2.6 Language testing results	239
4.2.6.1 Relation between degree of rejection and the results of the language test	240
4.2.6.2 Relation between degree of integration and the results of the language test	240
4.2.6.3 Relation between degree of assimilation and the results of the language test	241
4.2.6.4 Correlation	241
Section Three	
4.3 Summary of findings of the quantitative section analysis	243

## **Chapter Five: Qualitative Data Analysis and Results**

Introduction	249
Section One	
5.1 Analysis and results of the Saudi context qualitative data	250
5.1.1 Phase one: Main interviews	250
5.1.1.1 Early learning difficulties	250
5.1.1.2 The role of personality characteristics	254
5.1.1.3 Western culture and custom	257
5.1.1.4 Preference for English communication	260
5.1.1.5 Preference for reading	263
5.1.1.6 Preference for Arabic language	267
5.1.2 Phase two: Follow-up interviews	268
Section Two	
5.2 Analysis and results of the Australian context qualitative data	271
5.2.1 Phase one: Main interviews	271
5.2.1.1 Early learning difficulties	271
5.2.1.2 The role of personality characteristics	275
5.2.1.3 Western culture and custom	277
5.2.1.4 Preference for English communication	281
5.2.1.5 Preference for reading	285
5.2.1.6 Preference for Arabic language	288
5.2.2 Phase two: Follow-up interviews	290
Section Three	
5.3 Summary of findings from the qualitative section analysis	293

## **Chapter Six: Conclusions, Contributions Limitations, and Recommendations**

6.1 Introduction	299
6.2 Summary of the study	299
6.3 Summary of findings	300
6.3.1 Summary of the questionnaire section findings	301
6.3.2 Summary of the interview section findings	302

6.3.3 Relations to previous studies and theoretical models	304
6.4 Contributions of the study	305
6.5 Limitations of the study	306
6.6 Recommendations of the study	308
6.7 Directions for further research	309
<b>References</b>	311
<b>Appendices</b>	349

# *List of Tables*

<b>Table</b>	<b>Page</b>
3.1: Summary of the Saudi context language test respondents	85
3.2: Summary of the Australian context language test respondents	86
3.3: Phases of thematic analysis	88
3.4: Gender of participants for the Saudi context	91
3.5: Participants age group	91
3.6: Prior English training	92
3.7: Travelling	93
3.8: Gender of participating students for the Australian context	93
3.9: Prior English training	95
3.10: Travelling	96
4.1: Tests of normality – SA context	99
4.1.1: Responses to the rejection scale	100
4.1.1.1: Responses to the first group of rejection scale questions	102
4.1.1.2: Responses to the second group of rejection scale questions	107
4.1.1.3: Responses to the third group of rejection scale questions	112
4.1.1.4: Chi-Square tests - level of English vs. level of rejection	119
4.1.1.5: Chi-Square Tests - age vs. level of rejection	121
4.1.1.6: Chi-Square Tests - travelling vs. level of rejection	122
4.1.1.7: Chi-Square Tests - prior English training vs. level of rejection	124
4.1.2: Responses to the integration scale	125
4.1.2.1: Responses to the first group of integration scale questions	127
4.1.2.2: Responses to the second group of integration scale questions	133
4.1.2.3: Responses to the third group of integration scale questions	138
4.1.2.4: Chi-Square Tests - level of English vs. level of integration	144
4.1.2.5: Chi-Square Tests - age vs. level of integration	146
4.1.2.6: Chi-Square Tests - travelling vs. level of integration	147
4.1.2.7: Chi-Square Tests - prior English training vs. level of integration	149
4.1.3: Responses to the assimilation scale	150
4.1.3.1: Responses to the first group of assimilation scale questions	152
4.1.3.2: Responses to the second group of assimilation scale questions	157
4.1.3.3: Responses to the third group of assimilation scale questions	162
4.1.3.4: Chi-Square Tests - level of English vs. level of assimilation	169
4.1.3.5: Chi-Square Tests - age vs. level of assimilation	171
4.1.3.6: Chi-Square Tests - travelling vs. level of assimilation	172
4.1.3.7: Chi-Square Tests - prior English training vs. level of assimilation	174
4.1.4: Language test result	175
4.1.4.1: Chi-Square Tests – language test result vs. degree of rejection	175
4.1.4.2: Chi-Square Tests – language test result vs. degree of integration	176
4.1.4.3: Chi-Square Tests – language test result vs. degree of assimilation	176
4.1.4.4: Correlations	177
4.2: Tests of normality – AU context	180
4.2.1: Responses to the rejection scale	181

4.2.1.1: Responses to the first group of rejection scale questions	184
4.2.1.2: Responses to the second group of rejection scale questions	189
4.2.1.3: Responses to the third group of rejection scale questions	194
4.2.2: Responses to the integration scale	199
4.2.2.1: Responses to the first group of integration scale questions	201
4.2.2.2: Responses to the second group of integration scale questions	206
4.2.2.3: Responses to the third group of integration scale questions	211
4.2.3: Responses to the assimilation scale	216
4.2.3.1: Responses to the first group of assimilation scale questions	218
4.2.3.2: Responses to the second group of assimilation scale questions	223
4.2.3.3: Responses to the third group of assimilation scale questions	228
4.2.4: ANOVA – Level of English	234
4.2.5: ANOVA – Age of participants	235
4.2.6: ANOVA – Prior English training	236
4.2.7: ANOVA – Frequency of travelling	237
4.2.8: Correlations	238
4.2.9: Language test result	239
4.2.9.1: Chi-Square Tests - language test result vs. degree of rejection	240
4.2.9.2: Chi-Square Tests - language test result vs. degree of integration	240
4.2.9.3: Chi-Square Tests - language test result vs. degree of assimilation	241
4.2.9.4: Correlations	242
4.3.1: Overall findings of rejection scale	244
4.3.2: Overall findings of integration scale	245
4.3.3: Overall findings of assimilation scale	246

# *List of Figures*

<b>Figure</b>	<b>Page</b>
2.1: The socio-educational model	20
2.2: Map of Saudi Arabia showing the locations of the main regions	30
2.3: Saudi educational ladder	35
2.4: Study paths - ELICOS Australia	45
3.1: The methodological procedure	74
3.2: Participants level of English	92
3.3: The age of participants	94
3.4: Participants' levels of English	95
4.1.1: Responses to the rejection scale	102
4.1.1.1: Responses to the first group of rejection scale questions	106
4.1.1.2: Responses to the second group of rejection scale questions	112
4.1.1.3: Responses to the third group of rejection scale questions	117
4.1.1.4: Level of English vs. level of rejection	118
4.1.1.5: Age vs. level of rejection	120
4.1.1.6: Travelling vs. level of rejection	122
4.1.1.7: Prior English training vs. level of rejection	123
4.1.2: Responses to the integration scale	127
4.1.2.1: Responses to the first group of integration scale questions	132
4.1.2.2: Responses to the second group of integration scale questions	137
4.1.2.3: Responses to the third group of integration scale questions	142
4.1.2.4: Level of English vs. level of integration	143
4.1.2.5: Age vs. level of integration	145
4.1.2.6: Travelling vs. level of integration	146
4.1.2.7: Prior English training vs. level of integration	148
4.1.3: Responses to the assimilation scale	152
4.1.3.1: Responses to the first group of assimilation scale questions	157
4.1.3.2: Responses to the second group of assimilation scale questions	162
4.1.3.3: Responses to the third group of assimilation scale questions	167
4.1.3.4: Level of English vs. level of assimilation	168
4.1.3.5: Age vs. level of assimilation	170
4.1.3.6: Travelling vs. level of assimilation	171
4.1.3.7: Prior English training vs. level of assimilation	173
4.2.1: Responses to the rejection scale	183
4.2.1.1: Responses to the first group of rejection scale questions	188
4.2.1.2: Responses to the second group of rejection scale questions	193
4.2.1.3: Responses to the third group of rejection scale questions	198
4.2.2: Responses to the integration scale	201
4.2.2.1: Responses to the first group of integration scale questions	206
4.2.2.2: Responses to the second group of integration scale questions	210
4.2.2.3: Responses to the third group of integration scale questions	215
4.3.1: Responses to the assimilation scale	218
4.3.1.1: Responses to the first group of assimilation scale questions	223

4.3.1.2: Responses to the second group of assimilation scale questions	228
4.3.1.3: Responses to the third group of assimilation scale questions	233

# *Appendices*

<b>Appendices</b>	<b>Page</b>
Appendix A: Information statement for the educational institutes	350
Appendix B: Educational institutes consent form	355
Appendix C: Information statement for the students (English)	356
Appendix D: Information statement for the students (Arabic)	361
Appendix E: Students' questionnaire section consent form (English)	365
Appendix F: Students' questionnaire section consent form (Arabic)	366
Appendix G: Students' language testing section consent form (English)	367
Appendix H: Students' language testing section consent form (Arabic)	368
Appendix I: Students' interview section consent form (English)	369
Appendix J: Students' interview section consent form (Arabic)	370
Appendix K: Students' questionnaire (English)	371
Appendix L: Students' questionnaire (Arabic)	379
Appendix M: Students' language testing	387

# *Abstract*

The aim of the current study is to assess the effects of acculturation factors on Saudi students at university language centres in Saudi Arabia and Australia when they studying or using English as a foreign language. Secondary research purposes were first to explore the relationships among participants' demographic data: age, level of English, prior English training and prior travel to an English-speaking country. Another secondary purpose was to determine the role and influence of cultural change on Saudi students' religious and cultural perceptions in the Australian context, and how those factors affect their language learning and culture adjustment.

To achieve the research's aims, this study employed mixed quantitative and qualitative research methods, including a questionnaire, in-depth face-to-face interviews and a language test. Two hundred Saudi English-language learners in both Saudi Arabia and Australia—100 participants in each context—participated in the questionnaire section. There were 40 participants in the language testing section (20 participants from each context), and 20 participants for the interviews (10 participants from each context). Research data were collected from two universities: King Khalid University for the Saudi context, and the University of Newcastle for the Australian context.

Results from the quantitative and qualitative data collected for the current study revealed that the Saudi context participants were socially, psychologically, and culturally distant from the target language and the target language group, with high levels of rejection. On the other hand, social, psychological and cultural distance was still noticeable for the Saudi students in the Australian context, while integration scored the highest level in the Australian context participants' responses. Comparisons of the findings of the three scales; rejection, integration, and assimilation for both contexts demonstrated that the contextual atmosphere had an impact on the learners' degree of acculturation.