SOCIAL FACTORS AFFECTING
THE ACCULTURATION OF YOUNG SAUDI
CHILDREN IN THE AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

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MA in Applied Linguistics
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Statement of originality

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(Signed): ................................ ...................................................  (Candidate)
Date: 30 November, 2011
Dedication

In loving memory of my father, Abdulrahman Almuraikhi
who taught me the true value of honesty, integrity, and hard work.

To my lovely husband and my best university colleague, Mohammed Albousaif
whose encouragement, support, and unconditional love comforted me all the way
and inspired me to pursue my dreams.

To my two sons, Abdulaziz and Abdulrahman,
who mean the world to me.
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Abstract

This project examines the sociolinguistic situation of bilingual Saudi children in Australian early childhood educational settings. It investigates the social factors surrounding the children and these factors’ effectiveness in the sociolinguistic growth of these young learners of English as a second language (ESL). It is acknowledged that the ESL child’s supportive social network including parents, friends, teachers, and the media can facilitate their social integration either inside or outside the school. Children’s social and cultural backgrounds together with their native languages have a crucial role to play. Additionally, learning a second language is the initial step in the process of acculturation. Researchers indicated an interrelation between acculturation and learners’ achievement level in the second language. The learners’ language competence is seen to be influenced by their desire to communicate with the target culture. Integration into the target community can lead to successful acquisition of the second language. A crucial factor is the learners’ attitude held toward the new culture. Practically, the research looks at the formal and informal sociolinguistic environments surrounding ESL children. It investigates the main social factors affecting ESL children’s acculturation and their implications regarding Saudi children, and other sojourners, in Australia. It aims to specify the sociolinguistic hindrances Saudi children face either in the Australian context or when they return to Saudi Arabia, and to identify strategies provided by parents and teachers to foster their children’s acculturation, reacculturation, and bilingualism.

The research used two types of methods: semi-structured interviews and a structured questionnaire. The interview study had two groups of Saudi mothers: the acculturation group and the repatriation group. A total of 20 interviews reflecting Saudi mothers’ viewpoints regarding the acculturation and reacculturation of their children form the basis of this study; five of them were conducted with returnees to Saudi Arabia. The structured questionnaire was administered to 30 teachers who had dealt with Saudi children in early childhood educational levels within the region of Newcastle. The results of the research highlight how ESL children are influenced by their families’ religious and cultural backgrounds. They are not only crucial for Saudi children but also for young ESL children from diverse backgrounds because they focus on essential aspects of child acculturation and second language acquisition.
(SLA). It is hoped that the results will be beneficial to ESL learners and to the field of linguistics in general.

**Key words:** Saudi children, acculturation, supportive social factors, young sojourners, second language acquisition, re-entry research.
Chapter One: Young Sojourners, ESL and the Importance of Acculturation

1.1 Why studying young sojourners in Australia matters

Recent decades have witnessed a steady increase in the frequency, intensity, and incidence of sojourners (temporary migrants) moving across national and ethnic boundaries (Bochner, 2006). This fact is recently observed in the increasing funding for overseas study and the growing diversification of study abroad destinations sponsored by the Saudi government. Nowadays, Saudi Arabia seems to be pursuing a policy of building strong relationships with a wide range of countries and encouraging collaboration with overseas universities for various political, cultural, educational, scientific, and economic reasons (The Ministry of Higher Education, 2008). The influx of international Saudi students currently studying abroad accounts for a significant proportion of overseas enrolments in countries like Australia. As thousands of Saudi students are being invited over a considerable period of time to apply for the Saudi scholarship program, greater opportunity is provided for their accompanying family members to be eligible for scholarships. As a result, overseas schools are being called upon to incorporate children from an ethnic group with distinctive cultural norms, religious beliefs and practices. The question arises whether children of this diverse group will integrate into the new culture and what factors can facilitate their acculturation process.

This study examines the sociolinguistic situation of sojourning Saudi children in Australian early childhood educational settings and the Australian context in general. It investigates the social factors (e.g., family, teachers, and friends) surrounding the children and their effectiveness in fostering acculturation as a salient aspect of the sociolinguistic growth of these young ESL learners. The genesis of this research occurred in 2008 when I had to bring my two children to study with me in Australia. In the same year, universities in Australia were unexpectedly inundated with hundreds of applications from Saudi students who wished to come to Australia in
order to study English and then matriculate to higher education programs. My children as well as other Saudi children were moved to an environment totally different from their own. As a mother, teacher, and linguistics student, I have witnessed how they experienced linguistic difficulties and identity conflicts through sociolinguistic interactions with the host culture. I also discovered that Saudi child sojourners were underrepresented in the literature and the recent phenomenon of their intercultural exchanges in this country is therefore in need of more attention.

According to Patron (2006), numerous studies have been carried out on academic sojourners. However, the main focus has been on the academic dimensions rather than the social and cultural dimensions of their experience, and not on the youngest and most impressionable age group. These latter dimensions are essential to understanding the communication challenges and conflicts that sojourner children experience in their journey toward acculturation. A significant purpose of this study was to investigate the main social factors affecting ESL children’s acculturation and their implications regarding Saudi children (and other sojourners) in Australia. In order to do so, the researcher used a qualitative research method to reveal mothers’ and teachers’ perceptions of this issue. Certainly, it would be ideal also to investigate the experiences and perceptions of the young learners themselves, but due to the complete lack of prior investigation in this area, this study seeks to map out the social and educational environment surrounding them as a precursor to more direct investigation with child participants.

1.2 Becoming bilingual: Social and educational contexts

When individuals move into the host culture, exposure to the second language (L2) becomes unavoidable and their becoming a bilingual is the general expectation. Sojourners experience different types of interaction with members of the target culture and encounter different opportunities to acquire the L2 either formally or informally. Being surrounded by numerous influences, including their own families, young sojourners may also develop particular attitudes either to their first language (L1) or the L2. Various degrees of acculturation to the host culture also leave those children with different levels of proficiency in the L2. This research project proposes
that both positive and negative interaction experiences supported by the child’s social networks are essential variables in the process of acculturation.

In terms of social context, we found that the family arguably represents the most influential element in an individual’s life (Vuckovic, 2008). Language minority or ESL parents have a crucial role in their children’s academic achievement (Gonzalez, 2001) and their adaptation to the new context (Pihamaa, 2002). Moving to a new country, children rely on their parents’ resources to overcome their unfamiliarity with the new place (Li, 1999; Pihamaa, 2002). In a data-based study to investigate the effect of interactions between internal and external factors resulting in resilient or at-risk situations for minority children, Masten and Coatsworth (1998, cited in Gonzalez, 2001, p. 3) state that:

Children who have good internal and external resources tend to get off to a good start in school … [whereas] Children who enter school with few resources, cognitive difficulties, and self-regulatory problems often have academic problems, and get into trouble with teachers, and are at risk for disengaging from normative school and peer contexts.

Compared to other dimensions of the process such as social distance and ethnic identity, the connection between acculturation and family relationships has not been sufficiently analysed in the literature; there have been only a few attempts to examine family processes that affect the acculturative process, such as parent-child relationships and family functioning (Amer, 2005). Other attempts emphasised other facets of the sojourner’s social context, such as friends from and members of the target culture. Social alliances and friendships in the host culture are also essential in acquiring social skills, cultural knowledge, and gaining the acceptance that is required to adjust to the new culture (Cline et al., 2002; Gonzales, 2006; Pihamaa, 2002; Shi, 2001). Moreover, social interactions either with members of one’s own culture or with members of the host culture have been acknowledged as an essential component of the process of acculturation (Phinney, Berry, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2006).

There is some disagreement over which teaching contexts are meaningful for learners from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds, especially because young children have already formed their attitudes and cultural expectations for their self-
identities and styles of behaviour in different social contexts. In the case of lack of congruence between the cultural expectations of the home and school, an initial feeling of tension and discomfort may affect the child in the school situation. Although children generally have the ability to navigate their ways successfully between the different home- and school cultures, designing efficient classroom practices to assist a successful transition from home to school requires teachers and educators to be aware of the child’s home experiences (Espinosa, 2005).

Moreover, the teacher’s role and the educational environment have undeniable impact on the child’s progress toward bilingualism. According to Vuckovic (2008), the teacher is a key figure in various aspects of the child’s life. Dyadic teacher-child relationships involve a reciprocal role in the experience of both sides (Pianta, Hamre & Stuhlman, 2003; Vuckovic, 2008). Nowadays, teachers face new challenges instructing students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The number of those students in Australian schools is dramatically increasing as a result of the change in the characteristics of the school-aged population (Howard, 2003; Lee, 2004; McInerney & McInerney, 2006; McLaughlin, 1992; Richards, Brown & Forde, 2006; Youngs & Youngs, 2001). Neither the various aspects of these relationships nor the challenges faced by teachers have been emphasised satisfactorily in the literature. According to Tzivinikou (2005), each child is unique in his/her character and the ways he/she confronts a new environment. Any learning situation is affected by both past experiences and the individual ways of interaction that the child brings to the school environment.

McLaughlin (1992) declares that most teachers are probably not conscious that ESL children differ in their manner and rate of learning a second language. Teachers have unrealistic expectations of the second language acquisition process (McLaughlin, 1992) and the children’s emulating of the attitudes or behaviours of the host culture (Bryan & Atwater, 2002). Others express unwillingness to acknowledge or discuss cultural differences (Gayle-Evans, 2004; Lasso & Soto, 2005). Unfortunately, these children can be harmed due to such intuitive assumptions and personal perceptions (McLaughlin, 1992), as it is found that more negative expectation effects are caused by teachers holding social class biases and rigid stereotypes of students (Snow,
Recently, the literature on cultural diversity in education has suggested that school-based curriculum is a crucial structural factor that contributes to profitable multicultural education practices. Making changes in the various dimensions of the educational system is important to prevent ESL learners from becoming socially disadvantaged, and to break down any barriers that impede their learning (Mansouri & Kamp, 2007). There is an increasing necessity to examine school curricula to ensure that all students are taught using effective and proven methods (Westendorf & Karr-Kidwell, 2002). This should be done through coordinated and coherent reviews of all areas of educational content (Socknat, 2006). Smith (2006) and Pyterek (2006) assert that to take diversity into account, curriculum change or modernisation of instructional strategies are some of many levels. These levels are interrelated within the educational system to achieve a learning process that is sensitive to diversity and to avoid cultural discrimination. The curriculum can also be modified by teachers whose skills can influence the outcomes of learning. In many countries, the need to avoid a curriculum biased toward a specific cultural group has led education policy-makers to emphasise, by advocating culturally sensitive approaches, the development of social skills needed by today’s children.

1.3 Saudi child sojourners

Every nation is proud of its higher-achieving people and we are particularly proud of you, our Saudi brothers and sisters studying all over the world. We are looking forward to your returning with knowledge with which you can serve and develop your country. So, the responsibility lies with you to seek, with tireless determination, to acquire knowledge and learning. (King Abdullah Ben Abdulaziz, cited in The Ministry of Higher Education, 2008, p. 26)

To provide a comprehensive picture of the context of Saudi children studying in Australia, it is essential to point out the main reasons Saudi families have come here.
The most significant reason has been the granting of Saudi government scholarships, represented in the *King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP)*, which began in the fall of 2005. Since 2005, the Ministry of Higher Education, under the guidance of King Abdullah Ben Abdulaziz, encouraged more than 25,000 Saudi students (males and females) to apply for the opportunity of the scholarships. These scholarships were valid for over the next five years (AME Info FZ LLC/Emap Limited, 2007; Shaw, 2010).

This section focuses on these Saudi children’s backgrounds. It presents basic demographic information about them and the reason they came to Australia. It also gives some information about King Abdullah’s Scholarship Program discussing the beginning of the program, provides some statistics of Saudi students in Australia, the aims of the program, privileges given to Saudi students, and the role of the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission (SACM) as an essential mentor for the students and their families. After that, in order to facilitate understanding of the most important aspects with which Saudi children are raised, the chapter discusses the Saudi or Arabian Islamic and cultural characteristics.

No recent published studies focusing particularly on Saudi children in Australian or any other Western academic organisations, nor specific statistics about their numbers in Australian schools were found. Therefore, I will use my personal experience as a Saudi mother and a student studying in Australia to describe the setting of our children abroad. Adult Saudi students have the privilege to bring their families (spouses and children) who are then financially supported by the Saudi government to study in the schools and academic institutions of the country covered by the scholarship. The children speak Arabic as a native language (different dialects) and on arrival most of them have no or little proficiency in speaking English. A very large percentage of these children are infants and most are below the age of twelve. According to Gass and Selinker (2008), when they first interact with members of the host culture, these types of children’s primary language will be mostly settled and thus they will learn English within the frame of sequential acquisition for the L2 after their L1. Saudi children depend on two main sources to learn English: their school environment and their parents. Occasionally, Saudi parents use simple forms of
English (especially in front of other Saudis) when communicating with their children, either because they think that it is prestigious or because they want to assist their children’s second language acquisition (SLA).

As a result of spending considerable time in preschools, many Saudi preschoolers have acquired the behaviours, manners, and ideas of their Australian peers, which has become a source of complaint for many mothers. To make sure they are at the same level as other students in the Kingdom and based on the Saudi curriculum, children of school ages are often taught at home to prepare them for examinations at the end of every semester. When there is no Saudi school in the country of scholarship, they are assessed by examiners representing the Al-Haramain Islamic Academy in Jakarta, which is responsible for examining and issuing school certificates for Saudi students in Australia and East Asia. Examinations are held in particular halls or schools prepared by the Saudi Club. In most cases, Saudi preschoolers (especially those who have not attended a Saudi preschool) develop better literacy and numeracy skills in English than Arabic. However, Saudi families often visit each other, providing a good opportunity for children to practise their Arabic. Many parents notice with surprise that while playing, the children prefer to use English to communicate with each other; but this is not unusual among immigrant children, even when only temporarily resident.

The influx of Saudi children into the new context may raise many questions in the minds of those who are concerned about them. The children’s mothers may worry about their children being placed in an environment totally different to their own. Questions raised may be: ‘Are they going to integrate? How do they integrate and how can I help them?’ The children’s teachers may ask themselves questions like: ‘How can we communicate with these children and their parents? What should we do to assist their integration as well as their academic achievement?’

Further in this study, this review will consider useful background information about the main reasons bringing Saudi families into foreign countries, and which social and cultural aspects are considered essential in this ethnic group. It will also highlight the current state of knowledge in relation to the role of social factors surrounding ESL.
children and affecting their acculturation and integration into the new environment. A comprehensive literature review will be presented to investigate the current studies of the field of acculturation research and its relationships with ESL cultural identity, besides discussing issues of SLA in childhood.

1.3.1 Saudi children’s acculturation mode

Regarding the acculturation and adjustment modes of Saudi children, we cannot make use of the few studies conducted by some scholars (e.g., Aljasir, 1993 and Aljammaz, 1972) in the 70s to the 90s about the adjustment of Saudi scholarship students in the USA, because of the acknowledged differences between child and adult acculturation styles and attitudes (Lee, Mikesell, Joaquin, Mates & Schumann, 2009; Nitta, 2006; Schumann, 1978). According to Pihamaa (2002), children who are moved to a new culture due to educational or economic reasons adjust easier than children who moved for political reasons. Unlike most refugees and immigrants, sojourners are usually affiliated to a privileged minority in the host culture (e.g. they belong to upper classes or have a good socio-economic status). This probably promotes their acculturation process. Acculturation of Saudi children in the new context and factors that support their acculturation will be revealed in the findings of this present study.

From an Australian viewpoint, The State of Queensland Department of Education, Training and the Arts (2008) have provided a description of newly arrived ESL learners who enter Queensland schools at early childhood stages. It is pointed out that ESL learners may include migrants, refugees, or international sojourn students. Similarly to Saudi children, ESL learners in Australian schools come from non-English speaking countries and thus represent a wide range of educational backgrounds. They may attend school at any age, entering any educational stage at any time of the academic year. Some may have never attended school before and some may have had prior appropriate schooling in their primary language. Others may have some knowledge of English language, but even those who have had previous experience in a school environment may face difficulty in understanding the diverse learning processes and expected behavioural standards of the Australian schools. In addition, there may be vast differences between schools (schools in their
home countries and Australian schools) in resources, teachers’ qualifications, and
class size. Teachers need to take all these factors into consideration when making
curriculum choices for ESL students (The State of Queensland, Department of
Education, Training and the Arts, 2008).

1.3.2 King Abdullah’s Scholarship Program
In approaching the topic of the Saudi scholarship program, some light should be shed
on its beginning and early stages. This part will focus on providing an outline of these
scholarships and emphasising the Saudi leaders’ concentration on improving the
country through sending Saudi students to study abroad.

Currently, the strong need of the Saudi society to be more sophisticated is considered
one of the most effective motivations in decision making regarding the fields of
science and education. Recently, The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been
experiencing a total renaissance under the guidance of The Custodian of the Two
Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, who initiated a scholarship program
(The Program of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques for foreign scholarships or
King Abdullah Scholarship Program KASP) to support Saudi Universities as well as

On 25 April, 2005, a meeting was held in Crawford, Texas including King Abdullah
bin Abdullah Al Saud (Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia at the time) and President
George Bush. The meeting was considered a significant event to promote Saudi-U.S.
relations after the September 11 incidents (Saudi-US Relations Information Service
SUSRIS, 2005). A joint statement was released after the meeting including these
significant words:

Finally, the United States and Saudi Arabia agree that our future relations
must rest on a foundation of broad cooperation. We must work to expand
dialogue, understanding, and interactions between our citizens. This will
include programs designed to (1) increase the number of young Saudi
students to travel and study in the United States; (2) increase our military
exchange programs so that more Saudi officers visit the United States for
military education and training; and (3) increase the number of Americans
traveling to work and study in the Kingdom. The United States recognizes we
must exert great efforts to overcome obstacles facing Saudi businessmen and
students who wish to enter the United States and we pledge to our Saudi friends that we will take on this effort. (Saudi-U. S. Relations Information Service, 2005)

This joint statement was a main cause of the increase in the number of young Saudi students studying abroad. Since the King’s announcement, the program has been established through five main phases to sponsor highly competent students to continue their studies in a variety of academic fields in more than 21 different countries from the USA to Europe, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and many countries in Eastern Asia. Saudi students have been sent to continue their studies at the following levels of education: Bachelor degree, Master degree, Doctoral degree, and Medical fellowship (The Ministry of Higher Education, 2008).

In 2005/06, 17,500 Saudi nationals were awarded scholarships to study abroad at varied destinations including the USA, Europe, Japan, China, Russia, Canada, and Australia (AME Info FZ LLC/Emap Limited, 2007). According to a survey prepared for the Australian Government International Education Network, total enrolments for the Middle Eastern region in ELICOS institutions (English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students) in 2006 were 3,490 students; 74% of them were from Saudi Arabia (English Australia, 2007). In September, 2007, the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education released the names of almost 1,000 Saudi students to study in Australia (Australia Education International, 2007). In 2009, approximately 12,500 Saudi students were enrolled to complete their higher education at Australian educational institutions covering a wide variety of fields such as education, business, IT, health, and other specialist areas. By 2010, the number of Saudi students who were confirmed to be accepted at Australian universities and educational institutions reached over 9000 among more than 80,500 Saudi students studying abroad (The Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2010); the current number of Saudi students is predicted to reach over 10,000 by the end of the decade (The Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission SACM, 2009).

Historically, the influx of Saudi students completing their higher education abroad is due to country’s vast oil resources that funded the explosive expansion of the Saudi educational systems marked by the establishment of the organisation of the Ministry
of Education in 1953 and expanded with the Ministry of Higher Education in 1975. Recently, The Ministry of Education has implemented efforts to increase ‘Saudization’: substituting foreign guest workers with competent Saudi manpower to increase the Saudi ratio in its workforce, which put new major challenges before the Saudi educational system. Moreover, the country’s demographic profile is very young (over 60 % under the age of 18 years) and about one third of the Saudi students who have graduated from high school lack the required qualifications to enter higher education (Shaw, 2010). To meet these challenges, the Kingdom’s 2009 economic stimulus budget of USD $126.7 billion (the largest budget in Saudi Arabia’s history) allocated more than USD $32, 5 billion for education, training, and scholarship (Saudi-US Relations Information Service SUSRIS, 2008).

In 2007, The Ministry of Higher Education stated that “The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques- may Allah save him- has inaugurated his scholarship program under the supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education in order to fill the needs for specialised national cadres and to contribute to the preparation of national human resources that are specialised and prepared in the most distinguished foreign universities”. According to this statement, the main goals of the program are to support the Saudi work environment by building competent and professional cadres and to improve and elevate the level of vocational professionalism of these cadres. In line with the national needs of international, local, and regional economic development of the labour environment, the program attempts to send thousands of secondary-school and university graduates (who meet the Ministry’s high qualifications) to the best universities in different parts of the world. The level of professional and academic standards will be promoted through the program. Furthermore, scientific, cultural, and educational expertises will be exchanged between Saudi Arabia and countries of scholarship (The Ministry of Higher Education, 2008).

The scholarship recipients are provided with a generous financial support among various privileges. The tuition allowance covers at least one year of intensive English study (e.g., ELICOS institutions). There is financial support for spouses and dependents. On the top of that, one of the most useful privileges presented to Saudi
students is a fellowship support that allows members of the students’ family such as spouses and children to study the English language in the schools and academic institutions of the countries of scholarship. Upon achieving the required language level, the students’ spouses are able to become independent scholarship students by applying for a fellowship to the program (The Ministry of Higher Education, 2008).

The Saudi government has established numerous embassies, and Educational and Cultural Missions in the countries of scholarship. These Cultural Missions have similar responsibilities in providing comprehensive services in all aspects of the scholarship process. Saudi students and their families are supported in Australia and New Zealand through the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission (SACM), also known as the Cultural Mission of the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia. SACM provides many forms of advice, assistance, and monitoring to the students and their families, including assistance with Arabic and Islamic studies for students’ children, and establishing Saudi schools and clubs to encourage cultural maintenance during the sojourn abroad (The Ministry of Higher Education, 2008). Thus, the Saudi families are encouraged to devote attention to preserving the Islamic and Arab cultural aspects of their family life, in order to maintain a strong sense of identity, and to facilitate their re-entry into Saudi society on completion of their studies. Some of the key aspects that affect the daily lives of young Saudi children in Australia are outlined here.

1.3.3 Islamic aspects of Arab families

Islam emphasises the importance of family structure and marriage relations. Abudabbeh, (2005, p. 426) states that “[i]f the Qur’an is the soul of Islam, then the family can be described as the body”. Inside the family unit, men have specific responsibilities toward the whole family, women are instructed to treat their husbands with respect, and children are taught to honour their mothers. According to the traditional and Islamic codes of family and integrity, both parents are expected to support and consider the good of the family unit. Maintaining family ties is a priority for Muslim parents even if it means neglecting their personal wishes and self-satisfaction. Also, both parents are required to embrace particular values related to
hard work, the right to education and economic dependence, and avoidance of unacceptable behaviours or conducts (Abudabbeh, 2005). Furthermore, Islam prohibits premarital relations. Therefore, sexual purity is a source of family honour and marriage is a celebrated religious event and a vital rite of passage for Muslims. Thus, family or parents’ social networks play an important role in the accomplishment of most marriages in Islamic societies. Divorce is undertaken as a last solution (Abudabbeh, 2005; Amer, 2005). In crises, much consultation and negotiation occur before any decisions are taken, and patriarchs’ or matriarchs’ opinions and roles are paramount (Nydell, 2006). Through their child-raising methods, Muslim parents expect their children to maintain their Islamic and cultural heritage by obeying their parents and taking care of them in old age. The traditional family roles, values, and cultural customs of Muslim families are interwoven with their religious beliefs (Amer, 2005).

Islam is a complete way of life that influences every spiritual, social, economic, and political component of its followers’ life. In Arab societies, Islam is taught in schools and practiced openly. In fact, the Arabic language itself is full of Islamic expressions and religious phrases (Nydell, 2006). While children are not obligated to perform the religious duties of Islam until they reach puberty, many Muslim families introduce religious practices to their children at early ages (Syeed & Ritchie, 2006). Because it is impossible to discuss in details all Islamic teachings and values, which may vary according to Islamic doctrines or schools, I will only discuss the most important Islamic aspects which Muslim families usually want to emphasise through their child-rearing practices and that they wish their children’s teachers and friends will consider. It is important to know that while raising their children, parents are required by Islam to provide affection, proper upbringing, responsiveness, equal treatment, physical and psychological health, meaningful education, and playful environments for their children (Hadi & Al-Fayez, 2003).

Belief in God and religious practices in Muslim families
In the Arabic culture, religious affiliation seems of the utmost importance. Everyone should believe in God and acknowledge his/her religious affiliation to Islam. Agnostic or atheistic beliefs are expected to have no place in such a culture. Also, an
atheist may lose others’ respect and jeopardise the honour of the family (Nydell, 2006). Based on the Prophet’s sayings, all children are born of righteous nature (fitra) and it is their parents’ responsibility to teach them how to be believers (Hadi & Al-Fayez, 2003; Glassé, 2003; Syeed & Ritchie, 2006). For example, Muslim children are trained to perform prayer at an early age and try to fast part of the day in order to prepare for these duties when they reach the age of religious maturity. Also, in order to give them a sense of acknowledgement and participation, children are often assigned to call for prayers (muehdin) (Syeed & Ritchie, 2006).

Because of this centrality of Qur’anic teaching, key illustrative verses are included here to assist in the understanding of the most significant ways in which religion guides Muslim family life.

**Cleanliness, hygiene, and food hygiene (halal) in Muslim families**

Truly, Allah loves those who turn unto Him in repentance and loves those who purify themselves (by taking a bath and cleaning and washing thoroughly their private parts, bodies, for their prayers etc.). (Qur’an 2:222)

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: “cleanliness is half of faith.” (Sahih Muslim, book 2, No, 0432)

Muslim parents always draw their children’s attention to the necessity of cleanliness and hygiene in every aspect of their life such as the cleanliness of their hair, bodies, dress, mouths, and place of living. Children are instructed and taught how to attain purity by taking a regular bath, washing their faces, and cleaning their hands before and after eating. Those who reach an appropriate age to perform prayer (starting from the age of seven to ten) are taught how to perform ablution (wudu). Wudu is a ritual washing to remove impurities from the hands, face (including the mouth and the nose), head, arms, and feet before prayers (Glassé, 2003; Syeed & Ritchie, 2006).

Similar to Judaic religious law, Islamic law enacts specified dietary restrictions. It entirely forbids the consumption of pork products. Pork products are commonly used in processed foods and because of the prominence of pork products in Western cultures, Muslim families are often wary of eating the food of restaurants, hospitals or school canteens. Islam also forbids the consumption of alcohol and intoxicants in any
form. Alcohol consumption is also socially shameful for Muslims. There are also some Islamic injunctions against the consumption of the meat of animals that are killed other than in the name of Allah. Most Muslims only eat *halal* meat: meat that is slaughtered according to particular standards and rituals including the invocation of the name of Allah before slaughter, humane treatment of the animal while slaughtering, and the draining of the animal’s blood (Hammad, Kysia, Rabah, Hassoun, & Connelly, 1999).

**Piety, morality, and modesty in Muslim families**

One of the most admirable features that Muslim families make sure to ingrain in their children is piety and good morality. Socially, a person’s reputation, honour and dignity are crucial for the entire family and should therefore be protected (Nydell, 2006). Islam stresses the importance of moral guidance for the good of children. Hadi and Al-Fayez (2003, p. 459) summarise Islamic requirements of raising children by stating that:

> [C]hildren should be given suitable, sufficient, sound, and adequate ethical and moral guidance to prepare them for their entire life. They should be ingrained with true values and the differentiation between right and wrong, true and false, correct and incorrect, appropriate and inappropriate, and so forth.

In Islamic societies, interactions between the sexes are explicitly defined by Islamic teachings. In spite of the considerable variation regarding the extent of separation between sexes in different Arab countries, adult males/females’ casual encounters are generally limited to the family unit. According to Islamic and Arab norms, approaching for conversation or hand-shakes between non-related adult males and females is regarded as inappropriate. There are different philosophies and doctrines of Islam, some of which proclaim that these norms can be suspended in life-threatening situations and emergencies. Generally, modesty is the norm in Islam. Both sexes are dictated to adhere to specific roles regarding the covering of the body in front of non-family members (Hammad, Kysia, Rabah, Hassoun, & Connelly, 1999).

**Politeness (adab) and being kind to parents and others**

A basic Islamic value in Arab culture is that a Muslim’s behaviour should make a good impression on other people (Nydell, 2006; Syeed & Ritchie, 2006). For
example, Islam places a great importance on proper greetings (Assalāmu ’Alaykum) upon both meeting and parting. The prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) was asked: “What sort of deeds or (what qualities of) Islam are good? He replied: “To give food (to those in need) and to greet with peace those whom you know and those whom you do not know” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Book 2, No. 11). Characteristics of politeness do not mean only polite words; it refers to the general sobriety of actions and attitudes. For example, a person cannot point the sole of his feet at others when sitting and the right hand must be used in eating, drinking, and greeting. Being polite also requires visiting the sick and helping those in distress (Glassé, 2003) or even managing eating habits (Syeed & Ritchie, 2006). Moreover, Islam preaches that parents should be honoured and treated with kindness and respect, especially in their old age. Disobeying parents and being disrespectful or rude to them is a major sin in Islam (Hadi & Al-Fayez, 2003). The Qur’an says:

Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in thy life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honor. (Qur’an 17:23)

**Education and seeking knowledge in Muslim families**

Islam accentuates the importance of seeking knowledge and education. This can be drawn from many verses (surahs) in the Qur’an such as:

And follow not (O man i.e., say not or do not or witness not) that of which you have no knowledge. Verily, the hearing, and the sight, and the heart, of each of those one will questioned (By Allah). (Qur’an 17:36)

Then High above all be Allah, the True King. And be not in haste (O Muhammad) with the Qur’an before its revelation is completed to you, and say: “My Lord! Increase me in knowledge.” (Qur’an 20:114)

This verse includes the first revealed words of the Qur’an. When the first word (iqra) (which means read, understand, and learn) was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), it started a legacy of literacy and education for all Muslims:

1. Read! In the name of your Lord Who created (all that exists). 2. He has created man from a clot (a piece of thick coagulated blood). 3. Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous. 4. Who has taught (the writing) by the pen. 5. He has taught man that which he knew not. (Qur’an 96:1-5)
From the previous verses and others, one can deduce that Muslims view the act of giving knowledge to children and developing their skills (tirbyi) as the spiritual foundation of their societies. Inevitably, the Qur’anic teachings are congruent with Muslims’ daily practices and methods of tirbyi reflecting a deep attention and respect for religious beliefs and practices. The consensus-building of Islamic traditional tirbyi relies on lengthy discussions, reconciliation, and democracy. Yet, Muslim families always take into consideration the hierarchy of importance among the speakers (e.g., adults have the right to speak before children). In family decisions, the opinions and rights of both adults and minors should enforce group solidarity (Bangura, 2004).

Besides various sciences, the importance of seeking knowledge according to Muslim families is represented through teaching the Holy Qur’an to children in order to enable them to perform prayer, strengthen their faith, and initiate their lifelong quest (Syeed & Ritchie, 2006). Therefore, most Arab schools include religion and memorisation of some Qur’anic verses in the curriculum (Nydell, 2006).

In conclusion, Amer (2005) declares that religion can sometimes be utilised as a tool of preventing, coping with and addressing stress for Muslim families away from home. She provides the example of Abudabbeh and Hamid’s study (2001), which suggests that affiliation to the Islamic teachings in prohibiting the consumption of alcohol can be considered an essential factor in preventing psychological problems that may lead to substance abuse. They also suggest that social networks as well as religious networks at places of worship (mosques) play a role in supporting the acculturation of Arab Muslim families in the host culture. In many cases, social networks and religious institutions may compensate for the absence of the extended family.

1.3.4 Cultural aspects of Arab families

Arabs tend to be very sensitive about and proud regarding their reputation, family power, and lineage. Their obligations and loyalty to their families may extend beyond immediate family members (e.g., parents or brothers). Such strong family affiliation may include all of their relatives such as uncles, aunts and cousins and may even
precede their loyalty to friends, personal preferences, or job demands. Families’ social status is largely determined by their background. Relatives are supposed to support each other, defend the family honour, maintain family prestige, display family cohesion and conceal family disputes from public view (Abudabbeh, 2005; Nydell, 2006). Naturally, children are brought up to perpetuate these traditions (Abudabbeh, 2005).

The family is the foundation of Middle Eastern cultures and children are an essential part of this foundation. Arabs tend to be affectionate to children and they tend to express that openly. Adoring relatives participate in child-rearing by caring for, feeding and even serving as authority figures for children. Most Arabs raise their children using similar values and following similar ways; they are homogeneous in their upbringing style. Consequently, there is no place for arbitrary independent approaches in child-rearing as there is in Western society. Although most Arabs (especially mothers) express their unconditional love by indulging their children, there is always time for discipline. Nevertheless, harsh physical punishment and severe discipline methods are usually avoided (Nydell, 2006).

Traditionally and not religiously, there has been a noticeable preference for boys over girls in most Arab cultures (Abudabbeh, 2005; Nydell, 2006). The main reason was that men used to contribute more, at least materially, to supporting the family. The different role models provided for Arab children significantly influence the shaping of their personalities. Therefore, it is expected from boys to be decisive, adventurous, and aggressive, while demands on girls are that they be more submissive and passive. However, modernisation processes have positively affected the traditional family attitudes toward gender roles. Nowadays, women have equal opportunities to be educated and become breadwinners for their families (Nydell, 2006).

Regardless of the Islamic perspective, intimate relationships and eye-contact are generally avoided in cross-gender encounters (Hammad, Kysia, Rabah, Hassoun, & Connelly, 1999; Nydell, 2006). Nevertheless, before the age of puberty, mutual play and interactions between the genders are common because young children are not required to observe such norms (Syeed & Ritchie, 2006).
Besides the religious aspects mentioned previously, for most Arabs, one of the most crucial requirements of raising a child “well” is to teach him/her how to behave respectfully, especially in front of adults. Children must be clearly instructed of their social requirements in front of others. Polite behaviour is marked by shaking hands and greeting adults, saying one’s full name, conversing with them only for a short time and if asked, and avoiding talking back to or interrupting them (Nydell, 2006).

Another crucial requirement is teaching the child the Arab rules of hospitality. Most Arab families (especially Saudis) expect their children to learn about hospitality by helping to serve guests (Nydell, 2006). It is rude to refuse accommodating or feeding anyone who presents himself on your doorstep; however, hospitality obligations end by the third day. Also, it is inappropriate by guests to refuse drinking at least a cup of coffee or tea, but this custom seems to differ according to the context (Glassé, 2003).

Moreover, a good child is expected to maintain the family style of communication and respect their parents’ authority. This is described by Abudabbeh (2005, p. 427), “as hierarchical, creating vertical as opposed to horizontal communication between those in authority and those subservient to that authority”. Therefore, children from early ages are taught profound respect for older people in the family (e.g., grandparents) whose images and desires are given considerable weight by all family members (Amer, 2005; Nydell, 2006). Thus, one can observe that children are more likely to be lectured than encouraged to engage in open discussions with the adults of the family (especially not with fathers); therefore, most children tend to act out or use the mother as a mediator with the father (Abudabbeh, 2005).

In summary, taking responsibility for children’s upbringing is emphasised in Arab child-rearing practices. In essence, child-rearing outcomes should reflect positively on the whole family; therefore, Arab parents may be usually given much of the credit for their children’s successful personalities and consequently may be blamed for their failed achievements. Also, criticisms regarding poorly raised individuals may be considered a serious insult. Children’s dependence (emotionally and financially) is usually welcomed by most Arab parents and may continue throughout the parents’
whole lifetime (Nydell, 2006). Yet, they are definitely expected to acknowledge their parents’ efforts and sacrifices for their welfare and by the end, they should be an ultimate refuge for their parents when they grow old (Amer, 2005; Nydell, 2006).

1.4 Statement of the problem: ESL learning and acculturation in the sojourner context

Learning a second language has a great influence on different aspects of a child’s growth. It affects the whole forming and construction of a child’s identity, no matter how strong the home culture may be. As a matter of fact, children who move to another country are surrounded by several social factors that have the ability to influence their beliefs, values, cultural-, social-, and life experiences. These factors can also influence bilingual children by making them encounter different types of attitude toward the second language, their first languages, and even toward their role in establishing cultural and ethnic association.

Nowadays, Australia (and other English-speaking countries) receives thousands of Saudi students who are sent by King Abdullah’s scholarship program and are given the opportunity to complete their higher education. Most of these students are accompanied by their families. All these children speak Arabic as a native language and most of them have no proficiency in speaking English. On one hand, most of them have to go to child-care centres or schools. At this stage, these children will be in contact with the Australian society by their interaction with school, friends, and neighbours. Certainly, they will be affected by all these elements. On the other hand, the Australian schools have to incorporate a type of ethnic group who have specific cultural perspectives, diverse as well as dominating religious beliefs that should be recognised and appreciated by their teachers and peers equally to those of other ethnic groups. As noticed by the researcher and asserted by many Saudi students, there are widely held misconceptions about the Arabic culture and most of the Australian community cannot fully understand the Saudi Muslim character; it is a background totally different from other cultural backgrounds, like for example Chinese or Indian. For this reason, there is a growing need to identify the important features of this
cultural background by investigating the factors that influence it in the new environment.

Forming knowledge about the situation of Saudi children, together with the literature on SLA in a given socio-cultural context, evoked many questions that may relate to the topic of this study. Of these questions, five main research questions were seen as essential in guiding this investigation:

- What sociolinguistic, educational, and other difficulties do Saudi children face in the Australian context?
- What types of supportive social networks are surrounding Saudi children?
- What has been done by parents and teachers to support their acculturation and bilingualism in the Australian milieu?
- What is the relationship between the children’s acculturation process and social support, according to parents’ perceptions?
- Does the attitude toward acculturation differ significantly among Saudi families? And does the families’ religious and cultural background influence their children’s acculturation?

This topic is new in the field of Arabic research. There is a lack of studies or research discussing the present situation of the Saudi students of King Abdullah’s scholarship in their host countries. This point has been confirmed by Shaw (2010) who conducted a study that examined the U.S. educational experiences and success strategies of Saudi students. Shaw declared that very little research could be found on Arab students in their educational environments, and on their coping strategies and the differences they experienced between home and the U.S. Further, most of the few studies mentioned by Shaw on Saudi students concentrate on university- and graduate students rather than young children at early educational levels.

1.5 Aims and significance of the study

Remarkable initiatives and activities in integrating ESL students have been widely observed in the past 30 years in many places, such as Australia, England and Canada. These attempts have generally aimed to provide equal opportunities and entitlements
in educational settings, and have stemmed from a variety of demographic, historical, social, and legislative purposes (Leung, 2007). Most of the relevant studies concentrate on young immigrants and refugees, leaving the issue of young sojourners in need of further investigation from a linguistic point of view (Torres, 2001). Therefore, this research will have implications for the importance of social elements in ESL children’s acculturation, especially those who have a strong religious-, linguistic- and cultural identity, like Saudis. In addition to investigating the main effective social factors surrounding Saudi children in formal and informal sociolinguistic environments, the present study aims to explore the sociolinguistic difficulties faced by Saudi children either in the Australian context or when they return to Saudi Arabia, and to identify strategies provided by parents and teachers to foster their children’s acculturation, reacculturation, and bilingualism. It also aims to explore if the child’s social and cultural background together with their native languages have a crucial role to play in the process of acculturation.

Taking the Saudi religious and social aspects into consideration, the research is expected also to be useful for ESL teachers in dealing with new Saudi learners and their families. The research will introduce data that could help in understanding the process of acculturation and L2 development of Saudi children in Australia. Moreover, the research has clear implications for not only Saudi children but also for young ESL children from diverse backgrounds because it focuses on essential aspects of child acculturation and SLA. It will reveal much about the social factors surrounding the children and their effectiveness in the sociolinguistic growth of these young ESL learners. The findings of the research can be expected to assist Saudi parents’ and ESL teachers’ understanding of the numerous factors influencing their children in the new environment. It will also be helpful in improving understanding of the most effective strategies and activities to help maintain their children’s linguistic and social attitude to ESL. Additionally, the study will yield data that will enable Saudi educators to recognise the Saudi children’s situation in the countries of scholarship.
1.6 Definition of terms

The purpose of this section is to clarify significant terms used in this study. The following is an alphabetical list of such terms and their definitions.

- **Acculturation**: as a phenomenon and as a concept, acculturation has become an important construct since the early 1970s. As a result of recognising the importance of cultural contact and its psychological impacts on different cultural groups, it has been redefined by numerous researchers (Kohatsu, Concepcion, & Perez, 2009). These are the latest definitions, by the theorists on whose work this research project mainly relies:

  By acculturation I mean the social and psychological integration of the learner with the target language (TL) group. (Schumann, 1986, p. 379)

  Acculturation is the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members. (Berry, 2006, p. 13)

  Acculturation is a complex process involving multiple changes that take place following contact among individuals and groups from differing cultural backgrounds. It involves changes in many areas, including attitudes, feelings, beliefs, and behaviours. (Phinney, 2006, p. 79)

- **Bilingual**: As mentioned, researchers differ in their viewpoints on which child can be defined as bilingual. Some researchers, such as Bloomfield in 1933, affirmed that in order to be regarded bilingual, a child has to be fully competent in the two languages, whereas Grosjean, in 1989, insisted that functioning in each language is enough for the child to be considered bilingual (Bialystok, 2001). Yet, finding an accurate definition for the term ‘proficiency’ remains a problem. According to Tzivinikou (2005), the term ‘bilingual’ is primarily used to describe people who are able to speak or systematically use two languages. The use of this term can also be expanded to include those who have varying degrees of proficiency in three or more languages. However, numerous terms are produced by researchers to describe bilinguals regarding various considerations such as type of bilingualism, sociolinguistic background, age and sequence of acquisition of the languages, degree of proficiency, or method of acquisition of the second language (Tzivinikou, 2005).
• Bilingualism: Because the notion of ‘bilingualism’ includes several dimensions that involve numerous issues, trying to reach a definite definition of this state or describe the ownership of more than one language is far from simple. This is because bilingualism is not a static state but a changeable dynamic aspect comprising overlapping and interacting dimensions such as abilities, use, and contexts. Moreover, determining who is bilingual is a much more difficult task than just saying that a person who is able to speak two languages is bilingual as the main issue here becomes ‘what is ability?’. Fluency of a specific language may vary according to the basic four language abilities of speaking, listening, reading, and writing; this means that various degrees of bilingualism can exist (Baker, 2011). Hamers and Blanc (2000) state that most of definitions of bilingualism raise several theoretical and methodological problems mainly for two reasons: on the one hand, they require more operationalism and accuracy; on the other, they concentrate on a single dimension of bilingualism, which is the level of proficiency in both languages, without focusing on other dimensions such as cognitive organisation, social and cultural status, or cultural identity.

In earlier definitions, the term ‘bilingualism’ is restricted to meaning being able to speak two languages perfectly or they go to the extreme of proposing that bilingualism is to possess a minimal competency of any one of the four language skills of a second language (Hamers & Blanc, 2000). Yet, such definitions mainly reflect responses to the question of ‘degree’. For example, Bloomfield, in 1933, described bilingualism as the native-like knowledge of two languages and Weinreich, in 1953, simply defined bilingualism as “the alternate use of two languages in the same year” (Edwards, 2008, p. 8). Haugen, in 1953, also defined bilingualism as a person’s ability to construct complete meaningful utterances in the other language. Later, much greater variation in competence has been allowed. These more recent views realised that “any meaningful discussion must be attempted within a specific context, and for specific purposes” (Edwards, 2008, p. 8).

To make the issue of degree more complex, questions about the starting place of bilingualism have emerged. Romaine (1995) declares that to characterise the initial stages of becoming bilingual, Diebold, in 1964, introduced a minimal definition of bilingualism by using the term ‘incipient bilingualism’. Romaine comments:
he leaves open the question of the absolute minimal proficiency required in order to be bilingual and allows for the fact that a person may be bilingual to some degree, yet not be able to produce complete, meaningful utterances. A person might, for example, have no productive control over a language, but be able to understand utterances in it. (Romaine, 1995, p.11)

Because bilingualism is a relative notion, researchers describe it as relying on several characteristics including degree (how bilingual a person is), alternation (to what extent he transfers between these two languages), function (the reason of using the language and the function of his previous language in his total pattern of behaviour), and interference (how well he can separate these two languages or connect them). These characteristics cannot be treated in isolation of one another. Moreover, there are various confounding factors listed by researchers such as sex, age, and linguistic distance between the two languages, which make it harder to measure individuals’ capacity or try to sort them into neat categories of degree of bilingualism. Even if we are successful in reaching a degree of accuracy, there would remain problems of adequate labelling (Romaine, 1995). Nevertheless, many researchers have produced classifications of bilingualism. Romaine, (1995, pp. 183-186) again provided an analysis of six different forms of ‘home language bilingualism’, “taking as variables the languages spoken by the parents, the language spoken by the community and the strategy adopted by the parents for speaking to the child”. This can be seen as follows:

1- ‘One language, one parent’: parents speak their different native languages to the child from birth and the dominant language in the community is one of the parents’ languages. Notice that each of them has some degree of proficiency in the other’s language.

2- ‘Non-dominant home language/ -one language, one environment’: parents speak different native languages and the dominant language in the community is one of the parents’ languages but both of them use the non-dominant language with the child who is only exposed to the dominant language outside the home.

3- ‘Non-dominant home language without community support’: parents speak the same native language but the dominant language in the community is not the parents’ language and both of them use their native language with the child.
4- ‘Double non-dominant home language without community support’: parents speak different native languages but the dominant language in the community is not one of the parents’ languages and both of them use their own native language with the child from birth.

5- ‘Non-native parents’: parents speak the same native language and the dominant language in the community is the same as the parents’ but one of them always uses a language with the child that is not her/his own language.

6- ‘Mixed languages’: both parents are bilingual as well as part of the community and parents mix languages.

• **English as a second language (ESL)**: It refers to the field of English language teaching and learning (Hawkins, 2005). Notice that, in this study, the young bilinguals are acquiring ESL more naturalistically than most of their parents, who were learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) through instruction in their home country.

• **English language learner (ELL)**: It refers to learners whose native language is a language other than English and “having varying degrees of proficiency in English” but not a native-like proficiency (Lucas, 2011, p. 13).

• **First language (L1)**: a person’s first language, or mother tongue.

• **Second language (L2)**: a second, non-primary language learned after learning the L1.

• **Second Language Acquisition (SLA)**: Gass and Selinker (2008, p. 1) described the scope of SLA in their book *Second Language Acquisition: An Introductory Course*, as “a relatively young field” that focuses on language learning and teaching. They defined SLA as the process of learning a non-primary language after the learning of the native language. Sometimes, the same term may refer to the acquisition of more than one non-native language. The acronym SLA is used in the field of linguistics as an umbrella term in its attempt to understand a wide variety of phenomena. These phenomena consist of several issues like what is learned or not learned of a second language, how a new language system is created by learners after a limited exposure
to a second language, and why most second language learners fail to attain the same degree of proficiency in a second language as they do in their native languages.

• Sojourner: According to Bochner (2006), this term is frequently used to describe those who spend a specified period of time in a culture different from their own and who are expected at some point to return back to their country of origin. This term includes people who travel abroad to attain a particular goal and then return after completing their assignment. Examples of the sojourner groups are international students, military personnel, expatriate workers, and tourists. Similar definitions have been provided by Torres, (2001) and Ward, Bochner, and Furnham, (2001).

1.7 Scope of the study
Every research effort is limited to some extent. The research will focus merely on investigating the topic of acculturation and its relations to social support among young Saudi children as an ethnic group with strong cultural features. Using their mothers’ and teachers’ perceptions, it will draw a general picture of the effects of social elements in the acculturation of this type of ESL learners. Language development is seen as a part of the acculturation process and factors that influence the children’s adjustment to the new situation are also considered to have effects on their English-language acquisition. Also, the term ‘acculturation’ is used in this research as another notion for integration or adjustment to the new culture. Issues such as measuring the children’s acculturation and determining their English proficiency or level of linguistic skills regarding grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, reading and writing performance, communication style, communicative competence, code-switching, and so forth cannot be accomplished in the current design of the research.

1.8 Structure of the study
This thesis is divided into eight chapters. This first chapter presents a brief introduction to the research topic. The chapter gives an overview of the background of study, a statement of the problem, and the significance and aims of the study. A
section is devoted to clarifying the terminology and definitions in the research and another to discuss the scope of the thesis.

**Chapter two** presents a review of the literature on acculturation in child SLA including issues of second language acquisition in childhood, the theoretical framework of acculturation, and the related issues of repatriation after sojourning in another culture.

**Chapter three** explores the literature on social factors surrounding ESL children in a new culture, and on the roles of parents and teachers in the children’s acculturation situation. The influence of the host culture and media is also discussed.

**Chapter four** clarifies the methodology of the study. It discusses the research questions and research design using two methods: semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. This chapter describes the procedure of data collection for both methods, presenting the demographic information for the children and their families either in Australia or Saudi Arabia. A section is allocated to describe the process of data analysis and finally examine the role of the researcher and ethical issues in the interviews.

**Chapter five** presents interview data analysis and results investigating the sociolinguistic situation of Saudi children in the Australian context. The discussions are centred on six different areas: difficulties faced by Saudi children in the Australian context, supportive social factors surrounding Saudi children, strategies provided by parents to support Saudi children’s acculturation, parents’ perceptions of acculturation and social support, collaborative relationships with the school, and the effects of religious and cultural background on the children’s acculturation.

**Chapter six** provides discussions on questionnaire data analysis and results reflecting Australian teachers’ perspectives of the social factors that influenced Saudi children’s acculturation in the new environment and affected their linguistic development. The discussions cover the same previous areas.
Chapter seven presents the interview data analysis and results and discusses issues of the repatriation process and conflict situations that the children may face on return to Saudi Arabia. This chapter draws the attention to some variables influencing the re-entry process, issues of reverse culture shock, and outcomes of the whole sojourn experience.

Chapter eight provides conclusions for the study as a whole and brings the research journey to an end with a summary of the research process, overall implications, and main findings. It also presents the research limitations and offers suggestions for future research.

The alphabetical list of the references used in the thesis follows. The style used in formatting the bibliography is the American Psychological Association (APA 5th). EndNote X2.0.1 was used to produce the bibliography.
Chapter Two: Acculturation in Child SLA

2.1 Issues of second language acquisition in childhood

Language provides one of the most readily accessible windows into the nature of the human mind. How children acquire this complex system with such apparent ease continues to fascinate the student of human language. (Hakuta & Cancino, 1977, p. 294)

During the last quarter of the twentieth century, a qualitative leap has been witnessed in the knowledge about young children’s language acquisition process. Recently, researchers approaching the topic from different perspectives have started to extend their scope of inquiry into the varied aspects of the SLA process. These researchers have been attracted by two motives: firstly, to increase their knowledge of human language; and, secondly, to satisfy the need for greater understanding of the system of SLA in order to enhance the process of second language teaching as well as bilingual education. Moreover, researchers’ changing conceptualisation of the identity or nature of language and the learners’ influence on the learning situation has affected the focus of the analysis and led to distinct shifts in perspectives (Hakuta & Cancino, 1977).

In this theoretical context, it is important for a study like the present one to take account of the relationship of SLA and acculturation. Indeed, Schumann (1978) sees language as just one aspect of acculturation. Acculturation is a major construct in psychology and in SLA, particularly in research related to the adaptation of immigrants to a new host culture. Although sojourners are not adapting permanently to the host culture, highly similar factors operate during their stay. Acculturation, as this chapter will show, is a multi-faceted construct, and whereas different theoretical models focus on different factors, all models of acculturation factor in the acquisition of the language of the host community.
The relationship between acculturation and SLA is of particular interest because, on the one hand, theorists agree that L2 acquisition is a factor in acculturation, and on the other hand, some research (e.g. Schumann, 1978) suggests that acculturation is a causal variable in SLA. Most such research has targeted long-term adult migrants, but age is a major individual difference variable: children and adults differ in the way they acquire a second language, and in the way they acculturate. Therefore, the focus of this first section, 2.1, is on theoretical issues in SLA, and the focus of section 2.2 is on theoretical issues in acculturation. These two sections form the theoretical framework of the present investigation.

Gass and Selinker (2008) mention that child second language acquisition is an integral part of second language acquisition research, and Paradis (2009) asserts that the process of young children’s second language acquisition still needs further investigation. She argues that this topic has not been sufficiently studied as a separate theme, with its own issues and queries, without associating it with bilingualism and educational outcomes on the one hand, or adult second language acquisition on the other. Little is thus known about fundamental issues such as learners’ individual differences, in the case of children, and the development of the oral language proficiency of their second language. The recent resurgence of attention has emerged in the field of studying child L2 learners with a focus on oral language proficiency. Oral language proficiency here is seen to have important effects on intervention and assessment as well as situations referring to young speakers, such as the impact of home languages on the child’s L1 and L2 development.

This section examines some important issues of SLA in childhood. It provides several researchers’ discussions of the interface between the L1 and L2. Factors influencing SLA are presented. Advantages and negative consequences of SLA and bilingualism are also briefly discussed.

### 2.1.1 First language versus second language acquisition

Recognising the complicated process undergone by young children in acquiring a first language along with a parallel second language is crucial in understanding what
happens in language acquisition during early childhood. It is universally understood that by the age of five, a child living in normal circumstances and having no physical or mental disabilities is able to build a complex oral language system (Collier, 1995). Children, while learning language, which is inherently systematic, follow a particular pattern and yet reach extremely varied outcomes resulting from their exposure to the language and interactions with others (Clark, 2000). Berko Gleason (2004) adds that from the age of six to twelve, children engage in a continual process of acquiring subtle vocabulary, syntax, phonological distinctions, semantics, and other aspects of language. In the same period, they are also capable of absorbing the complex components of pragmatics of their first languages. Given formal schooling, children continue to add reading and writing to their language skills. Within each academic subject, they increase the cognitive level of their language use as they pass through the grades. At college level and in every discipline of their study, adolescents absorb enormous amounts of vocabulary and adopt various writing skills. This side of knowledge continues through life and supplies their life experience with new contexts to use language. In adulthood, people are affected in their everyday communication by the constantly changing patterns of language use and through the acquisition of new subtleties. Our first language acquisition is a lifelong process (Berko Gleason, 2004; Collier, 1995).

The acquisition of a second language is of equal complexity, as characterised by the leaders in the SLA field, including Ellis (1985; 2008) and Collier (1995). Pérez and Torres-Guzmán (1996, p. 96) state that “[c]hildren who develop proficiency in using their native language to communicate, to gain information, to solve problems, and to think can easily learn to use a second language in similar ways”. Children utilise some of the same patterns and strategies used in the acquisition of their mother tongue while going through the developmental stages of learning a second language and depend on native speakers as a source of input (Clark, 2000; Collier, 1995). If we take the morpheme-order studies based on the work of Brown in 1973 on child SLA as an example, we will notice findings verifying similarities between L1 and L2 learning processes in patterns of development. If two groups of children from different language backgrounds were found to undergo similar patterns of development, it can be concluded that there are specific developmental factors rather
than native language factors involved, and that the possibility of universal or general mechanisms for acquiring the L2 that had to be considered primarily (Gass & Selinker, 2008).

Several interesting hypotheses are presented by McLaughlin (1978) in a quest to explain the interrelation between L1 and L2. One is the Regression Hypothesis, which assumes that the child utilises the same language abilities as in the mother tongue with the L2 data but “at a very primitive and rudimentary level” (p. 117). According to McLaughlin’s second theory, the Recapitulation Theory, the child is recapitulating the same processes used by a native speaker of the target language. To provide evidence, McLaughlin refers to Wode’s 1976 study, which presents similar findings. When children are confronted with complicated structures in the L2, they have a tendency to use structures found in their first languages (McLaughlin, 1978). He concludes his claim by stating that “there is a unity of process that characterises all language acquisition, whether of a first or second language, at all ages” (McLaughlin, 1978, p. 202).

In the field of language literacy, the interdependence among academic skills across languages has been considerably clarified (see Cummins, 1991 for a review). Research has suggested that the correlation between academic skills in the L1 and those in the L2 leads to the conclusion that “the better developed children’s L1 conceptual foundation, the more likely they are to develop similarly high levels of conceptual abilities in their L2” (Cummins, 1994, p. 38). In a large-scale longitudinal study on Latin-American students, it was found by Ramírez, Yuen, Ramey, and Pasta (1991) that children were able to catch up academically in English to the achievement levels of native speakers of the target language if their first language skills were sustained. The implication of these data is that the stronger the opportunities provided to children to promote their first language abilities, the faster the development in their English reading skills (Cummins, 1994).

Furthermore, it has been found in studies such as those of Garcia (1994) and Thomas and Collier (1995) that children’s cognitive and academic progress in the native language has crucial effects on second language acquisition during schooling. In the
school setting, it has been noticed that children progressively demonstrate their knowledge-based-first-language skills as they expand the oral and written communication skills of the new language (Collier, 1995).

Among scholars interested in investigating the relationship between first and second languages, Cummins’ work has a profound influence on the understanding of bilingualism, language proficiency, and first and second language interference (The State of Queensland, Department of Education, Training and the Arts, 2008). Providing valuable findings in these areas, he posits three main principles connected with second language acquisition theory: (1) the linguistic interdependence between the first and the second language; (2) the additive bilingual model; and (3) the difference between *basic interpersonal communication skills* (BICS) and *cognitive academic language competency* (CALP) (Cummins, 1980).

Regarding the interdependence of the two languages, Cummins theorised that learners of an L2 transfer the cultural, social, and cognitive skills of their native language to enhance their capacity in the L2 (Cummins, 1980; Cummins, 2001). Superficially, it appears that the learners possess two distinct languages while, in fact, both languages share the same operating system, which is known as the *Common Underlying Proficiency Model (CUP)* (Cummins, 1980) (see Figure 1). This theory is thus in opposition to the hypotheses that claim *Separate Underlying Proficiencies (SUPs)* for each language in the learner’s brain. Cummins’s *Interdependence Hypothesis* posits that SLA is greatly influenced by the degree to which the L1 is developed. Cummins (1986, p. 20) states that “to the extent that instruction through a minority language is effective in developing academic proficiency in the minority language, transfer of this proficiency to the majority language will occur given adequate exposure and motivation to learn the language”. In other words, acquiring an L2 is enhanced when skills in the first language are supported. Cummins’s *Interdependence Hypothesis* has crucial implications for teachers, educators, and policy-makers focusing on fostering the student’s English language learning (Cummins, 1986).
Clark (2000), on the other hand, declares that it is not very common to find children who have equal proficiency in both languages. In her words, “bilingual children often have one area of language learning that is not equal between the two languages” (p.183). The reason is that the children’s usage of any of the two languages is strongly influenced by the society in which the importance of each language is determined by various factors. The need to communicate in two languages controls young children’s becoming bilingual. If they interact outside the home using one language, they are able to switch over to that language but still have a “receptive understanding” of their native language. Also, children’s attitude either toward the first language or the second language is important to a successful achievement of learning the second language and retaining their first language (Collier, 1995; Lindfors, 1991 cited in Clark, 2000, p. 183).

In fact, children also forget languages faster than adults. This can lead to negative cognitive results such as losing the ability to communicate with other members of the family who still speak only the native language. When children switch to the second language at preschool, this may result in obvious loss of much of their capacity in the native language (Cummins, 1979 in Clark, 2000; McLaughlin, 1984 in Clark, 2000; Wong Fillmore, 1991). Bialystok and Hakuta (1994 in Clark, 2000) point out that before the age of five, children show a rapid capacity in learning the second language and their first languages may be totally replaced by the second language. For this
reason, many researchers suggest that teachers and caregivers should consider “both languages as equally important and valuable” (McLaughlin, 1984, cited in Clark, 2000, p. 183). If there is no opportunity to use language and if children have not been provided with a full variety of experiential activities, they may lose the ability to function well in the second language on one hand or it may affect the development of their first language on the other (Clark, 2000). In the case of Saudi sojourners, one of the concerns of parents is that their children may fall behind in their Arabic language development. Such worries and activities provided as a way to retain their children’s skills in Arabic will be discussed later.

To conclude, the process of gaining a second language is more likely to be affected by several factors apart from the progress of the native language and has a wide range of variables that need to be taken into consideration.

2.1.2 Factors influencing second language acquisition

There are various factors affecting the development of second language proficiency, which result in impressive differences among individuals acquiring an L2 (Paradis, 2009). Because young L2 learners have greater individual differences than native speakers in acquiring a language, these variables have been predominately considered in the field of L2 rather than L1 acquisition research. Research has investigated a variety of factors, ranging from internal psychological and cognitive traits to external influential aspects such as the social context of the target language input, with the aim to determine sources of individual differences in SLA (Paradis, 2009).

Schumann (1978) makes an extensive effort to identify the full range of these factors in a taxonomy (summarised in Table 1) specially prepared to highlight the topic of acculturation, which he claims to be critical in SLA. These dynamics include: affective, social, personality, cognitive, biological, aptitude, personal, input, and instructional factors. Also, Hurburun (2008) cites Oxford’s declaration in 1992 that the rate of acquiring a second language in children depends on the interaction of numerous factors. These factors, that are also claimed to affect the progress of SLA and the adjustment to the new situation, are the age of the young learner on arrival,
the child’s native language support at home, home literacy, and social factors such as family status. Factors also extend to cover learners’ internal or individual characteristics including the child’s attitude, motivation, anxiety levels, gender, and self-esteem. Both external and internal factors play an important role in the success of second language acquisition, academic improvement, as well as the child’s settlement.

Table 1:
*Taxonomy of factors influencing second language acquisition based on Schumann, 1978*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social factors</th>
<th>Dominance; Nondominance; Subordination; Assimilation; Acculturation; Preservation; Enclosure; Cohesiveness; Size; Congruence; Attitude; Intended Length of Residence in TL Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affective factors</td>
<td>Language shock; Cultural shock; Motivation; Ego-permeability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality factors</td>
<td>Tolerance for Ambiguity; Sensitivity to Rejection; Introversion/Extroversion; Self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive factors</td>
<td>Cognitive Development; Cognitive Processes: imitation, analogy, generalisation, rote memorisation; Cognitive Style: field dependence, category width, cognitive interference, monitoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological factors</td>
<td>Lateralisation; Transfer; Infrasystem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aptitude factors</td>
<td>Modern Language Aptitude; IQ; Strephosymbolia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal factors</td>
<td>Nesting Patterns; Transition Anxiety; Reaction to Teaching Methods; Choice of Learning Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Input factors</td>
<td>Frequency; Salience; Complexity; Type of Interlocutor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional factors</td>
<td>Goals; Teacher; Method; Text; Duration; Intensity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The term ‘acculturation’ means roughly the degree to which a second language learner (mainly an immigrant or a refugee) integrates into the host culture of the target language. Therefore, this term cannot be applied in a foreign language learning
setting (e.g. the classroom). The Acculturation Model introduced by Schumann (1978) depends on the premise that L2 learners’ acquisition of the target language is influenced by the extent to which they adjust to the new culture. Schumann’s study of a 33-year-old Costa Rican immigrant in the US is considered significant in clarifying the effect of acculturation on acquiring a second language. He introduces The Pidginization Theory, which gives an account of the association between acculturation and language acquisition as follows:

Development towards target language norms is dependent on the social distance between the learner and native speakers of the target language … The greater the social distance, the less interaction there will be between the learner and native speakers. (Towell & Hawkins, 1994, p. 38)

According to Schumann (1997), the forces influencing acculturation are social and psychological or affective. Minority groups who have a feeling of being either dominant or subordinate to the host culture will have a low acculturation rate and hence resist acquiring the target language. Those who effortlessly acculturate with the target language community are those feeling equal to the target language group.

Supporting Schumann’s 1978 theory, Abu-Rabia (1996) also demonstrates that integration into the target community leads to acquiring a level of language that is close to that of native speakers. A crucial factor is the learners’ attitude toward the new culture. The learners’ language competence is seen to be influenced by their desire or lack of desire to interact or communicate with the target culture.

Not all of the factors in Schumann’s taxonomy were of interest to the present study, and not all of them are discussed here. If we assume, as Schumann does, that language is only one aspect of acculturation, then a key question for this study becomes whether Saudi families’ religious and cultural beliefs, and Australian teachers’ (mis)conceptions of these, are likely to hinder or facilitate Saudi children’s acculturation in the host culture and language.

In one of the few available studies of SLA in childhood, Tokuhama-Espinosa (2001) conducted a study on several factors influencing SLA in childhood, such as personality, language aptitude, and the critical period. In relation to motivation, she
claims that these factors can be either positive or negative and result from both intrinsic and extrinsic sources. She also asserts the importance of parents’ encouragement and their role in supporting their children’s motivation to acquire the second language. In the same vein, Van Lier (1996, p. 99) considers motivation as the “interplay between intrinsic (innate) and extrinsic (environmental) factors” and emphasises that the motivation for learning the target language depends on that interplay.

According to Vygotsky, language learning is innate. For him, language learning as a cognitive process appears first on the social level and then transfers to the individual level. Recently, this notion has been refined and expanded upon by many researchers, and the Vygotskian framework has formed the foundation of contemporary studies in a variety of fields such as psychology and anthropological linguistics. Modern sociocultural theorists argue that learning takes place in social interactional patterns. They also emphasise that language learning results in internalising the skills, and the linguistic and social knowledge of a specific social group. Competency is the result interaction with expert or more knowledgeable members of the linguistic community (Day, 2002). Holmen (2006) states that the acquisition of language results in a social setting and that language learning is a fundamental element of the dynamic processes of identity, social membership, and culture. He clarifies that at the micro-social level, language learning is considered a chance for interaction and not just a matter of individual capacity.

Likewise, Hawkins (2005) mentions that the field of SLA has experienced a major shift in interest and has started to look at language learning more as a communicative tool and that it is negotiated between ‘interactants’ in different social and cultural encounters. He points out that interaction has become the basis of learning and meaning. Thus, certain topics, such as cultural norms and the connection between learners’ identities, cultures, and use for the language, have drawn the attention of researchers lately. Moreover, there is a clear move towards the claim that language must be examined as part of the power relations enacted through social interaction. These new understandings have influenced the larger fields of education and language teaching in what is called, by Vygotsky, the “zone of proximal development
(ZPD), wherein learners come to new understandings and practices through apprenticeship to more knowledgeable others” (Hawkins, 2005, p. 26).

Toohey, Day, and Manyak (2007) discuss, in relation to young children’s acquisition of ESL, the complex social processes studied by empirical research and viewed through many theoretical perspectives. Their discussion examines socio-cultural hypotheses of identity and of mediated practice in order to enlarge our insight into children’s second language learning. The latest studies in this area are reviewed. The results of these studies reveal that children’s cultural identities, learning resources, and classroom practices interrelatedly affect learners’ acquisition of a second language.

In his book The Social Turn in Second Language Acquisition, Block (2003) provides a critical examination of a wide variety of research and praxes in SLA related to the current advances in social theory. To draw a greater attention to social issues, he argues that there is a need to examine language learning as a more socially sensitive process or sociohistorically situated phenomenon with multidimensional sociolinguistic issues rather than just as an individual and mainly cognitive process. He also suggests a socially informed framework that should be applied by linguists and language education practitioners.

2.1.3 Advantages and disadvantages of SLA and bilingualism

A substantial body of research has examined advantages and disadvantages of second language acquisition and bilingualism, particularly in relation to education. These questions are relevant to the present study, especially with reference to the studied Saudi families’ perceptions of what their children had gained from the sojourn experience. Early discussions of these bilingualism tended to focus on fears that it would cause confusion (Archibald, Roy, Harmel, & Jesney, 2004) and even cognitive impairment (e.g. linguistic retardation and low intelligence) (Hamers & Blanc, 2001; Portes & Hao, 2002).
More recent studies have explored potential cognitive benefits of bilingualism, in terms of cognitive flexibility, metalinguistic developments, and a variety of educational outcomes (Akbulut, 2007; Bialystok, 2001; Cummins, 1992; Tzivinikour, 2005). There are also some indications of improved problem-solving ability among bilingual children (Bamford & Mizokawa, 1991; Bialystok, 2008; Carlson & Meltzoff, 2008). Some effects of bilingualism on the development of phonological awareness are reported by Bialystok, Majumder, and Martin (2003), Tingley and colleagues (2004), and Andreou (2007).

Reassurance that acquisition of a second language does not impede development in the L1 has been provided by Archibald, Roy, Harmel, and Jesney (2004), who also point out the advantages of second language acquisition for children’s development of cultural awareness. Bialystok (2001) has also declared that learning a second language can increase grammatical accuracy. Positive effects on intercultural competency have also been observed by Curtain and Dahlberg (2004), and Baker and Jones (2004, in Gass & Selinker, 2008), while a variety of studies on other positive effects were reported in The NEA Research report (2007), which included studies by Garfinkel and Tabor in 1991, Horn and Kojaku in 2001, The College Board in 2004, Carreira and Armengol in 2001, and Cummins in 1990.

On the other hand, other researchers have discussed some potential fears associated with acquiring a second language in an environment that is not the child’s own. Several consequences of learning a second language in young immigrants have been explored, such as first language attrition (Baker, 2011; Clark, 2000; Clayton, 2005), loss of identity (Baker, 2011; Bialystok, 2001; Phinney, 2006), culture shock (Shi, 2001), and psychological issues (Pihamaa, 2002).
2.2 The theoretical framework of acculturation

_Critics of current mainstream SLA should provide some support for the claim that a more socially sensitive approach to research would enrich our understanding of the language learning process._ (Block, 2003, p. 7)

Early articles in the field of SLA tend to emphasise the relationship between language teaching and SLA. The emphasis on the relationship between these two issues continues in more recent publications, but at the same time, there has also been increasing discussion about the need for a more socially informed framework to explore the field of SLA. Consequently, a division of opinion has been generally noticed between scholars who perceive SLA mainly in psycholinguistic terms and scholars who perceive its nature as both psycholinguistic and social. Perspectives devoted to suggesting that a more socially informed approach would be preferable have challenged the more orthodox psycholinguistic stream in the field, as claimed by Block (2003). Unfortunately, discussions carried out at both extremes have been less productive and thought-provoking than those about Applied Linguistics. Lately, the views on the necessity of a different research paradigm turned to be significant and beneficial for SLA. This was the beginning of considering language learning as a sociohistorically situated phenomenon and not only as an individual and primarily cognitive process (Block, 2003). This present study responds to Block’s call for understanding the process of language learning from a more socially informed approach by investigating acculturation as a variable of young sojourners’ SLA.

This section provides an overview of the construct of acculturation in which definitions of acculturation, Schumann’s and Berry’s model of acculturation, the main factors affecting acculturation according to different researchers, and its relationship with SLA are explored. The connection between acculturation and ethnic identity are also looked at in this section.

### 2.2.1 Definitions of acculturation

Definitions of acculturation in the field lack precision and consistency. Also, the construct of acculturation has been redefined various times by various researchers.
(Collier, Brice, & Oades-Sese, 2007; Kohatsu, Concepcion, & Perez, 2009; Rivera, 2009). The reason for this definitional problem, according to Kohatsu, Concepcion and Perez (2009), is that defining acculturation has been influenced in some definitions by scientific racism that implicitly viewed the dominant White culture to be higher than the incoming, non-dominant cultures. Moreover, acculturation has frequently been confounded with other concepts, like ‘assimilation’ and ‘ethnic identity’. Finally, definitions of acculturation have depended mostly on whether the term has been conceptualised as multidimensional or unidimensional (Kohatsu, Concepcion, & Perez, 2009). Now, I will present the definitions of a number of well-known scholars who have influenced the research of acculturation.

Earlier scholars, like Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936, p. 149) have defined acculturation as “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals sharing different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups”. A more complex definition of acculturation was presented a few decades later by The Social Science Research Council (1954, p. 974 cited in Castro, 2003, p. 8), which described acculturation as:

Cultural change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems … Its dynamics can be seen as the selective adaptation of value systems, the process of integration and differentiation, the generation of developmental sequences, and the operation of role determinants and personality factors.

Later, Szapacznik, Scopetta, and Kurtines (1978 cited in Collier, Brice & Oades-Sese, 2007, p. 354) proposed that acculturation involves changes in two dimensions: behaviours (e.g., changes in language use and participation in other cultural activities) and values (e.g., changes in relational style, beliefs about human nature, time orientation, and relationships with people or nature). More recently, it has been argued by theorists like Berry (1980, 2003) that acculturation is a multidirectional process that involves changes in various dimensions, from monoculturalism to assimilation. Building on Schumann’s definition, Berry (1980) depicts acculturation as the process by which two diverse cultural groups come in contact with each other. Furthermore, he argues that the acculturative process can be difficult and perplexing for individuals who face a variety of possible acculturation strategies. A further definition of acculturation proposed by Berry (2003) is that it is a dynamic process
involving gradual change in a number of dimensions (e.g., language use, attitudes, personality, identity, cultural values, behaviours, and cognitive style) that influence the individual during contact with another culture and results in specific acculturative outcomes (e.g., assimilation, separation). A contemporary conceptualisation of acculturation was suggested by Kohatsu, Concepcion, and Perez (2009, p. 344) is that it refers to:

The individual’s process of learning about and adopting White cultural values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors into his or her self-concept … [and] the degree to which the person maintains his or her own ethnic culture (or other ethnic cultures) through adherence to cultural values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors.

Although theorists’ definitions have accentuated different aspects of this construct, a recent understanding of acculturation would include that this multidimensional process involves various strategies and thus generate several definitive outcomes. In addition, continuity and fluidity of the acculturative process, modification of attitudinal and behavioural patterns, and time duration of contact with other cultures would also be acknowledged (Marin, Balls Organista, & Chun, 2003).

2.2.2 Exploration of acculturation research

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the process of diverse ethnic groups assimilating into a new cultural milieu has drawn the attention of social scientists starting with Robert Park -one of the best known melting-pot theorists. Inspired by the ecological framework as a hallmark of the Chicago school of sociology, Park proposed, in 1914, a three-dimensional model comprising contact, accommodation, and assimilation as major concepts. Park’s model has remained, in some form or another, a cornerstone in acculturation research. The process used by newcomers to the United States to learn how to accommodate the new culture and minimise conflict was the essential component of the model. This process results in amalgamated intergroup relations among diverse ethnic communities (Padilla & Perez, 2003).

In 1936, the three-dimensional model had been expanded by the anthropologists Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits who made heavy reference to acculturation as a main construct in their hypotheses to clarify the process of accommodation. They
were also the first to introduce an early formal definition of acculturation (Padilla & Perez, 2003) as was mentioned before. Redfield et al. (1936) emphasised the significance of ‘continuous first-hand contact’ between members of different cultural groups in the process of acculturation. These scholars indicated that during contact, changes essentially occur to the cultural patterns of at least one of the two interacting cultural groups; however, this does not mean that assimilation would necessarily ensue.

Two decades later, further work on the current conceptualisation of acculturation theory was provided by The Social Science Research Council in 1954. The Social Science Research Council’s observations added a psychological dimension to the theory of acculturation and asserted that acculturation varies from one person to another due to various individual and environmental factors, such as personality, varying lengths of time, developmental sequences, and value systems. Based on these two early theoretical works, scholars and practitioners in the field started to investigate the experiential constituents that make the acculturation a common process among cultural groups and unique among group members at the same time (Gonzales, 2006; Padilla & Perez, 2003). Marin, Balls Organista, and Chun (2003, p. 208) support this view and provide these two early works as examples. They add that “social scientists have renewed their interest in exploring the relation between acculturation and a person’s attitudes, behaviours and values and better defining and understanding the construct and its implications”. These early attempts to explain the psychological process of acculturation have helped form the contemporary understanding of acculturation. Padilla and Perez (2003) point out that in 1974, Teske and Nelson proposed the first complete psychological analysis on acculturation, but their viewpoint lacked an explanation of how individuals of diverse, varied cultures accommodate to one another. The explanation was provided by Berry (1980) who extended the perspective of acculturation and included four varieties of adaptation: ‘assimilation’, ‘integration’, ‘separation’, and ‘marginalisation’. Berry’s model was important in affirming that group members have the choice in what extent they will embrace in the acculturation process. This model has formed a significant advance that will be discussed fully in later sections.
With this increased attention to the process of acculturation, plenty of studies have appeared (Marin, Balls Organista, & Chun, 2003). For example, Padilla’s multidimensional and quantitative model of acculturation in the 1980s expanded the notion of acculturation by including ‘cultural awareness’ and ‘ethnic loyalty’ as important aspects of acculturation that affect the way the way in which group members change regarding culture (Gonzales, 2006; Padilla & Perez, 2003; Collier, Brice, & Oades-Sese, 2007). According to the model, ‘cultural awareness’ represents the group members’ knowledge and understanding of their native culture and the new culture such as knowledge related to the languages, standards of behaviour, and values of each culture. The model holds that individuals who demonstrate more knowledge about their native cultures than they have about the new culture are less acculturated than those who on the contrary possess more knowledge of the new host culture. ‘Ethnic loyalty’ denotes individuals’ preference related to their self-ascribed cultural identity and attraction to one culture more than to the other (Gonzales, 2006; Padilla & Perez, 2003).

Recently, the theory of acculturation has been extended by Cuellar, Arnold, and Maldonado (1995) who provided evidence that this process is associated with modifications and adjustments in cognitions, behaviour, and emotional responses. In fact, modifications of behaviours and values have already been recognised in earlier descriptions of acculturation. Cuellar, Arnold, and Maldonado’s inclusion of emotional reactions (internal and external) and individuals’ beliefs and attitudes toward cultural characteristics were essential for describing the acculturation experience. Although behavioural changes connected to acculturation have been well acknowledged (e.g., Cuellar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1995), it has been more complicated to validate the cognitive aspects of acculturation. This is because individuals’ behavioural and cognitive changes resulting from intergroup contacts do not occur in the same time progression (Padilla & Perez, 2003). The contributions of previous scholars have assisted in elucidating the way in which cultural change takes place during the acculturation process.

As a matter of fact, forming a comprehensive understanding of acculturation requires the addressing of numerous related issues. One of the most important principles that
should be highlighted is the fact that acculturation is a complex construct that involves multiple layers and levels (Collier, Brice, & Oades-Sese, 2007; Gonzales, 2006; Kohatsu, Concepcion, & Perez, 2009; Marin, Balls Organista, & Chun, 2003; Rivera, 2009). Rivera (2009) points out that earlier research conceptualised acculturation as a unidimensional phenomenon and assumed individuals give up aspects of their native cultures and adopt aspects of the host culture simultaneously. The unidimensional conceptualisation of acculturation has been criticised for neglecting alternative strategies in negotiating the new context (e.g., becoming bicultural). The unidimensional views of acculturation have been replaced by more comprehensive multifaceted models of acculturation (e.g., Berry’s acculturation model). Kim (2001 cited in Patron, 2006, p. 26), has emphasised that the process of acculturation as cross-cultural adaptation is:

[A] multidimensional, multifaceted structure, where social and individual facets of adaptation are seen as complex interactive layers. The boundaries marking these layers and the dynamics of the processes interacting between each other are argued to co-constitute the entirety of the cross-cultural adaptation phenomenon.

At a cultural level, the extent to which individuals incorporate particular aspects from the dominant culture is concomitant with the maintenance or decline of adherence to their culture of origin. At an individual level, the constant psychological changes (e.g., including cognitive, behavioural, and affective components) undergone by individuals from both cultures arise due to the acculturation process (Berry, 2003; Kohatsu, Concepcion, & Perez, 2009).

Another principle is the individual differences in acculturation. Padilla and Perez (2003) argue that to measure acculturation, it should be conceptualised as a variable of personal characteristics. People from diverse groups may differ in their tendencies of attachment to and involvement in either their native cultures or in the host culture. The potential benefits of identifying with either of the two cultures seem to be a salient factor to these differences. Individuals’ own interpretations of appropriate cultural customs and values are influenced by distinct sources of cultural norms that affect their negotiation between the two cultures. Kohatsu, Concepcion, and Perez (2009) also assert that individuals process acculturation uniquely according to their interpersonal style and cultural socialisation. Therefore, it is essential to avoid
stereotyping and overgeneralisation when assessing acculturation. However, Padilla and Perez (2003) point out that flexibility in acculturation pathways, in which people can choose the degree of identifying with the new culture responding to different variables, is very different from the concern of the earlier views of acculturation. They also assert that the major theories of acculturation did not take effective individual differences and personality characteristics (e.g., assertiveness, extraversion, and sociability) into account and no advanced explanations were provided about how individuals from similar socioeconomic backgrounds differed in their choice, willingness, and capability to acculturate. However, Padilla and Perez (2003) also take the view that current social psychological research provides the field with a new set of conceptual tools that are useful in reconsidering the individual and group processes and pathways involved in acculturation.

A different principle is that the study of social identity is important to establish a conceptual framework that assists us to understand the construct of acculturation. As discussed by Kohatsu, Concepcion, and Perez (2009), acculturation intersects with various aspects of one’s overall identity. Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, and Vedder (2001, p. 494) also state that “[e]thnic identity becomes salient as part of the acculturation process that takes place when immigrants come to a new society”. Interacting with a new culture affects the reconstruction of both personal and social identities. Some newcomers’ identities reflect strong identification with the new culture while others reflect adherence to their heritage culture (Padilla & Perez, 2003).

Moreover, in order to understand the acculturative process, it is essential to account for the cultural context in which acculturation occurs. Kohatsu, Concepcion, and Perez (2009, p. 345) state that “[a]cculturation is a phenomenon that is contextually based, in that its meaning shifts from one context to another”. Multiple cultural, political and social environments (micro and macro) among other contexts are seen to affect acculturation. According to Collier, Brice, and Oades-Sese (2007), acculturation as cultural change occurs when acculturated individuals from diverse cultures or subcultures come into contact with each other (e.g., moving into a new environment). It occurs in various contexts and may take different forms (e.g. various
degrees of culture shock). Also, adaptation of values, behaviour, and languages should be realised as an exchange between two (or more) cultures in the environment in which both contexts are influenced. Rivera (2009) argues that there is a need for extensive research to examine different contexts of acculturation in order to understand the factors that affect this process among diverse ethnic populations.

**Schumann’s Acculturation Model**

Schumann’s Acculturation Model (1978) is a social psychological as well as a taxonomy-type model that focuses on the naturalistic rather than instructed SLA in the dominant L2 learning situation. The Acculturation Model associate SLA proficiency with the contact between the target language and the first language social groups: Schumann called this the social and psychological distance to measure individuals’ level of acculturation. The central premise of this model is that the extent of proficiency in the L2, in an informal learning context, is determined by the second language learners’ acculturation to the L2 group (Nitta, 2006; Siegel, 2003) and various social, personal, and affective factors (Noels & Giles, 2009). The original empirical evidence for this model relied on the findings of a ten-month observational study of an unskilled 33-year-old Costa Rican immigrant named Alberto, who lived in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Alberto’s interlanguage development while acquiring the L2 progressed only minimally during the ten months of observation. This case was understood as ‘pidginization’ as it has some characteristics of pidgin languages. It resulted from the social and psychological distance from the host culture that hindered the need to communicate with English speakers and thus impede the normal process of SLA. (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Noels & Giles, 2009). Further, Schumann developed his model to account for acculturation as “a major causal variable in SLA” (Schumann, 1986 cited in Kasper & Rose, 2002, p. 17). Schumann identified two types of acculturation; these depend on whether the learner considers the TL group as reference group or not. He stressed that both types of acculturation were efficient in the advancement of SLA (Ellis, 2008). Firstly, L2 learners can be described as psychologically open to and receptive of the TL and able to take on those characteristics using particular means (e.g. language). Secondly, which is more extreme, the learner also considers speakers of the TL as reference group and desire
consciously or unconsciously to adopt their values and life-style (Noels & Giles, 2009).

Schumann’s social psychological model subsumed two sets of variables affecting the process of acculturation and determining their levels of ‘social distance’ (the extent of comfort with the learning situation) and ‘psychological distance’ (the extent of identifying with the TL group and achieving contact with its members) (Ellis, 2008). These two sets of variables are described in Table 2. Based on his research findings on SLA, Schumann proposed that greater social and psychological distance indicate low acculturation, which predicts low levels of L2 development. He also proposed that the amount of contact and interaction with the TL group determines the success of acculturation and L2 proficiency (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Nitta, 2006; Ricento, 2005). Schumann (1986 cited in Kasper & Rose, 2002, p. 18) clarified this by stating that “any learner can be placed on a continuum that ranges from social and psychological distance to social and psychological proximity with speakers on the target language, and … the learner will acquire the second language only to the degree that he acculturates”. 
Table 2
Factors affecting social and psychological distance based on Schumann, 1978 (Ellis, 2008, p. 232)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social distance</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social dominance</td>
<td>The L2 group can be politically, culturally, technically, or economically (dominant), inferior (subordinate), or equal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration pattern</td>
<td>The L2 group may assimilate (i.e. give up its own lifestyle and values in favour of those of TL group), seek to preserve its lifestyle and values, or acculturate (i.e. adopt lifestyle and values of TL group while maintaining its own for intra-group use).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enclosure</td>
<td>The L2 group may share the same social facilities (low enclosure) or may have different social facilities (high enclosure).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesiveness</td>
<td>The L2 group is characterised by intra-group contacts (cohesive) or inter-group contacts (non-cohesive).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>The L2 group may constitute a numerically large or small group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural congruence</td>
<td>The culture of the L2 group may be similar or different to that of the TL group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>The L2 group and the TL group may hold positive or negative attitudes toward each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intended length of residence</td>
<td>The L2 group may intend to stay for a long time or a short time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Psychological distance</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language shock</td>
<td>The extent to which L2 learners fear they will look comic in speaking the L2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural shock</td>
<td>The extent to which L2 learners feel anxious and disorientated upon entering a new culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>The extent to which L2 learners are integratively (most important) or instrumentally motivated to learn the L2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ego permeability</td>
<td>The extent to which L2 learners perceive their L1 to have fixed and rigid or permeable and flexible boundaries and therefore the extent to which they are inhibited.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Social distance as a variable in the acculturation model**

Schumann provided a taxonomy of eight social variables that promote the social distance between L2 learners and the TL group. These variables are ‘social dominance’ (cultural, political, economic, or technological superiority or inferiority of the L2 learning group), ‘assimilation, preservation, and adaptation’ (integration tactics or rejection to the lifestyle and values of the TL group), ‘enclosure’ (the social constructs shared between L2 learners and the TL group such as social entities,
educational institutions, places of worship, clubs and trades between the two sides),
‘cohesiveness’ (the extent of the social separation from the TL group is determined
by the cohesiveness of the L2 learning group), ‘size’ (more frequent intragroup
contact occurs if the L2 learning group is large), ‘congruence’ (more potential contact
due to similarity between the two sides), ‘attitude’ (L2 learning is facilitated by
positive assessment of the TL group), and ‘intended length of residence’ (the
necessity of learning the target language is decided by the length of residency in the
TL environment) (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Lee, Mikesell, Joaquin, Mates, &
Schumann, 2009; Ratcheva, 2007; Schumann, 1978).

According to Nitta (2006), the relationship between these social variables and SLA
was discussed by Schumann in 1978. For instance, when the TL group and the L2
group are socially equal, when they are both cohesive and share the same social
facilities (low enclosure), when the L2 group is small in size, when the group have
similar cultural characteristics and display positive attitudes toward each other, and
when the L2 group has lived in the TL context for an extended period, social
integration is greater and better achievement in the L2 occurs. Schumann (1978)
described this case as a ‘good’ learning situation. On the other hand, several
situations of ‘bad’ learning are more possible, as many social variables allow to
different integration patterns. Also, “different learning situations manifest degrees of
‘badness’ in accordance with the extent of the overall social distance” (Ellis, 2008, p.
231).

Moreover, Lee, Mikesell, Joaquin, Mates, and Schumann (2009, p. 171) declare that
“[f]our of the variables are interrelated: pattern of integration, enclosure, attitude, and
cohesiveness”. They also explained that every L2 group has different patterns of
integration that influence the group’s desire to preserve its own cultural identity or
assimilate to the TL group. Social integration would be facilitated by ‘assimilation’
and social distance would be reduced. In contrast, social integration would be
inhibited by ‘preservation’ and social distance would be increased. Varying degrees
of social integration and social distance would be resulted from using ‘adaptation’ as
an integration strategy. ‘Enclosure’ is a second related variable that may be
influenced by a preservation-oriented group. Allocating resources to the group’s
social entities and having a coherent social structure indicate heightened degrees of enclosure. In addition, ‘attitude’ is related to ‘cohesiveness’. For example, a negative attitude toward the TL group may facilitate the cohesiveness of the L2 group. Likewise, the cohesiveness of the group can be measured by the group’s enclosure and the oriented pattern of integration. Lee and colleagues (2009, p. 171) concluded that these four interrelated variables “can shift the community along a continuum of relative social distance with respect to the TL culture, thereby influencing the degree of social integration”. Furthermore, social integration would be also facilitated by the size of the L2 group, which is perceived as a proxy for intragroup contact. The desire to interact with the TL group would be diminished in large L2 groups. ‘Cultural congruence’ may include similarities in cultural institutions such as religious or industrial institutions. Finally, a longer ‘intended length of residence’ would increase acquisition of the TL (Lee, Mikesell, Joaquin, Mates, & Schumann, 2009).

**Psychological distance as a variable in the acculturation model**

Schumann argued that classification of group contact situations cannot rely merely on individuals’ experienced social variables. Therefore, besides the social distance, there is a need to take the individuals’ psychological and affective variables into consideration. Variables that influence the psychological distance include, according to Schumann, ‘language shock’, ‘cultural shock’, ‘motivation’, and ‘ego permeability’ (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Lee, Mikesell, Joaquin, Mates, & Schumann, 2009; Ratcheva, 2007; Schumann, 1978). The variable ‘language shock’ refers to the distress a learner experiences while using the TL and the fright of receiving negative feedback (e.g., laughter). This is commonly noticed in adult learners, and not so much in children who seem to be more fearless and view learning an L2 as a source of pleasure or a kind of game (Lee et al., 2009; Nitta, 2006; Schumann, 1978). Lee and colleagues (2009) attributed language shock to the repeated lack of anticipated rewards (socialisation within the TL group). Intense depression resulted from language shock negatively affect engagement with the TL group and thereby SLA. ‘Cultural shock’ is another variable that results from living in a different environment and the asymmetries between learners’ own cultural norms and the new situation. It requires tremendous efforts to relearn the norms, signs, and symbols of communication of the new context, and this may cause feelings of stress and
frustration. Schumann argued that language and cultural shock “must be circumvented in order for SLA to proceed” (p. 172). Another variable in the acculturation model is ‘motivation’. Schumann (1978) clarified that motivation “involves the learner’s reasons for attempting to acquire the second language” (p. 32). According to Noels and Giles (2009), the notions of ‘integrative’ and ‘instrumental motivation’ were incorporated in this model drawing on Gardner and Lambert’s work (1972). The last variable in Schumann’s acculturation model is ‘ego permeability’, which is derived from Guiora’s work in 1972 (Noels & Giles, 2009). The psychoanalytic concept of ‘ego permeability’ refers to the learner’s ‘language ego’, which determines the response to the identity-threatening TL and is measured by the degree of flexibility of boundaries between the TL and their L1. Permeable language boundaries indicate success in SLA (Nitta, 2006).

According to Lee and colleagues, (2009), with regard to individual variation, Schumann would eliminate the four variables of psychological distance from the acculturation model and substitute them for Scherer’s (1984 in Lee, Mikesell, Joaquin, Mates, & Schumann, 2009) five dimensions of stimulus appraisal (see Schumann 1997 in The Neurobiology of Affect in Language): ‘pleasantness’ (an intrinsic property of a stimulus), ‘novelty’ (assessing a stimulus’s degree of familiarity and whether it has been encountered before), ‘coping potential’ (learners’ coping ability, the cause of the stimulus, the possibility of changing the stimulus, and learners’ ability to adjust to the stimulus outcomes), ‘Goal/ need significance’ (assessing the effects of a stimulus situation on learners’ attempts to achieve their goals considering four viewpoints: relevance, outcome probability, conduciveness, and urgency) and ‘self/norm compatibility’ (assessing learners’ stimuli in relation to their self-image and expectations of their valued others) (Lee et al., 2009, p. 173). In addition, because Schumann’s model does not clearly describe the internal processes involved in SLA, he added a cognitive dimension to account for them in 1990 (Ellis, 2008).

**Criticisms of Schumann’s model**

There has been limited support for The Acculturation Model in empirical research (Ellis, 2008; Kumaravadivelu, 2008; Noels & Giles, 2009). This failure to support the
model, as explained by Ellis (2008), is due to research finding a correlation between psychological distance and proficiency in the L2 in cases where social distance was high (e.g. Kelly, 1982 in Ellis, 2008). Other studies did not find a relationship between social distance and L2 proficiency when expected (Schmidt, 1983 in Ellis, 2008). This difficulty of assessing the process of acculturation was the main reason for these mixed findings. The model was constructed relying on the data collection of a single learner and as such lacks methodological rigor. Moreover, research could not objectively obtain reliable measures for each social variable because of the lack of a principled way to do so (Ellis, 2008; Kumaravadivelu, 2008). Noels and Giles (2009, p. 654) state that “the acculturation model nonetheless has galvanized recent critiques of power, identity, and language learning”. Kumaravadivelu (2008) points out that Norton, in 2000, questioned Schumann’s interpretation of Alberto’s responses regarding his motivation and attitudes toward the mainstream community. Norton suggested that the real reason for the pidginization of Alberto’s L2 was not because of his holding negative attitudes toward the mainstream community (which he was not), but partially because of the mainstream community’s ambivalent attitudes toward him, which limited the chance to practice the TL with them. Norton (2000 cited in Kumaravadivelu, 2008, p. 91) argues that “if Schumann found that Alberto’s lack of progress in language learning was due to the social and psychological distance between Alberto and Anglophones, it may be because the dominant power structures within society had relegated Alberto to a marginalized status and then blamed him for his inability to acculturate”. Norton’s argument is consistent with psychological research’s emphasis on the significant role of mainstream society in increasing opportunities for acculturation (Kumaravadivelu, 2008).

In addition, Ellis (2008) declares that the model’s pidginization analogy has drawn several theoretical objections. For instance, the pidginization phenomenon is associated with groups, while SLA is considered an individual experience. Pidginization results from incorporation of common characteristics from languages other than the TL, while SLA is always modelled on the TL. Nevertheless, Schumann’s model has not been invalidated by such criticisms since the principle construct of acculturation does not depend mainly on the pidginization analogy.
In 1989, Spolsky advanced a more serious criticism regarding Schumann’s presupposition that SLA is directly affected by social factors whereas these effects are more likely to be indirect. However, Spolsky’s concern is unjustified since Schumann clarified that the extent of interaction with the TL group mediate the effects of the social factors and this is likely to occur due to different social conditions. This presupposition assumes that the extent of interaction is positively correlated with achievement in L2. Moreover, although several studies, such as the ZISA Project on migrant workers in Germany and The Heidelberger Forschungsprojekt in 1978, reported a significant relationship between the amount of contact with the TL community and development in L2, other scholars (e.g., Swain, 1981 and Day, 1985) have failed to find a significant correlation between interaction with L2 speakers and L2 proficiency (Ellis, 2008). Kumaravadivelu (2008, p. 91) agrees with this by stating that “Schumann’s acculturation model echoes, in part, the nativist belief that language and culture are inseparable entities, and that second language acquisition and cultural assimilation are interconnected processes”. In his model, Schumann provided an implicit support to the nativistic view that minimises the significance of the L2 group’s own cultures and languages. Schumann’s perspective has been opposed by findings of recent research that demonstrates that SLA can be facilitated by maintenance of the L1 among child L2 learners. In other words, Schumann’s model suggests that acculturation is a one-way process in which L2 learners adopt the beliefs and norms of the host culture. It also claims that L2 learners have the entire responsibility for cultural and linguistic assimilation and slight attention is paid to the important role of the discriminatory relations of power that exist between L2 learners and TL group. Despite previous critiques, the model is considered one of the most influential social psychological theories in SLA and one that can be applied to different language learning contexts (Kumaravadivelu, 2008).

**Berry’s Model of Acculturation Attitudes**

Berry (1970, 1989), through a series of studies, established an association between individuals’ demonstrated degrees of acculturation and their attitudes toward the perceived significance of sustaining contact with the host culture (Culhane, 2004). Berry’s (1997) bidimensional conceptualisation of acculturation attitudes was that L2 learners in their new environment are involved in two intrinsic issues: maintenance of
their heritage culture and identity, and maintenance of relations with the new culture (Patron, 2006; Rivera, 2009). Berry argued that the psychological changes and eventual results in the process of acculturation are, on the one hand, dependent on the individual’s negotiation of ‘cultural maintenance’, in which the characteristics of one’s own cultural identity are considered to be of core value: this results in increased cultural maintenance. On the other hand, they are dependant on the individual’s degree of ‘contact and participation’, in which the degree of involvement with the other community is more important than one’s own cultural values and which results in a major shift in his/her cultural identity. However, variation in adjustment, which occurs due to different characteristics of the host culture and influences the way learners interact with the host culture, makes it difficult to introduce accurate predictions for the individual’s type of acculturation process (Berry, 1997; Patron, 2006).

Berry’s framework proposed that the choice of affiliation with one’s own cultural group or with the dominant host group culminates in four possible acculturation strategies: ‘assimilation’, ‘marginalisation’, ‘integration’, and ‘separation’ (Berry, 2003; Culhane, 2004; Patron, 2006; Rivera, 2009; Torres, 2001). These four strategies are contingent on the importance of cultural maintenance and the level of contact and participation in the host culture. They can be identified by asking two questions: a) is it considered to be of value to maintain cultural identity and characteristics?; b) is it considered to be of value to maintain relationships with other groups? As one can notice from Figure 2 below, answering these questions dichotomously with yes or no results in the four different acculturation variables (Berry, 1991; Berry, 1997; Culhane, 2004, p. 54; Duarte, 2009).
Individuals who select the ‘assimilationist’ strategy tend to espouse the new culture and embrace its values and behaviours while concurrently the values and behaviours of the heritage culture are rejected. Nevertheless, differences to accommodate to the host culture were noticed in migrants as opposed to sojourners, the latter being of temporary status. It is more likely for migrants who endure exclusion or discrimination to assimilate in cultures that are not tolerant of cultural variations. However, it is important to mention that assimilation may involve absorption of behavioural and linguistic features of the host community and this depends on length of residency and long-term consequences of discrimination. Moreover, individuals who perceive their culture to be less prestigious or make social comparisons and have pre-existing stereotypical views about their own culture have greater tendency to relinquish their cultural values and characteristics (Patron, 2006). To provide evidence on this acculturation paradigm, Patron, during the years of 2002-2005, conducted a study on young members of the Franco-Mauritian diaspora who had migrated to Melbourne-Australia during the 1960s. The researcher observed a high degree of assimilation to the norms of the host culture. She argued that such convergence arose from the domination of the English language and the negative
attitudes toward multiculturalism. Similar results have been shown in studies such as that of Baubock, Heller, and Zolberg in 1996, Clyne in 1991, and Finocchiaro in 1995 (Patron, 2006). According to Duarte (2009), ‘assimilation’ can also be a result of the merging of several non-dominant groups forming a single new community. When this strategy is chosen freely, the new culture is referred to as a ‘melting pot’, but when the dominant culture forces the non-dominant group to assimilate, it is referred to as a ‘pressure cooker’ (Berry, 1997).

Individuals who select the ‘marginalisationist’ strategy tend to have little desire either to maintain the norms of their own heritage culture or to gravitate toward the cultural norms of the new community (sometimes because of social elimination, cultural inferiority, or discrimination). Rather than being a personal choice, this strategy may be the result of failed attempts at assimilation and participating in the larger society (Berry, 2003; Patron, 2006). According to Berry and Kim (1988 in Patron 2006), groups who adopt the ‘marginalisation’ mode endure a feeling of alienation and, isolation from and inferiority to the dominant culture. This case is associated with terms such as ‘cultures in-between’ (Bhabha, 1996 in Patron, 2006), and ‘impermeable boundaries’ (Tajfel, 1981 in Patron, 2006) where ‘marginalisationists’ choice is accompanied by anxiety as well as collective and individual confusion because of the loss of the vital features of their culture and the failure to adapt to the wider society. Duarte (2009, p. 21) stated that when “marginalisation is the result of a group’s decision or attitude, it constitutes a situation of marginality; when imposed by the host community it is equivalent to social exclusion or even ethnocide”.

Conversely, individuals who select the ‘integrationist’ strategy (amounts to biculturalism) tend to maintain the heritage culture and simultaneously interact with the host culture. Following this strategy leads to the development of the minority group’s proficiency in the L2, and the existence of positive relationships and mutual acceptance between both groups (Duarte, 2009; Patron, 2006; Rivera, 2009). Berry (2003, p. 24) argues that people in this case have “some degree of cultural ‘integrity’, and at the same time they seek, as a member of an ethnocultural group, to participate as an ‘integral’ part of the larger social network”. Van de Vijver and Phalet (2004)
mention several consistent studies that reveal a preference for migrants to use this strategy, such as studies conducted on migrants in Belgium and the Netherlands (e.g., Phalet & Hagendoorn, 1996; Phalet, Van Lotringen, & Entzinger, 2000; Van de Vijver, Helms-Lorenz, & Feltzer, 1999). Berry (2006) also claims that strong empirical research has indicated that this approach is the most favoured acculturation style elected by non-dominant groups and the most efficient in attaining higher levels of functioning and thus positive consequences. Patron (2006, p. 23) states that this acculturation style is closely connected to the notion of the ‘third place’ mentioned by Bhabha in 1990, where non-dominant groups stand in a comfortable position and have the freedom to interact with the new culture without the obligation to abandon their cultural norms. Van de Vijver and Phalet (2004, p. 220) argue that compared to the other strategies, “the integration strategy is most often associated with successful personal adjustment”.

Finally, and of particular relevance to the present research, individuals who select the ‘separationist’ alternative tend to maintain the heritage culture (as a result of social comparisons) and exclude interaction with the host culture (Van de Vijver & Phalet, 2004). According to Patron (2006), this alternative is mostly chosen by academic sojourners on a short stay who may consider the integration or adaptation mode an onerous process, unlike the case of migrants who consider intercultural relations an acute issue. Instrumentally motivated, sojourners may view assimilation to the host culture as requiring too much effort due to the strength of their culture in comparison to the new one. In the same vein, research has shown that obtaining an advanced degree or professional training is the main interest of the overwhelming majority of sojourners and this may restrict their interaction with the host milieu to only including peripheral areas (Patron, 2006). Sewell and Davidsen (1956 in Patron, 2006) have described individuals who choose this pattern of acculturation as ‘detached observers’. These individuals do not pursue relationships with the host culture members due to the support they receive from their cultural network of friends (Patron, 2006).

In general, individuals’ acculturation together with the host culture’s attitude determine which acculturation strategy is selected (Berry, 2003). According to
Culhane (2004), the most negative acculturation stress occurs when ‘marginalisationist’ or ‘separationist’ attitudes are held. This is because individuals with these types of attitudes perceive intercultural experiences to be threatening. In contrast, less acculturative stress occurs when ‘integrationist’ attitudes are held. However, the above four acculturation variables associated with other important factors that influence the acculturation process (e.g., social support and friendship patterns, age, gender, educational socioeconomic status, and language use) (Berry, 2003) provide more detail of the complex process of acculturation and culture contact (Patron, 2006). Additionally, moving to a new culture, sojourners encounter ascending phases of acculturative stress or adaptation difficulties and to avoid increasing the level of the stress, they select one of the four acculturative strategies proposed by Berry (Patron, 2006).

Berry’s bidimensional framework suggests that acculturation does not only occur along two dimensions and vary between four diverse degrees, but that it is necessary to distinguish between acculturation within the private domain (changes on the psychological level and in the family environment) and the public domain (changes on the cultural level and outside the family) (Berry, 1991; Culhane, 2004; Rivera, 2009). Rivera (2009) points out that the study by Arends-Toth, Van De Vijver, and Poortinga, in 2006, on Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands provided evidence that, in the public domain, both the Turkish and the Dutch cultures were perceived to be equally favoured, which engenders an integration attitude. In contrast, Turkish migrants preferred to maintain their heritage culture in the private domain, suggesting a separation attitude. The researchers, relying on these results, proposed a third facet to this domain in order to add specificity and to measure the acculturation of different ethnic groups. Rivera (2009) also emphasises that this four-strategy model of acculturation is too limited and that it is also essential to examine the acculturation of the host society. She states that these concerns have led to the expansion of Berry’s approach by researchers such as Bourhis, Moise, Perreault, and Senecal in 1997 and Navas et al. in 2005. In 1997, Bourhis’s Interactive Acculturation Model (IAM) included five acculturation modes: ‘integration’, ‘assimilation’, ‘separation’, ‘anomie’, and ‘individualism’. Berry’s concept of ‘marginalisation’ is replaced by the last two terms in attempt to distinguish alienated individuals who rely on neither their
own culture nor the host society from those who perceive their group as individualist and choose not to identify with either culture to achieve a specific goal (Rivera, 2009). Recently, Navas and colleagues (2005 in Rivera 2009) have introduced The Relative Acculturation Extended Model (RAEM) that takes into account that the process of acculturation occurs within various realms. The authors asserted that regarding the public and the private domains, acculturation can be measured along seven domains: ‘social relations’, ‘family relations’, ‘work environment’, ‘religious beliefs’, ‘politics and government’, ‘economics’, and ‘values and principles’. Additionally, it is proposed that immigrants may involve in more than one domain depending on the circumstances they may experience. Berry (1990, 2003) has repeatedly accentuated the role of the national and the institutional policies in the acculturation process of the ethnic or minority groups. In multicultural societies (e.g., Australia or Canada), sojourners live in environments where various and diverse populations co-exist. Therefore, selecting one of the four acculturative strategies would be easier than in more explicitly monocultural societies (Patron, 2006).

2.2.3 The relationship between acculturation and second language acquisition

According to the Acculturation Model, SLA is viewed as one aspect of the process of acculturation (Nitta, 2006). Schumann (1978) links proficiency in acquiring a second language to the degree of acculturation and assumes a linear relationship between acculturation and SLA, and the existence of mediators between these two constructs. He considered contact with the TL group to be a crucial component of acculturation, but he also stressed that adoption of the values and way of life of the TL group is not the only factor for success in acquiring the TL. The Acculturation Model shows that those who failed to progress in the L2 demonstrate low acculturation levels. It is also suggested that social and psychological distances play important roles as mediators between acculturation and SLA (Schumann, 1978). In Alberto’s case, the main causal factor of his low English proficiency was that he encountered high social as well as high psychological distance toward the Anglo society (Kasper & Rose, 2002).
Several studies have been conducted to examine the interdependence between proficiency in the L2 and acculturation. For example, Schmidt (1983 in Kasper & Rose, 2002) used findings of a case study of Wes, a Japanese L2 learner in Honolulu to predict L2 learners’ interlanguage development. Wes’s acculturation pattern along the social and psychological dimensions were the core of Schmidt’s approach in which 14 out of 16 social and psychological variables were claimed to have a facilitative influence on Wes’s SLA. Over the three-year period of observation, Wes showed improvements in morphology, pragmatic and sociolinguistic skills, and communicative and strategic competence. Nevertheless, Wes failed to acquire much of the grammatical component of the L2. Schmidt attributed this failure to social distance factors such as the lack of interest to interact with the TL speakers and having negative attitude toward the TL group. Schmidt submitted that “[l]ow social distance, positive attitudes toward the second language community and high integrative motivation have led to a considerable increase in overall communicative competence but have had little effect on improved grammatical competence” (Kasper & Rose, 2002, p. 19). However, although Schmidt acknowledged the fact that acculturation influences SLA, he argued that acculturation could not be considered a primary factor to account for variation in SLA (Kasper & Rose, 2002).

Moreover, in a study to investigate L2 learners’ linguistic advancement and their level of acculturation, Stauble (1980 cited in Nitta, 2006, p. 15) explains the affiliation between acculturation and learning a L2 as follows:

The acculturation process involves modification in the attitudes, knowledge, and behaviour of individuals and that these modifications involve not only the addition of new elements to an individual’s cultural background but also the elimination of certain previous elements and reorganization of others. It is a matter of not merely adjusting one’s cultural habits but also learning the appropriate linguistic habits to function within the target language group.

According to Hamers and Blanc (2000), in 1990, Young and Gardner acknowledged the interrelation between modes of acculturation and SLA, but they disagreed as to the effect of L2 variables (e.g., proficiency and self-confidence) in the process of acculturation. On one hand, considering acculturation as a linear process entails interpreting L2 variables as indicators of assimilation to the new culture. On the other hand, viewing acculturation as a multidimensional process does not necessarily entail
viewing high scores in L2 variables as indicators of linguistic assimilation. In terms of type of bilingualism, Gardner (1985) points out that it is not necessary to link additive and substantive bilinguality to socioeconomic status of the majority and minority groups, but should instead be linked to individuals’ reactions towards L2 learning. The English proficiency of Chinese students in Toronto, Canada, for instance, has been linked to linguistic assimilation as well as to cultural assimilation, but their self-confidence with learning the L2 was seen as more related to linguistic assimilation (Hamers & Blanc, 2000). A different account of the relationship between acculturation and L2 proficiency has been given by Noel, Pon, and Clément (1996 in Hamers & Blanc, 2000) who studied Chinese students in Ottawa, Canada. It was indicated that interaction with the English culture greater than interaction with the Chinese culture resulted in higher linguistic self-confidence, while higher self-confidence in Chinese was a result from greater interaction with the Chinese culture. The researchers concluded that “two modes of acculturation, assimilation and separation were predominant in the Chinese community” (Hamers & Blanc, 2000, p. 219).

2.2.4 Factors affecting acculturation according to different researchers

The ways in which individuals acculturate are influenced by a variety of factors. In this section, I will summarise some current discussions of the most important indicators affecting the process of acculturation. These, according to Padilla and Perez (2003, p. 39), include “family structure and function, adherence to certain religious beliefs and practices, gender, power relationships between the majority and minority groups, personality characteristics, and age of onset of intergroup contact”. In addition, minority groups’ cultural aspects, such as religion, language, race, or dress, play an important role in distinguishing the minority groups from the host culture and thus affect their acculturation patterns. The socioeconomic status of minority groups besides political and social circumstances in the host country also affect the extent to which individuals experience social discrimination or find cultural adaptation more beneficial. In other words, newcomers from certain ethnic groups may endure greater discrimination than others and thus they may be more inclined to undergo cultural
adaptation. Padilla and Perez (2003) view acculturation as a mutual process between minority and majority groups. Therefore, they take into account cultural differences between both groups and the majority group’s attitudes toward newcomers. Openness to other cultures may indicate whether newcomers will maintain their heritage culture and will interact actively with the host culture. However, numerous social and environmental constraints determine individuals’ accommodation strategies and make acculturation a complicated process that is not merely the outcome of intergroup contact (Padilla & Perez, 2003).


For Berry (2003), individual differences and people’s diverse reactions toward acculturation are evident. Individuals differ in their goals and the paths they follow in order to acculturate. Many demographic factors may influence individual’s acculturation, such as age, gender, degree of education, years of schooling, ethnic identity, fluency in the L2 and language use, social support, and duration of residency in the host culture (Berry, 1990; Berry, 2003). Berry’s framework shows the possibility for individual (psychological) and cultural group factors to affect the choice of acculturative strategies (see Table 3). On one hand, individual factors such as one’s sense of cultural identity are clearly connected with one’s acculturation modes. It is pointed out by Berry that individuals with stronger cultural and ethnic identities have a preference for separation. On the other hand, evidence of the importance of particular group-level factors has been presented in the literature. For example, sojourners and social groups in voluntary contact seem more likely to have higher integration than refugees and immigrants who are not in voluntary contact. In addition, those who have distinct different appearances to the dominant group may experience more discrimination or be less assimilated. Demographic vitality (sheer numbers of ethnolinguistic group members) and social ecology are other factors that
may lead to integration or separation modes and increase the possibility of cultural maintenance (Berry, 2003). Berry also refers to the effects of national policies and types of multicultural ideologies in triggering certain preferences.

Table 3
Factors affecting the process of acculturation based on Berry and Sam, 1997 (Castro, 2003, p. 27)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society of origin</td>
<td>Political context</td>
<td>Civil war, repression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economic situation</td>
<td>Poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Demographic factors</td>
<td>Population explosion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host society</td>
<td>Immigration policy</td>
<td>From a pluralist to ethnist ideology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attitudes toward immigration</td>
<td>Mainstream acculturation strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attitudes toward specific groups</td>
<td>Stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acculturating group</td>
<td>Validity</td>
<td>Status, distribution (ethnic density)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Changes in economic, social, and cultural features</td>
<td>Structural barriers, cultural changes (e.g., language, religion, food)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factors prior to acculturation</td>
<td>Demographic</td>
<td>Age, gender, education, Socioeconomic status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>Language, religion, distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Health, coping strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Migration motivation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Factors arising during acculturation</td>
<td>Acculturation strategies</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contact/participation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural maintenance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prejudice and discrimination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Berry (2003), several group factors have been examined by researchers such as Moise and Bourhis, in 1997, who found that attitudes toward the contact situation and individuals’ ethnolinguistic vitality were salient predictors of which acculturation strategy was chosen. He concludes that “what is emerging from all these studies is that acculturation strategies are not adopted at random” (p. 30). Thus, acculturation strategies are an outcome of interrelated contextual factors.
Ward (1999 cited in Culhane, 2004, p. 55) agrees with Barry’s model and his concept of acculturation attitudes and emphasises a distinction between socio-cultural adaptation (acquisition of everyday operational skills within the new culture) and psychological adaptation (personal well-being and psychological coping within the transitional experience). Similarly, she argues that socio-cultural adjustment in sojourners depends on four variables: the cultural proximity between the host culture and the sojourners’ home culture, the length of residency in the new context, the extent of contact with members of the host culture, and the ability to use the TL fluently.

In a recent study, Choi and Thomas (2009) reviewed the predictive factors of acculturation attitudes in ethnic minority groups. The researchers emphasised the role of emotional and social support (e.g., supportive family members, relatives, and friends) in coping with challenges faced in the acculturation process. Choi and Thomas declare that the assimilation process is promoted by a strong sense of belonging to a specific ethnic community. It is also found that social support alleviates acculturation stress resulted from forms of discrimination. In addition, a supportive environment was found to influence the educational advancement of young children: ethnic groups were a protective factor from the pressure to reject their heritage culture (Choi & Thomas, 2009).

Another predictive factor presented by Choi and Thomas (2009) is length of residence in the host country. More years in the school system of the host culture is related to higher degrees of acculturation. In the same vein, the longer individuals reside in the host country, the higher the degrees of acculturation. Choi and Thomas’ (2009) findings indicate a gradual loss of sense of ethnic identity in minorities residing in the host culture for a longer period. However, other researchers such as Jain and Belsky in 1997, and Trueba in 2004 disagree with this argument and as such do not equate the length of residency with acculturation. They point out that some groups have spent a long period in the host country and still have bicultural orientation and maintain contact with their heritage culture (Choi & Thomas, 2009).
Regarding age, Choi and Thomas (2009) declare that younger newcomers have less of an ethnic identity and thereby a higher degree of acculturation and smoother adaptation. Choi and Thomas attribute this to social factors that provide opportunities for socialising with the new culture, such as the school and friendship networks.

Fluency in the L2 is another predictive factor that affects acculturation. Minority groups’ negotiation in both cultures and their social interaction with the new culture facilitate their adaptation (Choi & Thomas, 2009). According to Choi and Thomas (2009), individuals who have better proficiency in the TL acculturate better. Acculturation stress was found to be reduced by fluency in the TL while individuals’ sense of ethnic identity was simultaneously increased. The above factors were seen by Choi and Thomas (2009) to have an impact on the acculturation of minority groups in general. It is stressed that it is essential for policy-makers and educational professionals to understand and appreciate the acculturation of diverse ethnic populations.

Culhane (2004) notes that the examination of sojourners’ adaptation to a new culture (related to SLA) often draws on psychological studies of adaptation or linguistic studies, which only look at sojourners’ semantic, lexical, or grammatical acquisition. Because of the lack of intensive studies discussing the acculturation of sojourners in a new culture and the influence of the surrounding social context in the field of linguistics, I will use psychological perspectives regarding this topic because of the similarities between the two areas. Bochner (2006) notes variables that impact on this type of minority groups’ acculturation and their level of contact to include “the time frame of the visit, its purpose, the cultural attitudes of members of the society to outsiders, the sojourners’ emotional involvement with the host society, and the cultural distance separating the sojourners from the host-society members” (p. 183).

In concurrence with Berry, and Padilla and Perez, Bochner (2006) stresses the significant effect of the host group’s attitudes toward newcomers and their distinct physical appearance on the acculturation of sojourners. Sojourners’ ability and willingness to interact with the host community is motivated by how welcoming it seems. At the same time, the level of sojourners’ emotional participation in the host
community can be determined by the intensity of their social network (e.g., friends and associates). Likewise, there are substantial variations in the degree of sojourners’ engagement with the host groups, “ranging from those who immerse themselves in the local social and commercial scene, to those who live behind the walls of self-segregated compounds reserved for foreigners” (p. 184). However, sojourners who establish strong patterns of association with members or institutions of the host group become more likely to endure ‘reverse’ or ‘re-entry culture shock’ when re-entering their culture of origin (Bochner, 2006).

2.2.5 Acculturation and ethnic identity

When newcomers transfer into a new culture, ethnic identity becomes prominent as an important aspect of the acculturation process. Although the two concepts of ethnic identity and acculturation have been often used interchangeably, acculturation is considered to be a broader construct for enclosing a wide range of attitudes, behaviours and values. Therefore, ethnic identity can be recognised as the “aspect of acculturation that focuses on the subjective sense of belonging to a group or culture” (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001, p. 495). Farver, Xu, Bhadha, Narang, and Lieb (2007) declare that ethnic or cultural identity and acculturation are connected and separated constructs at the same time. Acculturation refers to processes by which individuals belonging to an ethnic minority adjust to the dominant culture and culture change in their beliefs, values, and lifestyle resulting from immediate, continuous contact between the two cultural groups. In contrast, cultural identity involves a sense of self-identification, affiliation, and belonging to a specific ethnic group as well as attitudes toward ethnic group membership. It may become more apparent in settings where two or more cultural groups have been in contact for an extended period of time. Maldonado, Kushner, Barr, and Korz (2009) note that there are reciprocal relationships between acculturation and ethnic identity that are linked to individuals transferring to a new culture. The transferring process is often a difficult one and requires separation from familiar social and cultural institutions.

As it is a part of acculturation, cultural identity can be explained through the same theoretical framework used to explain the process of acculturation. The general
understanding is of acculturation as a multi-dimensional process that may require more than mere assimilation into a dominant culture. It involves two important aspects: the adoption of behaviours and values of the new culture, and the retention of beliefs and values of the culture of origin (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001). According to Gibson (2001 cited Maldonado, Kushner, Barr, & Korz, 2009) acculturation can be defined as “the process of cultural change and adaptation that occurs when individuals from different cultures come into contact with each other”. Acculturation as a multi-dimensional process is largely based on Berry’s orthogonal model (1990, 2003). It recognises that acculturation is not a linear process of cultural change which falls either between adaptation to the host culture or maintenance of the home culture. Aspects of acculturation are “conceptually distinct and can vary independently” (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001, p. 495). Consequently, Berry proposed his four approaches to which ethnic groups may associate with their host cultures (Berry, 2003). Also, he suggested that the mutual relationship of exchange between the two groups mainly influences these approaches (Maldonado, Kushner, Barr, & Korz, 2009). Furthermore, Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind and Vedder (2001) note that Berry’s model provides a broad theoretical view of possible categories of minority groups’ identity. Individuals’ ethnic identity along with their national identity (identity as members of the new culture) are two dimensions of a group identity that varies diversely (either a strong or weak identity). Individuals with strong ethnic identity and who also associate to the new culture are said to have an integrated identity. Those with a strong ethnic identity but who do not associate to the new culture are regarded as having a separated identity. An assimilated identity results from abandoning one’s ethnic identity and assimilating only with the new culture while a marginalised identity results from abandoning both cultures (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001).

One line of research examining individuals’ distinct styles toward acculturation and cultural change assumes that acculturation affects minority families and children’s early adaptation and causes variations in child outcome (Farver, Xu, Bhadha, Narang, & Lieb, 2007). For example, Patel, Power, and Bhavnagri (1996 in Farver, Xu, Bhadha, Narang, & Lieb, 2007) found that parents with assimilated acculturation styles tended to encourage Americanised attitudes and behaviours in their children. In
fact, ethnic identity may interact with attitudes toward other cultures and contribute to minority groups’ adjustment. Thus, one can see that an integrated acculturation mode promotes positive orientations toward both groups and this have been connected to positive psychological adaptation (Farver, Xu, Bhadha, Narang, & Lieb, 2007).

A second line of research regarding culture identity and acculturation of ESL young learners has revealed various findings. For example, Norton-Pierce and Toohey, in 2001, point out that ESL learners construct essential language learning using individual identities, communities, and social formations. In different words, “language develops along with social and cultural identity”. However, it is found that aspects of minority groups’ cultures (e.g., cultural traditions and history) are often excluded in the educational curriculum (Maldonado, Kushner, Barr, & Korz, 2009, p. 14).

Diverse ethnic groups differ in their values, traditions, and beliefs and thereby in their experienced acculturation. It is declared by research that the extent of identification with one’s home culture influences the process of adjustment in a new culture. Although acculturation among specific ethnic groups, its internal processes, and situational factors that cause particular cultural adjustment styles have been examined, less research has identified patterns of cultural adjustment among children from minority ethnic groups. Recently, it has been found that acculturation differences are greater between ethnic groups than within (Sonderegger, Barrett, & Creed, 2004). For example, Sonderegger and Barrett (2004) conducted a study to examine variation in identification with new cultural values and involvement in home-culture traditions among Chinese and former-Yugoslavian children and adolescents. The study involved 273 primary and high school students investigating the children’s self-reported measures of acculturation, ethnic identity, social support, self-concept/esteem, internalising symptoms (e.g., trauma, anxiety, and depression), and future outlook. These aspects were studied depending on variables related to the participants’ gender, heterogenic ethnicity and cultural group, school level, and duration of residency. Findings revealed that bicultural adaptation was least correlated with internalising symptoms. Moreover, greater cultural integration -yet higher degrees of anxiety -were reported by former-Yugoslavian youth compared to
cross-culturally Chinese students. The study fully described the complex interaction of cultural variables that influence elements of the adjustment process (Sonderegger, Barrett, & Creed, 2004).

2.3 Repatriation of sojourners

“The nature of the sojourner is one of a cycle: moving to a new country and moving home; the process of adjustment and the outcome of adaptation; culture shock and reverse shock.” (Sussman, 2002, p. 391)

After spending a significant period of time away, sojourners returning to their home country encounter psychological, physical, interpersonal and behavioural changes referred to as ‘reverse culture shock’ (Martin, 1984; Park, 2008; Patron, 2006; Sussman, 2002; Torres, 2001). Reverse culture shock is one of the most difficult challenges and complex phases undergone by returnees (Park, 2008; Patron, 2006). “Returnees have to embrace re-learning their native language and re-adjust to the strange but familiar cultural and social environments of the home country” (Park, 2008, p. 197). Martin (1984, p. 116) defines the re-entry process by stating that “reacculturation or reentry is the readjustment of the sojourner into the home culture” while Patron (2006, p. 52) defines reverse culture shock as the “psychosocial difficulties (sometimes associated with physical problems) that a returnee experiences in the initial stage of the adjustment process at home after having lived abroad for some time”. A small number of studies have been conducted on reentry adaptation and the process of readjustment (Sussman, 2002; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001).

This section discusses research on reverse culture shock and reacculturation to home culture. Changes in identities, behaviours, and communication styles due to the sojourn process are also pointed out. Moreover, special consideration is given to presenting the findings of some recent studies on several issues regarding children’s readjustment. Finally, a number of theoretical frameworks to understand sojourner’s readjustment process are presented.
While some perspectives claim a direct, positive association between adaptation to the host culture and reentry experience, other prevalent perspectives have inverse predictions (Sussman, 2002). According to Patron (2006), the processes of reverse culture shock and readjustment to the realities of the home culture are dramatically more complicated than the process of acculturation. Newcomers to a foreign context are expected to get into confusing situations due to differences between the two cultures. It is normal for them to experience stress while adjusting to the new social context and feel homesick as a consequence. On the contrary, sojourners, when they arrive home, are expected by surrounding people simply to resume their lives. Also, returnees are shown little empathy and tolerance when mistakes are made (Patron, 2006). Torres (2001) clarifies that when sojourners return home, they have gone through many changes in their values, behaviours, and communication styles. This may bring about conflict situations and complex problems that trigger several challenges for sojourner families when returning home.

Some researchers, such as Weaver (1994 in Patron, 2006), argue that the processes of culture shock and reverse culture shock may have commonalities in their results. The inconsistency between expectations and reality in the two situations may affect the ability to interact or communicate with social harmony, which may result in feelings of alienation, frustration, stress, and mutual misunderstandings between returnees and their family and friends. In some cases, the distress may lead to physical and psychological responses. As described by Weaver, symptoms of reverse culture shock may manifest in indulgence in escapist or unaware behaviours such as social criticism and nonverbal messages that may depict returnees as arrogant and rude. However, returnees’ reactions range between denial and exaggeration regarding their experience abroad (Patron, 2006).

Focusing on children’s readjustment issues, Torres (2001) mentions Sueda and Wiseman’s study in the early 1990s, which introduced a different viewpoint on reentry and examined cases of Japanese children who accompanied their parents abroad for purposes of business in the U.S. It was found that readjustment to Japanese schools was one of the most significant challenges faced by child returnees. The differences between the native and the American schools made it harder for these
returnees to fit into the Japanese schooling system. Moreover, Japanese schools lack equipment, counseling services, and special programs to facilitate the children’s reentry experience. Similarly, Torres’s (2001) findings assert the difficulty in re-establishing relationships with teachers, and peers at school. As reported by parents, differences in communication styles made children encounter problems while attempting to relearn the hierarchical and formal communication style emphasised in Japanese schools. Also, Japanese teachers’ expectations of high respect and total acquiescence enhanced these challenges. In a recent study by Yoshida and colleagues (2002), factors causing a variety of psychological and social consequences of the reentry process were well examined. The noteworthy information in relation to the issue of re-entry was derived from a questionnaire survey data of 512 young returnees who spent more than two years accompanying their parents abroad (aged between 5 and 18). Results indicated that due to the increasing openness of the Japanese society and good preparation for reentry, those who returned home recently were less likely to experience repatriation difficulties. In addition, communication with parents and the privilege of special provisions from schools were effective in capturing positive outcomes including reduced adjustment difficulties, and increased acceptance and self-affirmation (Yoshida et al., 2002). More recently, Park’s (2008) qualitative study into the adjustment and readjustment of a Korean elementary school child who spent five years in the U.S as an ESL learner provides valuable data about living in two different cultures. The data were derived during 14 months of longitudinal observations and interviews with the focal child, her parents, and sister. Findings confirmed that the child’s sojourn was a continual negotiation of identities rather than being a temporary interruption. Lack of support and tolerance from parents, peers, and other returnees had a significant role in her negative repatriation experience.

Several theoretical frameworks are presented to examine the sojourner’s readjustment experience and to explain the phenomenon of the re-entry paradigm. For example, Patron (2006) cites The W-Curve Hypothesis of Gullahorn and Gullahorn in the early 1960s, which proposes a curvilinear adjustment pattern depicting the acculturation and reentry phases of sojourners. The precept of the hypothesis is dependent on the idea that the re-acculturation process experienced by returnees in their home context is parallel to their level of acculturation during cultural transitions. Various variables
influence this process including different personality traits, length of residency in the host culture, different patterns of interpersonal relationships, and cultural similarities between the two cultures. Patron (2006, p. 53) summarises Gullahorn and Gullahorn’s hypothesis here:

Sojourners experience initial euphoria when they first re-enter, followed by a subsequent trough in the level of adjustment during the most difficult stage, commonly known as reverse culture shock, with an eventual but gradual improvement of adjustment levels until they reach a stage of full recovery. This second part of the adjustment curve thus represents the readaptation of the sojourner along temporal dimensions.

Moreover, Sussman (2002) proposes The Cultural Identity Model (CIM) in her research on the cyclical nature of the sojourner’s adaptation and repatriation. Her model is based on the correlation between sojourner’s cultural identity and repatriation experience. Sussman focuses on the multidimensional aspects of cultural transitions. Several tenets are maintained in Sussman’s Cultural Identity Model (CIM): 1) cultural identity is a crucial but latent aspect of the self-concept; 2) the salience of cultural identity is an outcome of the beginning of a cultural transition; 3) cultural identity is dynamic and can shift as a result of the experience of transition and self-concept disturbances; and 4) shifts in cultural identity are viewed as a mediator between the cultural adjustment and repatriation process (Sussman, 2002).

In addition, four identity profiles are posited throughout the model, each with a particular repatriation result: affirmative, subtractive, additive, and global identity. When sojourners’ home country identity is affirmed by their foreign experience, it indicates an affirmative identity. Sojourners become ‘grateful repatriates’ who have a strong common bond and positive feelings toward their home country and co-nationals. Repatriation distress in this category of sojourners is low; since they demonstrated low adaptation to the host country. Sojourners with subtractive or additive identities, whose home country identities were affected by their affiliation and high adaptation to the host country, would encounter high repatriation distress. Repatriation distress experience by subtractive identifiers would be a result of identity loss, feelings of estrangement, and alienation from their compatriots as well as their home country. This is represented in more allegiances to the host culture and refusal to come home. On the other hand, high repatriation distress encountered by additive
identifiers would be a consequence of internalising many aspects of the host culture (e.g., beliefs, values, emotions, and social rituals). Negative repatriation in this category is mainly correlated to the extent of compatriots’ acceptance of the returnees’ remoulded identities and their cultural and linguistic internalisation of the host country. When sojourners have multiple international experiences, they are characterised as possessing global identities. Their cultural transition from and to their home country implies belonging to a universal community. The adaptation of this category of sojourners is instrumentally motivated and they are predicted to experience moderate or positive repatriation upon returning home (Park, 2008; Patron, 2006; Sussman, 2002). Using a social psychological framework, Sussman has proposed “a broader and more integrated theory of the transition cycle” (Sussman, 2002, p. 393).

Although attitudes of the home society affect the repatriation experience, various coping strategies can be applied to minimise the negative influences of reverse culture shock (Patron, 2006). Patron emphasises Weaver’s strategies in 1994, namely: ‘decompression’ (preparing the sojourners for repatriation by assisting their recognition of the symptoms and aspects of the reverse culture shock process); ‘communication outlets’ (using members of the home country to serve as mentors who can empathise with the returnees and reassure them), and ‘stress management techniques’ (adopting healthy daily routines such as exercising and healthy diet to minimise the disruptive effect of the readjustment pressure) (Patron, 2006).

Patron (2006) also cites Adler’s matrix of four coping styles detected in returnees in the early 1980s: ‘rebellious’, ‘resocialised’, ‘alienated’, and ‘proactive’. Adler’s typology was determined by two intersected dimensions: ‘overall attitude’ that ranges from optimistic to pessimistic and ‘specific attitude’ which can be active or passive. Pessimistic yet active responses indicate a ‘rebellious’ paradigm, which makes the returnees acting aggressively against their home culture. This style is comparable to Berry’s separation/segregation strategy. Optimistic yet passive responses indicate ‘re-socialised’ returnees who experience repatriation in a positive way; however, they consider their reentry as only a period of adjustment and choose to assimilate with current social norms. Pessimistic and passive reactions indicate an ‘alienated’ coping
style, which is similar to the marginalisation strategy. Returnees tend to react negatively dissociating themselves from their home environment and reject the reentry experience. Conversely, optimistic yet active reactions indicate ‘proactive’ returnees. Like those who choose the integration strategy, proactive returnees perceive reentry as positive opportunity for growth. They extend the growth experience by integrating and evaluating aspects of both cultures using their acquired cross-cultural skills. Proactive returnees seem more efficient and satisfied with their social position (Patron, 2006).

Importantly, the transitional phases of reverse culture shock are similar for each individual. Still, there are variations regarding their duration and intensity. According to Patron (2006, p. 64), “the symptoms of culture shock and reverse culture shock are not terminal but there is no ‘cure’ and each individual needs to find coping strategies to minimise the effects of these phenomena”. The previously mentioned effectual strategies proposed by Weaver and Adler help to assist the returnee’s ability to cope with readjustment difficulties (Patron, 2006). Young sojourners experience reentry differently from their parents. Being deprived of support and assistance may result in losing confidence and a sense of distress in those children (Park, 2008).

In summary, this chapter has considered some important issues regarding SLA in childhood. It has highlighted numerous factors that are perceived to influence the process of acquisition and their outcomes. It has also provided an idea of the theoretical framework of the notion of acculturation, concentrating on two effective models in the field. Issues of repatriation have also been considered. The next chapter will explore the literature of some essential social factors in acculturation.
Chapter Three: Social Factors in Acculturation

3.1 Social factors surrounding ESL children in a new culture

“Gaining language proficiency takes place in a social setting shaped by social structures and orders of discourse.” (Holmen, 2006, p. 197)

Language acquisition as a component of the dynamic and complex processes of identity, culture, and social membership is not merely a result of individual ability. It is also a result of social interactions and linguistic norms at both the micro-social and macro-social levels (Holmen, 2006). Studying an L2 is interrelated with the adjustments of attitudes toward members of the host culture and the L2 itself. Significant integration has been found to be a result of both positive and negative interaction experiences and interpersonal variables (e.g., friendship networks and contact strategies with the home and host culture) (Culhane, 2004).

This section discusses four main social factors surrounding ESL children or sojourners in a new culture, which also shape the selection of the methodology of the present study. For example, the survey presented a number of acculturation factors to a number of teachers and asked them to judge the importance of each of the factors. The first part addresses the influence of the child’s family, their home activities, and their personal attitudes, either toward the second language or the host culture, on the child’s acculturation in a new context. In the second part, the influence of the teacher and educational context on the acculturation process including SLA is addressed. The role of the teacher as one of the first significant role models after the family is emphasised in this section. The various requirements of which teachers need to be mindful while dealing with culturally diverse children are also reviewed. The remainder of this part focuses on the educational context surrounding the children, including the role of the school staff, the role of the curriculum and multicultural pedagogy, and the role of the school environment. The third part presents how the children’s adjustment is affected by the host culture’s attitudes toward sojourners and diverse groups as well as social alliances and friendships in the host culture. Finally,
the fourth part provides evidence of the influence of the media on adding valuable context for language learning and acculturation.

3.1.1 The child’s family

Because language competence is an indicator of successful adaptation in the host culture, efforts to enhance SLA lead to enhancing children’s cultural competence as well (Pihamaa, 2002). According to Wu (2005), parents’ behaviours and attitudes toward acquiring a second language have an influence on the development of their children’s language acquisition. Researchers, starting with Kuo (1974 in Wu, 2005), have found that behaviour and attitude are two family variables that are significantly related to a child’s chosen bilingual pattern. A child’s proficiency in a second language is higher in homes in which parents use the second language in various contexts, such as reading stories to the child (Gonzalez, 2001; Li, 1999; Wu, 2005). Moreover, certain personal characteristics, such as parents’ educational level, socioeconomic status, and national identity combine with their attitude toward the new language and therefore with their child’s (Wu, 2005).

In the field of adjustment and social adaptation, studies that affirm the concurrence of parents’ adjustment degree and those of their children are several (e.g. Garcia Coll & Magnuson, 1997; Stroh, 1990). Pihamaa (2002) reports the findings of a study conducted by Aronowitz, in 1992, on the connection between the social adaptation of school-aged minority children (aged 6-15) and their parents’ perceptions and attitudes toward the host culture and new experiences in San Francisco, US. Findings showed that parental attitude can be used as a prominent predictor of the adaptation process. Pihamaa also declares that Liebkind and Jasinskaja-Lahti’s study, in 2000, on immigrant adolescents in Finland confirmed the importance of parents’ support based on their experiences of moving into a new culture and the adjustment process of their children. They argue that when children reach the age of six, they have built some level of ethnic identity and their aptitude to integrate elements of the two cultures compatibly depends on their parents’ appreciation for both cultures. Also, it is argued by Liebkind and Jasinskaja-Lahti that even in the case of voluntary transitions to a new country (e.g., sojourners), families vary in their motivations to adjust in the new
culture. In this case, they are divided into three groups: those who desperately seek to assimilate in the dominant culture, those who show resistance for social change and depress any effort to acculturate, and those who represent the majority of families and stand somewhere between the two extremes (Pihamaa, 2002).

School adjustment and children’s socio-cultural developmental task of adapting to the new atmosphere are important issues for transitional families as well as host societies. Newcomers have a tendency to consider schools as places of interaction and mobility. However, some researchers have pointed out the consequences of parents’ pressures toward rapid assimilation: parents’ efforts to maintain the cultural identity of their child are related to stronger adjustment performance rather than hasty attempts of assimilation (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001). Reviewing the topic, Portes and Rumbaut (1990, p. 214) conclude that “it is not the parents most willing to assimilate—in the sense of ‘subtracting’ from their cultural background—who seem to motivate their children effectively, but those most inclined to reaffirm their cultural heritage within ethnic neighborhoods”.

In contrast, Vuckovic (2008) asserts that one of the fundamental aspects affecting the social construction of ethnic identity is negative family pressure toward the encountered society. In other words, parents are strong agents in shaping their children’s ethnic identity and accentuating their social manners. At the end of the school day and for the rest of the day, most parents expect from their children to substitute the social patterns of school and resume speaking and behaving in a totally different manner. This means potential complications are more likely to occur.

Beside the eagerness to reserve their cultural backgrounds, minority parents are ruled by two potential psychological sources of tension: emotions and personality. These integral and interconnected parts of the human nature may extend from influencing the atmosphere and behaviour that are encountered in the learning process to influencing one’s habituated behaviour which may become a source of conflict in itself (Vuckovic, 2008). It is argued by Lasker (1968 cited in Vuckovic, 2008, p. 13) that “the development of race awareness in small children always incurs an emotional response to members of other races. Commonly the emotion is fear”. It has been
found by extensive research that fear is the most distinct and lasting component of reactions of minority groups. This means that some young newcomers do not commence their experience either with the new environment of the school or during their contact with other races neutrally. They are loaded with exaggerated impressions of ethnic differences, prejudice and negative stereotypes (Vuckovic, 2008).

While “fear is a universal human emotion” (Vuckovic, 2008, p. 13), ridicule is a type of behaviour which can be mediated by both emotional experience and personality. Even though it is not directly associated with cultural or ethnic diversity, parents should be aware that implementation of race-based ridicule, including using racial nicknames at home, provokes a sense of culturally-intolerant behaviour, encourages stereotypical attitudes in their children, and delays their social integration. Conversely, parents who are not concerned about deepening their children’s understanding of ethnic differences and reinforcing their ability to counter taunts leave them unprotected to this kind of behaviour (Vuckovic, 2008).

Furthermore, it seems that some parents are also ruled by their cultural personality. For example, Portes and Hao (2002, p. 893) assert that most ethnically diverse groups are descendants of cultures in which “traditionally sharp differentiation of sex roles and distinct socialisation patterns for males and females” are highly appreciated. It was found that most ethnic minority families transfer such cultural traditions and norms to their children. The authors cite evidence provided by Gibson in 1989, which reported a divergent gender socialisation pattern in Indian Sikh parents in the U.S. who encourage their sons to surpass their peers in school and simultaneously focus on preparing their daughters for their future roles as good wives and mothers. Likewise, distinct gender socialisation patterns were reported in a study of Filipino-Americans by Wolf in 1997, and in another study of Latin American immigrants by Jones-Correa, in 1998. These attitudes had effects on the children’s language adaptation as well as their personality outcomes (Portes & Hao, 2002).

Shi (2001) declares that in order to avoid such issues, social adjustment requires taking changes and obstacles of being in a different culture into consideration. It entails using skills of acceptance and resolving crises, and adequate cultural
knowledge to reduce misunderstandings and enhance appropriate behaviours. Successful integration to a new culture also depends on individuals’ degree of acculturation and tolerance of the host culture while having appreciation for their own cultural heritage. In fact, cultures are ethnocentric and people from each culture see their own norms as superior to others. Therefore, newcomers should be prepared to experience the feeling of being a foreigner by being ready to tackle any sense of prejudice, personal rejection for others’ lifestyles, or discriminatory behaviours from people of the host culture. In addition, transitional families can generate a positive attitude about the new culture by expanding their learning experiences and avoiding making comparisons between cultures.

It is important, though, to mention that the process of transferring to a new culture can also be a source of conflict for language minority family members due to differing rates in the acculturation process between parents and children. While children tend to internalise the new culture’s value system, language, and norms, more easily, their parents might experience a larger need to preserve elements of the home culture (Amer, 2005; Berry, 2006; Torres, 2001). The social controls of the home culture decline due to the children’s exposure to new values. Therefore, children’s rapid adjustment may create a feeling of alienation between them and their parents. It is declared that the most frequent forms of aggravated familial conflicts in migrant families are born from parents’ fears that parental authority may be threatened as a result of the lack of language competency and the new role of their children as translators or mediators (McLean Leow, Goldstein, & McGlinchy, 2006). Portes and Rumbaut’s (2001) have introduced a prevailing model of language minority parent-child relationships and their influence on children’s social, affective, and academic outcomes. Their typology of the acculturative process across generations emphasises accepting the customs and language of the host culture and inclusion into the ethnic group. They assert that rate differences between parents and children in acculturation are indicators of incompatible acculturation that may result in deficient social and academic outcomes for children. On the other hand, similarities in acculturation indicate either complete assimilation or selective acculturation (attachment to both cultures) into the host culture, which lead to positive social and academic outcomes for the children.
According to Lopez (2007, p. 62-63), “[a]cculturation is a complex, bi-directional, multidimensional process involving the cultural transformation of one culture as a result of its constant contact with another culture [and] linguistic acculturation is a proxy for acculturation”. Parents who have the ability to speak the L2 can help their children’s linguistic acculturation as well as their academic success. Being acculturated and competent in the L2, parents will be able to overcome the linguistic barrier, participate in school events and activities, assist their children with their homework, and establish effective communications with teachers about their children’s behavioural performance and academic difficulties, which overall enhance the children’s acculturation. In contrast, less acculturated parents may hold negative perceptions toward their children’s school and teachers, which results in a decline in school involvement (Lopez, 2007).

Groups from many cultures hold similar beliefs and attitudes about the importance of language use and literacy. The variation among cultures is in the methods they approach to learning and early literacy, and the ways in which their children are socialised to be literate and language users. In other words, some home cultures train the child early to realise learning is a group task that depends on group performance, while other cultures see learning as an individual achievement. For example, documented ethnographic studies have shown that teaching early literacy and language use at home is assumed to be the mother’s main responsibility in some middle-class majority families. On the contrary, it is more common in African-American families, for instance, to make relatives and close friends share this responsibility or train their children to learn through observing adults’ behaviour rather than taking part in literacy activities or language experiences. “For young children, language development and learning about one’s own culture are closely linked” (Espinosa, 2005, p. 839). Thus, “[c]ulture and linguistic identity provide a strong and important sense of self and family belonging, which in turn supports a wide range of learning capabilities, not the least of which is learning a second language” (Garcia, 1991, p. 2).
It is previously stressed that the initial step of introducing a second language is by considering maintaining and supporting first language development. A convincing body of research has indicated the vital role of minority families in performing a dual duty of ensuring their children’s success in school and learning whilst maintaining their ethnic language skills (Espinosa, 2005; Garcia, 1991; Wu, 2005). In case of close family relations, it has been found that parents (mainly mothers) function as essential language models in forming children’s linguistic abilities and behaviour. It has also been found that children of parents who provide significant efforts to maintain the family’s home language show preferential usage of it. Therefore, adult language activities and practice in the home are important in achieving advantageous outcomes for their children (Wu, 2005).

In summary, the significance of family interaction patterns and methods of socialisation in the development of children is well established in the research. The outcomes of family training patterns affected by culture change are reflected in the growth of the children’s full potential, including their personality, self-concept, as well as their language, specifically in the case of those who endure problems concerning learning and behaving in the mainstream school system (Collier, Brice & Oades-Sese, 2007).

3.1.2 The teacher and educational context

The role of the teacher
Teaching is a holistic process. Therefore, it would be difficult to separate it into distinguishable elements (McInerney & McInerney, 2006). Nevertheless, in 2005, Vuckovic constructed a diagrammatic model that demonstrates the essential elements of an effective learning environment (see Figure 3) (Vuckovic, 2008). Vuckovic (2008) reports that regarding cultural diversity, the number of educational theories and approaches addressing education and culture, and the relationship between teachers and children are rising recently. These theories are valuable in providing guidance for teachers to increase their cultural awareness while incorporating this awareness into their lessons. Yet, the number of relative factors that should be considered by these teachers may still be overwhelming. Although these theories
differ in their principal assumptions or suggested strategies, they have the same aim of supporting culturally diverse education. They are also similar in their intentions of addressing the needs of minority group children as well as replacing the negative attitude of children of the dominant community with a positive one. This leads both sides to share a comfortable culturally diverse environment. Some theories, for instance, include approaches to ‘Multicultural Education’ (e.g. Sinclair & Wilson, 1999), *The Bilingual Approach* (e.g. Schwalm, 1998) and *Constructionist theory of learning and teaching* (e.g. McInerney & McInerney, 2006; Windschitl, 2002).

In fact, one of the major challenges faced by teachers is recognising diverse cultural groups’ expectations from them (Vavrus, 2002; Vuckovic, 2008). Teachers are “increasingly expected to have meaningful interactions to make a combined effort in defining education and children rearing” (Smit & Driessen, 2005, p. 170). This will now be discussed in more detail.

**Promoting self-reflection**

Gay and Kirkland (2003, p. 181) state that “[w]e believe that culturally responsive teaching for ethnically diverse students should be a fundamental feature of teacher
preparation and classroom practice”. Being critical and more self-conscious of one’s personal beliefs are some of teachers’ major responsibilities (Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2006). According to Gay and Kirkland (2003), teachers should promote their self-reflection as they acquire and develop knowledge about the cultures with which they come into contact. These principles are maintained by scholars such as Danielewicz in 2001, Gay in 2000, Ladson-Billings in 2001, Palmer in 1998, Valli in 1992, and Zeichner and Liston in 1996. Researchers declare that teachers’ self-exploring of their identity as individuals, their personal histories, and their understanding of the context in which they interact are of equal importance to the mastery of teaching skills (Coelho, 1998; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Howard, 2003; Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2006).

Understanding one’s cultural roots might include reflecting on the way in which members are socialised and the kind of customs or values they are raised to follow. Teachers who achieve competent recognition of the commonalities and differences among culturally diverse families, including their own, can earn their trust as well as their respect (Coelho, 1998; Howard, 2003). By being comfortable with their own ethnicity, teachers become motivated to respond actively and effectively toward learners from other ethnic groups. In other words, teachers who own a strong personal sense of cultural identity always hold respect and consideration for culturally diverse children and their families (Vuckovic, 2008).

The initial step of developing cultural analytical self-consciousness is having an awareness of the barriers that can impede the learning process, for Gay and Kirkland (2003). They add that these obstacles can be divided into general obstacles and specific ones. On one hand, general challenges are derived from various sources. Practicing as teacher education students, some potential teachers lack the knowledge of the reasons and methods of establishing self-reflection. They confuse reflection with describing ideas or summarising scholars’ statements, instead of having deep perceptions of how to incorporate issues related to cultural and ethnic diversity in their practices inside the class. Another problem is that some teachers have not received appropriate practice in self-reflection which is part of an instructors’ sense of duty to be cultivated in the education curriculum of preservice programs. In addition,
some teachers hold the belief that they should “treat all students the same regardless of who they are” (Gay & Kirkland, 2003, p. 182). Such traditional convictions hinder viewing teaching as an exceedingly contextualised process.

On the other hand, cultivating skills in self-reflection with regards to racial and cultural issues needed for several specific reasons. One of them is that some teachers avoid expressing their traditional beliefs or questioning their personal positions on racial issues and replace those by undermining their significance, or simply repeating the trends, or offering conventional reasons or justifications for why discrepancies exist. Other teachers may claim to be liberal thinkers or even try to convey their guilt over past acts of injustice and discrimination but they do not try to move beyond their resistance and general awareness to definite instructional actions in the class that can confront these prevailing attitudes (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Howard, 2003).

Overcoming challenges facing cultural self-reflection enhancement includes following strategies such as guidance and support provided by preservice programs to change teachers’ thoughts by stimulating the learning environment in which self-reflection is considered as a basic part of the class routine. Practising these strategies themselves during teaching preservice teachers should be equivalent in importance. Teachers are also advised to share critical conversations about diverse ethnic problems in education to foster confronting their beliefs (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Howard, 2003).

**Awareness of own attitude**

“Aside from knowing what they are, teachers should also be cognisant of how they are” (Sheets & Hollins, 1999 cited in Vuckovic, 2008, p. 12). Successful teaching, especially for non- and limited English proficient students, requires teachers to be mindful of their own attitudes toward children’s diversity (Vuckovic, 2008). Lately, research shows teachers do not feel sufficiently prepared to deal with culturally and linguistically diverse children (Andruszkiewicz, 2006; Smith, 2006). According to Bryan and Atwater (2002), “[s]tudies have documented that beliefs about culturally diverse students were based on hearsay, yet influenced teachers’ pedagogical decision making and expectations of academic performance”.
Teachers would be able to confront personal biases that have negatively affected their value system if they frankly examine their beliefs about people from different cultures (Richards, Brown & Forde, 2006). Nevertheless, researchers suggest that teachers of culturally diverse children often need time to reconcile their previous experiences or negative feelings toward diversity (Ladson-Billings, 2001; Lee, 2004; Vavrus, 2002).

Teachers should be aware that their personal attitudes about different cultural issues, including racial ethnic diversity, affects students’ learning and self-esteem (Hamilton, Anderson, Frater-Mathieson, Loewen, & Moore, 2005). Espinosa (2005) points out that there is compelling evidence of the impact of teachers’ attitudes toward teaching minority learners on the students’ success or failure to cope with the new school situation. Also, teachers’ positive attitudes should be reflected in the content of the educational program or the educational approach used because the whole environment of the learning process fundamentally relies on it (Vuckovic, 2008).

In fact, some children may face difficulty in coping with the new situation of the school environment (Hamilton, Anderson, Frater-Mathieson, Loewen, & Moore, 2005). Lack of awareness of cultural variations influences teachers’ expectations, academic performance, and interactions with these children, and as shown by research, teachers’ responses in class are also influenced by their beliefs about students’ diversity (Hamilton, Anderson, Frater-Mathieson, Loewen, & Moore, 2005; McLaughlin, 1992). Youngs and Youngs (2001) state that the “teacher’s exposure to cultural diversity … underlies positive ESL-related attitudes among mainstream teachers”. Toohey, Day, and Manyak (2007) declare that it has been documented by ethnographic research that interactions between teachers and linguistically diverse learners that are affected by particular cultural expectations and assumptions of incompetence and ignorance can negatively affect their identity positions within the class.

**Effective understanding of ESL children and their families**

Gonzalez et al. (1993 cited in Hawkins, 2005, p. 38) adopt the term ‘*funds of knowledge*’ referring to the knowledge students gain from their family and cultural backgrounds. Gonzalez et al. conduct visits to their students’ homes to reveal the
impact of their changed understanding of the students’ funds of knowledge on the schooling curriculum. According to Barry and Lechner (1995) and Espinosa (2005), it is hard for teachers to achieve a high degree of culturally-responsive education as it requires knowledge of children’s cultural roots including needs, family values, attitudes, special skills, beliefs, and sometimes language patterns. Some researchers found that educators struggle to find the best educational strategies to assist a multicultural curriculum in the classroom (Derman-Sparks, Ramsey, & Edwards, 2006). Therefore, developing effective approaches for all children, especially those from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds, has become more urgent (Espinosa, 2005).

In addition, knowing that diversity may sometimes cause dissonance can be a reason for teachers to reflect cultural diversity in general while establishing their programs (Orange, 2005). Vuckovic (2008) declares that having the motivation to learn from the ethnic groups with which they are interacting is essential. It is also important to be unprejudiced while being “ready to critically reflect upon experiences and conflicts” (p. 13). To do so, it is important to obtain information about the background of the families that might participate in the educational program. Teachers should be objective and stay open-minded while exploring the various cultural backgrounds of the school population (Vuckovic, 2008).

Teachers’ miscues based on generalisations and misconceptions of diverse students’ behaviours have been a focus in research. Students’ attitudes and interaction methods arise from their cultural backgrounds (Coballes-Vega, 1992) and it should be realised that different cultures may deviate in some conventions, such as matters related to communication style. For example, most children come to class having the view that the teacher is an authority figure. Children from rigidly structured societies believe in the significance of social hierarchy. For this reason, a teacher who may find some students avoiding looking her/him in the eye during the first period of attending the class should respect these cultural differences (Jonson, 2002). Another example is depending exclusively on verbal communication to deal with children who are unfamiliar with the language used and assuming that this will support them. For this reason, using knowledge about other cultures is valuable in identifying sources of
misinterpretation. In addition to the issue of communication style, some maths and science teachers lack the ability fully to understand the principles of culturally responsive education. They mistakenly assume that this term only addresses racial, ethnic, or cultural issues without having any relationship with course content. These teachers should search for alternative teaching methods in order to facilitate the academic achievements of their students by monitoring the use of language and estimating the suitability of their resources for instance (Banks & McGee-Banks, 1996 in Vuckovic, 2008). Collaborating with the family or members of the community is a profitable solution, too (Derman-Sparks, Ramsey, & Edwards, 2006).

Concerning collaboration with parents, teachers should also be aware during any discussions that cultures have different standards. What is seen as positive in a particular society may be inappropriate in another. For example, teachers’ praising of specific students in the class may be unacceptable for families that belong to collective societies where the group has much more value than the individual. Such behaviour may be interpreted as spoiling them (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, & Greenfield, 2000).

To meet the various needs of ESL learners, it is crucial for teachers to obtain as much cultural and linguistic information as they can about these types of students (Espinosa, 2005). Tabors (1997) and Tabors and López (2005) assert that the best method to understand the language and the cultures of minority-language families, especially if there is a difficulty in communicating in a common language, is using questionnaires that can be translated into the parents’ native languages. Teachers should design their questionnaires efficiently to obtain useful cultural and linguistic information. Parents’ views about their child’s preferences and daily routines at home are also essential. However, teachers should avoid making random assumptions while collecting information (Espinosa, 2005). Jonson (2002), and Villegas and Lucas (2002) suggest that reading literature that reflects the perspectives of those diverse groups and having personal interactions with them are effective in learning about their backgrounds. In addition, Richards, Brown, and Forde (2006, p. 7) state that “[t]eachers need to learn about successful approaches to educating children from
diverse backgrounds” by visiting or reading about successful teachers in diverse settings.

The importance of understanding learners’ varied cultures has been emphasised in numerous studies. Relying on a biblical image, Ladson-Billings (2001) affirms in her book *Crossing Over to Canaan: The Journey of New Teachers in Diverse Classrooms* the need for teachers who possess competent understanding for diverse classrooms and communities. Suggesting valuable strategies to tackle issues of diversity, Ladson-Billings (2001) and her colleagues introduced a program called ‘Teach for Diversity’ (TFD) with the aim to prepare teachers to interact successfully with culturally diverse students in the learning environment. In addition, the book addresses the problem of “the failure of [teacher education] students to demonstrate a clear understanding and commitment to principles of human diversity, equity, social justice, and the intellectual lives of teachers” (p.30) based on the experiences of a group of eight women who had been assigned to work in the Langston Hughes Elementary School. Each woman in this group represents a type of community and differs in her life experiences and motives to enter the field of teaching. Ladson-Billings announces that there are growing numbers of new teachers who are ignorant of other cultures and she asserts the importance of being culturally competent to support students to succeed at school without losing their identities. Similarly, Shade, Kelly, and Oberg’s (1997) study suggests several practical strategies to assist teachers to include more cultural diversity in their teaching methods. These strategies depend on understanding children’s cultural backgrounds, exploring the influence of these cultures on the children’s learning, and constructing a comfortable environment for diverse ethnic learners. Furthermore, Freeman and Freeman (2007) give an example of a study conducted by Vang’s, in 2000, on Hmong students learning English as a second language in an urban California school. An important finding is that teachers can have access to communicate with Hmong students by gaining knowledge on their culture. Consequently, Freeman and Freeman (2007) present four interrelated keys to support ESL students to develop self-confidence as well as academic English proficiency. One vital key is that schools should be built on recognition for students’ cultural background and draw on their home experiences.
With respect to research on (im)migrant students, Lasso and Soto (2005) declare that a move toward a holistic educational approach in which the norms and values of the home culture are incorporated in the teaching methods have been recently observed. Achieving the goal of integrating newcomers into the school environment is seen in research as a mutual process involving both teachers and students appreciating each others’ cultures, beliefs, and values. An example, provided by Lasso and Soto (2005) of these studies is de Atiles & Allexsaht-Snider’s in 2002, which delineates many effective strategies for educating newcomer students, including reflecting knowledge on the children’s cultures and acknowledging their variety.

**Finding ways to collaborate with parents**

Initiating effective communication and sustaining successful collaboration with ESL parents is vital (Porter, 2008; Waterman & Harry, 2008). According to Waterman (2006), the school-families partnership leads to noticeable benefits for the children and the school. It has been found that such relationships have a positive influence on students’ academic achievement and their attitude toward school, in addition to influencing their parents’ attitudes. Christenson (2004) asserts that teachers and parents should not be isolated from each other. While parents are assumed to support school, teachers have the responsibility to make efforts to establish collaborative partnerships that can enhance parental contribution in the education of their children (Porter, 2008). Because it takes a long time to gain the involvement of parents in school activities, teachers need to commit themselves to reach their goals successfully (Gibbons, 1992).

In a recent study, Nakhid (2003 in Gorinski & Fraser, 2006) reports a lack of knowledge among teachers on the importance of parents’ contribution to the education of their children. Because of the disparate race, education, and socio-economic levels between teachers and diverse families that may hinder collaboration, she declares that stereotyping parents and questioning their attention to their children’s education are common trends. Therefore, she advocates the need to assist effective parent-school engagement through increasing parents’ involvement in various significant ways.
Parker (1993) suggests a plan that helps teachers involve parents in the education of their ESL learners. His plan encourages teachers to speak the home language with parents if possible in order to establish fine connections and ensure access to their community resources. Reports and recommendations regarding the progress of the child also should be written in the home language. Moreover, he indicates that following some strategies such as interviewing each family at registration is significant. Teachers should prepare a list of questions about the children’s backgrounds including information about parents’ methods to assist their children to acclimatise themselves to the new school and language. To find resources about the target minority groups, collaborating with community organisations, local health and service agencies is useful in understanding the needs of ESL families. Establishing effective affiliations with the minority language community organisations can be enhanced by cooperating with community or family liaisons with knowledge of the culture and language of this group.

Furthermore, collaboration can be extended by teachers through sharing information with parents regarding the class instructional techniques, the curriculum, and the school standards to provide better understanding for the achievement evaluation measures used by teachers in the class (Coltrane, 2003).

**Promoting culturally responsive instruction for ESL students**

McLaughlin (1992) affirms that effectual instruction for culturally or linguistically diverse children in class requires teachers to be aware that the children’s values and interactional styles are influenced by their experiences within the home culture. Teachers’ adaptation for instruction has contributed to creating valuable educational innovations recently. In addition, affirming the standards of the home culture fosters children’s tendency to be more responsive (Au, 2000). Gibbons (1992, p. 227) states that “[p]ositive responses to children’s first language and culture, and early intervention in their English language development, is essential”.

However, some researchers display a conservative estimate for the importance of culturally responsive instruction. For instance, Lee (2004, p. 66) claims that the multicultural education pedagogy concentrates more on issues of cultural and
linguistic diversity rather than on its relationship with academic instruction. Consequently, he conducts a study that investigates patterns of change in primary teachers’ beliefs and practices as they learn to set up moderate instructional congruence, a pedagogy that reconciles academic discipline with cultural and linguistic background experiences of diverse students to ensure their academic standards’ advancement. For six teachers working with Hispanic students in the fourth grade, it was found that the teachers’ changes and learning occurred in different ways in the areas of academic instruction such as language and literacy instruction, and science instruction. Additionally, the result of the study indicates that establishing instructional congruence is a gradual process that requires self-reflection, formal education, partaking, and inclusive support. Also, Au (2001) argues that it is true that teachers’ culturally responsive instruction supports learners of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds to attain high levels of literacy. Yet, it cannot be taken as the absolute answer to improving diverse learners’ capability to achieve high levels of literacy. He clarifies that culturally responsive instruction is strongly connected with reflecting the values and power brought by learners in teaching literacy. It is a powerful construct that has the aim of going beyond surface features to convey deeper respect for cultural notions, but in terms of necessity, there are still some approaches that have been identified to enrich students’ achievement without regarding their cultural backgrounds (Au, 2001). An early study on Hawaiian children by Au and Blake (1984) finds that culturally responsive instruction is just one of more than 30 strategies crucial to a successful classroom reading program.

Richards, Brown, and Forde (2006) provide numerous guidelines to promote culturally responsive instruction for diverse student groups. They assert the importance of acknowledging the differences as well as commonalities of these learners. There is an additional necessity to confirm learners’ cultural characteristics through teachers’ practices in the class and use of instructional materials. Teachers can encourage students’ appreciation for diversity and promote their sense of equity by enhancing interaction among them to become more socially conscious. Also, fostering the dual relationships between families and school are essential for assisting students’ critical thinking and motivating them to be proactive members through learning. Similarly, in a case study conducted by Siilata and Barkhuizen (2004 in
Gorinski & Fraser, 2006) on four young Polynesian speakers moving from a Pacific Island home situation to a monolingual school situation, the researchers argue for supporting culturally diverse learners’ by incorporating their cultural knowledge into the school environment. This can be further assured through positive home-school interaction and biliteracy.

**Developing culturally responsive methods, strategies, and resources for ESL students**

Establishing a rich linguistic environment for children of limited English proficiency requires teachers to act as good role models while using the language in class. This can be easily achieved by speaking in a natural and coherent way in order to expand the children’s vocabulary. Encouraging children to practice the language with their peers is also essential in motivating them to communicate. Some ESL learners are rarely exposed to literacy activities at home. Stressing the significance of reading and writing for these children is a vital responsibility for teachers. Connecting literacy with the actual lives of the children is useful in encouraging them to take risks while using the language (McLaughlin, 1992).

Shi (2001) asserts that teachers should avoid using slang or colloquial expressions that may confuse linguistically diverse students, especially those with limited English proficiency. Speaking slowly and using simple words are also valuable in supporting their linguistic comprehension. Assignments, instructions, and projects should be clearly explained.

According to Espinosa (2005), there are various strategies for dealing with ESL students and enhancing their development in both languages in the case of teachers who do not speak the children’s home language. The initial stage is to determine short- and long-term goals of the selected program that will be provided by teachers and administrators. Clarifying goals and reaching consensus on the purposes of language instruction and general agreement on the significance of supporting the learners’ home language are valuable in avoiding confusion regarding language of instruction or teaching strategies for ESL learners. Coelho (1994) also suggests many methods to adapt classroom strategies to suit the learning style of ESL learners as
well as all the children in the class. She mentions that modifying the classroom language is fundamental in introducing the language for new ESL learners and assisting their ability to comprehend the content. A brief synthesis of research on language-minority group education has been compiled by many researchers with useful suggestions (Au, 1993; Espinosa, 2005; Garcia, 1993; Hamilton, Anderson, Frater-Mathieson, Loewen, & Moore, 2005; Purcell-Gates & Dahl, 1991; Tabors, 1997):

- Teachers should encourage parents and other members of the family to develop the child’s native language by providing early literacy development and engaging in interactive family activities including reading books in the home language.
- Teachers can utilise parental contribution, family members, community volunteers, ancillary staff, or even older students who speak the same language to provide effective instructional support and help with the translation of stories or songs.
- Teachers can show their respect for the children’s home language by learning or using a few words and be careful to use the correct pronunciation of words.
- Children’s native language can be incorporated into the daily class activities such as rhymes and games. Familiar songs and stories can also be represented through simple materials in the children’s mother tongue to improve their literacy skills.

**Supporting peer interactions and group work**

Peer interaction has been considered an especially effective means for assisting ESL learners (Téllez & Waxman, 2010). Attention by researchers and teachers has turned to the potential advantages of peer interaction for children acquiring a second language (Allison & Rehm, 2007) since interactionist theories of second language acquisition have provided evidence on many positive outcomes (Fassler, 2003). For example, Moll and colleagues (1993 cited in Toohey, Day, & Manyak, 2007, p. 634) document bilingual primary classrooms in which Latino students “featuring highly collaborative literacy activities” take advantage of various social resources for learning. They use their linguistic ability to facilitate communication between monolingual children as they access sources of knowledge in Spanish and English. Moll and colleagues find that “children become important, indispensible, thinking recourses for one another” (Moll, Topia & Whitmore, 1993, p. 160). Levine (1996 cited in Leung, 2007, p. 254), an early proponent of orienting ESL newcomers,
affirms that children should have “their own voice”. Setting an educational context in which child ESL students are encouraged to collaborate with other English speakers in small groups engaging their ideas and interests that reflect their own personality is a pivotal element in their development. Moreover, Hruska’s study (2000 cited in Hawkins, 2005, p. 39) explores the connection between contributing factors such as discourses occur in school (e.g. friendships across formal and informal school events) and shaping bilingual children’s self-esteem, identity, motivation, and investment in a kindergarten class. Toohey (2000) conducted a three-year longitudinal study on six minority-language children in typical North American classrooms in which they learned English as a second language. The researcher followed these children from kindergarten through grade two using observing classroom methods and conducting interviews to reveal the interaction between learners’ identities and their English language skills. Toohey demonstrates a set of classroom circumstances and practices that is common in Canada, the U.S., Australia, Britain, and New Zealand. The study highlights the correlation between social practices at school and the development of ESL learners’ identity. Also, it explores the socio-cultural factors that have recently been the focus of SLA research. The study concludes by offering valuable suggestions for strategies to support young ESL learners in the acquisition of English as a second language.

In a second language learning situation, peer interactions are effective in various ways. Through interacting with native speakers, ESL learners will be exposed to many sources for learning the language besides the teacher (Kline, 1995). Moreover, peer interactions provide a variety of authentic and interesting opportunities to use informal and less anxiety-provoking forms of the language that cannot be used while communicating with the teacher (Fassler, 2003). It has been found that establishing peer groups, in which heterogeneous learners are encouraged to cooperate with each other on various activities and tasks, enhances inter-ethnic relationships, language acquisition, and cross-cultural understanding among diverse learners, besides supporting their development of intellectual autonomy (Allison & Rehm, 2007; Crandall, Jaramillo, Olsen, & Peyton, 2001). Moreover, Ervin-Tripp (1991 cited in Fassler, 2003, p. 6) declares that using different forms of language in situations that require negotiation, argument, and asking questions expand children’s “linguistic
capital”. Nevertheless, individual differences in whether learners have a tendency to interact with the teacher or their peers are largely a matter of personal preferences.

Children’s reactions and behaviours differ within groups because they vary in their “social style characteristics” (Wong Fillmore, 1979 cited in Clegg, 1996, p. 20). Sociable children have greater ability to learn the second language faster. They are not afraid of making mistakes and they can generate input from native speakers using limited sources. On the other hand, shy, quiet children who have a fear of making mistakes use watching and listening as devices for learning. However, research indicates that both kinds of children are able to acquire a second language successfully (McLaughlin, 1992).

It is crucial to notice that placement of ESL students in the class should rely on specific considerations (Toohey, 2000). Several studies have reported the positive correlation between making classroom rules and grouping patterns more relevant to the child’s home culture, and increasing attention and participation levels in American and Native Hawaiian children (Espinosa, 2005). According to Toohey (2000), the teacher’s placement of ESL learners in small groups allows them to engage in creative forms of communication. Small group interactions provide the children with opportunities to find their own voices and identities. Also, teachers should be aware of placing ESL children in the appropriate age group to enhance their social skills in the new setting. They should also ensure that children learning ESL are placed with those who have good proficiency in English (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007).

In her ethnographic study of a group of children speaking English, Cantonese, and Bengali in a multilingual primary classroom, Bourne (1992 in Toohey, Day, & Manyak, 2007) reports the importance of positioning ESL children in relation to the teachers’ beliefs and teaching practices. In her study, ESL learners are either isolated from English-speaking peers or positioned with other beginners near the teacher. Opportunities for social interaction and active participation are thus rare. Bourne finds that such classroom practices and strict rules affect the development of proficient identities. In another recent detailed study conducted by Bourne (2001) on
children in the primary classroom, she asserts that student identities are mutually created through interaction. She concludes that children should not be treated as passive pawns in the process of socialisation. They are active contributors who take significant parts in pedagogic and peer practices. Extensive evidence has been found by researchers such as Oakes in 1985, Minicucci and Olsen in 1992, and Ogbu in 1993 that social discriminations in the relationships between majority and minority students can sometimes be heightened by segregating language minority students in special ESL classes that obstruct interaction with English speakers (Collier, 1995).

Fassler (2003, p. 7) reports that Pica, in 1994, states that the results of peer interaction are “very complex and very context-specific”. Fassler (2003) also reports a finding by Wong Fillmore, in 1982, in a study on four bilingual preschools that using small collaborative groups to support peer interaction is only effective if there is a balance of the numbers of native speakers and ESL learners in each group. She adds that Chesterfield and colleagues (1983) reach the same result in their study of bilingual preschool programs. ESL learners have been found to be more motivated and have shown less anxiety while engaging with peers in social cooperative activities rather than having restricted interactions with the teachers in large groups. To achieve these benefits, teachers should engage all the children in interesting tasks to ensure higher levels of communication and refine their expressions to be ever more clear and precise. They should provide materials to assist ESL learners’ understanding for the context and thus their language development (Fassler, 2003).

Mhathúna (1999, p. 43) states that “[t]he number of children in a group exercised a strong influence on the topics under discussion, the amount of child initiative that could be accommodated and the amount of scaffolding that could be given to any individual child”. Cicognani and Zani (1992) argue that talking to a group of children and an individual child is different. For example, while communicating with a group of children, teachers often become more directive and use closed questions. In contrast, while speaking to one child, they try to have a discussion with him/her about the ongoing activity.
In addition, empathetic peers outside the class can play a crucial role in supporting ESL learners in their first experience with the new language even without the teacher’s intervention. Young ESL learners can incidentally acquire a large amount of the language through interacting with their peers in meaningful contexts. Relationships that are formed in play allow children to practise and rehearse the new language. Therefore, teachers should support child-to-child conversations by initiating interactive activities that foster their language development (Clegg, 1996; Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007).

**Providing appropriate learning environments in the class for ESL learners**

Many researchers maintain the role of the environment of the class on socialising ESL newcomers in the new setting. Richards, Brown, and Forde (2006, p. 4) state that “a culturally responsive instructional environment minimizes the students’ alienation as they attempt to adjust to the different ‘world’ of school”. Furthermore, Shannon (1995 in Hawkins, 2005) emphasises the role of the teacher in constructing the learning environment in her investigation on the influence of classroom culture on socialising and engaging ESL learners to be active participants in class.

A rich physical learning environment is found to be effective in reinforcing the children’s language development and giving them the opportunity to learn and explore in a safe, yet challenging, atmosphere. Fruitful learning environments should enable children to make independent choices as well as include activities and learning resources such as books, labels, and role-play materials that reflect different cultures or are related to the children’s linguistic identity (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007; Gayle-Evans, 2004; Jonson, 2002). Outdoor environments are also beneficial for children learning ESL. Teachers should maximise the potential for outdoor activities as it gives children more chance to use the language than playing inside the classroom (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007).

Fassler (2003) asserts that two major criteria should be available in class to create an ideal learning environment for ESL learners. Firstly, learning environments should be social settings in which both teachers and children have a desire to communicate and to be understood, where the meaning of the curriculum topics can be deduced from
the immediate physical context of the class, and where many ‘authentic’ circumstances to use the language are provided. Secondly, ESL learners should be exposed to proficient English speakers in order to enhance their learning through social interactions. Gibbons (1992) adds that an ideal learning classroom environment is a place in which learners feel secure to make mistakes and take risks.

**The role of the school staff**

High-quality early education programs that provide the opportunity to promote a smooth transition from home to the new school environment by supporting emotional security and accepting students’ diversity are beneficial to ESL learners as they may experience inconsistencies resulting from the process of transition. Cooperation of staff in every aspect of this process has the ability to prepare children and parents for the new setting, and increase their sense of continuity (New Jersey State Department of Education, 2000; The State of Queensland, Department of Education, Training and the Arts, 2008). Moreover, studies prove that children benefit from supportive school staff during the process of second language acquisition. For instance, Freeman and Freeman (2007) declare that it is reported by surveys on support staff dealing with English language learners that there is a necessity for numerous types of assistance that allow learners to be self-confident and achieve academic success. These demonstrated types of assistance are associated with development workshops that include relevant topics for diverse cultural and linguistic students, curriculum improvement that introduces instructional materials to meet the students’ needs, replications for successful approaches in this field, policy progression, and networking in the school.

Collier (1995) argues that schools’ first response to provide staff development training in an attempt to keep up with the latest perspectives in the field is not enough to identify the most effective education for ESL learners as the issues are too complex to be solved in a short-term training assembly. In contrast to his view, researchers increasingly emphasise the beneficial role of trained staff. Staff has a significant role in children’s lives and their understanding of and respect for cultural diversity. Therefore, educating staff on multicultural issues and providing professional
development that supports good values responsive to cultural diversity is essential in all early childhood services (Westendorf & Karr-Kidwell, 2002).

A heterogeneous staff membership is also found to be influential for schools with minority populations as it creates more welcoming atmospheres for them. According to Westendorf and Karr-Kidwell (2002, pp. 5-7), “although challenging and possibly time consuming, the rewards of diverse staff is great”. Andruszkiewiez (2006) reports that in many countries, the employment of Romani staff who work as mediators to assist teachers working with Romani students has been found to be useful in bridging the gap between teachers and schools on one hand and Romani students and their communities on the other. As liaison workers for schools, Romani mediators help students face problems that may affect their academic performance or disturb their social integration with the environment of the school. Andruszkiewiez adds that well-trained teachers and principals are of equal significance to school mediators.

Pianta, Hamre, and Stuhlman (2003) conducted a collaborative research project with the aim of investigating the effect of interventions in improving ESL learners’ transition to preschool. One of most important themes characterising collaboration indicated in the results was the confirmation that preschool staff was a useful source in supporting parents and building shared positive views among parents and teachers. Karabenick and Clemens Noda (2004, p. 56) state that “[with] state and federal funds in short supply, hiring additional certified or endorsed bilingual and/or English as a Second Language (ESL) instructional staff is not a tenable solution for many districts”. It is more realistic to provide developmental training programs for school staff that supply them with requisite knowledge and social skills to meet the needs of ESL students. Moreover, personal relationships between language minority students and the school staff is noted to be effective in lowering the anxiety level of these learners. It is found that supportive and caring staff contributes in protect learners against unpleasant encounters as it enhances their academic achievement. It is also stated that lack of support is one of the major obstacles that face language minority learners at school (Carrier & Cohen, 2003; Collier, 1995).
A large part of school staff’s limitation in supporting language minority children and collaborate with parents results from barriers pertaining to language and their lack of familiarity with diverse cultures. Therefore, it is necessary to provide professional development opportunities and staff training to understand diverse linguistic and cultural groups, and enhance self-awareness, knowledge and social skills required to deal effectively with ESL learners and their parents (Waterman & Harry, 2008). It has been affirmed that a well-trained staff that is sensitive to racial variations among children can support their self-esteem as well (New Jersey State Department of Education, 2000).

Nissani (1993) declares that it is important to implement effective programs that guide individuals working with young language minority children to be sensitive to their cultures. Staff development training in skills of cross-cultural communication should embrace practices, activities, and strategies to support optimistic home-school-community relationships. Furthermore, according to Clegg (1996, p. 31), staff development occurs in various ways. On one hand, it occurs through “a well-functioning partnership” in which individuals learn from each other. On the other hand, it occurs through ESL specialists’ role in providing staff with informal advice within formal meetings at school. A local advisor may aid staff development as well. Mansouri and Kamp (2007) clarify that professional staff development takes place through bringing schools together in formal sessions to work collaboratively on the improvement of their cultural knowledge about their students. Other imperative dimensions of staff development are reflective work that explores the findings of research and making use of online teacher support materials.

Sanchez and colleagues (1995) declare that although there is an increasing recognition of the importance of staff training on cultural sensitivity, many educational programs only insert a few practicing sessions each year, and this is seen as being sufficient professional training. He asserts that school staff training courses should have three main components. First, staff should examine their awareness regarding their own attitudes, values, and world perception. Second, they should have knowledge and flexible understanding of diverse groups’ social, historical, and cultural contexts. Third, they should have communication and advocacy skills that
result from developing subtle and culturally sensitive assessment strategies along with empowering treatment and multicultural consultation.

The role of the curriculum and multicultural pedagogy

Since the 1990s, education has been affected by numerous social, economic, and demographic trends since minority language students represent an increasing percentage of the school population (Banks & Banks, 2001). According to Valdez (1999), and Mansouri and Kamp (2007), the need for attaining the knowledge, skills, and attitudes about different cultures in order to make social change, and reduce race and ethnicity divisions has become an essential component of the education of all students. As a part of a Position Paper from the Association for Childhood Education International, Moyer (2001 cited in Gayle-Evans 2004, p. 2) presents a list of various programs including practical strategies for “an effective, individually and culturally developmentally appropriate kindergarten program”. She claims that an effective early childhood educational program should provide “many opportunities for the use of multicultural and non-sexist experiences, materials and equipment that enhance children’s acceptance of self and others.”

According to Pyterek (2006, p. 18), “[m]ulticultural education is one way to insure that the human needs of children are being met”. Multicultural education is one of various (though confusing due to diversity in practice) educational programs with many different labels and emphases. It has been acknowledged to be one of the “most peace-education programs” accentuating learning about diversity (Smith, 2006, p. 39). However, a public debate continues to bring proofs to the argument that multicultural education carries diversity too far to the extent that it may divide students at schools along ethnic and cultural issues, rather than unite them. In contrast, other scholars have asserted that multicultural education has an impact on every aspect of the educational operation including the curriculum that should reflect the perspectives of diverse ethnic and linguistic groups (Appelbaum, 2002). Schaps (1997 in Appelbaum, 2002) argues that utilising a multicultural teaching approach to enhance the students’ sense of community can foster their social and intellectual development, while Lee and colleagues (1998 cited in Cumming-McCann, 2003, p. 9)
state that “multicultural education is more than just teaching about heroes and holidays”.

Recently, educators use the term ‘multiculturalism’ interchangeably with ‘diversity’ to address issues of minority population studies, bilingualism and English as a second language, human relations, and cultural awareness as major facets of a multicultural curriculum (Pyterek, 2006).

Multicultural education consists of a variety of programs that can be roughly categorised into three major types. First, there are ‘Content-Oriented Programs’ that primarily aim to increase students’ awareness of different cultures by developing and adding content and educational materials to the curriculum. The simplest form of this kind of program involves integrating some readings or celebrations of cultural occasions into the school’s annual events’ calendar. Second, there are ‘Student-Oriented Programs’ that address the academic needs for minority students with the intention to increase their academic achievement and integration into the educational mainstream without the need to transform the content of the curriculum. Finally, there are ‘Socially-Oriented Programs’ that aim to reform the cultural and political context of education by raising racial and ethnic tolerance. These programs require curriculum revisions and refer to research on teaching style to decrease racial anxieties in the classroom (Banks, 1994; Sleeter & Grant, 1993).

Classifications of multicultural education and equity pedagogy in the literature have mainly been introduced by James Banks and his colleagues, who have concentrated in their influential studies on the ways teachers can incorporate multiculturalism into the curriculum (Cumming-McCann, 2003; Gorinski & Fraser, 2006). Banks (1994) develops a model that includes four different approaches to diversity education.

- The Contributions Approach: The most frequently used approach that can be easily understood and implemented by teachers and educators. It is based on the addition of cultural components such as ethnic heroes, cultural holidays, or ethnic celebrations to the existing curriculum without the need to change the basic structure and goals of the curriculum. This approach is criticised for its many limitations. In this approach,
alternative perspectives on ethnic cultures are presented separately from the real curriculum, which underestimates their critical role in society. The illusion that ethnicities are being celebrated is the main outcome.

- The Additive Approach: The first phase of restructuring the curriculum in which little training, planning, and effort are entailed seeing that some ethnic themes and concepts are implemented within the original curriculum. Despite the apparent ease with which this approach can be applied and which may seem advantageous, it fails to address basic racial inequities and the fact that the dominant and ethnic cultures are interrelated. Moreover, events and issues are introduced according to the dominant mainstream perspective.

- The Transformative Approach: As opposed to the other models, this approach requires the infusion of issues, events, themes, and perspectives of diverse ethnic or cultural groups. Groups and workshops may be used consciously by teachers to achieve a complete transformation of the curriculum. While deconstructing their own beliefs and knowledge to embrace this approach, teachers should be willing to explore, research, and practice their own roles in introducing the issues. This approach is effective in empowering racial and ethnic groups as they will see their cultures in the school curriculum. It also reduces racial and cultural segregation. Staff development and in-service training, and substantial curriculum revision are required.

- The Decision Making and Social Action Approach: In addition to the elements of the former approach, the Social Action Approach requires learners to take actions, make decisions, and study how to make social changes related to the themes and issues they have studied. This approach can have an influence on the whole lives of the students and their communities, and it can increase the social involvement of all students of different backgrounds. However, it is unconventional and unrealistic to expect teachers to take risks addressing issues like political topics, for instance, that may elicit hostility in the case of older students (Appelbaum, 2002; Banks, 1993, 1994; Cumming-McCann, 2003; Green & Ingraham, 2005; Holland, 1997; Reyes-Carrasquillo, 2007).
Similarly, Jonson (2002, p. 105) gives examples of approaches that are useful for dealing with ESL learners in mainstream classrooms. She suggests that in order to infuse multicultural approaches into the basic curriculum, teachers can use the ‘single-group approach’, which means inserting a whole unit about a certain culture. Also, the ‘topical approach’ can be used to ask students to provide information about a particular aspect of a certain culture such as its music, heroes, or holidays. Nevertheless, Jonson (2002) indicates that although these two approaches are commonly used by teachers and interesting to students, they have some potential problems. For example, they may lead to presenting superficial tasks or fragmented lessons that may take teachers away from being balanced and concentrating on both similarities and differences. She declares that the most comprehensive approach is the ‘conceptual approach’ that incorporates concepts of cultural studies such as beliefs, language, arts, and other cultural patterns into lessons. In this approach, it is recommended that instructional materials should emphasise the daily lives of the presented cultures rather than their special events. Teachers should call attention to similarities rather than differences. Cumming-McCann (2003, p. 12) concludes that:

Implementing multicultural education effectively can take time, energy, and a great deal of work. But imagine, for a moment, the potential: Learners seeing themselves in the curriculum, their voices being heard and valued in the classroom.

Generally speaking, the types of educational programs that are held in high regard for young ESL learners in early childhood educational settings depend on several factors: the learner’s age; personality features such as motivation to acquire the second language; home language support; and any previous exposure to the second language. Second language acquisition research suggests that efficient early childhood programs for ESL students are those in which associations between development in the native language and potential academic success are affirmed (Bialystok, 2001; Espinosa, 2005; García-Vázquez, Vázquez, López, & Ward, 1997; Hakuta, 1986; Osterling, Violand-Sánchez, & von Vacano, 1999).

Using the learners’ native languages as a means of instruction is claimed to be efficient in transforming their knowledge into the second language. Recent research has revealed that the most successful ESL learners are those whose home languages
are maintained while adding fluency and literacy skills in English instead of simply being replaced by English (Brownlie, Feniak, & McCarthy, 2004; Espinosa, 2005; Tabors & Snow, 1994). Throsby and Gannicott’s (1990 in Smith, 2006) findings also announce that the curriculum is a factor affecting the educational process for students from diverse linguistic backgrounds and instructing these students using their native languages is the most effective strategy to raise the quality of the curriculum for minority groups. Also, Coelho (1994) accentuates the importance of providing bilingual instruction as a way of ensuring social integration and creating a welcoming and supportive learning environment for ESL newcomers.

Regarding attaining academic success for language minority students, Thomas and Collier (1995) have found that the most promising educational programs at the primary level are those that include characteristics such as providing academic support through mother-tongue instruction; providing the opportunity for language minority students and English native speakers to learn through each others’ languages; sustaining staff development training; providing cooperative interactive teaching methods as a part of the curriculum; and parental involvement in the education of their children to intensify home-school cooperation. These characteristics have positive influence on student outcomes. Andruszkiewicz (2006) reports that policy-makers in countries with sizable numbers of Romani-speaking students have acknowledged that literacy skills can be acquired easier by introducing them through the students’ native languages. Following this perception, educational programs were helpful to promote students’ understanding of the language of instruction (mainly English). For some schools, lack of resources, Romani-speaking teachers and untrained majority teachers are the main factors that hinder schools’ efforts in supporting Romani students. Furthermore, Leung (2007) points out that overall integration of ESL learners into the main environment of the school has taken two directions: first, efforts to create an inclusive advantageous school environment for language-minority groups, and second, efforts to make accessible curriculum that use learners’ native language as a means of learning.

Kuamoo (2006) declares that many researchers are concerned with the language of instruction as a fundamental issue for educating young ESL learners. They
acknowledge the positive effects of instructional models that rely on learners’ native languages. These models include ‘Transitional bilingual programs’ that depend on an alternate usage of instruction in the first and second languages to achieve an eventual transition to the second language only. There are also ‘General programs with ESL support’ that provide instruction using ESL teaching strategies supporting ESL learners’ native languages through the involvement of parents and diverse communities. Finally, there are ‘Two-Way bilingual programs’ that value the importance of both languages by developing the language proficiency of equivalent numbers of native language and English speakers.

Garcia (1991, p. 2) accentuates the importance of assisting the child’s cultural heritage by saying that “[c]ulture and linguistic identity provides a strong and important sense of self and family belonging, which in turn supports a wide range of learning capabilities, not the least of which is learning a second language”. Consequently, besides adopting a specific language approach, it is essential for early childhood education services to take the children’s diverse cultural backgrounds into account in order to establish a culturally responsive curriculum (Espinosa, 2005; Hamilton, Anderson, Frater-Mathieson, Loewen, & Moore, 2005).

In order to achieve a successful education that reflects multiethnic student populations, the microcultures living in the local community should be considered. It is important to be aware of which minority cultures exist in an area. This can be attained through providing a curriculum and student instruction from multicultural perspectives, which may entail making some changes in the current educational approach. By locating teaching aids, material, and information that demonstrate the elements of cultural diversity and ethnic minority, the school curriculum can ensure the promotion of the most conducive values and attitudes toward culturally diverse groups. Moreover, concepts or topic like bilingual education and ethnic minority, knowledge of cultural variation, human relations, racism, equality, stereotyping, and powerlessness are components of multicultural curriculum included in numerous educational programs that should be known by teachers and educators (Gollnick & Chinn, 1990).
Generally, it is found that to form culturally responsive curricula, educational personnel should incorporate particular instructional adaptations in teaching style such as inclusion of home culture knowledge, awareness of family values and expectations, usage of multicultural materials, structure of various activities that entail peer interactions within small groups and establishment of collaborative partnerships with parents (Espinosa, 2005). Socknat (2006) declares that the style in which the students are taught, teachers’ encouragement for culturally sensitive behaviours in students, and the organisation of the classroom are also crucial aspects of integrating diversity.

However, “diversity-sensitive pedagogy” cannot be treated simply as a technical matter separated from the political and social environment of the country in which it occurs (Smith, 2006, p. 39). For instance, Mansouri and Kamp’s (2007) study recruiting students from Arabic-speaking backgrounds in three Melbourne secondary schools investigates the influence of surrounding structural and cultural factors on their social experiences and academic achievements. The study outlines a multicultural approach in education that is effective in integrating these students and their parents into the environment of the school. A developed and tested multidimensional model is proposed including four key strategies: ‘Community-Schools Partnership Project’ for parents, ‘Professional Development for Teachers’, ‘On-line Teacher Support Materials (TSM)’ and ‘Model of Best Practice’ for policy and school environment change. Although the findings of the study suggest that young Arab students’ sense of identity has been influenced by the current socio-political perspective of the Islamic personality, surveyed families report that evident teacher racism is a rare phenomenon in Australia.

**The role of the school environment**

Since the 1990s, research has increasingly explored the influence of the structure and characteristics of effective schools on the interactions between teachers and students (Fuller & Clarke, 1994; Hamilton, Anderson, Frater-Mathieson, Loewen, & Moore, 2005; Jansen, 1995; Waxman & Walberg, 1991). Much recent research has been introduced on the topic; various special issues have been devoted to it, and the accumulated research has reached a saturation point in the field of education
Overwhelmingly, the school climate has been proven to be significant to the varied aspects of language minority students’ educational achievement. Newcomers will be motivated and supported within cultivated school climates because they will have the opportunity to make friends and find a supportive social network (Hamilton, Anderson, Frater-Mathieson, Loewen, & Moore, 2005).

According to Hamilton, Anderson, Frater-Mathieson, Loewen, and Moore (2005, p. 63), an “effective school is defined as one that consists of students who demonstrate particular positive behaviours (one or more) at rates higher than one would predict given the student, family and community characteristics”. Positive behaviours means students’ high self-esteem, high grades on standardised tests, low rates of divisive classroom manners, and a high rate of school attendance (Hamilton, Anderson, Frater-Mathieson, Loewen, & Moore, 2005). In their analyses on the characteristics of effective bilingual primary schools serving a Mexican-American population in California, Carter and Chatfield (1986) find that school effectiveness was linked to processes and structures of the educational pedagogy, classroom organisation, and strong administrative leadership. Serving language minority students, schools should provide a positive social climate to promote favourable outcomes.

Characteristics of an effective social school climate that have been recommended to be beneficial for language minority students include: an organised and safe school environment that motivate all students through responsiveness, respectfulness, and resourcefulness; a positive leadership by the principals or administrators who are committed to high quality; culturally responsive teachers who have high expectations and positive attitudes towards all learners; high levels of parental and community involvement; a strong instructional performance that concentrates on mastery; a comprehensive supervision for learners’ acquisition and development of skills (Hamilton, Anderson, Frater-Mathieson, Loewen, & Moore, 2005); an effective academic orientation that has clearly stated goals and definite plans; and a strong staff support with a good understanding for roles and responsibilities (Carter & Chatfield, 1986).
**Safe school environment**

A safe school environment is especially important for language minority students to flourish. Racial discrimination, mockery, or bullying can seriously hinder children’s motivation and efforts to learn and develop (Hamilton, Anderson, Frater-Mathieson, Loewen, & Moore, 2005; Snow, Corno, & Jackson III, 1996). Olweus’s (1998) study on bullying in the United States and some selected European countries indicates that most cases of bullying take place at school rather than outside, and that neither teachers nor parents are aware of it. In general, it is found that the degree of the students’ assimilation to the norms and values of the majority culture determine whether they will be subjected to any inappropriate treatment.

**Schools’ buddy system**

Evidence suggests that schools should give attention to issues beyond academic instruction. A ‘buddy’ system, sometimes called ‘peer tutoring’, is considered useful for newly arrived ESL learners (Allison & Rehm, 2007; Coelho, 1998; Cohen, Kulik, & Kulik, 1982; Clegg, 1996; Hamilton, Anderson, Frater-Mathieson, Loewen, & Moore, 2005; Lasso & Soto, 2005). Using this method, the newcomer students are assigned to English speaking peers, which enables them to become familiar with the new school environment, establish friendships, and accelerate their acquisition of the second language. In addition, this method can save teachers time and foster mutual understanding and appreciation for both cultures (Hamilton, Anderson, Frater-Mathieson, Loewen, & Moore, 2005; Lewis, 1997).

In an attempt to examine teachers’ perspectives on Latino student social integration, Lasso and Soto (2005) conducted interviews with nine teachers and administrators from public primary schools in Ohio and Indiana with the aim of finding the best methods for including Latino newcomers in the new school situation. Findings indicate that pairing newcomers with a buddy may alleviate children’s fears during the process of transition by improving familiarity with the school facility and the daily routine of the class. Cohen, Kulik, and Kulik (1982), who conduct a meta-analysis on the outcomes of ‘Cross-Age Tutoring’, report enhancement in students’ academic achievement, self-esteem, and attitudes toward ‘the content area’. Furthermore, peer tutoring has been found to be effective with learners whose cultural
values accentuate mentoring and cooperation, such as Native American and Hispanic students (Allison & Rehm, 2007).

According to Allison and Rehm (2007), and Crandall, Jaramillo, Olsen, and Peyton (2001), numerous educational scholars have identified the social benefits of peer tutoring. On one hand, peer tutoring provides the opportunity for tutors to develop a sense of leadership, and enhance their self-confidence and appreciation for students from different cultures. On the other hand, tutees are engaged in various social situations including conversations, listening, and sharing ideas.

According to Lewis (1997), an action research project, conducted by two teachers concerning peer tutoring, reveals several essential factors. They have confirmed the critical importance of peer tutors training in short-term programs (about 6 to 10 weeks). Tutors and tutees should share common interests due to the fact that personality factors affect interaction. Development in language awareness and social skills is also noticed in numerous ESL children and their tutors.

**Collaborative relations with parents**

Parental involvement, as a means to establish collaborative relations with parents, is a key component in building an effective school climate for culturally and linguistically diverse students (Baker, 2011; Coelho, 1998). According to Smit and Driessen (2005, p. 170), “the relation between parents and school is characterised by cooperation and consultation … Parental involvement is seen by politicians as an important means to combat educational disadvantage”. There is considerable evidence that schools’ efforts to initiate collaborative relations with parents and encourage their involvement leads to higher levels of student achievement, enhanced school attendance, reduced dropout rates, motivated students with more positive attitudes toward school, promoted social and emotional growth, and higher academic grades (August & Hakuta, 1997; Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Epstein, 2001; Fan & Chen, 2001; Gorinski & Fraser, 2006; Waterman & Harry, 2008).

Several methods have been proven to be effective in communicating with parents from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Waterman & Harry, 2008). One
main method is establishing school committees; these are found to be valuable in guiding parents of newcomers to the school’s key policies (Westendorf & Karr-Kidwell, 2002). Gorinski and Fraser (2006) point out that a key to an effective home-school relationship is involving parents as tutors in educational activities. Conducting meetings, formal parent-teacher interviews with bilingual interpreters and information sessions with parents (which can be provided in a variety of languages) are also useful in informing them about their children’s classroom activities, the school curriculum, and ways of participation (Gibbons, 1998; Gorinski & Fraser, 2006; Waterman, 2006; Westendorf & Karr-Kidwell, 2002). Moreover, reporting to parents about their children’s situation at school has been noted to be effective to communicate with parents. Sent written reports that relate to different aspects of the child’s achievement, such as assessment of learning-progress, attitudes, and social adjustment have been proven effective (Gorinski & Fraser, 2006). Gibbons (1992) points out that recently, numerous schools send translated school notes such as permissions notes, invitations to school, and newsletters on a regular basis. Therefore, to avoid confusion about the most appropriate language to use for particular parents, schools should send bilingual notes.

Oral reporting is a significant form of communicating with parents. Using friendly, honest, and constructive language is affirmed as a basic requirement for successful parent-school engagement (Marino, Nicholl, Paki-Slater, Timperley, & Kuin Lai, 2001). Waterman and Harry (2008, p. 10) argue that “[s]chools should also use phone calls as a means to communicate with parents as often as resources allow, as written correspondence is not always sufficient … Yet, school staff should not assume that e-mails or internet notices will be accessible or familiar to parents of ELLs”. Alternatively, they stress the importance of bilingual liaisons and a bilingual front desk receptionist in responding to parents’ concerns.

Moreover, Waterman (2006), Gorinski, and Fraser (2006) and Coltrane (2003) highlight additional strategies for establishing effective collaboration with parents such as conducting skills-based workshops or ESL classes for parents, and initiating programs that use family literacy projects and parent volunteers.
**Parental involvement programs**

In a review called *Model Strategies in Bilingual Education: Family Literacy and Parent Involvement*, McCollum & Russo (1993 cited in Téllez & Waxman, 2010, p. 108) claim that four main components should be available to create a qualified parental involvement program. First, parents’ desire to be competent in English should be addressed by the program; that is, parents’ skills in the language will be developed in a natural context due to the “genuine instructional tasks” provided for them. Second, the program should refer to the short-term requirements and pressing concerns of the entire family as well as the long-term requirements of the child. Third, it should help parents to be their children’s teachers and realise the demands of local schools. Fourth, it should enable parents to increase their participation in their communities by providing instruction in English. Several studies have echoed similar concepts. For instance, Osterling, Violand-Sánchez, and von Vacano (1999) have designed an involvement program for ESL parents that fosters their contribution in developing the academic skills of children with the aim to introduce a caring community that have appreciation for different cultural values and promote leadership and initiatives. Additionally, the program aims to “establish a collaborative partnership among parents, community organisations, and the school system” (p. 65). Their data indicate that the designed program is advantageous in improving ESL education.

However, barriers to effective parent-school collaboration are created by ineffective communication between the school and home (Epstein, 2001). When collaborating with parents, it should be noticed that effective school-parent communications entail awareness for possible differences in both written and spoken language (Westendorf & Karr-Kidwell, 2002) since language or cross-cultural barriers can be serious hindrances (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004). Fisher, Ury, and Patton (1991) indicate that higher possibilities for misinterpretation and miscommunication may occur in the case of people speaking different languages. Words or phrases in one language may be misconceived due to them having different connotations in the second language. Therefore, it is suggested that schools should choose careful translations in situations to avoid such problems. In addition, teachers should avoid professional jargon that could alienate and frustrate language minority parents, especially those with limited
English proficiency (Robinson & Fine, 1994). Gorinski and Fraser (2006, p. 26) conclude that “[t]here are however, a number of challenging factors involved in effecting positive parent community-school interaction. When these challenges are left unaddressed, school-parent relationships can become antagonistic or adversarial.”

3.1.3 The host culture

Children’s psychological and socio-cultural adjustment has been found to be affected by the host culture’s perceptions and attitudes toward sojourners and ethnic groups (Bochner, 2006; Pihamaa, 2002). There is a variation in societies’ normative cultural patterns and they differ in the degree of flexibility, permissiveness, and tolerance to strangers (Pihamaa, 2002). Moreover, the intercultural experiences of individuals in a new cultural environment and their social cognitions should be considered in relation to issues of social stigma. Individuals’ adaptation to the new environment and cultural comparisons are affected by the host culture’s preconceived notions about newcomers. Therefore, demonstrated values, behaviours and even appearances may aggravate explicit or implicit discrimination. Social stigma encountered by acculturating groups has been recognised to exist in multiple manifestations such as prejudice, discrimination, and lack of acceptance from the host culture. Resolution of some of these issues or hindrances is achieved by the acquisition of new linguistics skills, new personal associations and modified insight into social issues. Recognised cultural similarities between the two cultures have a considerable positive influence on the process of acculturation (Gonzales, 2006).

When children see themselves appreciated in others’ eyes, they build a strong sense of identity. Research on patterns of friendship in culturally diverse schools have found that it is common to create friendship networks across ethnic groupings, yet a considerable proportion of formed associations in schools are based on a shared cultural background, especially when approaching adolescence (Cline et al., 2002). In their research on children and young people from minority ethnic groups in mainly white schools, Cline and colleagues (2002) found that the children encountered many challenges in negotiating friendships across cultures and they were confronted with different cultural and religious values. Nevertheless, the majority of the children were
well integrated socially after spending a significant length of time at their schools. Also, there was still a small network of friendship with members from the same ethnic group of these minority children. Ward’s study (2005) indicated that establishing satisfying contacts with domestic peers from the host culture leads to an increased opportunity of student success and better social integration. On the other hand, social integration may be diminished by the lack of good language skills and the development of marginalisation patterns. Almqvist and Broberg’s (1999 in Pihamaa, 2002) investigation on Iranian refugee children in Swedish preschools suggests that positive relations with friends and peers are effective in the promotion of the children’s adaptation. In contrast, perceived discrimination and lack of acceptance may lead to feelings of alienation (Pihamaa, 2002).

According to Phinney, Berry, Liebkind, and Vedder (2006, p. 80), the degree of social contact is commonly used as a means to assess acculturation. Social interactions and supportive networks have been found to account for 3% to 10% of the total individual variation in the process. Nevertheless, children’s social networks are constrained by their parents or by school or community demographics. Studies in culturally mixed schools showed that activities of the ethnic groups or of the neighborhood influence children’s acculturation. Friendship patterns and social associations are also found to be connected to ethnic identity (Phinney, Berry, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2006).

In addition, social support can be received from ethnic or expatriate families from the same heritage culture and those who have undergone a similar experience of being sojourners. According to Pihamaa (2002), there is an opportunity for members of the expatriate community to share their success stories and frustrations, which can considerably contribute to their social adjustment. The social time spent with both other expatriates and members of the host culture can assist children’s ability to face the pressures of living in the new culture (Pihamaa, 2002). In a study on 12 international graduate students in the U.S.A., Gonzales (2006) used an open-ended survey and follow-up interviews to find that proficiency in the English language was not enough to adapt to the host cultural environment without developing supportive networks in the new culture. Although friendship relations with members of the new
culture were valuable opportunities to feel more emotionally and socially secure, social support networks from the same culture of origin “offered a unique opportunity to recall images, relevant topics, and cultural traditions of their past” (p. 72). In addition, it was found that students lacking English proficiency and expressing a deficit in establishing significant social support networks (either from their own culture or from the new culture) were more likely to encounter acculturative stress and feelings of isolation (Gonzales, 2006).

It is frequently asserted that Australia is a multicultural society. With origins in over 200 nations who practise a variety of different religions, about 44% of the Australian population were either born overseas or have one or two overseas born parents (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009). Moreover, Australia is competing in recent years for migrants who move to the country responding to demand for labour and education, or because of demographic shifts or global events. Recently, the growth of temporary and cyclical migration has been one of the main changes in migration patterns in Australia. For example, the number of onshore (from inside Australia) visas granted to overseas students and temporary skilled workers who applied for permanent residency has increased from 15,282 in 1997-98 to 54,400 in 2007-08 which represents over 34% of total migrants to Australia. By educational sector, around 278,184 student visas were granted in 2007-08 which grew by 22% from 2006-07 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009). This growing number of migrants contributes in enriching the Australian society with a large array of diverse cultures.

However, the notion of multiculturalism seems to be defined relying on the different conditions of every country. Multiculturalism in Australia, as a policy, originated from the desire to manage an ethnically diverse population (Ratcheva, 2007) Ratcheva (2007, p. 30) declares that there are “a lot of metaphors for and elaborations on multiculturalism but very few straightforward definitions. Based on what government policies emphasise, multiculturalism can be defined as “essentially a liberal democratic creed, based on tolerance of diversity within the principles and practices of Australian public life”.
In Australia, multiculturalism became an official government policy with the appearance of The Galbally Report in 1978. The non-English speaking migrants’ need to have access and equity was recognised for the first time. The report emphasised the need for additional support structures represented in multicultural TV, extended ethnic radio, a Central Health Interpreter Service, Migrant Resource Centres, development of new language content, a multicultural curriculum with an emphasis on individual needs, social welfare information in cultural group languages, and establishment of ethnic associations. As result of this multicultural policy, which is firmly engrained in the Australian political agendas, “Australians of many backgrounds have learned to live together, and appear to be more tolerant and sophisticated than they once were” (Ratcheva, 2007, p. 32). It could be said, of course, that all these elements have contributed in maintaining positive attitudes toward diverse ethnic groups including sojourners or international students. Patron (2006) states that sojourners to Australia “are within a multicultural environment which already has experiences and discourses of diversity. Therefore, acculturative options may be more open than in more explicitly monocultural countries” (p. 25).

Although English is the official language of government, commerce, and the medium of instruction in Australian schools, some cultural groups (especially in major cities) mainly speak languages other than English in both private and public domains. Moreover, a large percentage of children who are raised in non-English-speaking homes (e.g., Mandarin Chinese or Greek) attend Australian urban schools. To provide an opportunity for children to learn one of the languages spoken by cultural communities or to support their community languages, various language programs such as teaching Mandarin Chinese, Italian, and Arabic are offered in schools. Children and newcomers with little or no English proficiency are taught English as a second language (ESL). They are also supplied with specialised ESL teachers and developing programs based on the individual needs of each student. The focus is on value rather than applying policies of assimilation for all cultural groups (Mallozzi & Malloy, 2007). The National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia (Australian Government, Department of Immigration & Citizenship, 1989) stated that:

Multiculturalism is achieved through maintaining and renewing cultural identity; providing access, equity and educational services with equitable outcomes; and maximizing the potential of people on a national and
international level. Some question how successful this policy has been and suggest that it has served only to increase racism rather than promote the valuing of cultural and linguistic differences.

3.1.4 The influence of the media

Considerable evidence exists internationally to indicate that the media (particularly television) have the potential to influence children’s knowledge, achievement, learning, and engagement with schooling (Biddulph, Biddulph, & Biddulph, 2003). Biddulph, Biddulph, and Biddulph (2003) cite two studies (namely, Wylie’s 2001 New Zealand review, and van de Voort’s 2001 international study) in which the researchers revealed the relation of television viewing to children’s intellectual, physical, emotional, and social development. Also, Biddulph, Biddulph, and Biddulph noted a wide range of experimental studies that have demonstrated both positive and negative impacts of television viewing. It has been found that viewing moderate amounts of non-violent or well-designed TV programs allows improved long-term memory, stimulates children’s thinking and creative abilities, clarifies their ideas, improves their educational performance related to vocabulary and language, and enhances their curiosity. In contrast, extensive watching of violent programs has an adverse effect on children’s emotional and physical development as well as their educational performance (Biddulph, Biddulph, & Biddulph, 2003).

As mentioned previously, any language support is significant in enhancing the adjustment of ESL learners or cultural minority children due to the fact that linguistic proficiency is an integral part of the acculturative process (Pihamaa, 2002; Nitta, 2006). Therefore, it is suggested that the mass media has a major influence on providing an important context for language learning as well as acculturation to the new culture (Qian, 2009). In a recent study, Qian (2009) investigated the influence of use of mass media of the host culture on Chinese ESL students concentrating on their acquisition of the L2 and acculturation in the new environment. Ten ESL students who were also Chinese-speaking were interviewed and it was found that “the type and amount of media the participants selected to use were related to their level of English language proficiency, and acculturation attitude as well” (p. 78). The researcher also declared that “[a]udio visual media such as TV, movies, DVDs, radio,
and music were effective in training and improving listening and oral communication skills” (p. 135). However, many families rely heavily on mass media to promote their children’s acquisition of the L2, even though it has been shown that personal interaction is the most effective method for facilitating the learning process: television or video has limits as instructional aids for young ESL learners. For example, some studies indicate that reading out loud to children in the L2 is more effective to increase their vocabulary than viewing television in the same language (King & Fogle, 2006).

Green (2005, p. 56) states that technology (e.g., computers) is a supplemental teaching tool in providing ESL learners with valuable language experiences and additional learning opportunities outside the classroom. Maximum results can be reached by combining these experiences with parent’s efforts and activities to enrich their children’s competency in the second language. Children learn better through engaging in interactional environments that increase verbal exchange. Computers can offer these types of contexts (Green, 2005). For example, Green (2005) cites a study conducted by Liaw in 1997 on whether computer books and the interactive stories of computer programs enhance the verbal interaction of limited English proficiency children. The children were videotaped while using computer books to measure the quality of their talk. It was noticed that to accomplish their reading, children engaged in various modes of language functions provided by using real voices, illustrations, and sound effects. Furthermore, they shared opinions, asked questions, and give suggestions and commands while interacting with each other. Computers can also accommodate various learning strategies to create rich, contextual environments that make children active learners. These learning strategies are useful in facilitating the children’s vocabulary development, their reading abilities, and writing skills. There is a good opportunity for parents to get involved in their children’s language practice while using computers (Green, 2005).

As technology and mass media have great potential in enhancing learners’ SLA, it is also related to the acculturation patterns of newcomers to the host culture. Due to the important role played in individuals’ process of knowledge about the new culture, newcomers’ cultural adaptation is shaped by the choice of ethnic or host media
Studies on the effects on mass media on the acculturation of ESL learners (or young minorities) seem to be insufficient compared to studies conducted on immigrants (Qian, 2009). According to Kong (2006), studies on the interaction between acculturation and media have suggested that influences of host media in cultural adaptation are bigger than those of ethnic media. For example, studies on acculturation and traditional media uses of Chinese immigrants in the U.S. demonstrated that those who spent more time on English-language media had higher levels of acculturation than those who exclusively turned to Chinese-language media. In addition, Kong (2006) cites some studies that have shown the positive influence of mainstream media use on the degree and rate of acculturation. These studies include Jeffres’ study in 2000, Subervi-Velez’s in 1986, and Hwang and He in 1999. Kong states that such studies have emphasised that the “greater the host interpersonal and mass communication, the greater the intercultural transformation. The greater the ethnic interpersonal and mass communication, the lesser the intercultural transformation” (pp. 5-6). The same case can be applied to electronic media use and consumption of radio, publications, and film (Kong, 2006).

In relation to ESL learners’ use of mass media, Qian, (2009) cites a study conducted in 1991 by Shah to examine the relationship between use of the host communication channels and extent of cross-cultural adaptation among 222 Asian-Indians in the U.S. The findings were concurrent with Kim’s theory in the positive contribution of the host communication channels in learners’ cross-cultural adaptation. They also indicated that the effect of interpersonal communication with members of the new culture exceeded the effect of the host mass communication channels in the participants’ cultural adaptation. The only limitation of this study, according to Qian (2009), that it was a secondary analysis. The measures of the specific type of media content used by the participants were not included. Since specific kinds of media may have different effects on acculturation, the participants’ individual differences could not be traced.

As exposure to host mass media plays a crucial role in immigrants’ as well as ESL learner’s acculturation process, it has the ability to cause feelings of alienation and spread negative stereotypes of particular ethnic groups (Huntemann & Morgan, 2001;
Qian, 2009). Negative images of specific groups are often normalised, repeated, and perpetuated in most of children’s media. Providing such stereotypes can have serious implications for minority children’s self-esteem and perceptions of themselves. Cultural groups who are not represented in the media do not exist. If children see their ethnic group underrepresented on television, they will be sent a clear message that their group does not have any social power in the larger society. According to several analyses of media, ethnic minorities in general are negatively depicted and highly segregated. Additionally, some ethnic groups are often associated with violence, crime and abuse. As a result of this socially segregated programming, unappealing portrayals or even neglect, minority children may feel alienated and become uninterested in interacting with the majority society. In other cases, children may feel ashamed of their racial identity, struggle to find a sense of identity and reject their own cultural group. For that reason, the role of television and mass media in intensifying fragmentation and ethnic frustration should not be overlooked (Huntemann & Morgan, 2001).

Keshishian (2000 in Qian, 2009) conducted a qualitative study on older ESL students, which provided evidence on the impact of host media on international students’ cultural adaptation. Keshishian, following an autobiographical approach, revealed her own experience as an international student from Iran in the 1970s, studying in the U.S. The author accentuates the critical role of interpersonal interaction and mass media in her own acculturation process. She declares that numerous factors, including lack of English language proficiency and familiarity with the cultural norms of the new society besides acculturation stress and homesickness, were the main impediments to her adaptation. She also points out that establishing social networks and gatherings with local friends influenced her acculturative process positively. In relation to the effect of mass media on acculturation, Keshishian argues that it could play a contradictory role either in facilitating or impeding the process of acculturation. This depends on the nature of the contents of the media. She states that introducing negative stereotypes in the media could “affect the immigrant’s self-concept, slow down his or her acculturation, breed mistrust, cause poor intercultural communication, and facilitate discrimination, leading to an unhealthy society” (Keshishian, 2000 cited in Qian, 2009, pp. 21-22). In spite of the vivid picture
provided by this study, one should take into consideration, that since the late 1970s, Iran has not had positive political relations with the U.S. Therefore, the perspective of the study cannot be generalised to other cultural groups as the author’s opinions could be unique to Iranians.

One of the most prominent models depicting the relationship between mass communication and acculturation is Kim’s Acculturation Theory (1977). Her theory identifies key factors that hinder or facilitate the process of acculturation, such as personal characteristics, the individual’s own background, interpersonal communication, the new culture, and mass communication. Her work investigates the acculturation process affecting the communication patterns of immigrants. The central hypothesis is that “the extent to which members of an ethnic group are acculturated will depend, at least partially, on the extent to which they participate in the communication channels of the host society” (Kim, 1977, p. 66). These communication channels (represented mainly by mass media and interpersonal communication) function as mediating processes required to facilitate moving from one culture to another. “Communication is crucial to acculturation. It provides the fundamental means by which individuals develop insights into their new environment” (Kim, 1977, p. 68). Mass media and interpersonal communication are described as “the two most salient forms in the cultural learning process” (Kim, 1977, p. 70). Kim also posits that increasing consumption of the host environment’s mass media influences the amount of communication and thus results in high levels of acculturation because the new host culture is reflected in the host media channels. However, it is proposed that there are considerable individual differences in the levels of acculturation motivation which directly affect the use of mass media and interpersonal communication. To summarise, usage of the host media was found to be positively linked to language competence, and the degree of cultural knowledge and familiarity with the new context.

This chapter has provided an overview of relevant factors that have a significant role in facilitating ESL children’s acculturation in a new cultural environment. These social factors include the role of family, the educational context, the host culture, and the media in acculturation. It is noteworthy that, throughout the literature, the role of
the child’s family, the host culture and the media, have all received disproportionately little discussion in comparison with education. This is mainly attributable to the lack of investigation focussing on any of these areas without linking it to education or psychology. The research questions and design will be described in the next chapter. In addition to the process of data analysis and the role of the researcher, a number of ethical issues in the interviews will be discussed.
Chapter Four: Design and Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology of the study. The research questions will be presented in the first section. The second section includes the general research design which was selected to answer the research questions, along with detailed descriptions of participants. The data collection procedure and analysis are presented in the following two sections. Finally, the role of the researcher addressing issues of ethics, reliability, and validity is presented.

4.1 Framing the research

The dual origins of this research in the academic sojourn experiences of the researcher’s own young family, and those of thousands of other Saudi families studying abroad, have been described in some detail in section 1.1. These experiences were what initially prompted the exploration into the literature on childhood SLA, which brought the realisation of the growing importance of acculturation, especially in the lives of young children becoming bilingual in early childhood educational settings. The multiplicity of sociolinguistic, socio-cultural, and educational factors identified in the literature led to the framing of the first focal point of this research: to explore and document what specific sociolinguistic, educational, and other difficulties are faced by this particular group of child sojourners in the Australian context, and how these encounters impacted on their SLA experiences.

Theorists and researchers’ descriptions of the nature of acculturation in relation to a wide range of different SLA populations and contexts raised, in some ways, more questions than they answered about the social factors operating in the lives of the young Saudi ESL learners. Taking into account the background of the Saudi and Islamic culture and some of their specific aspects (religious and social), it was decided that the focus should be on investigating the social factors that influence Saudi children’s acculturation and participation in the new situation. A decision was made to map out these factors initially by drawing on the informed perceptions of the most significant adults in these children’s lives: their parents and their teachers. The
Saudi family structure, together with the cultural constraints on a female researcher coming from Saudi Arabia, meant that the parents’ perspective was represented through the perceptions of mothers.

Thus, on the basis of the literature review, five research questions were devised to delineate the social factors surrounding the children and their effectiveness in the sociolinguistic growth of these young ESL learners, in a way that takes account of the complex relationship between acculturation and the development of bilingualism in children at this age:

1. What sociolinguistic, educational, and other difficulties do Saudi children face in the Australian context?
2. What types of supportive social networks are surrounding Saudi children?
3. What has been done by parents and teachers to support their acculturation and bilingualism in the Australian milieu?
4. What is the relationship between the children’s acculturation process and social support, according to parents’ perceptions?
5. Does the attitude toward acculturation differ significantly among various Saudi families? And does the families’ religious and cultural background influence their children’s acculturation?

The overall aim of this research is to assess the importance of social elements in ESL children’s acculturation, especially those who have a strong religious, linguistic, and cultural identity, like Saudis do. To investigate further how complex the processes of adaptation are, and how this complexity impacts upon the emergent cultural identity orientations of these children, a further concern was to investigate issues of reverse culture shock and benefits the children gain from the sojourn experience. While it would be highly desirable to examine the experiences of bilingual children from their own perspectives and in their own voices, it was considered essential first to map out this complex sociolinguistic situation from the viewpoints of the adults in their lives. Hence, this study relies on mothers’ and teachers’ perspectives about young children’s acculturation, and hopes to stimulate further research looking more closely at the young learners themselves.
4.2 The design of the present study

A qualitative-holistic design of discovering underlying attitudes and perspectives, using multiple approaches was adopted for this study (Kothari, 2008). The research was based on two main data gathering methods: semi-structured interviews, and a structured questionnaire. These methods suit the purpose and exploratory nature of this research, which deals with complicated socio-cultural issues in which using one data source may be insufficient to tell the complete story (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2010). It has been pointed out in discussions of research methodology that the methods of quantitative researchers are rarely able to capture their subjects’ point of view since they rely on more objective research instruments that are removed from the subject’s own viewpoint. Of course, correspondingly, the subjects’ individual views tend to be regarded by many quantitative researchers as “unreliable, impressionistic, and not objective”. But because of their objective structure, quantitative methods are difficult if not impossible to apply to naturally changing situations, and it is generally agreed that a purely quantitative approach has less ability to examine the constraints of everyday life or secure rich descriptions for the social world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003a, p. 16).

Qualitative research is “pragmatic, interpretive, and grounded in the lived experiences of people” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 2). Qualitative research methodologies can be enacted in natural settings, and they have the ability to highlight social interactions expressed in daily life and explore the meaning that is attributed to these social interactions by the people themselves. Drawing on multiple methods, qualitative research is typically an emergent, evolving, and essentially interpretive genre that tends to view social settings as complex and holistic (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). In their illuminating discussion of the validity and reliability of qualitative studies, Denzin and Lincoln (2003a, p. 13) emphasise that the word qualitative:

implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on process and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured (if measured at all) in terms of quantity, amount, intensity or frequency. Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. Such researchers emphasise the value laden nature of inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning.
Because the research questions of the present study focus above all on the social experience of young bilinguals, it was clear that qualitative methods were the most appropriate. At the same time, it was desirable for this study to be able to offer more than just impressionistic observations of such a fascinating sociolinguistic situation, and to examine it in an organised way. There were also some practical constraints, such as the undesirability of encroaching too much on the valuable time of teachers when collecting data. For these reasons, a written questionnaire was designed for teachers to complete at their convenience, while a much more detailed interview format was designed to explore the perspectives of the parents. In the Saudi family structure, it is almost always the children’s mothers who have the most extensive involvement with their young children’s daily social and educational experiences. As the researcher is herself a mother of young children, the interviews could be conducted in a culturally appropriate way that facilitated comfortable and open expression of the mothers’ knowledge and views.

4.2.1 The semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interview is a practical approach that allows individual participants freedom to discuss what is important to them. Using this method, the conversation is guided to focus loosely on a certain set of questions. The researcher can develop the conversation to flow naturally, making room for unexpected knowledge to emerge and new topics to be explored (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). The attraction of conducting semi-structured interviews is that it provides a wider variety of information or what is called ‘thick description’. Additionally, it is possible to ask follow-up questions or for clarification to elicit more in-depth data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Two sets of semi-structured interviews were conducted: one set with Saudi mothers of children living in Australia for a period of time, and one set with those who had returned to Saudi Arabia. The first set of interviews was divided into six thematic sections, focussing on the following:

- difficulties Saudi children may face in the Australian context;
- supportive social factors surrounding Saudi children;
• strategies provided by parents to support Saudi children’s acculturation;
• parent’s perceptions of the relationship between acculturation and social support;
• collaborative relationships with the school; and
• characteristics of Saudi children in the early childhood educational context and the effect of the religious and the cultural background on the children’s acculturation.

The second set of interviews addressed five main thematic areas:

• the initial period upon re-entry;
• reverse culture shock;
• reverse linguistic shock;
• what comes next; and
• benefits Saudi children gained from the bilingual experience.

The interview questions can be seen in Appendices H and J. The interviews also contained open-ended, referential questions in order to extract more in-depth information. A field test of the instrument and interview process was administered with a number of mothers under conditions anticipated in the information statement and the consent form, before the data were gathered. The transcripts of these preliminary interviews were carefully translated and critiqued for feedback before proceeding with the final data collection. Many discussions about the interviews were made with other PhD colleagues (most of whom were also parents) regarding reliability, ethical considerations, and validity of data analysis process.

### 4.2.2 The questionnaires

Written questionnaires were given to teachers who had dealt with Saudi children at early childhood educational levels, with the permission of their preschool or school directors. The questionnaire consisted of 55 statements focusing on the following six themes:

• Saudi children in the Australian context;
• supportive social factors surrounding Saudi children;
strategies provided by teachers to support Saudi children’s acculturation;

• collaboration with parents;

• Saudi children’s characteristics in the early childhood education setting; and

• the effect of the religious and the cultural background on the children’s acculturation.

The participants were asked to evaluate these statements on the basis of a Likert scale of five points (‘Strongly agree’, ‘Agree’, ‘Don’t know’, ‘Disagree’, ‘Strongly disagree’). The 55-item questionnaire developed to collect information on the social factors affecting the acculturation of Saudi children in Australia relying on their teachers’ perspectives, also looked at the teachers’ knowledge of the children’s home culture and their strategies to support Saudi children’s acculturation.

In order to maximise its validity, the questionnaire was based on theoretical considerations that had emerged through some previous studies about the process of acculturation (particularly Berry, 1980, 1990, 2003; Schumann, 1978) and acculturation of young sojourners (e.g., Patron, 2006; Pihamaa, 2002; Torres, 2001). It was also reviewed critically by experienced researchers in the linguistics and applied linguistics team, linguists including the supervisors, and by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University, to identify any possible problems or ambiguities. A copy of the questionnaire survey can be found in Appendix I.

Both the questionnaires and interviews were perceived to be rich sources of valuable information about the sociolinguistic environment of Saudi children, including their parents’ attitudes toward acquiring a second language, activities practiced with children to assist their acculturation, and any extra input they received inside or outside the home. In particular, the methods used in this project assisted the researcher in:

1. specifying sociolinguistic, linguistic, and other hindrances that these Saudi children faced in the Australian context either inside or outside the school;

2. identifying activities and special strategies provided by parents and teachers to foster the children’s acculturation and bilingualism in the Australian milieu;
3. highlighting the influence of families’ religious and cultural background on the children’s acculturation;
4. comparing children’s situation before and after social adaptation; and exploring what happens when sojourner children return to their home culture, from their parents’ point of view.

4.3 Data collection procedures

The interview study had two components: the acculturation group and the repatriation group. A total of 20 interviews reflecting Saudi mothers’ viewpoints regarding the acculturation and reacclimation of their children formed the basis of this study, of which five were conducted with returnees to Saudi Arabia. The questionnaire sought about 30 teachers from different schools and preschools in Newcastle region to participate. Total questionnaires completed were 45 of 100 distributed, for a response rate of 45%. Although this total was more than originally needed, it is still a fairly low rate of responses. This was attributed by principals and directors to the fact that the schools did not have a long experience with Saudi students, because the major source of such families, King Abdullah’s scholarships, only commenced in 2005.

4.3.1 The semi-structured interviews

A large part of the data was gathered through semi-structured, tape-recorded interviews, which were conducted to explore perceptions of Saudi mothers of their children’s acculturation and reacclimation experiences. The semi-structured interviews took about 60-70 minutes each for the acculturation group, while interviews in Saudi Arabia took 40-50 minutes. All the interviews were held in the participants’ homes, except for one interview that took place in a room in the language centre (ELICOS) of the University of Newcastle. They were conducted in Arabic or English depending on the preference of the participant. Each participant was sent a consent form, an information statement (that describes the whole project), and a copy of the interview questions before the time of the interview. Translations into Arabic were provided as well for all documents (see Appendix K). All
interviewees were informed that the interviews would be audio-taped and that they had the freedom to withdraw from the project at any time without giving a reason.

At the beginning of each interview, the research project was thoroughly explained and participants were assured full confidentiality, ensuring that they fully understood the information statement. The participants understood that they could decline to answer any question - if they so wished. They were also informed that they could review the recordings to edit or erase any unwanted contributions and that the recordings would be only transcribed when participants were satisfied with them. After that, using the background survey part of the questionnaire, they were asked to provide some demographic information, such as their children’s ages and sexes, educational levels, length of stay in Australia, and English proficiency. The participants were not asked to provide any personal information, such as names or any other indications of identities (see Appendices F and G). During each interview, field notes were taken to record dates of the interviews, durations, materials, how to reach participants, and the researcher’s general thoughts. It was valuable to keep a secure, confidential journal to record contact details, and to organise the progress of the interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2003).

**The acculturation group (the sojourner group)**

The research project recruited a core group of fifteen Saudi mothers in Australia. These mothers temporarily resided in Australia either to further their education or to accompany their spouses who had come as international students. The reason for focusing on young Saudi sojourners was because of the lack of studies that investigate and assess the acculturative process of this group internationally and in the field of research in Saudi Arabia. The successive groups of Saudi children who are being sent to various countries around the globe are a new phenomenon that requires attention. The researcher intended to explore this phenomenon relying on the mothers’ perspectives and daily experiences with their children. Furthermore, the decision of concentrating on a particular ethnic group provides a more homogeneous perception and cohesive approach to the study. Besides, it helps to avoid complex issues arising from variations among cultures (Patron, 2006).
The criteria for participants in this component of the study included mothers of Saudi children (aged 4-8) who had lived in Australia for at least six months. The region of Newcastle was selected for the first part of this study. Several enquiries through personal contacts and visits to monthly Saudi meetings were made in the first phase of the project to locate potential participants. Through the Saudi community association in Newcastle, seven mothers were invited to consider participating, from those attending a meeting held for the examination of the children at the end of the first semester (according to the Saudi academic year), 2009. A further eight mothers were selected from among the Saudi community in Newcastle. The Newcastle group was interviewed in the first semester of 2010. Conducting interviews lasted for a couple of months. Table 4 below provides a summary of the demographic information for this group of participants. An effort was made to include families from a variety of educational and social backgrounds. Details of the children are given in Table 5. The mean age for the children was 6.6 and their ages of arrival in Australia ranged from three to seven. Their educational levels ranged from Kindergarten (preschool) to third grade. Somewhat surprisingly, the interviewed families had only one child in the relevant age group.
Table 4  
*The acculturation group: Families' demographic information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Region in Saudi Arabia</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Highest educational level</th>
<th>English proficiency</th>
<th>English usage at home</th>
<th>Time in Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Family 1 | Western | F: Personnel Manager  
M: College Administration | F: High School  
M: BA | F: Excellent  
M: Excellent | Sometimes | 3 years |
| Family 2 | None | F: Company Administration  
M: Teacher | F: MA  
M: BA | F: Excellent  
M: Not good | Seldom | 10 months |
| Family 3 | Southern | F: Supervisor  
M: Housewife | F: MA  
M: High School | F: Excellent  
M: No | Sometimes | 9 months |
| Family 4 | Central | F: Lecturer  
M: Student | F: PhD  
M: High School | F: Excellent  
M: Good | Sometimes | 4 years |
| Family 5 | Southern | F: Nurse  
M: Teacher | F: Diploma  
M: Diploma | F: Excellent  
M: No | Seldom | 8 months |
| Family 6 | Western | F: Businessman  
M: Housewife | F: High School  
M: BA | F: Good  
M: Good | Sometimes | 6 months |
| Family 7 | Southern | F: Lecturer  
M: Housewife | F: PhD  
M: Diploma | F: Excellent  
M: Not good | Seldom | 5 years |
| Family 8 | Eastern | F: Employee  
M: Student | F: Diploma  
M: MA | F: Good  
M: Excellent | Seldom | 2 years and 7 months |
| Family 9 | Western | F: Medical  
M: Housewife | F: MA  
M: BA | F: Excellent  
M: Good | Sometimes | 6 months |
| Family 10 | Northern | F: Marketing  
M: Teacher | F: BA  
M: BA | F: Excellent  
M: Good | Sometimes | 9 months |
| Family 11 | Western | F: Teacher  
M: Student | F: BA  
M: BA | F: Good  
M: Excellent | Sometimes | 1 year |
| Family 12 | Western | F: Company Administration  
M: Student | F: BA  
M: BA | F: Good  
M: Good | Sometimes | 18 months |
| Family 13 | Western | F: Lecturer  
M: Teacher | F: MA  
M: BA | F: Excellent  
M: Good | Sometimes | 3 years and 6 months |
| Family 14 | Central | F: Accountant  
M: Teacher | F: MA  
M: BA | F: excellent  
M: good | Sometimes | 2 years |
|----------|---------|-----------------|--------|-------------|-----------|--------|
| Family 15 | Central | F: Company Administration  
M: Teacher | F: BA  
M: BA | F: Excellent  
M: Excellent | Often | 18 months |

Note: F= father; M= mother; None: respondent did not nominate a specific region

Table 5
The acculturation group: Children’s demographic information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Age when arrived</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Educational level</th>
<th>English proficiency</th>
<th>Previous sojourns</th>
<th>Visits to Saudi Arabia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child 1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The returnee group (the repatriation group)

Further interviews were conducted with five mothers of families who had returned to Saudi Arabia after a period of residence in Australia. The interviews were carried out in Saudi Arabia in 2010. Respondents for the returnee group originated from various parts of Saudi Arabia. Two mothers were contacted personally, while mothers in the Eastern region were contacted with the assistance of the Ministry of Education, General Administration for Girls’ Affairs in Al-hassa, Educational Projects and
Research Administration. With the permission of the Ministry, school directors facilitated recruiting several mothers in order to help the researcher complete the required number of interviews. Details of the families and the children are given in Tables 6 and 7. The children’s ages ranged from six to about nine and their ages when returned to Saudi Arabia ranged from three and a half to seven. Their educational levels ranged from first grade to third grade.

Table 6
The returnee group: Families’ demographic information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Region in Saudi Arabia</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Highest educational level</th>
<th>English proficiency</th>
<th>English usage at home</th>
<th>Time in Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family 1</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>F: PhD student M: Housewife</td>
<td>F: MA M: High school</td>
<td>F: Excellent M: Not good</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>14 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family 2</td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>F: Personnel Manager M: Housewife</td>
<td>F: BA M: MA</td>
<td>F: Excellent M: Excellent</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family 3</td>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>F: Lecturer M: Student</td>
<td>F: MA M: BA</td>
<td>F: Excellent M: Good</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family 4</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>F: Businessman M: Housewife</td>
<td>F: MA M: BA</td>
<td>F: Excellent M: Good</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family 5</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>F: Businessman M: Housewife</td>
<td>F: MA M: BA</td>
<td>F: Excellent M: Good</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: F= father; M= mother

Table 7
The returnee group: Children’s demographic information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Age when returned</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Educational level</th>
<th>English proficiency</th>
<th>Previous sojourns</th>
<th>Visits to Saudi Arabia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child 1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.2 The questionnaires

For the second part of the study, a structured questionnaire was administered to 30 teachers (15 teachers from preschools and 15 from public primary schools) who had dealt with young Saudi children. Preliminary contact was made with 20 educational institutions within the region of Newcastle to seek permission to recruit teachers who had taught Saudi children aged 4-8. Only 16 educational institutions declared that they had teachers with the relevant experience. Teacher participants were contacted through their school principals or preschool directors, who were asked to distribute envelopes containing the invitations, participant information sheets, and copies of the questionnaire. The researcher’s numbers and contact information were also included in the envelopes, which allowed the schools to contact the researcher to collect the surveys when completed. Thus, collection of data took place in the participants’ normal daily environment (during the school day), although teachers were free to complete the questionnaire at any time if they chose to do so. Follow-up reminder calls to the school principals and preschool directors helped in increasing response rates, without pressuring individual teachers.

Some schools commented that they had used a team approach to complete the questionnaires, so the responses may reflect input from more than one individual per questionnaire. This does not, however, make such responses invalid, in view of the kinds of information sought in the questionnaires. In analysing the data, priority was given to complete questionnaires. Questionnaires with omitted or incomplete responses were not used. The analysis is based on the originally sought sample size of 30 questionnaires, selected at random from the set of complete questionnaires; the additional 15 questionnaires were discarded. Surprisingly, from 50 questionnaires distributed, 45 were returned, but not all were complete, and it was decided to stay with the intended sample of 15 each from preschool and primary school, for a total of 30.

The time and duration of distributing invitations and completing questionnaires were between the second semester of 2009 to the first semester of 2010. It was emphasised that participation in this research was entirely by choice and only those people who gave their informed consent would be included in the project. The participants were
given enough time to make their decision. They were also informed that completing
and returning the attached anonymous questionnaire in the reply envelopes provided
would be taken as their informed consent to participate and that decisions to
participate would not entail any advantages or disadvantages for any of them. Those
who agreed to participate were asked to give their responses to the questions in the
questionnaire freely and honestly. They also completed an anonymous information
sheet (as part of the attached questionnaire), to provide some information in relation
to gender, ethnic self-identification, degree or qualification, years of teaching
experience, and other related information. The participants were not asked to provide
any personal information, such as names or any other indications of their identity. In
addition, they were informed that they could not withdraw their data after returning
their questionnaires, because it would be impossible to know which anonymous
questionnaire had been submitted by which participant. To facilitate the data
collection procedure, the researcher kept secure confidential records of participant
schools, addresses, dates of receiving and returning the envelopes, numbers of
anticipated participants, and numbers of supplied copies of the questionnaire. A
general description of the teachers’ educational qualifications and other details will be
given in chapter 6.

4.4 Data analysis procedures

4.4.1 The interview study

While the interviews with Saudi mothers in Australia were being conducted in the
first semester of 2010, the first set of recorded data was reviewed with the aim of
evaluating the efficacy of the interview questions. Reviewing the first set of
interviews simultaneously with the interviewing process was beneficial in assessing
the types of responses made in this early stage of collecting data, as it allowed for any
necessary modifications. After all 15 interviews had been conducted, the audio-tapes
were transcribed and then translated in order to facilitate the preliminary stages of the
analytic process. It is important to mention that the interviews of the sojourner group
in Australia were the core interviews of the research. Data generated from the
returnee group in Saudi Arabia was intended to provide a better insight into the
complex phenomenon of acculturation in which the processes of adjustment and readjustment are interdependent.

Because the analytic process of data is a spiral, messy, and not a linear off-the-shelf process (Marshall & Rossman, 2011), it was crucial to begin with a general, thematic and coded organisation of the transcribed data. In fact, having already arranged the interview questions into themes expedited the research methodology. Following Creswell and Plano Clark’s (2010) advice, the transcribed data were read and reread until it became very familiar. Then, the data were summarised using tables and marginal notes for each category. The data were represented through tables to identify similar responses and thus enrich the main findings of this study. The process continued with colour-coding and classification of data according to the categories. This thematic analytical approach was supported by utilising note books for recording field notes and personal thoughts. Then, the data were interpreted with regard to the questions of the study. The final step after interpretation was representation of the data using tables and sorting the findings into themes. The analytic process used in the study depended on repeated readings and interpretational analysis of the data as well as narratives derived from Saudi mothers. Thus, the usage of qualitative research methodologies resulted in a rich and descriptive material that was helpful in investigating the phenomena in question.

4.4.2 The questionnaires

The analyses of the questionnaire data were carried out using two statistical software programs: Microsoft Excel and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Statistical analyses including descriptive statistics and comparisons of frequencies were also utilised. Questionnaires were divided into two main categories for preschool levels and primary levels. Fifteen completely answered questionnaires were randomly selected from each of these two levels, from the total 45 received questionnaires. These were then numbered from 1-15 for each educational level. The researcher manually transferred the data to data sheets, which were checked several times for accuracy by an individual with a research background. Then, the researcher entered the data into Microsoft Excel databases. Data related to the teachers’
information were transferred manually onto subject-specific data sheets regarding ethnicity, degree or qualification, years of teaching experience, and specialised courses in preschool methodology. These were also rechecked to ensure accuracy. Multiple correlations were used to estimate the relation of the teachers’ demographic information and some parts of the questionnaire including strategies provided to support Saudi children’s acculturation, collaboration with parents, knowledge of the children’s culture, and the teachers’ own attitudes toward children’s diversity.

4.5 The researcher’s role and ethical issues

In a qualitative case study like this, all of the participants and the researcher are included as active elements in the research process. Therefore, it is desirable to examine the role of the researcher in relation of issues of ethics, reflexivity, and trustworthiness (Shaw, 2010).

The participants were not promised any benefits from participating in the research. They were also informed that the procedure for data collection could involve a small risk that they feel uncomfortable with questions about their intercultural experiences, but that they could stop participating at any time if they were to feel uncomfortable during the interviews and that the researcher could refer them to appropriate counselling or religious support services in case of more support being needed. The research did not expose participants to any kind of potential risks, physical or psychosocial harm beyond the normal risks of daily life, as collection of data occurred in the participants’ own households.

Following the recommendations of Fontana and Frey (2003), the researcher tried to avoid agreeing or disagreeing with the participants’ responses. Every effort was made to ensure that the researchers’ facial expressions and expressive words (e.g., ‘aha’ and ‘ehm’) did not represent any personal views on the topic of the question. Close attention was paid to personal reflexivity and awareness of the researcher’s position in the research and data analysis processes; however, interviews cannot be invisible or ‘neutral tools’. They are a negotiated context in which the researcher and the subjects create a reality of the interview situation. Answers given in this situation are
influenced by the researchers’ personal characteristics including race, ethnicity, gender, and class (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003b). Therefore, a reflexive journal was necessary during this study and discussing the work with several trusted colleagues was found to be valuable.

To maximise reliability, all the documents were ensured to be in accordance with the requirements of the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Newcastle. They were reviewed by two supervisors. The Arabic versions were checked by a Saudi university graduate to review the clarity of translation and ease of understanding. Finally, the researcher developed a trusting relationship with the participants due to the fact the researcher herself is a Saudi mother who had been through similar experiences to the participants; although this same fact imposed an ethical obligation to take special care not to allow personal views or experiences to affect the participants’ responses.
Chapter Five: Interviews with Mothers in Australia

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the sociolinguistic situation of bilingual Saudi children in the Australian context. This part of the study reflects the mothers’ perspectives of the social factors that influence their children’s acculturation and affect their linguistic growth in the new environment. A qualitative analysis, using interview methods, of the mothers’ viewpoints forms the basis of this chapter. The introduction is outlined in section 5.1, the results of the analysis are presented under thematic headings in 5.2 to 5.7, and 5.8 presents a summary of these results with reference to the research questions.

Many factors in the lives of children who move to another country can affect their attitudes toward the L2 as well as the L1, and form part of a shift in their identity. The interrelationships between these factors and the children’s conflicts, attitudes, language acquisition, and changing identities while acculturating to the Australian culture are worthy of more investigation in the case of this kind of sojourners. On one hand, the lack of research on these aspects of the situation of Saudi and other international students in their host countries intensifies the desire to investigate the influence of surrounding social factors in the new environment. On the other hand, the widely held misconceptions about the Arabic culture in general and Saudi people in particular make it important to look objectively at the relevant features of their cultural background. Therefore, a series of interview questions were developed around this topic to explore the above-mentioned themes and all are included in Appendix H.

As this study aims to shed light on social elements in ESL children’s acculturation, semi-structured interviews were used as a basis for the “thick description” and systematic and detailed analysis recommended by Marshall and Rossman (2010, p. 11) in order to illuminate the processes involved. The semi-structured approach used a list of issues to be explored with each participant in a free and natural manner. As recommended by Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011), these semi-structured interviews
relied on a list of questions that guided the conversation while allowing for flexibility, giving interviewees the freedom to discuss the topic of each question according to what they considered important or interesting. Participants can also provide additional useful information that may not have been considered by the researcher before conducting the interviews. Semi-structured interviews depend on open-ended questions that follow the interviewees’ lead. This investigation used open-ended questions such as “Do you want your child to learn English? Why?” and “Are you concerned to teach your child his/her religious and cultural beliefs? Why? How?” The interviewees were further prompted to provide examples and stories in order to clarify their views regarding the topic of the study. As each interview proceeded, the interviewees were asked some follow-up questions (e.g., you mentioned before…can you tell me about...) to provide more details. In this research, face-to-face interviews were considered the best method to provide detailed and comprehensive data.

The data collection and analysis were guided by the qualitative principles recommended by Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011), aiming for an enhanced understanding of the collected data by placing them in a qualitative form with hybrid analysis, and putting the collected data into categories according to a set of variables that increased the findings’ generalisability.

The interviews were recorded in audio format and then transcribed. Then, they were examined for keywords and themes, and then categorised using tables and marginal notes for each category. The participants’ quotations were used to illustrate the main issues of the study and extract important findings. The interview data analysis consists of six main thematic sections and subdivisions. The six main sections are: Saudi children in the Australian context focusing on many difficulties they may face; supportive social factors surrounding Saudi children; strategies provided by parents to support Saudi children’s acculturation; parent’s perceptions of the relationship between acculturation and social support; collaborative relationships with the school; and characteristics of Saudi children in the early childhood educational context and the effect of the religious and the cultural background on the children’s acculturation. The children’s and families’ demographic information such as ages, English proficiency, and educational levels was used to establish some comparisons in
relation to particular parts of the analysis (see Tables 4 and 5, section 4.3.1 of the methodology chapter). Some important findings are displayed in tables to provide a better understanding of the children’s sociolinguistic situation.

5.2 Saudi children in the Australian context: A general view

5.2.1 Initial reactions upon arriving in Australian schools

Almost all of the cases (13 out of 15 interviewed mothers) indicated common experiences for Saudi sojourner children. Saudi mothers indicated that at the beginning of their stay in Australia, their children had difficulties in integrating into the new environment either in the preschool, school, or with the carer. The respondents generally began the interviews with a description of their children’s reactions when they first started school or preschool. While it is unsurprising that there was an initial shock and unfamiliarity that developed similar feelings in the children, it is notable that these were manifested in a variety of ways. Some children’s first reactions were sadness, fear and anxiety, as one of the mothers #5 explained:

He was crying when we first took him to school. His father had to accompany him and he had to excuse himself from the ELICOS [the language centre] and stay with him. This lasted about a week.

Mother #7 also confirmed that:

When he first started school, he faced some difficulties because everything was new to him…new children and a new teacher … He felt strange and he was crying. This lasted for two days or three before he got used to the situation.

Changes in communication and cultural norms were associated with feelings of loneliness, shyness, and refusal to go to school or carer:

She sometimes refused to go to the baby sitter’s house. If she was upset, she didn’t want to go there. She was trying to find excuses for not going, such as she didn’t like the place or that they didn’t like her. (Mother #6)

Mother #11 said that:

At the beginning and when I woke them up, they were refusing to go to the family day care. When I woke them up, they went back to sleep and if I took them to the carer, they were playing in front of the door and refusing to get in.
Mother #9 noted that her daughter’s feelings of fear and anxiety had led to embarrassment to speak English in class. This mother said that she tried to teach her child some basic words to use in school, but her daughter had to struggle with bigger issues:

If I collected her from school, I found her wetting herself many times although she was old enough to go to the toilet and when I asked her why, she replied that she was embarrassed to ask the teacher or that she didn’t know how to ask her. She knew the words: bathroom and toilet, but she couldn’t use them.

Although the data revealed that homesickness could be aggravated by cultural distinctions and lack of language management skill, homesickness also became a feature when family relations were missing. Therefore, there were some children who felt homesick and expressed their longing for friends, relatives, or even the Arabic language. Mother #1 mentioned that her son was two years and 11 months when she brought him to Australia. She said that although her son was very young then, he still expressed a desire to go back to Saudi Arabia because he missed his extended family.

At first, he was sad because has been raised between me, my family and his father’s family. He used to have a strong relationship with my sisters. Then suddenly I took him away and brought him here. He was always asking: “When are we going to see them?”

Mother #13 indicated that her son’s unfamiliarity with the English language made him miss his mother tongue.

He was always saying that he wanted to go with a group of children who speak his language which means that he was suffering. When he came back from school, he was always saying that he didn’t understand them and they didn’t understand him. He wasn’t crying. He was playing with them, but he missed the Arabic language.

In contrast, there were two mothers (#8 and #10) who claimed that their children did not experience any difficulty in integrating into the new milieu. They said that their children were happy in school from the beginning and that they did not face any difficulties in any shape or form. When I asked mother #8 how she knew that her children had not experienced difficulties in adapting to the place, she explained:

Because they were feeling happy going to school. They were also happy when they returned home. It didn’t occur to them that the school will treat them like this. They saw their teachers as family. So, they liked the school.

Mother #10 also clarified:
I expected that she would face some difficulties, but I was surprised to see her very happy in her first day at school … [S]he did not face any difficulty in relation to the language … When she first came from school, I asked her about it and she replied that she was very happy and that she wished tomorrow to come so she could go to school again.

In both cases, it was suggested by the mothers that having knowledge of the L2 prepared the children adequately for their sojourn and helped them to pass the first step of the acculturation process. Mother #8 mentioned that her daughter was about six years old when they came to Australia. At the beginning, she had some euphoric moments at navigating the new culture. According to the mother, her daughter was three or four years old when she started to teach her some words in English. The mother also wanted to improve her child’s English language by letting her go to a private preschool in Saudi Arabia that concentrated on teaching English. Mother #8 said that:

When they came here, they weren’t totally unable to speak English. They knew some vocabulary. They knew some English and they have gradually acquired the language.

Similarly, mother #10 claimed that her child’s previous schooling for two years was beneficial in teaching her some English and therefore integrating to the Australian school. She explained:

Maybe this was because she had studied in a private school for the kindergarten and preschool levels. They were concentrating on teaching children the English language.

These two cases were the exception; it was found that experiencing difficulties at the beginning of arrival to the Australian context was common among Saudi children.

5.2.2 Common types of difficulties faced by the children

The most common type of difficulties faced by most Saudi children (13 out of 15 children) was lack of knowledge of the English language, which prevented efficient communication with members of the host culture. One of the interviewees provided a good description of her son’s situation:

My son couldn’t integrate at the beginning because he couldn’t communicate with them … The main problem was in his language. He couldn’t understand English either during lessons or when he played with others … [H]e didn’t have a difficulty in mingling or playing with them. His main problem was that
he couldn’t express himself or what he needed or understand what other children said. He is a sociable child and he didn’t show that he didn’t want to go to school. He wasn’t crying or refusing to go to school but he wasn’t able to speak the language. (Mother #2)

Another mother of a child, who was five years old on arrival, shared the same insight:

When he first came here, he wasn’t able to play with other children freely because he wasn’t able to talk or communicate with them. He might interact with them through playing, but he couldn’t communicate through speaking. He wasn’t even able to understand what they said. This was the difficulty he faced. (Mother #15)

As a result of their limited ability to use the new language, Saudi children went through a non-verbal period when they first moved into the new culture. Several mothers reported that their children initiated spontaneous strategies of using body language in attempts to communicate with English speakers. Mother #3 described this scenario in which her six-year-old son and his playmates utilised such tactics as a means of communication:

They couldn’t understand each other but this was only at the beginning ... but after a while they became able to communicate by gestures and things like that. This was just at the beginning. Now, he is able to interact with them. He can socialise with them unlike before.

Children’s linguistic deficits as well as their unfamiliarity with the new environment were reflected in their alienation from English speakers. This was noticed by some mothers (three mothers) as in the case of Mother #3 who raised questions about this dilemma:

When he first attended school, the school staff noticed that he didn’t want to socialise with them because this was a new thing for him. Although the teachers were so cooperative and helpful, I felt that some Saudi children couldn’t adjust to this new environment. They didn’t want to interact with them, you know?

It was found that difficulties in social interaction with English speakers were displayed by three female children (out of five females) whose ages ranged between four to six when they arrived. One of the females was one of those whose mother reported to have no difficulties at beginning of their attendance to school. Yet, her mother indicated that the child’s withdrawal and passivity occurred after she had been attending school for a while:
She told me that other children didn’t want to play with her … She felt like a stranger. (Mother #10)

Inefficient use of the new language was also a main cause of encountering difficulties related to academic achievement of Saudi children. Since they are unable to speak English fluently, the educational focus tends to be on the effects of this on their reading and writing, yet this was only mentioned by two mothers (of five and seven-year-old children). It may be that the other interviewees’ lack of emphasis on the educational progress of their children during this early stage of acculturation can be attributed to the young ages of their children, or that they are examined according to the Saudi curriculum as soon as they begin first grade. So, the children’s academic performance in Australian schools becomes less important.

The data indicated that the second most common types of difficulties faced by Saudi children was culture shock and differences between the two cultures, which challenged their efforts to adapt to the new context. Although this view was only reported by five out of 15 mothers, it was indirectly deduced in six other cases. Most mothers referred to differences in clothing, gender roles, lifestyle, and religion as important aspects of their children’s culture shock. A six-year-old male child clearly expressed a desire to go back to Saudi Arabia at the beginning of the stay because he hated the Australian lifestyle. Other children could not understand why most Australian women do not wear the Islamic hijab (a head cover worn by some Muslim females). Mother #9 stated that:

There were also some things that were difficult for her to understand … integrating into the new culture such as the way of how boys and girls dress and how this is different from Saudi Arabia. Even the issue of the hijab...she asked why they don’t wear the hijab.

Another mother echoed similar issues by saying that one of the most serious problems for her six-year-old son was related to cultural differences. She stated that the child’s lack of ability to communicate in the English language had started to disappear after three or four months, but he still experienced culture shock. The mother further stated:

[H]e wonders about why women don’t cover their faces as in Saudi Arabia and why they mix with men. He was shocked with the cultural and religious differences between the two societies. His questions have become more
complicated as he grows up and I can’t give him enough answers. (Mother #15)

As the interviews progressed, there were a number of mothers who shared their stories and personal experience regarding this issue. For example, mother #8 seemed open and eager to move to a different culture. Her positive attitude toward the sojourn inspired her children and made them feel happy with the new situation. Consequently, this case was one of the few cases of immediate integration with no difficulties. Although this mother appreciated being in the Australian society and she liked the freedom of it, she was the only mother who made her daughter wear the *hijab* at a very young age (eight years old). At the beginning, her daughter was not convinced to wear the *hijab*, but the mother tried to explain that she wanted her to get used to it. After several attempts, her daughter agreed to wear the *hijab* and she started gradually to accept the situation. The daughter’s *hijab* raised a lot of questions by her teacher and classmates. The mother admitted that this thing made her child feel different from her friends and that this was the only difficult experience encountered by her daughter in Australia. The mother clarified:

> I told [the teacher] that it was not obligatory for her to wear the hijab because she was still young but that I wanted her to get used to it. I didn’t want her to be influenced by her surroundings in the school. We have to stick to our religion. So, the teacher understood the situation and everything went fine. Then, my daughter started to wear her *hijab* every day.

The results showed that the children differed in the degree of culture shock. However, culture shock was less intense in children whose parents had positive attitudes toward moving to another culture. Symptoms of culture shock were discussed later in the interviews as will be presented below.

Further difficulties were: fear of separation either from the mother or family members when they first attended school, feeling embarrassed to interact with members of the new society in the presence of parents, and the longer workday in Australia, which was difficult for the children to cope with. It was also noticed that language deficiency made the situation more complicated. Table 8 displays the most common types of difficulties faced by Saudi children at the beginning of attending school as reported by the 15 mothers.
Table 8
*The most common types of difficulties faced by Saudi children at the beginning of attending school*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficulties</th>
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<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
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<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
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</tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

The table shows that linguistic difficulties were considered by the mothers to be the biggest issue. Culture shock was only reported by a third of the mothers, but it was found that it was the second most common difficulty faced by the children as will be discussed later. Fewer mothers reported difficulties in social interaction with English speakers and academic achievement.

5.2.3 The role of family and educational institutions in the beginning stage of acculturation

The initial stage of the sojourner settlement in Australia entailed much effort from Saudi families and educational institutions to alleviate the stress resulting from the acculturation process. The data revealed that parents, especially mothers, served as a crucial means for assisting the children’s attempts at integration in the beginning stage. One of the most common strategies was trying to solve the problem of children’s lack of ability to communicate in the L2. Some families tried to teach their children simple words or sentences in order to help them survive the first days at school. In some families, especially those in which the mother had no or limited English proficiency, the father played an important role in teaching the child. As Mother #2 commented:

*We tried to teach him some vocabulary and sentences that we expected might help him at school.*
The same strategy was used by Mother #4, the mother of an eight-year-old boy, who said:

I taught him some words such as “I need the toilet” or “I need some water”. I mean simple sentences like these and by these key words, he started to socialise with them.

Other families tried to improve their children’s acquisition of language through practicing English with them such as Mother #15 who provided practical ways:

In relation to language, I always read stories to him in English. I try to communicate with my children in the English language. When they make a mistake, I try not to show disappointment with them or make fun of them. On the contrary, I try to encourage them to pass through this phase without hating the English language.

There were families who admitted that communicating with the teacher to help improve the child’s language skills was very useful:

Regarding the language, his father asked the teacher to place the emphasis on teaching them English. He asked her to concentrate on improving their speaking ability, so the children could benefit from their stay in Australia. We didn’t want to waste this year. Thanks be to God, a short period after Christmas, I felt that there was a huge difference and their language had improved. (Mother #3)

Other families tried to encourage their children to be proactive in interacting with English speakers as a way to adapt to the place and acquire the English language. Mother #10 noticed that her daughter was waiting for someone to come and invite her to play, which prevented her from socialising with other children. In her words:

I talked to her and I encouraged her to go and socialise with other children by herself and not to wait for others to come and invite her to play. She did what I told her and went to the children’s groups and played with them.

Another mother believed that providing the opportunity for her child to interact with English speakers was a crucial phase of the integration process and learning English:

Socially, I was always trying to make him interact with native speakers. The nanny who came to our home was a native speaker. The neighbours’ kids were all native speakers. The preschool that he attended for nearly a year, I tried to choose one in which most of the children were native speakers and didn’t have a lot of Saudis. (Mother #15)

In some instances, some mothers had to provide translations in the Arabic language to enhance the child’s language acquisition:
While playing, my son comes and says to me: “Mama, Jake says this, what do I say to him? What does it mean?” Then, he resumes playing and then comes back to ask me about another word … So, as I told you this helped him to learn the language. (Mother #2)

In their attempts to encourage the children to interact with members of the host culture, Saudi mothers used various strategies. Some mothers expressed that taking photos of the child in the class was a source of joy in the first period of school:

Yes, I was encouraging him. I was taking photos of him and his new friends and his teacher. I felt that he became happy. (Mother #7)

Another mother #13 used toys to help her son to initiate communications with other children:

I was buying him toys and made him go to his friends and talk about the toy with them. I wanted him to socialise with them … They started to like him very much because every time he was bringing a different toy and explaining to them how to play with it and letting them play with him.

Comforting and reassuring the children at this early stage were other effective strategies in helping them face the fear of interaction with others. Mother #9 asserted:

Her father and I tried to reassure her that it was something normal to feel afraid because everything was new for her…the language was new … We told her that we have all experienced these things and that she feels like this because it is a new culture.

Mother #14 used examples and motivational stories to help her children face their difficulties:

I gave him some examples from Saudi Arabia because he loves it. I told him stories and gave him examples in order to make him like the school here. I told him that they are your friends and when you go there, you will be able to speak two languages. You should talk with them and he was happy. I feel that he became a little bit attracted to the language.

Mother #13 also declared that encouraging the child to participate in school activities was another effective strategy:

We were always encouraging him to participate in school events. We let him participate in these events to make him integrate more with the school’s environment. He was participating in anything such as bringing food for charity or whatever was going on at to the school.

It is also interesting to note from the data that the Australian teachers were mindful to fulfil the aim of supporting culturally diverse students. With the exception of one
mother, all the interviewees confirmed that the teachers’ supportive, informal, and proactive attitudes were valuable in assisting the children’s attempts at integration at the beginning stage and defeating their difficulties. The difference between the two environments of the home and school, in addition to the children’s diversity, led to a sense of confusion by learners resulting from their inability to understand the language and their uneasiness toward the new values and rules applied in school. However, their teachers appeared to be sufficiently prepared to deal with these children, and similar to Saudi families, they had a variety of ways and methods. As reported by the mothers, most teachers tried to break the ice with the children by introducing them, teaching other students how to communicate with them, and taking them to see the class or join in group activities. One of the mothers said about her son’s teacher:

She used many strategies to cheer my child up. She brought them toys and turned on the tape recorder. She also tried to make them dance. She also took him to show him some other toys to play with. She helped him until I felt that he started to love her. She supported him a lot. (Mother #7)

After the stage of breaking the ice, it was crucial to provide enough comprehensible input by paying special attention to enhance the acquisition of the English language of the new arrivals and help them keep up with the rest of the class. Teaching the children the English language was the next logical step to acculturate. Mother #2 said about her son in the kindergarten:

[H]e wasn’t integrated at the beginning because he couldn’t speak English. So, she tried to help him with that through teaching him some vocabulary.

Childcare centres and babysitters also appeared to be helpful in teaching English to the children and preparing them for school. One of the mothers pointed out that the babysitter was very nice to her daughter and cooperative in teaching her the language. In the mother’s own words:

She exercised the language with her. She taught her the letters, numbers, and words. I mean she tried to help her to learn the language. She stayed there for about three months until she went to school on Christmas. After that, the child improved her language. She was able to speak and communicate in English. (Mother #6)

This example shows how early educational settings played an important role in preparing the child for school. Children can gain many advantages from going to
childcare centres where they can learn English in informal and less anxiety-provoking settings than the school context.

It was also observed that a considerable number of schools paid special attention to assist the children’s English learning and improve their language skills through providing ESL teachers and special classes. Mother #8 expressed her admiration of her daughter’s school by saying:

Of course she was unable to communicate with them at the beginning, but the school has a good experience in dealing with international students. So, they immediately provided her with an ESL teacher to teach her English using stories. They were teaching her about many things.

In this case, providing additional input to learn the language for a couple of months resulted in integrating to the place and establishing new friendships. The previous view was echoed by another mother who reported that placing her child in a special class helped her child to catch up with peers in the class.

In relation to facing difficulties in social interaction with English speakers, many teachers attempted to encourage the child to interact with his or her peers and participate in group activities. Mother #10 talked about the teacher’s influence at this critical stage:

She knew that she was Arabic and that she came from a different country. So, she was trying to make her participate in everything. She tried to help her make friends and establish friendships with other children. She was trying to involve her in groups. I didn’t feel that she suffered from that and I am sure that this was because of the teacher’s efforts.

Another mother revealed that in addition to encouraging her child to collaborate with other English speakers in small groups, the teacher encouraged the family to establish social relations with Australian families.

She tried to put them into groups. There were many Saudi children in the class, but she tried to put each one in a different group. She also tried to introduce her to some girls. She encouraged her to establish friendships with them and encouraged us as families to build relationships with each other and go to places together. (Mother #12)

It was clearly understood from the data that kindness and attention to the child was a key to make him love his or her teachers and then like the school environment. The
Australian teachers’ egalitarian and friendly relationships with the children had positive impacts on their social integration and self-esteem. Mother #14 stated:

I felt that he treated him in a special way. He moved to the next level and I felt that he still wanted his old teacher. He liked him very much.

In attempting to assist the child’s integration to the new place and inclusion in the host society, many teachers were giving gifts to the children and making cards on special occasions as many mothers reported:

She gave them some gifts on Easter, Father’s Day, and on Mother’s Day. At all these occasions, she was trying to make him understand what the occasion was and teach him about it. She did the same thing for Christmas. She was always doing these activities. (Mother #1)

Finally, it is interesting to note that many teachers used a “buddy system” to make the children familiar with the new school environment as well as to create opportunities for social and academic interaction. This system depends on assigning students from upper classes to guide and monitor new students in the school. Mother #13 provided a good description:

Yes, they have this system in the school in which they nominate some students from higher levels to be responsible for new students. They teach new students everything. They make them familiar with the school environment until they go to the next level … For example, when the child feels afraid or wants to go to the toilet, his buddy helps and supervises him.

Another mother clarified that using this system helped her daughter to alleviate her fears when she first entered school and encouraged her to make friends. In her words:

My daughter has one. She was talking about her when she first attended school. She was telling us that she was helping her and accompanying her to the toilet. She liked this buddy very much. She was always talking about her. (Mother #14)

5.2.4 The children’s difficulties starting to disappear

According to the literature, adjustment to the new context is the last stage of acculturation in the culture shock cycle (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963 in Patron, 2006; Shi, 2001; Sussman, 2002). At this stage, Saudi children’s basic needs were met and families had established a sense of routine as a way to negotiate their existence in a different culture. The data revealed that after attending school for a
while, most children (14 out of 15) were able to overcome their difficulties and felt happy with the school. It was noticeable that improvement in the L2 skills and cross-cultural relations with members of the host culture generated a smooth adjustment and more positive experiences with the host culture. In other words, the mothers indicated that their children’s difficulties disappeared when they started to learn English and felt more comfortable communicating in the new language. When mother #1 was asked about the factors that made her child happy with the school, she replied:

He may be integrated to the place because he started to learn the language … he was more able to express himself and what he wanted.

These results are congruent with studies that document the importance of English language proficiency in determining degree of and success in acculturation. Mother #5 described the difference in her son’s attitude toward the school:

He is different now. He started to speak English and he talks with his friends. He loves them. At weekends, he feels sad. For example, he cries if it is Friday or if I tell him that there is no school tomorrow. He didn’t used to be like that. At the beginning, he was refusing to go to school, but it is different now … He is very happy.

Patron (2006) asserted that the value of social relations in an international exchange situation cannot be underestimated. Saudi children’s social interactions, either inside or outside the school, were found to be useful in minimising their problematic moments at this early stage. As they interacted with children from the host culture, Saudi children had started to get used to the place and achieve successful integration into the Australian society. In the words of Mother #3:

He became familiar with them and he got used to them and you felt that he became happier than before when he played with them. He insisted on going to school even if he was sick.

Mother #8 clarified that her child used friendships as a successful coping mechanism. She said:

After two months, she started to integrate to the place and she made a lot of friends … [She was] very happy, she didn’t want to come home.

Mother #8 also pointed out that her daughter’s coping strategies had made her totally assimilated to the host culture. She indicated that her daughter’s identification to the Australian lifestyle prevented her from establishing friendships when she visited
Saudi Arabia. It also made her dislike attending school in Saudi Arabia and express her desire to stay in Australia for the rest of her life.

Separation from the new culture was only cited in one case of the 15 children in which the child was reported to reject living in the host culture and tended to avoid contact with the new society. The main reason was that the child was a victim of bullying by his peers in the school due to lack of knowledge of the English language and his inability to accept differences in cultural norms and physical appearance. His mother mentioned that her eight-year-old son displayed happiness at the beginning when joining in some outdoor activities and taking swimming lessons, but suddenly, he started to refuse to go there and said to his mother that he hated the place. She commented on the issue by saying:

He wasn’t able to communicate because he was wondering how to communicate with them. Sometimes, they were teasing him … I feel that when they knew that he was Saudi…you know…that they have some classes that he couldn’t attend. They were teasing him a lot. For this reason, I felt that he was very upset. (Mother #14)

At the beginning of the interview, I felt that the mother sensed that there was a problem but was in denial. She continued describing several symptoms that indicated a definite case of rejection and harassment by peers, and how her child told her after a while that this had begun when his classmates caught him crying after he saw them changing their clothes in front of each other. She declared that her child became very anxious and that he wanted to return to Saudi Arabia. She also expressed that he was still crying and refusing to go to school. He hated the place and the people; his personality had changed; and he became more reticent.

These points were recognised by the interviewer as symptoms of bullying problems and associated trauma that aggravated his homesickness and made him hate the new culture. The mother finally admitted that other children were bullying and teasing her son and that she was afraid that they might do something to harm him. When asked about what they did to try to solve the problem, she told me anxiously that the father had not done anything to stop the bullying issue. He considered it normal that many children are bullied in school. He also believed that the school could not help because it was not their responsibility, which reflects the policy and practice in most Saudi
schools in which children are bullied while their families and teachers remain silent thinking that this is not very important or that the child must learn how to defend himself/herself. Likewise, the mother feels worried about the impact of this on her child’s personality, but instead of trying to get help, she made comparisons between the child and his younger sister. All these things contributed to hindering his adaptation and made him fail to adjust to the host culture. Here are some of the mother’s words:

Because he was going to school and everything was all right. There were no discomforts but after that I felt that they started to tease him … He was crying every morning and he refused to go school … He refused to play with them. He didn’t want to…I feel that he hated them. He didn’t want them. Now, he is crying all the time and we can barely persuade him to go school. (Mother #14)

As the interview proceeded, it was found that this mother made dedicated efforts to maintain the religious and cultural values of the family, but these efforts seemed to be motivated by fear of identity loss rather than trying to support the child’s integration into the host culture. Besides showing a tendency toward negative attitudes to the norms of the host culture, mother #14’s answers to the interview questions reflected an unawareness of her child’s situation as an ESL learner needing to adjust to the new culture.

Table 9 displays the mothers’ personal evaluation of their children’s degree of acculturation to the Australian culture. The mothers’ estimations were displayed according to a five-point scale (1 = ‘not at all acculturated’; 5 = ‘fully acculturated’), at the beginning of entering the host culture and at the time of the interviews.
Table 9
Saudi mothers’ estimations of their children’s degree of acculturation to the Australian culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Upon arrival</th>
<th>Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree of Acculturation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At the time of the interview</th>
<th>Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree of Acculturation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 1 = not at all acculturated; 5 = fully acculturated

The mothers’ estimations of the acculturative process in this table show a general progress for all children in exception of child #14 who was still struggling to fit in the host culture. Integration to the Australian context was a result of an interweaving of several social factors that influenced the children in the new environment and enhanced recovery from initial culture shock. However, the mothers’ personal views and duration of the sojourn also played a partial role in their estimations.

5.3 Supportive social factors surrounding Saudi children
This part examines the supportive social networks that surrounded the Saudi children in the second stage of their sojourn, which is referred to as the consolidation stage. Factors assumed to provide emotional as well as linguistic support for the young children are: parents’ attitudes, teachers and educational institutions, members of the Australian society, and TV and the media.
5.3.1 Family members’ attitudes toward the host society

This factor represented the most influential coping stratagem effective during times of stress. Feelings of homesickness and longing for relatives are not necessarily eliminated, but parents’ optimistic perspectives and positive attitudes toward the host culture may dramatically reduce the intensity of common manifestations of children’s culture shock. This was stressed by one of the mothers #8 when she commented on the role of parents’ attitude on the child’s social adaptation in Australia:

I feel that our positive attitude toward the new society has influenced our children. When we came here, we were very happy to move to a different culture. We were happy about what we experienced. Therefore, my children didn’t feel the difference. They didn’t feel any change. I know some friends who weren’t happy when they came here, so, their children didn’t feel happy, either.

The analysis revealed that Saudi mothers’ positive attitudes can be separated into two types. On one hand, there were mothers who wanted their children to engage in the new culture only in things that were congruent with the Islamic and Saudi norms. On the other hand, there were those who expressed enthusiasm and desire to let the child experience the new culture from every aspect (without going against Islamic teachings) regardless of its suitability to the Saudi cultural traditions. An example was mother #1 who commented on letting the child participate in the school musical events:

I told [the teacher] to make him participate in everything because some Saudi parents didn’t consent to let their children participate in things like these. They might say, “No, we don’t want our children to do this and that,” but I told her to let him participate in everything.

Generally, many mothers across the interviews articulated their admiration for particular characteristics of the Australian culture. Mother #4 commented on politeness customs in Australia:

People here are very polite when interact with others and I feel that my children have acquired this. They have learned to say ‘please’ and ‘excuse me’ all the time.

In the interviews, mother #4 seemed intrigued to find that Australian Islamic community was helpful in fostering her children’s adaptation to the Australian culture:

I repeat what I said that the society here is very very wonderful and not just the neighbours and people in the street -there is also those at the school. I feel
that they are very wonderful, flexible, and exceptional. Even the Imam of the mosque came and asked us to teach his children religion and Arabic. That was wonderful. I mean it is rare to see such unpretentiousness. My relatives who study in other countries tell me that we are lucky to live with people like these.

Mother #15 said that she likes how some Australian parents give their children the freedom to express themselves and their preferences. She said:

Another thing is that if we are in a shop, I noticed here that the mother asks her four- or five-year-old daughter about her favourite colour and what she likes to wear. She asks her about the shoes she likes and she buys what her child chooses. We do the opposite, when we make choices about what our children eat and wear, and this indeed affects their personalities.

None of the interviewees seemed to have strongly negative opinions toward the Australian society except mother #2 who talked at length about several issues regarding hygiene standards and other problems. She had objections about privacy in school toilets, and impolite expressions and body gestures of some students in school. She told stories about how her children got head lice and skin rash as a result of lack of healthy hygiene. Other opinions concentrated on criticising public display of affection, suggesting that it contributed in increasing the children’s culture shock. The mothers declared that this was considered very offensive and unacceptable either in the Saudi culture or Islamic values. Several mothers complained that these things attract the children’s attention and raise a lot of questions. One of the mothers stated:

I told him that we are Muslims and I always talk to him about Islam and what is prohibited in our religion and that no one should do these things in front of other people because it is wrong. I think that anything attracts his attention and they intend to do inappropriate behaviours in front of us. I tried to make my children close their eyes but everything attracts their attention. (Mother #14)

Saudi parents’ strategies to foster their children’s social adaptation to the Australian culture will be further discussed in section 5.4.

5.3.2 Teachers and educational institutions

Teachers and educational institutions were the second most important social factor useful in assisting Saudi children’s social adaptation to the Australian culture. Throughout the interviews, the mothers repeatedly pointed out that their children’s
teachers represented good models of language use, which aided their overall adjustment and acculturation process. The school teachers were vital in improving the children’s English and literacy skills. Some mothers such as mother #7 described how the teacher provided reinforcement to her child by expanding his vocabulary repertoire and encouraging him to speak coherently. She continued:

The teacher also instructed and helped him if he made a mistake or didn’t know the answer.

The teachers realised that speaking with peers will give the children a stronger motive for communication. Therefore, most teachers were reported to be using small groups to encourage children learning English to interact with others in the classroom as much as possible. Mother #15 explained that by saying:

After lunch time, the teacher was dividing them into small groups and she was trying to put English speakers and ESL children in the same group. I think that this thing helped to improve his language.

It was also revealed that the teachers exposed Saudi children to meaningful literacy games and activities that were of special importance in promoting their language skills. Most of the Saudi mothers reported that reading and writing was made appealing and significant to the children using various methods such as sending books and stories home regularly as a part of the school’s literacy program. They also stressed that they made sure to set aside a time to read these stories with the child. Mother #8 commented on this by saying:

I also encouraged her to borrow more stories from the school library … We also participate in a literacy project called “Scholastic” and they sent us stories every week. We began reading them together.

Mother #5 said the teacher used several activities even outside the classroom setting to enhance her child’s language skills through socialisation with other children:

[The teacher] made some activities or games and made her daughters play with my daughter. They were communicating through these games. She was coming back home with a new game or new information every day.

Moreover, it was clearly understood that the teachers did not forget to combine their strategies in fostering the children’s adaptation with methods that enhanced the child’s confidence and self-esteem such as giving rewards and praising the child. An example of this was what mother #11 said when she talked about her son’s teacher:
She was letting him paint because he likes painting. She also rewarded him with gifts, books, and chocolate. She even surprised him with a birthday party in the class.

According to many mothers, many schools with larger populations of Saudi children and other culturally diverse students were keen to support multiculturalism in their education system. The school’s positive responses to the children’s native languages and cultures were represented by providing culturally appropriate instructional materials in the class (e.g. clothes, pictures, and music). The interest in the Saudi culture was also reflected in some Arabic expressions being used in the class and the culture being included at the school open days. Several schools tried to involve parents and community members from Arabic backgrounds in their programs. Referring to this inclusion of the child’s culture in the class, one of the mothers said:

[W]e made a deal with the teacher and I made a party and I told them that this is for an Islamic celebration called ‘Eid Al-Fitr’. We made some cake and a pie. I made some coffee and tea and took them to school. The children were very happy. (Mother #4)

Another mother stated that her daughter’s school had a program that aimed to maintain Saudi children’s Arabic language. The school also provided parents with books and special classes to learn the Holy Qur’an and Islamic teachings. Using this method helped the mothers in their attempts to teach the Arabic language to their children as well as informing the school staff about Islam as mother #9 explained:

Every Thursday, they invite the mosque Imam and let the students talk to him. Therefore, I’m sure that the whole school knows about Islam.

In some preschools, it was reported that the children’s diverse cultures was emphasised in their games and in-class activities.

One important element of understanding the new culture was to be familiar with the school rules and increase children’s awareness of what was expected from them in the class. As reported by the mothers, this was one of the teachers’ main priorities. Many mothers admired the teachers’ efforts in teaching their children patterns of thanks, apologies, and requests for permission. Mother #13 expressed her happiness to see her child learn about his rights and responsibilities either inside or outside the school:
She taught him about the school system. She let him know his rights and responsibilities in the school. He began to feel angry if someone insulted him by a word. He knew that this word shouldn’t be said to him.

Mother #15 admitted that there were some aspects that she did not know about the new culture and that the teacher was helpful in teaching her child some Australian cultural standards:

I think that the preschool has influenced him regarding this thing … The preschool has taught him how to ask for permission if he wants to play … It is different here. You have to ask for permission and wait for your turn. You can not push your friend and you have to take off your shoes when playing. Of course, the preschool has taught them a lot of things.

These words illustrate how the school was effective in teaching the children the rules and standards of the host culture and give them the chance to practise this with other children in reality.

5.3.3 The Australian society

Another effective factor in facilitating the children’s social integration and helping them to face their difficulties was their social alliances and friendships in the host culture itself. The children’s relationships with members of the new society can be divided into two main types: relationships with peers in the class and relationships with neighbours and their children. Social activities reported by the mothers included home visits, attending birthdays and other parties, and going to parks, clubs, and other public places. In addition, it was observed that the children’s tendency to bond with friends from the host culture was stronger than their tendency to make friends from their own ethnic group.

Many statements from several interviewees accentuated that interactions with peers in the class contributed to their children’s learning of the English language in a number of ways. Besides giving them a good opportunity to use forms of the language in a less anxiety-provoking situation, interactions with peers was a valuable source of exposure to the L2 as mother #9 indicated:

She learned the language from them because she had to speak English with them. I think that she can learn the language from her friends better than from us.
The authentic and intrinsically interesting situations created by informal talking with peers and patterns of play were seen as being of special effect in promoting the children’s integration into the host culture. Mother #5 noticed this in her six-year-old child. She was surprised to see her child separate from her and engage with his friends in such a short time:

He likes his friends at school and he talks a lot about his peers. He even ignores me if I visit him at school or come near him. He doesn’t look at me. He wants to play with his friends.

In addition to providing essential input to learn the L2, peer interaction at school opened doors for a lot of Saudi children to make friendships and socialise with English speakers outside the school and thus achieve successful integration into the Australian society. Mother #10 asserted that association with members of the host culture was the key psychological resource for her daughter to solve her problems during the initial phases of acculturation. In her own words:

She made friends here. She began to like school. She told me that her friend was going to the park today or that she invited her to a party. They were also going to the club together. I mean there were some relations between them outside the class or the school.

Many mothers talked about the positive attitude of Australian children toward their children at school. With the exception of mother #14 in the case of the bullied child, none of the interviewees reported any traits of discrimination from members of the host society toward their children. They explained that the main important thing according to children (especially at this young age) is to play rather than to conceive notions about value or appearance differences. However, markers of ethnicity (e.g. language and physical features) were recognised among children of the host culture. The son of mother 13# was four years old when they arrived to Australia. She clarified:

Actually, because he is from another country, or Asian, other children liked him as a new student who differed from them. He maybe felt that he couldn’t speak English like them, but they didn’t face any difficulty in dealing with him. They liked to play with him and invited him to play. They never found it difficult to interact with him.

Similar to the influence of peers, Saudi children’s linguistic, psychological, and socio-cultural adjustment was found to be affected by dense friendship networks with
neighbours and their children. Most of the mothers indicated that social interactions with these people helped the children face pressures of living in the new culture:

The neighbours were useful. When we first came, there were no schools. So, he started to play with the neighbours’ kids ... They were coming to our place and playing with him and he was going to their house. He started to feel that life began to become normal...like before. (Mother #5)

Throughout the interviews, many mothers made the connection of the usefulness of the relationships with the neighbours’ children and their children’s ability to improve their proficiency in English and understand certain cultural norms of the new culture. This was expressed by mother #11 who said:

They helped him in learning the English language. If he wanted to say something in English and could not, they were able to understand what he wanted to say and teach him the correct way to say it or teach him what he should say instead.

Comments similar to mother #11’s suggested that young children can learn more quickly from those who are in their own age group than from adults.

People in public places have also influenced Saudi children but to a smaller degree than school peers and friends. The interviewees’ description of interaction patterns between their children and people in the street, parks or shops can be summarised in what mother #11 said:

When we go shopping, people say hi to him. They talk with him sometimes and ask him about his school or preschool.

5.3.4. The media and TV programs

As evidenced by most of the mothers across the interviews, mass media, especially TV programs, played an integral part in providing their children with valuable language experiences as they learned English and thus enhanced their acculturation to the new culture. Several mothers gave examples of some well-designed programs that helped their children gain knowledge about the Australian culture and improved their cognitive skills, but the most important benefit of watching TV on a regular basis, according to most of the interviewees, was that it provided additional context for language learning. Therefore, Saudi families were keen to provide their children with access to many educational programs. As one of many instances, mother #12 stated:
I feel that they have very useful TV programs. You don’t only watch the program, you gain benefit from it. They teach children a lot of things. For example, they teach them the language, they teach them how to speak.

Many mothers declared that TV programs had promoted their children’s English language proficiency and spoken vocabulary as a result of the repetitive style of much of these programs. In relation to this, mother #6 commented:

My daughter loves Dora if you know her. We have all her DVDs at home. I feel that this program has improved her language because Dora repeats words many times and this required the child to respond to her. Sometimes, I hear my daughter responds to her and repeats what she says.

In addition, it was noted that the children like energetically to respond to and interact with programs that depend on human voices, lively songs, non-human characters, peculiar sound effects and movement activities. Mother #15 talked about the results of such interaction by saying:

There were some educational programs in English such as Dora and things like that. The child can learn songs in English; he can learn the alphabet, names of colours and animals. All these things improve the child’s English language skills.

The Australian TV program Play School is another program that is most frequently watched by Saudi children. The format of each episode, as described by Harrison (2004), is characterised by the personable style of two presenters who speak directly to the young viewer. Using direct talk and stimulus questions, this program was shown effectively to elicit responses from young children. One of the mothers stressed this effect in the following words:

The program that is called Play School is excellent and wonderful especially for those who don’t speak the English language. For example, it says: “What day is today? It’s Thursday”. It teaches the Australian pronunciation or accent. It was very wonderful … I feel that they benefited from these things. (Mother #4)

Only one mother commented on how TV programs motivated her children’s creative abilities and developed their curiosity and ability to introduce new ideas.

Numerous mothers talked about how they used the internet, computer games, stories and books as supplementary teaching tools for teaching the English language. Their practices and strategies will be fully presented in the next sections.
In summary, the data collected from all respondents acknowledged that the social factors surrounding Saudi children in the Australian context had a role in the multidimensional process of acculturation. The main factors that influenced the children’s chosen patterns of acculturation were: families’ attitudes and strategies, teachers and educational institutions, the Australian society including school peers, friends and neighbours, and the media and TV programs. Only two mothers acknowledged the existence of secondary factors that supported their children’s adaptation to the new culture. Mother #4, who is a mother of four children, discussed the influence of Islamic community in the following words:

I emphasise the role of Muslim children who don’t speak Arabic in fostering the child’s adaptation. I feel that they were very helpful to my children. There are some similarities between them in things such as religion… I mean, my children teach them some Islamic expressions … and [they] learned a lot of things from them.

Here, the presence of a supportive religious group was shown to strengthen the children’s personal sense of connectedness and provide them with the emotional support needed to cope with experienced challenges.

The second secondary factor was preparation for the transition process, as one of the mothers reported the role of preschool in Saudi Arabia in preparing her child for the sojourn and giving her a head start in the English language. She commented:

I think that the school in Saudi Arabia was more helpful for my child. When [my daughter] came here, she was speaking good English. I mean I think that her first school was the main reason for that. It was a private school and all their subjects were in English.

The mother also pointed out that her daughter was very shy when she entered the preschool for two years, but interaction with the teachers and other girls helped her to become more sociable.
5.4 Strategies provided by parents to support Saudi children’s acculturation

To assess the Saudi mothers’ awareness and perceptions of acculturation strategies, they were asked to provide examples of the most effective strategies to assist the acculturation of any sojourning child. Some mothers, especially educated ones, seemed knowledgeable of what kinds of techniques could facilitate the process of integration. They provided various types of activities in line with what is recommended by the literature to increase the degree of the children’s social and cultural integration. Some mothers argued that was important to prepare the children for the sojourn through helping them to understand their position in the new situation. Nevertheless, about four mothers had some difficulty in answering this question and needed multiple clarifications to help them to give examples, which may reflect a lack of knowledge of the effect of the acculturative process on the child either in the host culture or on return to the home culture. The interviewees’ examples of useful strategies to assist a child’s acculturation are summarised in Table 10.
Table 10
Saudi mothers’ examples of acculturation strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children</th>
<th>1</th>
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<td>Enhancing socialisation with the</td>
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<td>Teaching him about the new culture</td>
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<td>Not accentuating differences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Watching TV and educational</td>
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</table>

As shown in the table, the most repeated strategies were improving the child’s language skills, enhancing socialisation with members in the host culture, and increasing the child’s knowledge about the important aspects of the new culture. Watching TV and educational programs, and using rewards and encouragement were reported by many mothers to be effective.
The consolidation stage of the children’s sojourn to the new culture entailed a range of efforts and coping strategies by Saudi families in order to achieve a gradual and stable recovery from the initial transition. At this stage, the children started to manage the English language and to adjust to the Australian culture. Most of them consolidated good friendships and established good relationships with teachers. A number of strategies utilised by Saudi mothers in fostering the children’s social adaptation to the Australian society at this stage emerged from the analysis of the data.

5.4.1 Fostering literacy and language skills

One of the most frequently used strategies was improving the child’s language. Most of the Saudi families realised that learning the L2 was a key factor in acculturation to the host society. As a result, many of them were enthusiastic about improving the language skills of their children. The interviewees reported that they concentrated on using family members or English speakers in the host culture as valuable sources of input to the target language. For example, mother #7 told how the father, who had obtained a high level of education in English, tried to enhance her son’s English language using daily conversations. She said:

He talks with him in English all the time. He also encourages him to speak the language. He talks with him in the car and tells him in English about many places.

Mother #8 indicated that she used the child’s siblings, who had better English proficiency, to teach her:

I make them practice English with her. I let her sister correct her pronunciation because she picked up the accent very well.

Mother #15 emphasised that people in public places can also be used to improve the child’s English proficiency:

I think if you were in a supermarket, a mall, or a restaurant, try not to prevent your child to talk to other people such as the waitress, the customers - either children or adults. So, when the child experiences this himself, he will gain confidence to speak English and communicate with other people.

This mother also found that levels of human and material resources available within families could enhance the language acquisition. She stated:
I let them practice the English language in everything around them; their toys, their movies, their magazines, and their relationship with me. We were using the English language when they asked me anything and when I asked them anything. (Mother #15)

Parent-child interaction patterns in the target language are summarised Table 11.

Table 11
*Parent-child interaction using the English language at home*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Practicing English</th>
<th>English use while playing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child 1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 2</td>
<td>Not too much</td>
<td>Used Arabic most of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, but I stopped.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 5</td>
<td>Not too much</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child 6</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
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<td>Child 7</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, the father did.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child 8</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child 9</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child 10</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 11</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 12</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 13</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 14</td>
<td>When we first arrived</td>
<td>Not all the time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 15</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

When asked about their daily interactions in English, seven mothers said they practiced English with their children on a daily basis and used English while playing with them. In these families, it was noticed that the children had good or excellent English proficiency, according to their mothers. Another five mothers reported that
they sometimes used English with their children. Only three mothers mentioned that they did not practice English with their children every day and that they used Arabic most of the time. The main reason, as deduced from the demographic information of the families, was related to the mothers’ poor spoken English proficiency. The information also revealed that mother #7 was not proficient in English, but she repeatedly declared that the child’s father had an exceptional role in teaching him English. The rest of the mothers indicated that they combined English with Arabic in their daily interactions with their children. It is important to mention that along with the management of spoken English at this stage, Saudi children went through a normal aspect of SLA, namely is code-switching. This means that they started to mix English with their mother tongue (Hamers & Blanc, 2000, p. 260). In future research, it could be illuminating to investigate this through audio recordings of children as their L2 develops.

Regarding the children’s education, all Saudi mothers asserted that they monitored and assisted with their children’s homework as a means to enhance their academic achievements. Mother #2 saw a relationship between showing interest in the child’s academic achievement and his integration to the school. She clarified:

We were also encouraging him to go to school every day. We don’t want him to skip school so he won’t miss out on anything...because if he skipped school, his academic achievement would be affected. If this happened, it would affect him psychologically and would reduce his relation to other children.

The mothers provided various reasons for their concern to supervise their children and read over their homework. For most of the interviewees, the focus on academic achievement was aimed to improve the child’s linguistic skills and develop a strong base in English. Mother #5 explained:

First of all, I want him to learn. I frankly want him to be good at the language at any cost. Any person who learns a second language at early age will be able to speak it fluently for the rest of his life.

This was mentioned repeatedly by most of the interviewees, even those who were about to return to Saudi Arabia.
A second reason provided by some mothers was that lack of English proficiency can make the child feel inferior to others, which may lead to serious consequences or problems. Mother #13 explained this by saying:

I do not want him to be less than the others. This may make him lose his self-confidence and affect his self-esteem. Even if he is only here for a temporary period, if I don’t concentrate on him, he will feel that he is less than other children.

Another reason was that most of the mothers had a concern to teach their children how to be good students as a way of preparing for the return process. Mother 1# admitted that although learning English was a main goal for supervising the child’s homework, she also wanted him to be good at school. She continued:

If I do not give him enough attention in his first grades, he may become careless. So, I have to keep up with him, work with him, and help him.

A few mothers aimed to make a good impression about Saudi children through following up their children’s homework, such as mother #11 who said:

[W]e don’t want to give the school a wrong impression about Saudi students.

Reading to the child can improve his/her achievement in reading and promote his/her appreciation for reading as a lifelong hobby. Among strategies employed by parents to improve their language skills, parent-child reading of English books was indicated to be the most effective. Mother #4, who was particularly eager to share her strategies and home activities with her children, indicated that they used story time not only to improve their children’s reading, but also to strengthen their speech skills and creative writing abilities. She said that the father had devised a presentation program for them in which every child had to read a story and make a presentation of that story in front of the whole family. The mother said:

Every day, one of the children has to read a story, write this story and make a presentation in front of the rest of the family. He has to prepare some questions on this story and allow his brothers to answer them.

Only two mothers admitted that they did not read to their children or listen to them read in English. Mother #3 thought that her six-year-old son was still too young for reading either in English or Arabic, but he used his imagination and pretended to read books. The other mother #14 declared that she did not read English stories to her eight-year-old son because he did not bring them to her. She said that she had to look
in his schoolbag every day to check if he had brought a story with him from school. She also said that she only concentrated on teaching the child according to the Saudi curriculum. In her words:

I teach him every day. I teach him the Holy Qur’an, reading, and math … We have a book about good behaviour and he feels happy if I read something to him. It is from the Saudi curriculum.

A comparison was made from the data between practicing reading in English and Arabic. It was found that most of the mothers focused their attention on the child’s English literacy rather than Arabic literacy, being unaware of the literature suggesting that maintaining one’s native language skills can increase success in acquiring the L2 (see Table 12). However, the mothers’ efforts in relation to Arabic were concentrated on teaching their children The Holy Qur’an. In cases of older children (above seven years of age), the interest was on teaching them according to the Saudi curriculum and preparing them for the Saudi exam. Mother #8 tried to go beyond these limited sources by trying to provide access to books in the Arabic language to her daughter, but then she stopped doing that when she noticed her child’s reading difficulties in Arabic. She said:

I bought her some stories in Arabic but I didn’t feel that she liked to read them because the words were too difficult for her level. She wasn’t able to understand their meaning either. So, I had to explain them to her.

Mother #13 was one of those who confessed that reading in Arabic was missing in her parent-child interaction patterns except for reading the Holy Qur’an. She stated:

I concentrate on teaching him the Holy Qur’an … I mainly let him listen to the Holy Qur’an to help him memorise some verses. He has a toy that has some short verses. So, I turn it on before he sleeps every day.

Mother #3 also confirmed this by saying:

We only have the Saudi curriculum books. I don’t bring him Arabic books…only the Saudi school books because we have to do this.

In addition, a relationship was found between the child’s age and Arabic supplementary education. It was noticed the younger the child, the fewer efforts were devoted to improve his or her Arabic literacy and language skills. Mother 1# said that she did not read to her six-year-old child because he was still young to go to school. She stated:
I don’t teach him a lot of Arabic recently. Just simple things such as how to write from right to left … only the Holy Qur’an.

Mother #12 also said:

She only read the Holy Qur’an. She rarely read other things such as letters and such. She is in the first grade according to the Saudi curriculum. Therefore, I only teach her some basics or simple things.

There were only two mothers who tried to balance strengthening their children’s literacy and reading skills in the two languages. Mother #4 declared that she made a point of reading to her children in Arabic every Friday. She said that they also tried to provide books of the Prophets’ stories. Mother #9 mentioned that the children’s father brought them a story in the Arabic language every day and that when he gathered the children to read them the story, her six-year-old daughter tried to read it or say some sentences in Arabic.

Table 12

*Parent-child interaction through reading books*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children</th>
<th>English books</th>
<th>Arabic books</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child 1</td>
<td>Yes, every week.</td>
<td>No, only the Holy Qur’an.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 2</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>No, only the Saudi curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 3</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, every Friday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No, only the Holy Qur’an.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 6</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No, only the Holy Qur’an.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 7</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No, only the Saudi curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 8</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Inconsistently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 9</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, every day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 10</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>No, only the Saudi curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 11</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 12</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No, only the Holy Qur’an.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
As mentioned before, TV programs, the internet, and computer games were used by Saudi mothers as supplemental teaching tools for teaching the English language. Similarly, the media contributed to a great extent in immersing the children in the host culture. The interactive nature of the media served as a medium of social interaction between Saudi children and their Australian peers and provided a window for the children to be acquainted with the characteristics of the host culture. Advantages for the children’s linguistic progress were mentioned repeatedly by several mothers. However, most of the mothers followed a particular system with the aim to monitor and mediate their children’s television behaviour and control their amount of television viewing. When asked about their practices and strategies regarding watching TV, several mothers declared that they let their children watch only TV programs that were appropriate for their young ages, such as mother #7 who stated:

Actually, I don’t let him watch all TV programs. I only let him watch good programs that suit his age. And I concentrate on educational programs as well. I let him watch a lot of educational programs.

The mothers’ attempts to control their children’s amount of television viewing reflected their worries regarding the impact of the host media on the child’s perception and behaviour. When discussing the topic of watching TV, the comments of many mothers were similar to the following example:

There is a good channel on TV. They can watch it as much as they want. It was very helpful in teaching them some words. My younger daughter has learned a lot of words by watching this channel. But I don’t let them watch TV all the time. (Mother #5)

In addition, other mothers expressed their fear of the messages provided by the media, especially those featuring sexual or violent content. The data revealed that Saudi mothers realised that young children are particularly vulnerable to these messages, which have the capacity to teach them some beliefs or behaviours that are
objectionable according to the Saudi culture or Islamic religion. Mother #12 commented on this by saying:

I let them watch TV but in a limited manner. For example, there are some animations that you may feel are difficult for our children to understand. Of course, it is ok for them to let their children watch these kinds of movies but not for us. So, I try to choose things that suit them.

However, some mothers reported that they tried to combine their children’s experiences with activities that enriched the children’s competency in the L2. Mother #14 said that she tried to assess the child’s comprehension through asking him questions. She continued:

I feel that he started to learn some words from watching TV. Sometimes, I asked him about the meaning of a word to know if he could understand what was being said and he told me its meaning. I felt happy with that.

Mother #5 tried to connect watching TV with improving her child’s writing skills:

What made me happier is that when we bought the TV, he was happy while writing words he heard on TV. He wrote down every word he heard on TV.

Moreover, it was revealed that the school played an important part in providing the children with useful educational websites:

[H]e likes to play some games and go to some websites in English, I think. He also brings some website names from school and enters them from home … and they have some educational games. He likes them very much and likes to play them. (Mother #14)

When comparing the children’s amount of watching TV and playing computer games in English and Arabic, it was noticed that there was more concentration on English programs than Arabic ones. Mother #7 commented on this as follows:

Unfortunately, we don’t concentrate on Arabic.

The reasons, according to the mothers, were that they either did not have Arabic channels at all or that they were only interested in installing Arabic channels that suit older viewers. Mother #5 further explained:

Most Arabic channels we have on our TV don’t have a lot of children’s programs. So, they watch English programs more.

Regarding this issue, the data indicated that there were only four cases in which Saudi mothers let their children watch Arabic TV programs. One mother declared that her child watched Arabic TV programs more that English. The other three mothers
indicated that their children’s watching of Arabic TV programs was limited to teach them the alphabet or some songs. Similar results were found in relation to the internet and computer games.

5.4.2 Interaction with English speakers and other people from the host culture

According to Vuckovic (2008), parents are a strong agent in characterising their children’s ethnic identity and accentuating their social manners when they move to a new culture. Children therefore count on their parents’ resources and perceptions to overcome their unfamiliarity with the new place (Pihamaa, 2002). Encouraging interaction with English speakers and other people from the host culture was a significant strategy used by Saudi mothers in fostering the children’s social adaptation to the Australian society. When asked about what they did to enhance their children’s social integration to the Australian community, the answer provided by several mothers was that they tried to encourage socialisation with other Australian children. This strategy was applied in different ways. There are those who let their children play with the neighbours and visit them in their houses. Mother #5 was one of those who used this strategy:

> Sometimes my son asks me to let him play with them. So, I give him candy or something and I let him go to my neighbour’s house and play with her kids.

This strategy was, of course, supported by some advice and instruction regarding how to behave with the others and how to consider the new culture’s customs and rules, as the same mother clarified:

> We told them not to spend a long time in their house. They may be annoyed if you spend a long time in their house. Sometimes, we tell them to play with them outside their home so they don’t bother their mother.

This idea was echoed by mother #12 who stated:

> In relation to the neighbours, I tried to teach her to return home on time and not to spend a lot of time there … The situation is different from Saudi Arabia in which you stay for a long time when you visit someone. I also tried to instruct her how to behave in the shops.

The same strategy was sometimes applied reversely through inviting other children home and being proactive in establishing good relationships with the neighbours.
We also let other kids to come to our house and watch a DVD or play with my kids. Sometimes, we cooked Saudi dishes and we sent some to the neighbours to try the Saudi food. (Mother #5)

A considerable proportion of mothers acknowledged the value of allowing the child to engage in after-school activities and attend school parties. Mother 1# said about this:

I have tried to get him involved in after-school activities or parties such as those dancing parties arranged in school … I allow him to attend these parties and other events that occur within the school.

Mother #15 suggested the value of encouraging the child to talk with people in public places. She mentioned:

So, if we were in a restaurant or a supermarket, I like my child to ask the waitress about the food. For example, in the supermarket, he asks about the yoghurt, about the milk or the juice. This helps him a lot. If he tries to speak or to convey the meaning while we are encouraging him, he can talk or buy anything by himself. This will assist his acculturation and he also will gain the confidence to socialise with the new culture.

Only two mothers admitted through the interviews that they did not do much for their child to enhance their communication with members of the host culture.

5.4.3 Helping to overcome culture shock

As mentioned before, culture shock in Saudi children was characterised by disorientation, stress, and confusion in relation to differences in clothing, gender roles, lifestyle, and religion. An important facet of culture shock appeared when the children compared everything with the values (e.g., habits, behaviours, and social customs), places, and people they had left in their home culture. Nevertheless, communication has an important role to play in reducing culture shock, as emphasised by several studies (Torres, 2001). This result was also found through the analysis. A mother of five-year-old child talked about a main source of confusion in Saudi children seen in the common question: “Why don’t we celebrate Christmas?”.

She clarified:

At Christmas, she asked: “When Santa is going to visit us?” She waited for him. You felt that she liked him very much. She asked me to buy her DVDs or toys that have Santa in it. I tried to explain to her but she didn’t understand the idea … We have the same problem with Easter. She said to me “Happy
Easter”. I tried to explain that this is not in our culture but she didn’t want to accept this. (Mother #6)

In some cases, culture shock underwent another shift in which it took the form of rejection of their own cultural and religious background. Mother #12 talked about her daughter:

She has some objections against my hijab. She also has questions about car driving. She asks me about why I don’t drive a car. When her father tried to tell her that women don’t drive cars in our culture, she replied that there are some Saudi women who drive cars here. She is confused.

Trying to overcome the children’s culture shock, the vast majority of mothers (13 out of 15) relied on explaining and talking to them about cultural and religious differences. It was understood that the first step to overcoming their children’s fears and confusion was to help the child to recognise them. Mother #9 argued:

I want to say that the base of our child-raising is to advise him and explain to him the differences between what we believe in and what others believe in. I consider this as an important aspect of raising a child.

Mother #2 emphasised the importance of concentrating on differences rather than giving negative attitudes toward other cultures. Like several mothers, she was keen to facilitate the process of cross-cultural understanding by teaching her child to keep an open mind and not perceive anything that is different to be negative or wrong because this may make him fear or hate the new culture and impede his acculturation. She stated:

I told him that we are different and then I talk about Islamic beliefs. I don’t want him to hate other cultures … I tell him that there are some people who do wrong things even in our culture … I try not to say that they aren’t Muslims because he will fear them and separate from them. He is young and he can’t understand that and he will be afraid and if he becomes afraid of the other culture, he will not integrate and we have to stay in Australia for a long time.

Mother #1 also argued that the most important thing a mother should do is to teach her children their religious practices and beliefs without making judgments about other people:

I don’t try to teach him that they do wrong things or not. I try to explain to him that we are Muslims and every person has his own principles, thoughts, and beliefs, I mean.
In two interviews, the mothers mentioned that preparing the child for the sojourn before coming to Australia was a good method to help him or her understand differences between the two cultures. Mother #8 commented that this method made her children ignore any behaviour that is not acceptable to the family:

We told them that you will see different things. We tried to explain some differences to them. We told them that you will see some people who wear different clothes or behave freely in the street. So, we are supposed not to judge them and not to do what they do at the same time. They wear what suits them and we also wear what is approved by our God and suits our culture.

Mother #4 mentioned another method. She declared that in addition to explaining or discussing differences, she tried to enhance her children’s ethnic identity and develop their self control:

The most important thing I tried to teach him was to have a strong confidence and self-esteem. I am a Muslim and Arabic and it is wrong to copy everything. I have to influence others and not the opposite.

Strengthening the religious and cultural aspects of the child was also used by five other mothers.

It was noticed through the analysis that the younger the child was upon arrival, the lower the level of culture shock and the higher the level of acculturation to the Australian context. Patron’s study (2006) on adult French international students in Australia presented a range of factors that contribute to culture shock in the Australian context: academic culture, the effect of pre-existing stereotypes, linguistic shock, behavioural differences, and value conflicts. With the exception of linguistic shock and lack of English, young children did not seem to suffer from any of those symptoms, or at least, not nearly as strongly as Patron’s focal group. Some mothers declared that younger children did not ask questions as much as older ones. For example, Mother #1, whose son was two years and eleven months when he came to Australia, said that:

He was not asking questions … as I told you because of his age, he wasn’t asking religious questions ever. He wasn’t asking why you wear this or that. So, regarding these things [inappropriate scenes or pictures in the street] … I let him look normally without it causing any problems.
In contrast, mothers of older children asserted that their children’s questions were becoming more complex with age, and more difficult to answer. Mother #12 said that she tried to explain cultural differences to her daughter from the beginning:

I told her that we are Muslims and that we don’t do these things. After that, she started to ask me more about cultural differences in a way that was difficult for me to answer. So, I started to remain silent or tell her that when she grows up, she will understand such differences. Really, sometimes she was asking me questions that I can’t answer.

Moreover, it was found that children had lower levels of culture shock if they were used to travelling abroad, or had low social distance resulting from the existence of some similarities between their own cultures and the host culture. Mother (#10) clarified:

Regarding gender mixing, there were a lot of boys in her school. So, it was normal to her and she didn’t feel strange. Regarding clothes, I don’t think that my child noticed or asked about these things because we have travelled a lot and she was used to seeing these things. I mean that this is not the first time she sees these things. Therefore, you feel that she knows about these things. She understands these things. It is not something new to her and she is not like children who stare when they see something unusual.

It was deduced through the interviews that some mothers did not have a clear idea of culture shock. They were unaware of the culture shock experienced by their children and they were unable to explain when they noticed psychological symptoms that indicated culture shock such as the child’s feeling homesickness, or experiencing social withdrawal, or crying. Therefore, most of the strategies and methods used to alleviate the children’s confusion concentrated on providing simple answers to their increasing number of questions.

5.5 Parents’ perceptions of acculturation and social support

5.5.1 Parents’ attitudes toward the L2

For ESL children, family variables, especially parents’ attitudes toward maintaining the home language and acquisition of the L2, are expected to influence the bilingual pattern of the child and the linguistic support from members of the host culture (Li, 1999). In agreement with the literature, the findings of the present study indicated that sojourner children’s attitudes toward the maintenance of their mother tongue as well
as SLA are mostly dependent on how parents look upon the usage or choice of the two languages. In spite of the repeated complaints and expressed worries that their children may lose their feeling for Arabic, all of the mothers (15 out of 15) had a positive attitude toward the L2 and wanted their children learn English. Such a positive attitude was felt when the mother immediately and without hesitating answered ‘yes’ or ‘of course’ to the question “Do you want your child to learn English?” in each interview. Saudi parents’ positive attitude was also clearly viewed from their efforts and various activities to support SLA in their children either at the beginning or consolidation stage of the children’s sojourn to Australia. The analysis cited some important reasons for learning English (see Table 13). Most mothers, of course, combined more than one reason when they responded to this question, such as mother #2 who stated:

The most important reasons are to integrate into the Australian society and to return to Saudi Arabia with a good linguistic competency in the second language.

Mother #13 also said:

In Australia, I want him to become more independent and more confident and to make a lot of friends, but in the future, I want him to get a good education.

Moreover, Saudi mothers seemed aware of the significance of English as the global lingua franca of the modern era, and that it has become a requirement in a number of fields of education and work. For instance, mother (1#) commented that she tried to interact with her son using English because of its increasing importance in the Saudi society. She said:

I believe that he is supposed to learn English and, moreover, I encourage him to learn the language because English is very important to our generation. So, what about their generation? The English language is very important in Saudi Arabia and even more so when you apply for a job there. Lots of jobs require speaking English. It is an essential thing indeed.

Table 13 also indicates that mother #4 pointed out another reason why she wanted her child to learn English. Here is her point of view:

You can say that we have a religious tendency. The reason is that I want him to be like his father. You know that he gives some lectures on Islamic concepts and issues in which he speaks Arabic and then translates into English for those who don’t speak Arabic. That’s why I want him to learn English…to participate in spreading Islam.
Table 13
Why Saudi mothers want their children to learn English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals of learning English</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
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<th>14</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to further his/her education in Saudi Arabia</td>
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<td>to express feelings/opinions freely in the Australian context</td>
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<td>to communicate with more and various people in the future</td>
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<td>to get a good education in Australia</td>
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<td>to feel more confident</td>
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<td>to ensure a good career in the future</td>
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<td>to be more independent</td>
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<td>to establish friendships with Australians</td>
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<td>to understand the Australian culture</td>
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<td>to participate in the Australian community</td>
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Note: reasons are displayed in order of frequency

Looking at the table, one can deduce that the mothers had various purposes in mind as to why they wanted their children to acquire the English language. The nature of these goals was educational, psychological, social, cultural or even related to their career in the future. They ranged from short- to long-term goals. Also, one can notice the mothers’ desire to reach a balance represented in the most frequent goals in the table. While they reported that they wished their children “to further their education in Saudi Arabia”, they realised the importance of being active in the host culture and “to express feelings/opinions freely in the Australian context”. The goal “to communicate with more and various people in the future” shows that the mothers even took the children’s future into consideration as a vital goal to learn English.
5.5.2 Parents’ attitudes toward children from the host culture

According to the findings of the present study, all Saudi mothers (15 out of 15) wanted their children to socialise and play with Australian children. While the mothers’ perspective about socialisation with children from the host culture was decidedly positive, it did not confirm that all mothers had no criticisms of the host culture or children from the host culture. Saudi mothers’ concerns toward rapid integration were associated with some well-intended goals. As with attitudes toward the L2, the mothers provided a combination of reasons in each response regarding socialisation with Australian children. Eight mothers emphasised that social interactions and socialisation with members from the host culture played a fundamental role in enabling the children to acquire, practice, and improve their language skills and hence to acculturate. One of the mothers described the relationship between these three aspects by saying:

The more he socialises with them, the more he learns the language and if he socialises with them he will certainly integrate to the situation. (Mother 1#)

Another eight mothers emphasised that encouraging their children to socialise and interact with Australian children was aimed at socialisation itself. Those mothers seemed to welcome their children establishing friendships with people from different cultures. Mother #10 commented:

I usually take them to the park that is near our house to play and socialise with Australian children. I think it is good for them to be sociable and to know other children and not only Saudis or Arabs. I think it is a good thing to interact with other nationalities.

Additionally, seven mothers accentuated the importance of this type of socialisation in gaining knowledge of different cultures, understanding other cultural groups’ various traditions and customs, and discovering different personalities. Also, there was an understanding that learning about the host culture is a process that continues to introduce advantages throughout their stay in the host culture and beyond. Mother #4 was one of those who would like her children to know about other cultures and have a good understanding of their customs and ways of life because of advantageous effects of such knowledge. She said:
If he socialises with other people, he will gain experience of other cultures. I think he may acquire more information or good things from them especially if these people are from a culture that is different from our own.

A number of the mothers’ positive perspective about socialisation with Australian children (5 out of 15) was related to the aim of learning some good behaviours from the new society. While interviewing these mothers, several concepts, such as politeness, independence, and organisation were mentioned as noticeable in most Australian children. So, mothers such as mother #6 declared that they wanted their children to be influenced by those children and acquire these good values. Mother #6 said this about her daughter:

She has to make friends and have relationships with other children to benefit from their culture, learn the language and because the Australians are very organised. I want her to be like that. I want her to learn some good behaviour.

However, mother #8 stressed that learning new behaviours should be restricted to those that are considered acceptable and approved in the Saudi culture and religion:

If she plays with them, she will learn how they think. She will know about their style. She can benefit from the good things they have and if there is anything that is against our beliefs, we advise her not to be influenced by it. I mean we should also be with her. We shouldn’t leave her without supervision.

There were four other responses in which gaining psychological advantages was the main goal of letting the child interact and play with children from the host culture. The psychological advantages mentioned in the interviews were those of becoming more self-confident, social, and open-minded. Mother #15 argued that encouraging interaction with people from other cultural groups was a crucial factor that eliminates and reduces cultural differences. She explained:

Of course, there are some psychological advantages for socialising with other children. If he feels that he can play with them, that means he is not different from them. If he can play and speak, it means that they are not different.

Mother #11 declared a desire for her child to be active and efficient in the host culture. She wanted him to give a good impression while engaging in its events. She explained:

I want my son to play and socialise with other Australian children because I want him to be active and efficient and that helps him to learn English and understand the culture.
The data analysis suggested that there were many advantages and relatively few disadvantages in the children’s sojourn in Australia, in the mothers’ view. All the interviewed mothers cited several overlapping and life-changing benefits encompassing linguistic, psychological, social, behavioural, cognitive and educational, cultural, and even physical advantages. Many advantages were discussed in each response. In this analysis, the most repeated advantages mentioned in the interviews were put into categories first and examples of the mothers’ responses were then provided under each category.

When asked about the benefits that their children gained from coming to Australia, the majority of Saudi mothers (14 out of 15) answered that the most important benefit was learning the English language. One of the mothers stated that:

In fact, his learning for the English language is more than enough and I think that it is very advantageous for a child to speak two languages. (Mother #4)

This statement, along with similar statements made by other mothers, represents an appreciation for English acquisition, and hence bilingualism, as an anticipated outcome from the sojourn experience. The data indicated that most of the mothers were aware of the fact that bilingualism offers the widest possible set of benefits and opportunities and they were grateful that their scholarship would provide this opportunity not only for them but also for their children. Therefore, they were determined to provide every possible support to enhance their children’s English. In many cases, the concern for promoting English language skills exceeded their efforts to maintain the children’s skills in Arabic.

Other common advantages perceived by the majority of the mothers (13 out of 15) were psychological advantages and positive changes in the children’s personalities and behaviour. An important result was that these children were found to become more confident, more able to express their opinions freely, and more independent. Also, they were noticed to have stronger personalities, and to be psychologically well-adjusted and happy. A good example was what mother #9 said about her daughter:

She has become more confident in herself and she has become more independent. Now, she does a lot of things on her own. She can buy her things and she can request things. She wasn’t able to do these things before.
One mother compared her child with his cousins and said:

He learned to express his opinion even if this makes others feel angry … I feel that my child has a stronger personality now. I told you about my nieces, I feel that my children have stronger personalities than they have. They can express their opinions better than their cousins, especially in religious issues and they have a wonderful religious knowledge. (Mother #4)

These mothers attested to how this experience was uniquely rewarding for their children, and how the pleasure of this experience may boost their self-confidence and psychological well-being. Having self-esteem seemed to enhance the children’s identity and ability to stand for their beliefs. In addition, coming to Australia led to reinforcement or positive changes in their behaviours. Findings in relation to this issue showed that the children learned good behaviours and how to respect rules. They have learned how to carry out their responsibilities and respect others’ rights. Many mothers reported that their children became tidier, and more organised and polite. As understood from these mothers, such advantages were not simply the result of normal circumstances, such as growing up or starting school. They declared that it is usual for most Saudi children to be dependent on their parents even in school age.

A salient and well-noted advantage for moving to the new culture was developing enhanced social skills. As reported by six mothers, children became more interactive and social. Mother #7 indicated that:

My son wasn’t very social because he was with me all the time. When he came here and attended school, he became more social and now has many friends.

This quotation shows how moving into a new environment assists separation from the mother and makes children able to establish friendships. The Australian experience took away fears of people different from themselves and of any attempts at trying to communicate with them.

Four mothers reported that coming to Australia gave their children better insight into other cultures, and not only the Australian culture. It built their cultural competency skills in a way that distinguished them from Saudi monolinguals. Reported aspects were: having intercultural competence, having knowledge of different and diverse cultures, and prevention of culture shock if they study abroad in the future. Mother #2
raised the important issue of reaching a balance between maintaining one’s original identity and being more tolerant to the new culture at the same time—almost as if the child gained a third identity. She said about her child:

I think he recognised a different culture that was totally diverse in its customs and traditions. He also knew the value of his religion … Coming to Australia provided me with a good chance to teach him his religious practices and values. He has learned that a person should respect himself and others to achieve better results. He has learned how to understand the good characteristics of this culture and use this perform his tasks efficiently.

One can see how it is possible for children who come from stricter cultures such as Saudi Arabia to be influenced by the transition process and move from egocentricity to reciprocity. This experience is referred to in the literature as being in a ‘third place’ in which children develop an intercultural identity that combines estimation for the cultural aspects of both cultures (Bhabha, 1990 in Patron, 2006).

The process of transition was also perceived by some mothers to lead to physical improvement and well-being in their children. They became better in sports and they started to develop a healthy lifestyle in relation to sleeping routine and eating habits. A fine example was mother #12’s clarification:

In relation to her well-being, she started to develop a healthy way of living. She started to sleep earlier, unlike in Saudi Arabia where people sleep late and wake up even more late. She also started to eat healthy food because the school always encourages students to only eat healthy food at school.

These words represent a wider agreement of many mothers about the positive influence of coming to Australia on adopting a healthy diet and developing daily routines for the whole family in comparison to their past lifestyle. It is important to consider the vital role of Australian schools’ regulations prohibiting bringing junk food into schools, especially for preschoolers and young students, and encouragement to eat serves of fruit and vegetables.

Issues of academic achievement and cognitive development were not addressed directly through the interviews. However, the analysis found that the children’s experiences enriched their academic achievement especially in science, arts, and mathematics. Two of the mothers mentioned that their children became more creative
and better at solving complex problems. This was found to be correlated with having
greater cognitive flexibility and higher-order thinking skills.

On the other hand, the data reported some negative consequences affecting a small
percentage of the children. For instance, mother #6 expressed her fears in the
interview that her child may be acquiring a negative attitude to the Arabic language.
In her words:

[My daughter] doesn’t speak Arabic a lot now. So, she tries to speak English
all the time. She tells me that she wants to speak like other children and that
she wants to be like them and she doesn’t want to speak Arabic any more.

In this case, language became a source of conflict between the child and her parents.
Reluctance to speak Arabic may be attributed to the child’s assimilation to the
Australian context. She does not want to be different from her peers. She wants to
dress, behave and speak like they do. Although her mother expressed her fears of
eventual attrition of the Arabic language from lack of use, she did not make much
effort to enhance her language skills in Arabic or at least try to maintain them.
According to the mother, her daughter was still young (five years old) and she did not
want to increase their conflicts.

Another mother #8 complained that studying in Australian schools has reduced her
daughter’s L1 literacy skills and vocabulary, which might affect her academic
achievement upon return home. She said that:

I feel afraid of our return to Saudi Arabia because when we visited Saudi
Arabia, I noticed that other Saudi students read faster than she did. They have
a lot of vocabulary in Arabic and there are a lot of things that she doesn’t
know about.

These fears indicate that the child was not well-prepared to enter the school in Saudi
Arabia. She was in the third grade and still had difficulties in literacy. According to
her mother, she tried to provide some books or stories to her daughter but she found it
very difficult to read them alone because of her inability to understand most of the
words. This reason, in addition to the mother being occupied with her own studies,
contributed to make her dislike her native language.
In addition to fears of language loss, one mother had some fears that changes in her son’s identity resulting from the sojourn might affect his affiliation to the home culture:

I feel that my son doesn’t accept our culture anymore. He wants to be like Australian children. He even said to his father that he wants the Australian nationality. This is what bothering us. We tried to explain to him that we have to leave Australia one day but he can’t understand. I feel that he has changed.
(Mother #7)

This case is similar to the case of mother #6 above, which indicates a desire to identify with the dominant culture. Children do not like to appear different to their peers and friends. Being from a diverse culture, they do not want to be ridiculed or mocked for their appearance or different behaviour. Unfortunately, this may be interpreted by some parents as their children being ashamed of their home culture.

Another negative consequence, revealed only by mother #14, was that being bullied at school increased her son’s fears and feelings of intimidation, which impeded his integration to the host culture. The transition process in this single incidence resulted in distress, anxiety, withdrawal from other children, and signs of psychosomatic ailments among other psychological issues. The final result was the child’s strong desire to return to Saudi Arabia as soon as possible.

5.5.3 The relationship between acculturation and the social supportive network

Interview data indicated a positive correlation between acculturation and social support. English fluency sustained by a supportive social network can be identified as important predictor variables in determining the level of acculturation. Most of the mothers (13 out of 15) reported that they had noticed that the social support available to their children had an impact on the extent to which they adjusted to the Australian culture. The relationship between the two components was found to be reciprocal. They clarified that when a child received more support from the social supportive network, his or her adaptation to the new environment increased. Here are some examples of the mothers’ comments:
I think that there is a mutual relationship between them. If we, the teacher, and other social supportive networks increase our support to the child, his social acculturation will be definitely enhanced. (Mother #4)

The same idea was echoed by mother #15:

These activities have a huge impact on the child’s acculturation. I think if the family, friends, and teachers at the school influence or support the child using these activities, they will help him and enhance his social adaptation and his interaction with the Australians.

These mothers have witnessed how the presence of supportive family members, teachers, peers, friends, and other interactions in the host culture provided emotional support for their children and helped them to cope with external challenges in the acculturation process.

Although social support was also found to alleviate difficulties resulting from the acculturation experience, two mothers (#8 and #12) stated that they did not believe that there was much relationship between social support and the child’s acculturation. Mother #8 argued:

I think this depends on the child himself. I feel that if the child liked the experience or liked being moved from one place to another, he would integrate to the place but if he refused to accept this change, he would not adapt to the new culture whatever we tried with him.

This mother is right in assuming that individuals have a choice and they can choose which acculturation strategy (i.e., separation, marginalisation, integration, and assimilation) to follow. However, the literature illustrates that this is not always the case (Berry, 2003; Choi & Thomas, 2009). Nonetheless, these two mothers reported earlier in the interviews how social factors were useful in fostering their children’s social adaptation in Australia, and they acknowledged that their and the teachers’ activities were influential in enhancing the children’s interaction with the host culture.

5.6 Collaborative relationships with the school
5.6.1 Mothers’ attitudes toward collaboration with the school

The educational literature accentuates the importance of collaboration between home and school in integrating diverse children into school. These interviews confirm this
view, in that a large proportion of the mothers (14 out of 15) believed that collaboration with the school was crucial in assisting their children’s acculturation, and that the relationship between home and school should be characterised by cooperation and consultation. Of course, these views are mostly those of parents who are confident in such collaboration, and whose own educational experiences have been positive; several of these parents are teachers themselves.

Several reasons were provided in the interviews for such an interest of being involved in the children’s education. Partnership between parents and school gave them greater opportunities to know about the children’s situation at school, enhance their self-esteem, improve their academic achievement, enhance familiarity with the school environment, solve existing problems, participate in the school’s decision-making processes, have better understanding of the education process and apply it with the children, promote their children’s positive attitudes toward school, and bring knowledge about the Saudi culture. Examples of the mothers’ comments were:

I feel that this can provide me with a good chance to watch my children closely and make them benefit from that. I’m a teacher too and it is very important to me to know which useful methods I can apply with my own students. (Mother #2)

Mother #10 argued that collaboration could be used to protect the child:

I think collaboration with the school is very important. Using this method, you will be able to know if your child has any problem at school or is being bullied. And through communication with the teacher, you will know what the problem is and try to reach some solutions together.

Mother #7 stated that parents’ involvement in the children’s education could influence their psychological well-being:

Collaboration with the child’s school is effective in assisting his integration and making him happy and adapted to the place. My son felt very pleased to see his father follow up on his school affairs.

Mother #3 was the only mother who declared that she did not believe there to be much effect of communication with the school in the child’s social adaptation, and that they only communicated with the teacher in case of problems. She also indicated that they had never attended a meeting with the teachers or tried to participate in any of the school events. It is possible that the mother’s lack of English formed an obstacle to collaboration. Moreover, a reason for such an attitude may be attributed to
the fact that the mother did not attend college, as shown in the family’s demographic information. Although the father had good proficiency in English, he was unable to attend school events being occupied with his studies.

5.6.2 Dimensions of collaboration

Five common dimensions of collaboration were identified through the interviews: attending meetings, receiving and responding to written communications from the school, visiting the child at class, volunteering and participating in school activities, and communicating with the teacher face to face or by phone. These dimensions are elaborated upon here.

The number of mothers (12 out of 15) who reported that they have attended meetings with their children’s teachers (formal or informal) shows how this was an important consideration for Saudi mothers, especially the educated ones. These mothers were aware that meetings were required for efficient partnership. Benefits of attending school meetings were pointed out by mother #1 as follows:

I benefited from attending the school meetings. They were very useful to make me understand the school system. Meetings here are different from in Saudi Arabia. Here, they gave you the chance to be in touch with your child’s situation at school. They also encourage you to come and talk with them about what happens and what may happen to the child.

It is understood from these words that parents’ meetings held by Australian schools are more productive and efficient. In most Saudi schools, students’ affairs and most decisions are decided by the school administration and teachers. Because of these differences, some mothers reported that meetings were useful to inform the school about practices that are against the religious beliefs of some families, such as music and mixed dancing. Others declared that they used meetings as a means to express their opinions and inform teachers about some areas on which to concentrate when teaching the child. In addition, attending meetings was found useful in knowing about their children’s talents, points of interests, and educational weaknesses or strengths. Many mothers reported that their children were very happy to see their parents visiting their schools, which participated in assisting their integration and self-esteem.
Another common method of collaboration with school was receiving and responding to written communications designed to provide frequent information and advice for parents. The interviews showed that communication with the parents took many forms including school notes, permissions notes, weekly newsletters, progress reports, diagnostic letters, and invitations to school. In relation to acculturation, the school notes enabled Saudi parents to stay informed of the school events that might enhance their children’s socialisation with the host culture. As mother #4 mentioned, she started to realise the importance of reading the school notes after this incident:

There was an open day at school. I didn’t know about the school rules for this day. My children did not tell me and I did not read the notes. I thought that the students do not have to wear the school uniform in open days, but I was wrong. My children were odd on that day and it was my fault.

Regarding volunteering and participating in school activities, ten mothers declared that they were willing to participate if they were invited by the school. However, only one of them reported that she did. Mother #4 had volunteered to participate in a family literacy project (taking turns with the father) and found this to be useful in enhancing her children’s acculturation. In her words:

They have a program in the public school in which parents volunteer to come to the class and sit with the child. While the teacher is teaching the students, one of the parents reads a story for the child in English. In this way, they create a type of collaboration between the school and parents. I think that is an excellent strategy to assist our children’s learning.

Mother #4 believed that she should participate in her children’s school environment in order to support their integration and self-esteem. Some mothers emphasised that they would only agree to participate in events that were appropriate for them or suited their religious beliefs. Generally, the analyses revealed several obstacles that could have impeded some Saudi mothers from participating more in family literacy projects or volunteer in the school activities such as being occupied with their study, having babies to take care of, lacking fluent English, and thinking that their different appearance or hijab may scare other students.

Most of the interviewees reported that they did not encounter difficulties while communicating with Australian teachers, and that they felt comfortable going to the teacher or any member of the school staff to ask them about their children. A main
reason for the mothers’ positive attitude was the ability of the children’s teachers to take cultural diversity into consideration while communicating (as reported by 13 mothers). The teachers’ effective communication skills prevented culture differences from becoming barriers to communication. Most Saudi families indicated that they felt supported, understood, and respected. They were also encouraged by the teachers to share their perspectives or discuss their children’s progress or problems. An example of such support was mother #1’s comment on her child’s teacher:

She encouraged us to come and discuss anything with her or ask about anything.

Mother 3 also stated:

I noticed that teachers here are very nice. They are very kind.

As noticed in the interviews, Australian teachers and school staff were described by most of the interviewees as cooperative, understanding, positive, tolerant, productive, welcoming, and systematic. In the following quotation, mother #7 clarified how she used her son’s teacher to enhance his attitude toward learning English:

My son was very happy when we came here. He was learning the second language without difficulties, but when he saw that his father faced some difficulties while learning the language, he started to imitate his father by saying that learning English is difficult. So, I went to the teacher and I asked her to tell him a story about an old person who succeeded in learning something new. She cooperated with me and together we changed my son’s attitudes.

The only communication barrier as reported by two mothers was the language. As stated by mother #6:

My daughter’s teacher is very understanding and cooperative. She accepts everything about me and she treats me nicely. The only barrier is the language.

These mothers were afraid of not having the ability to choose the proper words to convey their ideas. Also, there was shyness related to the fear of making mistakes. However, language barriers were not a major problem due to the teachers’ cooperation and patience. In general, the teachers’ proficiency in communication skills generated positive opinions on the whole school system in Australia, which was seen by the mothers as a constructive influence on the children’s acculturation. Only a few negative attitudes were expressed by some mothers toward the school curriculum.
It was criticised as not being intensive, but rather, simple and general. A good example was this mother #8’s argument:

The system here is similar to preschool. They put the children in a circle and the teacher talks with them and changes the topic after a while. They don’t have a lot of books. They depend on the worksheets given to the students. Sometimes, they combine mathematics with science and a little bit of language. However, they keep the child interested all the time with these various topics. Not like classes in Saudi Arabia … They are more specific. They have more subjects and every subject concentrates on a particular field.

These comments reflect the fact that the Saudi curriculum, even in primary school, has a much more traditional structure, divided into separate subjects, and parents who have been educated in that way do not understand the thematic approach used in Australian primary schools, where similar content is taught in a more integrated way across the curriculum. However, these differences in education did not affect the children’s progress in acculturation at least not at this stage of the transition cycle.

5.7 Effects of religious and cultural background

5.7.1 Parents’ attitudes toward teachers’ knowledge

It is pointed out in the literature that diverse learners’ attitudes at school are influenced by their cultural background. Therefore, having some knowledge about other cultures is important to support their acculturation (Coballes-Vega, 1992). Varying degrees of disapproval emerged when the mothers were asked about if they thought that Australian teachers have good knowledge of Saudi culture and Islamic practices. In regard to the cultural knowledge, nine mothers perceived that their children’s teachers had only basic knowledge about the Saudi culture. Another six mothers reported that the teachers lacked knowledge of the Saudi culture. More negative opinions were expressed regarding the depth of their understanding of Islam. Mother 1# is a Master’s degree student who has observed this from her personal experience in the university as well as at her child’s school. In her words:

I feel that they are confused sometimes. They can’t understand differences between families … They know something but they don’t have enough information to make them understand our culture.

Mother #8 is another Master’s student who had a convergent perspective:
They know that we are Arabs but I don’t think that they know about Saudis in particular. They know that we are Arabs, Muslims and wear the hijab. That’s all they know…the basics. There are some Iraqi Muslims, Jordanians, or Lebanese in Australia, but there were no Saudis before. So, they think that either we are similar to them or totally different from them. They even ask me if we can understand their language. So, I don’t feel that they know exactly what the difference between us is.

The opinions of these two mothers, who had relatively more interactions with Australian people compared to the other interviewees, may strengthen the suggestion that Australian teachers’ knowledge of the Saudi Arabia and Islamic values is full of misconceptions or generalisations. However, the validity of these views will be further investigated later in comparing responses of the two groups of participants (mothers and teachers).

5.7.2 Parents’ attitudes toward cultural differences

According to the mothers, Saudi families’ child-rearing methods helped in creating visible differences between the children of the two cultures. These methods arise from their social and religious background. In order to investigate the influence of the children’s background in their acculturation and whether acculturation significantly differ among various Saudi families, the interviewees were asked to give their perceptions of the most noticeable differences between the two groups of children. In general, Saudi children were noticed to be less social, less independent, less confident, more submissive toward their parents and families, more reliant on their mothers, and more attached to their religion and traditional values. Many mothers also reported differences in playing patterns, and over all, the data supported the view of Saudi children being quite different from their Australian peers. Except for association to religion and culture, the mothers tended to view most of their own children’s characteristics more negatively, expressing their wish for their children to be more like Australians in their strong personalities and self-reliance.

However, the results showed that a large proportion of the mothers (9 out of 15) preferred to accentuate cultural as well as religious diversity, teaching their children that they were different from other children at school. In fact, this issue was seen from two different viewpoints. First, most mothers emphasised that they accentuated
differences in a positive manner as a way to retain their children’s cultural identity. Second, a few mothers sensed that their attempts to promote the home language and religious beliefs could be based on some degree of discrimination and the belief that they are better than ‘the others’. This idea can be understood better from the following example:

I tell him that we are different and then I talk about Islamic beliefs. I concentrate on the word “Muslim” because I don’t want him to hate other cultures. I try not to say that they aren’t Muslims because he will fear them and separate from them. He is young and he can’t understand that and he will be afraid and if he became afraid of the other culture, he would not integrate to it and we would have to stay in Australia … I tell him that there are some people who do wrong things even in our culture. (Mother #2)

Mothers who held similar opinions argued that there would be consequences for teaching their children that they are totally similar to their peers. They were afraid that their children might be influenced by their friends and lose their cultural identity or be affected in their beliefs. The mothers’ concerns were related to elements that may aggravate conflict with parents such as eating pork, demonstration of affection, adoption of a Western style of behaviour and clothes (especially for girls), and adoption of Western customs that may contradict their culture. There were many complaints by these mothers that their children embraced some ideas opposing their culture or religion such as celebration of Christmas and Easter or believing in Santa Claus and fairies. Therefore, this group of mothers tried to teach their children not to copy what they saw, but this did not mean that they could not establish friendships and exchange some cultural elements without harming their own. Accentuating cultural differences were intended to achieve positive outcomes, not to promote conflict.

The second category of mothers (especially those from strict religious families) felt that the most important thing in their children’s interactions with Australian children was to remember that they are different. The notion ‘different’ in this case was implied to be ‘better-different’ more than ‘different-different’. An example was offered by mother #8:

I don’t want her to lose her religion. Thank God our religion tells us what is good for us and what is not and at the end it is the right thing to do. Therefore, there is no reason for her to abandon her religion just to be like other
Australian children. So, I told her that our religion forbid this for a good reason and look at what happened to all those who abandoned their religion.

Holding a different viewpoint, some mothers perceived following this method to be useless in younger children and that it might cause confusion. Mother #15 argued that accentuating cultural differences may impede her six-years-old son’s acculturation. She clarified:

I want him to feel that he can talk and interact with them. If he thinks that he is different, this may hinder his social interaction with other children. Quite oppositely, I always teach him that you are different only in your appearance but at the end you are like other children and you all go to the same school, speak the same language, and play the same games. The only difference is in your appearance.

Accentuating differences here was differentiated from cultural maintenance. The mothers who held this perspective argued that teaching the child that he is different means teaching him to dislike the other culture. However, having this idea did not prevent them from teaching their children their religious and cultural values.

At the end, the results revealed that regardless of beliefs about emphasising cultural differences or not, all Saudi mothers had an increasing interest to teach their children about Islam and Saudi culture. This interest seems to be correlated with the children’s ages; the older the child, the more the interest to teach him his religious and cultural obligations. In some cases, the mothers’ practices varied depending on what they believed to be right and acceptable. For instance, mother 1# said:

Of course, I will teach him his religion. I believe that he must establish a strong religious base for himself in the future, but regarding traditional issues, I don’t instruct him about things that I don’t believe in. I was raised on the basis that there is nobody has the right to impose in your personal life and I do the same thing with my son. I will teach him to have privacy because I believe in it.

It can be seen that Saudi families may differ in their attitudes toward cultural values and customs, but the religious aspect was found to be negotiable.

As mentioned above, all the interviewees asserted their interest in teaching their religious and cultural norms to their children. The various statements provided by the mothers in relation to this issue related to one basic reason: this is the child’s identity
and the child should be raised according to the faith and culture of his parents. Through the interviews, numerous Saudi mothers showed awareness that it was only a matter of time before they would return to Saudi Arabia and that their children should be prepared for the return in order to avoid reverse culture shock. According to mother (#4):

Traditions have a value but religion is the base. I mean our traditions, customs, and norms are important but the religion is still the base and the origin according to us, especially since we will return to Saudi Arabia after all. We will return to our origin. It is difficult to return with a child who has diverse beliefs and values. He will face another culture shock in addition to what he faced when he came here at the beginning.

Mother #4 pointed out that if she did not prepare her child through teaching him what is considered essential in his home culture (customs and religion), he may experience a reverse culture shock, which may be more difficult than the adjustment process in Australia. This mother expressed some fears that her child would be nearly an adolescent upon their return and that he may encounter severe re-entry stress that may affect his personality and behaviour. She believed that maintaining the family’s own culture was very important even if they decided to immigrate to Australia. Similarly, many mothers affirmed that psychological and cultural preparedness of the child for repatriation became increasingly important as the child grew older. Mother #5 clarified:

A child does not forget anything he learned in his childhood. It will stay with him for ever. If you teach him about his religion or his culture, it will be with him to rest of his life.

Mother #6 emphasised that preparing the child for the return by improving his native language was equally important to psychological and cultural preparation:

I am interested in teaching my daughter these things to avoid facing difficulties if we return to Saudi Arabia. I don’t want to let her feel confused or remain without any guidance. I should explain to her what we should do in our culture … this is what I have in mind even in relation to the Arabic language, which I am starting to teach her now. We are going to return to our country at the end and it is important to strengthen her Arabic.

Believing in the importance of psychological preparation to return home, several methods were used by Saudi mothers to teach their children their religious and cultural requirements. A commonly used strategy was instructing the children’s behaviour and interaction methods to suit the Saudi cultural and religious
backgrounds (15 out of 15). All the mothers realised that childhood was the best time for their children to learn their culture. This perspective can be seen from mother #15’s argument:

If you don’t teach your child to do this while he is young, it will be difficult to do this when he grows up. You should teach him his beliefs and values because he will lose them when he reaches the age of puberty. He will be affected by his friends, the media, and the internet. So, you should build this inside him because he may lose it with time.

Mother #2 asserted that parenting is innate and it is important to instruct children when they do wrong things. She continued:

This is the parents’ role, but I emphasise this strongly when my children interact with others or they made a mistake ... I instruct them to be patient and tolerant because they are our neighbours and we should keep a good relationship with them. I like my children to show how Muslims respect their neighbours and friends and respect their rights.

Instruction according to mother #2 has a dual function: enhancing socialisation with members of the host culture and teaching her children how to maintain their cultural identity. Instructing the child’s behaviour at this stage of the sojourn was described to be difficult and requiring consistency due to the influence of friends and adoption of host culture values. However, most mothers reported that their children accepted their values and instruction. A key point is to avoid negative ways of discipline such as yelling or harsh punishment that may lead to undesirable consequences.

Another reported method was answering the child’s questions and explaining Islamic beliefs or Saudi cultural customs (14 out of 15). Influenced by differences between the two cultures, the mothers reported that they were asked a lot of questions about several religious and cultural aspects including: Allah (God), the Angels, purpose of fasting, women’s driving, the veil, and gender roles in both cultures. Many children, especially older ones, made comparisons between the two cultures in relation to celebrations and lifestyle. Yet, some mothers asserted that they answered these questions calmly using a simple manner and without complications, especially in relation to religion.

The analysis also showed a preference among Saudi mothers to explain Islamic and non-Islamic practices or beliefs to the children themselves, more than relying on the
teacher as at the beginning of the adjustment process. Except for two mothers, most of the participants declared that they preferred to explain Islamic and non-Islamic practices using their own style and according to their own beliefs, and not waiting for the teacher to carry out this responsibility. In relation to this issue, several arguments were made. There were mothers who clarified that the child’s teacher might be lacking knowledge of Islam and hence would not be able to convey the idea as well as the mother. Other mothers expressed fears that the teacher might put things of which they do not approve in the child’s mind or that he or she might be affected by the teacher’s beliefs. Also, some mothers argued that they knew their children better and so could deal with them better. The last group simply remarked that they did not think that this was the teacher’s responsibility. Examples of the mothers’ comments were:

My son may not accept that from his teacher if she told him about Islam. I don’t think she knows about the Islamic point of view regarding this issue. (Mother #5)

I do not think that she knows about Islam or what is right or wrong according to us. So, I tried to make my daughter understand that we also have our celebrations … [and that we can] celebrate and have gifts in our celebration as well. (Mother #12)

However, it was found that Saudi mothers differed in their acceptance of Australian holidays and family events including celebrating birthdays or attending Christmas celebrations. Although Saudi families may not mark such occasions to be a part of their religion or culture, some mothers may allow their children to participate in these celebrations at school by making or receiving cards and attending their friends’ birthdays. Others even reported that they celebrated their children’s birthdays and allowed them to invite their Australian friends. In these cases, the mothers’ desire to avoid their children feeling odd may indicate an awareness of socialisation as an important factor of acculturation.

Practicing their Islamic faith was another crucial method used by Saudi mothers (12 out of 15) especially in families with older children. Through the interviews, it was noticed that Saudi families in Australia were concerned about intensifying their religious practice in every aspect of their life, including eating, drinking, and other daily habits. Encouraging their children to memorise at least short verses from the Holy Qur’an and praying was frequently mentioned. Mother #6 stated:
Regarding prayers, we pray with each other in order to teach her that. We also let her hear the Holy Qur’an and the *adhan* [call to prayer] because we want her to understand that. In Saudi Arabia, she was very young and here, there are no apparent religious practices. So, it will be difficult for her when she returns.

While this mother perceived practicing Islamic rites as a way of preparing the child for the return, many mothers believed that teaching their children how to practice Islam was fundamental whether they lived abroad or not. In contrast to the relatively limited efforts to promote the child’s literacy and academic skills in Arabic, a big concern was found to maintain the children’s religious and cultural identity and teach them to reflect these principles in their actions.

Speaking and conversation was also used by most Saudi mothers (12 out of 15) to teach their children about religion and cultural requirements and then prepare them for the return. The analyses showed that the mothers made use of certain occasions to talk to their children about Islam or their cultural norms. Several age-suited methods, such as telling stories and giving examples, were found to be beneficial. According to mother #10:

*I even explain things that happen to other people in front of us. I tell her that this is a wrong behaviour according to us and I discuss this with her.*

However, this method is also noticed to be preferable with older children who have started to notice cultural differences and raised questions about them. Mothers of younger children reported that they preferred to avoid talking deeply about religion or Saudi traditions in order not to confuse the child. Nevertheless, they reported that they were still interested in teaching them the basics of their religion.

Methods practiced by Saudi mothers placed a noticeable emphasis on encouragement, reward, and appraisal to achieve better results in making the child relate to his or her culture of origin. The parents’ concerns to socialise their children in the family’s religion and culture may be attributed to the fear of losing cultural identity as a result of the sojourn. This fear was clearly expressed by a large proportion of the interviewees (13 out of 15) such as mother #2 who commented:

*The period we will stay here will certainly influence them and I want to emphasise on the effect of the time of residency. If I spend, shall we say, more than four or five years, my children will be more resistant to learn their*
religion … The longer the period of the sojourn and the older the children grow, the more they assimilate to the new culture.

The amount of comments and practices reported in the interviews showed how Saudi families place strong emphasis on religious practices to help maintain their children’s identity. Using the school to include religious or cultural practices in teaching the child was used as an additional strategy. Whereas most schools use surveys or meetings to know about the students’ religious or cultural needs, a lot of the mothers reported that they utilised these forms to inform the school about which cultural aspects they wished the teachers emphasise while interacting with their children. The most common request was being careful to provide halal (lawful) food to the child. Nearly all the mothers reported that they informed their children’s schools to avoid providing their children with food that contained pork products. It was also reported that the schools were cooperative and respectful of their requests. For example, mother #4 stated:

Their father went to the canteen and told them that because our children are Muslims, they are not allowed to eat pork. So, they took care not to give my children anything with pork products in it.

The mothers’ comments regarding this issue showed that their dietary restrictions were not a subject of discussion or negotiation. Some mothers appeared to be flexible to adopting some aspects of the Australian culture; however, no tolerance was sensed regarding basic issues like food and faith. Similar rejection was found in relation to allowing the children to attend Scripture classes. In contrast, different attitudes were held by Saudi families in relation to music and dancing. First, there were mothers of religiously strict families who did not allow their children to participate in dance events or learn to use a musical instrument. In mother #6’s words:

The teacher told me that my child likes music and I asked the teacher not to make her take music lessons or try to make her fond of these things. So, we registered her name to go to a club for gymnastics instead.

Second, there were mothers who showed moderate attitudes such as mother #13 who stated:

My husband also didn’t like our child to dance with girls … I told my husband not to concentrate on this too much. We told the teacher about it but we did not make a fuss about it because we didn’t want the child to resist us and do the opposite.
Finally, there were mothers who perceived music or dancing to be harmless and common in most Saudi families, such as mother #12 who argued:

The most important thing I notified the teacher about was their religious classes. Other things such as dancing and music are ok with me because we do them ourselves. The child will be upset if I prevent her from dancing and she will wonder why they others can dance while she can’t.

Issues related to privacy in the toilet and hygiene were considered insignificant to discuss with the teacher. Most mothers reported that they preferred to teach their children themselves. Others commented that it would be difficult for the teacher to pay attention to every child using the toilet.

Moreover, making visits to the home country frequently was found useful in rejuvenating the family’s religious identity and cultural norms as well as the children’s Arabic. The Arabic of the children who spent a long time visiting their home culture was found to be more enhanced. Those children were also found to have a stronger cultural identity than those who did not visit Saudi Arabia or who only visited once. Mother #13 talked about how she used a several-months’ long trip to Saudi Arabia to compensate for her son’s deficiency in the Arabic language:

[W]hen we went to Saudi Arabia in the holidays, we let him go to a school. They taught him Arabic, religion, and everything. It was difficult for him to read some of the Qur’an verses or pronounce some letters before … I felt that we did something good to let him go to a Saudi school. He began to know the traditions and customs. He had changed.

Similar results were reported by mother #1 whose child spent eight months in Saudi Arabia, mother #4 whose children spent seven months visiting, and mother #13 whose child visited Saudi Arabia about four times, spending more than six months there during one of the visits. In all cases and according to their mothers, the children were seen as having deeper cultural and religious knowledge, and more developed Arabic literacy skills than before. The mothers were also optimistic that the results of these trips would facilitate their children’s repatriation experiences.

In general, as Saudi mothers were concerned to assist their children’s integration to the new culture, some strategies and methods were used only to maintain their cultural identity. Although the children appeared to be strongly influenced by their
religious and cultural background and although their parents’ religious and cultural beliefs were clearly reflected in their parenting style, this did not prevent the children from adapting to the host culture or affect their attitudes toward the English language. As emphasised before, the children were able to overcome their difficulties after living in the new context for a while, and when they started to learn English. According to the mothers’ personal evaluations of their children’s degree of acculturation, all the children (except for one) achieved successful integration into the Australian culture. The negative attitude of the only child who showed alienation or separation from the host culture was found to be attributable to factors that went deeper than the trigger of bullying peers who took advantage of the child’s lack of English, culture shock, and inability to accept differences in cultural norms and physical appearance at beginning of his arrival. The results suggested other reasons including the parents’ neglect to solve the problem, lack of collaboration with the school, personal traits of the child, the mother’s fears of loss of identity, her passiveness, and lack of knowledge of the importance of adapting to the new context for young ESL learners. The data also showed fewer interactions in the second language in this family. However, the failure to integrate into the Australian culture did not prevent him from acquiring the second language.

5.8 Summary of results of the interview analysis

This section summarises the findings from the interviews in relation to answering the research questions. The sociolinguistic situation of sojourner Saudi children in Australian early childhood educational settings as perceived by their mothers was explored under several themes, covering the early stages of the transition process and the consolidation of staying in the new culture. In general, the results suggested parents, teachers, and educational institutions to be the strongest influencing factors in young children’s acculturation.

*Research Question 1: What sociolinguistic, educational, and other difficulties do Saudi children face in the Australian context?*
Transition to another culture was not described as easy or pleasant to most children. Common reactions on arrival in the new environment were: sadness, fear, anxiety, alienation from English speakers, and homesickness. The analysis suggested that Saudi children were subject to several types of adjustment difficulties especially when they entered Australian schools. Only two parents reported that their children had not experienced any difficulties, yet from their other comments it appeared that they did not escape experiencing some symptoms of culture shock. Adjustment difficulties therefore resulted in various levels of stress.

Lack of English language proficiency upon the arrival was identified by the mothers as the most common difficulty, in which the children entered a non-verbal period to compensate for their inefficiency to communicate in the new language. Techniques used during this phase were body language and gestures. Culture shock differences between the two cultures came in second place. Parents’ positive attitudes toward the transition were found useful in alleviating this difficulty. Fewer responses were obtained than expected in relation to having difficulties in social interaction with English speakers and difficulties related to academic achievement. The results indicated the role of gender traits in social interaction with members of the host culture where females displayed more difficulties than males. Difficulties of academic achievement were not considered to be an issue, especially not by mothers of younger children.

Except for one child, the children were able to make gradual improvement in adjustment levels and reach a stage of full recovery as the mothers’ estimations of the process indicated a clear progress in patterns of acculturation. They were reported to overcome their difficulties and adapted to the new culture after a short period. Learning English was a key factor for acculturation.

**Research Question 2: What types of supportive social networks are surrounding Saudi children?**

The presence of supportive family members, teachers and educational institutions, people from the host culture including friends, peers, and neighbours, and one’s religious or cultural group was found to be important in providing emotional support.
for young sojourners in coping with external challenges of the acculturation process. It was also found that the media can be used as a motivating force to enrich, engage and empower young Saudi children. Thus, it is deduced from the analysis that the value of supportive social networks in international exchange situations cannot be underestimated, as the dynamics between these factors can assist the children in minimising their problematic moments in the new context as well as enhancing a personal sense of connectedness. The results highlighted the role of the children’s families and teachers in supporting them through the first stages of acculturation. Enhancing language acquisition was seen as the most required among many strategies used to foster the children’s social adaptation to the Australian culture during this phase.

**Research Question 3: What has been done by parents and teachers to support their acculturation and bilingualism in the Australian milieu?**

Having established that families and teachers were the two strongest influences on the children’s attempts of adjustment at the beginning stage of acculturation, I now summarise how they make this contribution. It was found that parents, especially mothers, served as a crucial support for acculturation using several methods: equipping the child with simple words to use at the first days at school, enhancing the children’s language acquisition, collaborating with the teacher to improve language, and encouraging the children to interact with members of the host culture as a way to adapt to the place and acquire the English language. Comforting and motivating the child and encouragement to participate in school activities were suggested to be effective additional strategies. In the consolidation stage, a large proportion of the mothers became more understanding of the importance of supporting their children in the new context. The results showed various strategies in relation to literacy and language skills, interaction with English speakers and other people from the host culture and in relation to overcoming culture shock. In general, it was found that younger children had lower levels of culture shock and higher levels of acculturation to the Australian context in comparison to older children.

Australian teachers were reported to be sufficiently prepared to deal with newcomers from culturally diverse groups and, similar to Saudi families, they had a variety of
ways and methods: breaking the ice, enhancing language acquisition through cooperating with ESL teachers or placing the children in special classes, using group work to encourage interactions among children, encouraging social relations between Saudi families and other families to motivate the children, and using a buddy system. The teachers continued to use some of these methods during the second stage of the sojourn, focusing on improving the children’s English skills and supporting their communication patterns. Small groups, encouragement, and meaningful literacy games and activities were used to achieve this aim. Teachers also incorporated the children’s cultures into their class activities and the school special events besides teaching them the school rules and Australian cultural norms.

**Research Question 4: What is the relationship between the children’s acculturation process and social support, according to parents’ perceptions?**

It was found that Saudi children were mainly influenced by their parents’ attitudes to acculturation. Positive attitudes were held by most Saudi mothers either toward the host culture or L2. This was shown by the many goals mentioned by mothers for wanting their children to learn English and socialise with Australian peers. These goals signified a concern for the children’s future. In addition, it was found that coming to Australia was considered by the parents to be a definite advantage for the children; linguistically, psychologically, socially, beside many other aspects.

Relying on the mothers’ viewpoints, the findings indicated a positive correlation between acculturation and social support. This relationship, as described by most mothers, is reciprocal or mutual. The more the child is supported, the higher the level of acculturation. Therefore, social support from parents, teachers, friends, people from the host culture, and the media was suggested to be an important predictor variable in determining the level of acculturation. English fluency was also found to be valuable in alleviating difficulties resulting from the acculturation experience.

**Research Question 5: Does the attitude toward acculturation differ significantly among various Saudi families? And does the families’ religious and cultural background influence their children’s acculturation?**
The findings did not indicate significant variations in the attitudes of Saudi families toward acculturation. The mothers appeared to have strong opinions on the importance of assisting their children’s efforts to learn English and adjust to the host culture even if only staying for a short period of time. Collaboration with the school was also important in achieving this aim. The findings showed some criticisms regarding the depth of Australian teachers’ understanding of Saudi culture and Islam. Australian teachers’ knowledge about Saudi culture and Islamic practices was perceived by the mothers to be basic or full of misconceptions.

The results revealed that Saudi children’s attitudes and interaction methods in acculturation were influenced by their cultural and religious background and that visible differences among the Saudi and Australian children were created by the parents’ child-rearing methods. However, stressing religious and cultural aspects did not impede the social adaptation of the children. Although the results showed that the Saudi families differed in their affiliation to their culture and maintenance of their traditional values, they all declared to have special interest in reflecting Saudi culture and Islam in their child-rearing methods. Teaching the child his or her religious and cultural requirements was seen as crucial in maintaining the children’s identity and preparing them for return. Believing in the importance of psychological preparation to return home, several methods were utilised:

- instructing the child’s behaviour and interaction methods to suit their cultural and religious backgrounds
- answering the child’s questions and explaining Islamic beliefs or Saudi cultural customs
- practicing Islamic faith with the child
- speaking and conversation
- increasing encouragement, reward, and appraisal when the child does what he or she is instructed to do
- using some additional strategies such as requesting the school to include religious or cultural practices while dealing with the child
- using trips home to enhance child’s knowledge of his or her religion and culture
Moreover, the results of the interview analysis allowed for some comparisons in relation to particular themes in the study. The degree of Saudi children’s acculturation according to their mothers’ estimations could not be identified as a direct cause of SLA as child #14, who still struggles to integrate, was also evaluated to have an excellent proficiency in English. This suggested that progress in SLA became virtually inevitable when individuals were sufficiently exposed to L2. However, English fluency was identified as a significant variable in determining the level of acculturation. In addition, when looking at the degree of the children’s acculturation and the amount of difficulties they had encountered at the beginning of the sojourn, it was found that facing difficulties did not prevent the children from reaching a full recovery and adjustment to the host culture.

Failure in acculturation was suggested to be a result of a combination of impediments. It was also found that the degree of social adaptation increased when the children received more support—especially from parents or teachers—and that their acculturation correlated with their parents and teachers’ strategies. The degree of the children’s social adaptation was suggested to be connected to their parents’ perceptions and attitudes toward the L2 and the host culture. Finally, a correlation was suggested between the children’s ages and their mother’s interest in teaching them their religion and culture and preparing them for the return. The older the child, the more his parents became interested in teaching the religious and cultural requirements.

In summary, the results identified some significant predictor variables in determining the level of acculturation of young Saudi children. These were: social supportive networks, English proficiency, age, level of education, parental attitude, and length of residence. Having identified these variables, the next step would be to test their operation in a further study or studies designed for that purpose.
Chapter Six: Teachers’ Perspectives

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results obtained from the analysis of the data from the questionnaire surveys administered to 30 teachers who had taught Saudi children at early childhood educational levels. The educational centres included in the survey are located in the region of Newcastle. The purpose of this part of the study was to widen the information base, and to provide some independent comparisons and confirmations of the perspectives of the Saudi parents, with a view to increasing the validity of the findings. The questionnaire strategy was employed largely to avoid imposition on teachers’ valuable time, but the quantitative data are also useful from the standpoint of comparison and validation.

To collect data on the social factors affecting the acculturation of Saudi children in Australia, a questionnaire consisting of 55 statements was developed. The questionnaire has a structured multiple-choice format. The options participants can choose from are: ‘Strongly agree’, ‘Agree’, ‘Don’t know’, ‘Disagree’, and ‘Strongly disagree’. The questionnaire is thematically divided into six main parts and each one has a number of items: Saudi children in the Australian context, supportive social factors surrounding Saudi children, strategies provided by teachers to support Saudi children’s acculturation, collaboration with parents, Saudi children’s characteristics, and the effect of religious and cultural background on the children’s acculturation (see Questionnaire in Appendix I). It should be noted that the items in these six parts do not form scales. It was important to focus on describing the items individually because the aim was to identify the factors that teachers thought could possibly influence Saudi children’s acculturation rather than to explore teachers’ attitudes and perspectives per se. A few of the questionnaire items were negatively worded in order to ensure participant vigilance in reading questions as well as use of all ratings. The respondents were given the chance to record their clarifications and comments in the notes section.
The data were analysed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel. The nature of the items and the small sample size allowed only for the use of a descriptive approach to the analysis of the data. The teachers’ responses were used in the first place to answer the research question regarding what has been done by parents and teachers to support Saudi children’s acculturation and bilingualism in the Australian milieu. In addition, the teachers’ responses contributed to answer the following questions:

- Research Question 1: What sociolinguistic, educational, and other difficulties do Saudi children face in the Australian context?

- Research Question 2: What types of supportive social networks are surrounding Saudi children?

- Research Question 5: Does the attitude toward acculturation differ significantly among various Saudi families? And does the families’ religious and cultural background influence their children’s acculturation?

Teachers’ demographic information such as ethnicity and years of teaching experience was used to establish some comparisons in relation to particular parts of the questionnaire. The findings are displayed in tables that show these comparisons between groups.

### 6.2 Participants’ demographic information

**Gender and ethnic backgrounds**

The sample consisted of 30 teachers who completed the questionnaire. The largest number of respondents were females ($n = 27$, or 90%), while only three respondents were males (10%). Therefore, it was hard to make comparisons between the genders because of the small percentage of male teachers. Most of the respondents came from a variety of English speaking backgrounds. Australian, British, and American teachers could represent one broad group and be classified as Anglo-Saxon ($n = 25$, or 83%). However, to reflect differences and variety in the cultural aspects of this
group, they were divided into three main ethnic groups: Anglo-Australian \((n = 20, \text{ or } 67\%)\), followed by those who are Anglo-British \((n = 4, \text{ or } 13\%)\), and those who are Anglo-American \((n = 1, \text{ or } 3\%)\). Another two small groups of respondents were two teachers \((7\%)\) who identified themselves as Aboriginal and three teachers (from Macedonia, Italy and Greece, 10%) who were classified as Non-English Europeans (see Figure 4).

![Ethnic backgrounds](image)

**Figure 4  Ethnic backgrounds**

**Qualifications and level of education**

All the participants had post-high school qualifications, which allowed them to teach early childhood education levels. The sample was distributed over different qualifications or degree categories. More than half of the respondents \((n = 19, \text{ or } 63\%)\) had university degrees (Bachelor of Teaching, Education, Early Childhood Education, Languages and ESL, Science, and General studies), two respondents \((7\%)\) had postgraduate degrees (Master of Special Education and Applied Linguistics TESOL), and another nine \((30\%)\) had completed a college or a certificate/diploma course after high school (Childcare Studies, Teaching, Preschool childcare, Early Childhood Education, Children’s Services, Education). A summary of respondents’ levels of education is presented in Figure 5.
Specialised teaching courses and years of teaching experience

In relation to staff development and in-service training (e.g. specialised courses which address the cultural or linguistic needs of migrants), only 11 respondents (37%) reported that they had taken specialised courses in early childhood or preschool methodology. The rest of respondents \( n = 19 \), or 63%) admitted that they had not taken any courses of this kind. Regarding years of teaching experience, six participants (20%) had between less than a year and five years of experience in teaching early childhood levels, followed by eight participants (27%) who had between six and ten years of experience, then, and six participants (17%) who had between 11 and 20 years of experience. The largest number of respondents \( n = 10 \), or 33%) had over 20 years of experience in the field of teaching (see Table 14). The most expert teacher was a male who had been a public school teacher for 38 years.

Table 14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Frequency ( N = 30 )</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0- 5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6- 10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11- 20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During the analysis phase of the questionnaire data, it was noted that it would have been useful to have asked about, not just years of teaching experience, but the extent of their experience in teaching Saudi children. This could be a point to investigate in future research.

**Languages used in the class**

Most of the teachers (n = 23, or 77%) reported that they spoke only English in class, while only seven teachers (23%) used some basic words in Mandarin, French, Arabic, German, Spanish, or Greek to enhance communication with their students.

### 6.3 Questionnaire data analysis

As previously pointed out (in the methodology chapter, 4.2.2), the questionnaire was divided into six thematic parts. Within each section, there were a number of statements, each of which was helpful to obtain valuable information about the teachers’ perceptions of the sociolinguistic environment of Saudi children in Australian educational institutions. As mentioned in the introductory section, despite the Likert-style presentation (‘Strongly Agree’ = 1, ‘Agree’ = 2, ‘Neither Agree nor Disagree’ = 0, ‘Disagree’ = 3, ‘Strongly Disagree’ = 4), the items were not treated as scales but as discrete variables. For this reason the discussion of the results is based on the Mode statistic—the most commonly occurring score. The Mode is by definition:

[A score that actually occurred, whereas the mean and sometimes the median may be values that never appear in the data. The mode also has the obvious advantage of representing the largest number of people having the same score.](Howell, 2011, p. 67)

Of interest for the present research was which of the categories between ‘Strongly Agree’ and ‘Strongly Disagree’ was endorsed by the largest number of teacher participants. This was thought to allow for a meaningful comparison with the mothers’ interview responses (as presented in the previous chapter).
The results for each of the six parts of the questionnaire are presented in frequency tables first. If observation of the frequency tables reveals that responses to particular items are more or less evenly distributed between agreement and disagreement, cross-tabulation between the teachers’ demographic characteristics and the responses to the item of interest is performed as a follow-up step. This is done with the aim to explore the possibility that the teachers’ ethnic background, level of education, years of teaching experience, and undertaken specialised courses may affect their perception of the importance of various acculturation factors. In these tables, the responses ‘Strongly Agree’ and ‘Agree’ were merged under the label ‘Agree’; the responses ‘Strongly Disagree’ and ‘Disagree’ were merged under the label ‘Disagree’. Attention is drawn to the results that suggest some relationship between variables could possibly exist. Despite the small sample size and the adopted descriptive approach, this is done in the hope that in this way the present study will map areas in the field of acculturation in education, where further research can look for specific relationships of correlation and causation.

6.3.1 Saudi children in the Australian context

Table 15 below summarises the data for the first part of the teachers’ questionnaire. A set of eight statements was designed to elicit information about teachers’ perceptions of Saudi children’s situation when they first arrived in Australia and what types of difficulties they faced during their initial stay in the new context.

It is recognised as normal for newcomers to any new context to experience stress and get into confusing situations while adjusting to the new social culture. Aggravated by differences between the two cultures, enduring such emotions may cause a feeling of homesickness and pining for friends and kindred, among other issues (Patron, 2006; Torres, 2001). Similarly to the interviews with mothers, the questionnaire concentrated on four main possible difficulties that were derived from what was emphasised in the literature: lack of English language proficiency (Berry, 1990; Choi & Thomas, 2009; Schumann 1978; Torres, 2001), social alienation from English speakers (Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2006; Shannon, 1995 in Hawkins, 2005), academic achievement difficulties (Cummins, 1994; Masten & Coatsworth 1998 in
Gonzalez, 2001; Thomas & Collier, 1995), and culture shock or noted differences between the two cultures (Berry, 1990; Padilla & Perez, 2003; Schumann, 1978; Shi, 2001). The aim of items 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 in Table 15 below was to explore which types of difficulties teachers in Australia perceived as most common among Saudi children when they enter Australian schools.
Table 15
Frequency of responses to part 1 of the questionnaire in number and per cent (Saudi children in the Australian context)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SA (N %)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>When they first start school, all Saudi children integrate easily with the new environment (e.g. talk to or interact with English speakers in the first days of class).</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>14 (47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10 (33%)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The most common type of difficulties Saudi children face at the beginning of school is lack of the ability to communicate (i.e. because they cannot speak English).</td>
<td>11 (37%)</td>
<td>17 (56%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>The most common types of difficulties Saudi children face at the beginning of school are in social interaction with English speakers. (e.g. can speak English but do not socialise).</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
<td>15 (49%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>8 (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>The most common types of difficulties Saudi children face at the beginning of school are educational and related to academic achievement.</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
<td>18 (61%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>The most common types of difficulties Saudi children face at the beginning of school are related to culture shock and differences between the two cultures.</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
<td>10 (34%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 (20%)</td>
<td>10 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I believe that Saudi parents actively help their children to face these difficulties or assist their integration with the new situation.</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>15 (49%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8 (27%)</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Some Saudi children resist my efforts to help them cope with the class rules or their Australian peers.</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>11 (37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>14 (46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>After a while, most Saudi children integrate with the new situation and feel happy with the school.</td>
<td>7 (23%)</td>
<td>23 (77%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: SA = Strongly Agree (= 1); A = Agree (= 2); Neither A nor D = Neither Agree nor Disagree (= 0); D = Disagree (= 3); SD = Strongly Disagree (= 4)

The phrases ‘when they first start school’ and ‘at the beginning of school’ refers to children who have entered the Australian school system for the first time.
As table 15 shows, responses to item 1 (*When they first start school, all Saudi children integrate easily with the new environment.*) indicated a disagreement. The figures showed that the largest proportion of respondents (80%) did not endorse the statement that all Saudi children integrate easily with the new environment when they first start school. In other words, Saudi children did face some difficulties integrating to the new environment of school at the beginning. Teachers who disagreed with this statement commented that some of the reasons for integration difficulties could be related to lack of proficiency in English and attributed to personality traits (e.g. shyness). Teachers who expressed agreement commented that this depended on the experience of each individual child. Items 2, 3, and 5 attracted a large percentage of ‘Agree’ and ‘Strongly Agree’ responses. Although the mode for item 3 (*The most common types of difficulties Saudi children face at the beginning of school are in social interaction with English speakers.*) represented a general agreement, there were still eight teachers (27%) who did not consider obstacles to social interaction with English speakers as one of the most common types of difficulties Saudi children faced at the beginning of attending school. To identify the source of such disagreement, responses to this item were cross-tabulated with the teachers’ demographic categories including years of experience, ethnicity, and specialised teaching courses.

The results as shown in Table 16 suggest different possible reasons are behind such disagreement to item 3. Years of experience could be a prominent factor in which tendency to disagree increases with teaching years. For example, it was found that about half of those with 20 years of experience or over tended to disagree. Moreover, having specialised teaching courses was noticed as another possible factor. Most teachers who had no specialised courses (74% versus 21%) agreed and considered social interaction a difficulty. A considerable percentage of teachers who had taken specialised courses in early childhood or preschool methodology (36%) disagreed. However, a preschool teacher who disagreed with this statement explained that: “just like native kids they vary” while another school teacher commented that difficulties in social interaction faded when the children felt safe and comfortable with the new environment. Only one school teacher who agreed with the item commented that Saudi children’s difficulties in social interactions were as serious as language issues.
Similarly, ratings to item 5 (*The most common types of difficulties Saudi children face at the beginning of school are related to culture shock and differences between the two cultures.*) indicated positive response with 47% of respondents \((n = 14)\) generally agreeing that one of the most common types of difficulties Saudi children face at the beginning of school were related to culture shock and differences between the two cultures. Yet, about a third of the teachers \((n = 10, \text{ or } 33\%)\) they disagreed with this item. The cross-tabulation between item 5 and the teachers’ demographic characteristics did not seem to suggest the existence of any relationship between the two (see Table 16 below). Perhaps the teachers who responded to the survey did not share a definition of culture shock; the term may mean different things to different people. Moreover, the school day is full with regular activities and sessions, and children usually become familiar with the school routine after a short period of time. This makes it difficult for the teacher to observe symptoms of culture shock unless there is an obvious incident. However, culture shock was mainly observed in older female students as noted by one of the teachers.

Table 15 above also shows that items 6 and 8 attracted a large percentage of ‘Agree’ and ‘Strongly Agree’ responses while items 4 and 7 attracted a large percentage of ‘Disagree’ or ‘Strongly Disagree’ responses. For item 7 (*Some Saudi children resist my efforts to help them cope with the class rules or their Australian peers*), more than half of the teachers \((53\%)\) reported that Saudi children were flexible and cooperative with their efforts to help them integrate. At the same time, 40% of the teachers \((n = 12)\) agreed with the item and reported that some children resisted their efforts to help them cope with the class rules or their Australian peers. When the teachers’ demographic characteristics were cross-tabulated in categories with the responses to this item, it was found that most of the teachers who reported difficulties in helping Saudi children to cope were Australian and British, which represents nearly 50% of the whole sample. Other ethnicities such as Aboriginal teachers and most non-English Europeans disagreed with the item, which suggests that other ethnic groups may have more ability to understand and deal with the children. The results do not seem to point to any relationship between years of experience and specialised teaching courses and the responses to item 7 (see Table 16). One of the school
teachers who agreed with this item declared that this was specially noticed in older students and older female students more so than in younger students.

The reader may notice that in the category of ‘Ethnicity’, the Anglo-American group consists of only one participant and the Aboriginal group of only two. Due to these small numbers, it cannot be said with confidence that participants from American, Australian, and British background can form a homogeneous Anglo group or that participants from Aboriginal and Non-English speaking background can form a homogeneous Non-Anglo group. In spite of this, a decision was made to keep these groups separate, small as they are, in order to preserve the integrity of the data. All of the table cells for the Anglo-American and the Aboriginal groups, despite the lack of sizeable group membership, are populated with numerical data in order to maintain consistency and detail in presentation.
Table 16
Frequency of responses to part 1 in number and per cent for respondents in categories by years of experience, ethnicity, and specialised teaching courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic variable</th>
<th>Item 3 N (%)</th>
<th>Item 5 N (%)</th>
<th>Item 7 N (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Ne A nor D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-5 (n = 6)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>(83%)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 (n = 8)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>(63%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 (n = 6)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>(67%)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 20 (n = 10)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>(60%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo-Australians (n = 20)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>(70%)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo-British (n = 4)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(50%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo-Americans (n = 1)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginals (n = 2)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-English Europeans (n = 5)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(67%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Courses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes (n = 11)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>(55%)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No (n = 19)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>(74%)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: A = Agree; Ne A nor D = Neither Agree nor Disagree; D = Disagree

To sum up, the results suggested that according to the teachers’ perspectives, in addition to the lack of ability to communicate in English, the most common types of difficulties faced by Saudi children were related to social interaction with English speakers and culture shock. The small percentage who did not prefer to acknowledge social interaction as a difficulty concurred with most of the mothers’ opinions regarding this issue. Also, the teachers did not consider difficulties in academic
achievement to be as important as difficulties in socialisation, which corresponds with the mothers’ points of view throughout the interviews.

The aim of item 6 (I believe that Saudi parents actively help their children to face these difficulties or assist their integration with the new situation.) in Table 15 was to explore the teachers’ perception of the extent of parental support offered to Saudi children. Family structure and function are seen in the literature as a salient indicator of acculturation into a new culture (Berry, 2003; Choi & Thomas, 2009; Padilla & Perez, 2003; Pihamaa, 2002). Family is also seen as a strong agent in shaping the child’s social manners as well as ethnic identity in the new culture (Vuckovic, 2008). Therefore, children depend on their parents’ internal and external resources when they transfer to a new country and use them as a means to overcome unfamiliarity with the new place (Li, 1999; Pihamaa, 2002) and to have a good start in school (Gonzalez, 2001). The results revealed that more than half of the teachers who were surveyed (56%) believed that Saudi parents were actively helping their children to acculturate.

The aim of item 8 (After a while, most Saudi children integrate with the new situation and feel happy with the school.) in Table 15 was to explore whether the teachers believed that Saudi children ultimately achieved positive acculturation and coped well at school. As the figures in Table 15 show, and matching the results from the mothers’ interviews, all respondents agreed that the end result from the acculturation process was indeed positive for Saudi children. From the educational side, many researchers such as Youngs and Youngs (2001), Richards, Brown, and Forde, (2006) and McLaughlin (1992) point out that teachers are now confronting new challenges, dealing with school-aged populations from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. These unprecedented mixtures of populations are increasing dramatically every year and their teachers are thus increasingly required to meet the needs of these diverse learners. In the case of Saudi children, evidence provided by both the children’s mothers and teachers stressed the important role of Australian teachers as a social factor supporting the children in the new context. As deduced from the mothers’ interviews, Australian teachers were very helpful in assisting
interaction with peers in class as well as helping the Saudi newcomers to understand the new values and rules applied in school.

At the end, acculturation is still a complex phenomenon that involves multiple dimensions and outcomes and it varies from one person to another due to the impact of several individual and environmental factors (see section 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 of the literature review). Identity change caused by cross-cultural contact and the process of acculturation with its diverse patterns seem to be inevitable (Kumaravadivelu, 2008; Schumann, 1997). In a similar vein, all respondents, both teachers and mothers, revealed that after a while, most Saudi children integrated and felt happy with the school. However, notes written by the teachers explained that Saudi children’s integration to the school was in the first place a result of receiving a lot of support by the teacher. Thus, our result could be interpreted as an expression of the teachers’ confidence in their ability to contribute positively to the children’s acculturation.

6.3.2 Supportive social factors surrounding Saudi children

Table 17, on p. 225, summarises the teachers’ responses to five items examining their views on the supportive social factors surrounding Saudi children in Australia. Four social factors, including the role of children’s parents, teachers, the host culture, and the media and technology are mainly explored in the present study. Referred to as supportive social network, these factors are considered by researchers to facilitate young sojourners’ social integration either inside or outside the school (see chapter 3).
Table 17
Frequency of responses to part 2 of the questionnaire in number and per cent (Supportive social factors surrounding Saudi children)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Frequency N (%)</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SA  A  Neither A nor D D SD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I believe that parents’ attitudes are influential in fostering Saudi children’s social adaptation in Australia.</td>
<td>7 (23%) 20 (67%) 2 (7%) 1 (3%) 0 (0%) 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Teachers and educational institutions are influential in fostering Saudi children’s social adaptation.</td>
<td>7 (23%) 22 (74%) 1 (3%) 0 (0%) 0 (0%) 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>The Australian society (e.g. friends and neighbours) is influential in fostering Saudi children’s social adaptation.</td>
<td>2 (7%) 21 (70%) 6 (20%) 1 (3%) 0 (0%) 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>The media and TV programs are influential in fostering Saudi children’s social adaptation.</td>
<td>3 (10%) 14 (47%) 10 (33%) 3 (10%) 0 (0%) 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Computer-based resources available for children in the school are influential in fostering Saudi children’s social adaptation.</td>
<td>1 (3%) 12 (40%) 11 (37%) 5 (17%) 1 (3%) 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: SA = Strongly Agree (= 1); A = Agree (= 2); Neither A nor D = Neither Agree nor Disagree (= 0); D = Disagree (= 3); SD = Strongly Disagree (= 4)

Responses to these items show that the respondents believed a supportive social network to be an effective element when moving to a new culture. The importance of social networks in children’s acculturation has been identified by previous research (Choi & Thomas, 2009; Padilla & Perez, 2003; Berry, 1990, 2003; Bochner, 2006; see section 2.2.4). Similar findings were extracted from the interviews. As the results in Table 17 above show, the same positive attitudes were found to be held by the school teachers in the survey where items 1 through 3 in this part attracted a large percentage of ‘Agree’ and ‘Strongly Agree’ responses. Regarding items 4 and 5 in Table 17, researchers, including Qian (2009), Kong (2006), and Kim (1977) suggested that host mass media has a major impact on providing an important context for language learning and adaptation to the new culture and that technology, including mass media and computer based resources, were also related to the acculturation patterns of newcomers. Our results show, though, that a fairly large
proportion of respondents were either uncertain or disagreed about the importance of media (43%) or computer based resources (57%) as factors influencing Saudi children’s positive acculturation. More positive responses were received by the mothers. A cross-tabulation suggested that the teachers’ background characteristics (years of teaching, level of education, ethnicity, and specialised courses) were not likely to have an effect on the perceived importance of these two factors. Perhaps teachers are getting increasingly aware of the fact that the acquisition of language and culture require interactive input; media and technology are facilitating but not necessary conditions for acquisition (King & Fogle, 2006).

6.3.3 Strategies provided by teachers to support Saudi children’s acculturation

Because there are 16 items in this part, it appeared to be better to divide them into two main categories. In the first category, the focus was on items that have a direct relationship with the use of in-class activities and the development of culturally responsive methods, strategies, and resources for Saudi children. In the second category, the focus was on items that reflect teachers’ personal attitudes and their efforts to understand Saudi children and their culture.

In-class activities and culturally responsive strategies

It has been stated that children can negotiate their position in the different cultures of home and school (Espinosa, 2005). Yet, dissimilarities between the two contexts may cause a feeling of stress and discomfort in the child. Therefore, it is important for teachers to consider including the child’s culture in the class in order to assure a successful transition from home to school (Espinosa, 2005). The significance of connecting classroom practices and using materials from the actual lives of the children is emphasised throughout the literature (e.g., McLaughlin, 1992; Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2006; see section 3.3.2).
Table 18
Frequency of responses to part 3A of the questionnaire in number and per cent  
(Strategies provided by teachers to support Saudi children’s acculturation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Frequency N (%)</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SA (N)</td>
<td>A (N%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I use regular in-class activities (e.g. stories, games and songs)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to assist Saudi children’s acculturation</td>
<td>6 (20%)</td>
<td>19 (63%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No special activities, just time and playing with other children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>is the best way to help Saudi children to fit in.</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>9 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Enhancing Saudi children’s English language acquisition is helpful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in assisting Saudi children’s acculturation.</td>
<td>14 (47%)</td>
<td>16 (53%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Literacy (i.e. reading and writing) is helpful in assisting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Saudi children’s acculturation.</td>
<td>7 (23%)</td>
<td>22 (74%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I use special activities and culturally responsive methods for</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ESL learners recommended by the Department of Education or other</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
<td>15 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ESL teachers to assist Saudi children’s acculturation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I depend on library resources and class materials to assist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Saudi children’s acculturation.</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>20 (67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I use real objects taken from the Saudi culture to make the child</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>feel familiar with the classroom environment.</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
<td>8 (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Peer interactions and small groups are helpful in encouraging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Saudi children to socialise.</td>
<td>15 (50%)</td>
<td>15 (50%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: SA = Strongly Agree (= 1); A = Agree (= 2); Neither A nor D = Neither Agree nor Disagree (= 0); D = Disagree (= 3); SD = Strongly Disagree (= 4)

The findings in Table 18 reflect our respondents’ belief that school activities and culturally responsive strategies are important factors in facilitating Saudi children’s acculturation. The figures in Table 18 above show that questions 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 attracted a large percentage of ‘Agree’ and ‘Strongly Agree’ responses. Responses to item 3 (Enhancing Saudi children’s English language acquisition is helpful in assisting Saudi children’s acculturation.), for instance, revealed a total agreement
among teachers that enhancing Saudi children’s English language acquisition is helpful in assisting their acculturation. This result reflects participants’ perception of language as a key factor in successful adaptation to the host culture. Item 11 (Peer interactions and small groups are helpful in encouraging Saudi children to socialise.) also attracted total agreement, which reflects the teachers’ highly positive perceptions of peer interactions as an important factor in promoting Saudi children’s socialisation into Australian culture.

As one can see from Table 18, a discrepancy occurs in the responses to items 2 and 7. In response to item 7 (I use real objects taken from the Saudi culture to make the child feel familiar with the classroom environment.), more than half of the teachers (n = 17, or 56%) reported that they did not use real objects taken from the Saudi culture to make the child feel familiar with the classroom environment. A teacher’s comment indicated that this “depends on what is available”, which is obviously not very much. A similar distribution of responses between ‘Agree’ and ‘Disagree’ was found for item 2 (No special activities, just time and playing with other children is the best way to help Saudi children to fit in.) where the larger proportion of the respondents (56%) favoured the use of special activities to help the children acculturate. In order to trace the possible source of this disagreement among the teachers, their demographic characteristics were cross-tabulated with the responses to items 2 and 7. These results are presented in Table 19 below. The results for item 2 (No special activities, just time and playing with other children is the best way to help Saudi children to fit in.) seem to suggest that the teachers’ ethnic background may have had an effect on the responses. Teachers from non-Anglo backgrounds considered free interaction among children as a more important factor in acculturation than specially designed classroom activities. The results for item 7 (I use real objects taken from the Saudi culture to make the child feel familiar with the classroom environment.) seem to suggest that years of teaching experience may have influenced the teachers’ responses. The comparisons suggest that the more years of experience the teachers have, the fewer the numbers of teachers who use real objects from the Saudi culture which means that new teachers are more aware of this. Another factor that may have influenced the responses was whether or not respondents had specialised teaching courses, as those
who had not taken specialised courses (63%) did not use real objects from the Saudi culture.

Table 19
Frequency of responses to part 3 in number and per cent for respondents in categories by years of experience, ethnicity, and specialised teaching courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 3</th>
<th>Item 2 N (%)</th>
<th>Item 7 N (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Ne A nor D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-5 (n = 6)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 (n = 8)</td>
<td>4 (50%)</td>
<td>1 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 (n = 6)</td>
<td>3 (50%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 20 (n = 10)</td>
<td>4 (40%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo-Australians (n = 20)</td>
<td>9 (45%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo-British (n = 4)</td>
<td>2 (50%)</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo-Americans (n = 1)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginals (n = 2)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-English Europeans (n = 3)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes (n = 11)</td>
<td>5 (45%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No (n = 19)</td>
<td>6 (32%)</td>
<td>2 (11%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: A = Agree; Ne A nor D = Neither Agree nor Disagree; D = Disagree

In the interviews, most mothers provided examples of strategies and special activities applied by their children’s teachers in order to help the children acculturate when they first entered school. An important aim in the mothers’ opinion was to enhance the children’s English language acquisition. Results for this part of the questionnaire generally matched the mothers’ views of how teachers’ culturally responsive methods and in-class activities were helpful to the children.
Teachers’ personal attitudes and efforts to understand Saudi children

The items in this part were aimed to explore the teachers’ personal efforts to understand the children’s diversity and facilitate acculturation.

Table 20
Frequency of responses to part 3B of the questionnaire in number and per cent (Strategies provided by teachers to support Saudi children’s acculturation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Frequency N (%)</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I use additional or personal efforts (e.g. praising and invitation) to encourage Saudi children to interact with peers and work groups.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Asking Saudi children to talk about their lifestyles and home culture is valuable in assisting their acculturation and improve their self-esteem.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I use the buddy system (i.e. specifying a friend for each child) to encourage Saudi children to interact with peers.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Saudi children respond happily when I invite them to play with me or other children.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>I try to recognise Saudi children's ethnic diversity during activities (e.g. reading Arabic stories, dancing to their music, having cultural day….etc).</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>I use some Arabic words while interacting with Saudi children.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>I try to obtain some information about Saudi culture to help me to deal with the children and their parents.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>I learn about successful approaches to acculturate children from diverse backgrounds by visiting or reading about successful teachers in diverse settings.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: SA = Strongly Agree (= 1); A = Agree (= 2); Neither A nor D = Neither Agree nor Disagree (= 0); D = Disagree (= 3); SD = Strongly Disagree (= 4)*
Table 20 shows that items 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, and 15 attracted a large percentage of ‘Agree’ and ‘Strongly Agree’ responses. The strategies reflecting the teachers’ positive attitudes included encouraging the children to break the ice and increase their interactions with peers. According to what the teachers reported, this was attained by using the buddy system, inviting them to play with others, and encouraging them to express their identities and talk about their culture. However, the teachers’ comments in relation to these items indicated that it was hard to get the children to talk about their culture and this may be attributed to the shy nature of Saudi children as the mothers had previously mentioned. However, it can be a difficult task even for adults to describe their culture, since it involves having both a point of comparison and a high level of meta-awareness to describe that in which we are socialised. The fact that these are young children, and that they are speaking in an L2 would make this task even harder.

Also, some comments revealed that the buddy system may not be considered essential at pre-schools in comparison to schools. Regarding item 13 (I try to recognise Saudi children's ethnic diversity during activities.), some teachers reported that Saudi children’s ethnic diversity was not emphasised through every aspect of the learning process such as in literacy or the daily class activities because of the limited resources available. However, Saudi culture is mainly recognised through some school activities, such as at Harmony Days, which support harmony of all cultures. Comments also revealed that it was hard to find reliable information about the Saudi culture. After all, all these strategies were considered useful in the literature. Looking at the level of agreement to item 8, one can deduce that the great majority of teachers realise the advantages of enhancing peer interactions for learning and assisting acculturation. The same high level of agreement can be noticed in item 15 (I try to obtain some information about Saudi culture to help me to deal with the children and their parents.).

Moreover, results for items 13, 14, 15, and 16 show that a large proportion of the respondents agreed with the statements, indicating that the teachers attempt to learn about the Saudi culture and incorporate this knowledge into the class activities. Nevertheless, the results still show a considerable disagreement on 14 and 16. In
detail, responses to the item: (I use some Arabic words while interacting with Saudi children” were split between agreement and disagreement). The results showed that more than half of the respondents (n = 16, or 54%) stated that they used some Arabic words to facilitate communication with the Saudi children, while 43% of the respondents stated that they did not. In order to identify the source of this distribution of responses, the teachers’ demographic characteristics and the responses to this item were cross-tabulated. The results, as presented in Table 21, suggest the teachers’ specialised courses may be the reason for disagreement. It can be noticed that teachers’ with specialised teaching courses (73% versus 27%) used Arabic words with the children while a large proportion of those with no specialised teaching courses (58%) did not use this strategy. In general, the teachers’ learning of some basic Arabic words to facilitate their communication with the children was not easy, either. This was understood from comments such as: “I try to learn some words from them but I can’t pronounce them correctly!”, “at this time, I have tried!”, “not always and still learning” and “would like to learn more to make it possible”.

Similar to item 14, 54% of the teachers (n = 16) indicated that they learned about successful approaches to acculturate children from diverse backgrounds by visiting or reading about successful teachers in diverse settings. A third of the teachers (n = 10, or 33%) indicated that they did not make use of other successful approaches and four teachers (13%) opted for a “Don’t know” response. Therefore, responses to this item were cross-tabulated with the teachers’ demographic characteristics. It was found that teachers who made use of other successful approaches (82%) mainly belonged to the group that had taken specialised courses. Almost half of the teachers who had not undertaken specialised courses (47%) reported not using this strategy followed by 16% of teachers who had not taken specialised courses and did not have knowledge about this strategy. Moreover, the results suggested that ethnicity might be a factor here. It was found that non Anglo-Australians had more of a tendency to learn about successful approaches (see Table 21). However, the numbers are too small to yield valid generalisations.
In summary, the results suggested that providing culturally responsive teaching was acknowledged by the teachers as an important acculturative factor. Also, their efforts and strategies to support the children’s integration into the new context were reported in both the interviews and the questionnaire. The teachers’ strategies varied. They included daily in-class activities (e.g., stories, games, and songs), the use of instructional materials and library resources, promoting the children’s SLA and providing additional efforts to understand the children’s culture and include it in class. The teachers also appreciated the role of enhancing the children’s self-esteem.

Table 21
*Frequency of responses to part 3B in number and per cent for respondents in categories by years of experience, ethnicity, and specialised teaching courses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 3B</th>
<th>Item 14</th>
<th>Item 16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N (%)</td>
<td>N (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Ne A nor D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>3 (50%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>3 (38%)</td>
<td>1 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>6 (100%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 20</td>
<td>4 (40%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo-Australians</td>
<td>11 (55%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo-British</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo-Americans</td>
<td>1 (100%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginals</td>
<td>1 (50%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-English Europeans</td>
<td>2 (67%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8 (73%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7 (37%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: A = Agree; Ne A nor D = Neither Agree nor Disagree; D = Disagree*
through peer interactions, using a buddy system, placement of the children in small groups, and engaging them to express their own voices and identities. The teachers’ self-reported difficulties in trying to learn about the children and their cultural characteristics are reminiscent of Barry and Lechner’s (1995), and Espinosa’s (2005) argument that attaining a high level of culturally responsive education entails having knowledge of the children’s home cultures and language patterns, which seems challenging for teachers to achieve.

6.3.4 Collaboration with parents

Like the previous part, this part consisted of 13 items that were divided into two main categories. The first category is comprised of items relating to the teachers’ own beliefs, attitudes, and efforts to sustain successful collaboration with Saudi parents. The second category is comprised of items relating to the perceived schools’ techniques and strategies to establish collaborative partnerships with Saudi parents.

Teachers’ personal attitudes and efforts to collaborate with Saudi parents

According to many researchers, sustaining a successful partnership with ESL parents is crucial (Epstein, 2002; Porter, 2008; Waterman, 2006; Waterman & Harry, 2008). There is considerable evidence that establishing collaborative relations with culturally diverse parents have positive effects on the students’ academic achievement as well as their social and emotional growth. It also influences the students to have more positive changes in their attitudes toward the school environment (August & Hakuta, 1997; Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Epstein, 2001; Fan & Chen, 2001; Gorinski & Fraser, 2006; Waterman & Harry, 2008).
Table 22
*Frequency of responses to part 4A of the questionnaire in number and per cent (Collaboration with parents)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Frequency N (%)</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I believe that collaboration with all parents is important in helping their children to adjust in the school</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I have difficulties in communicating with Saudi families.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Difficulties in communicating with Saudi families are related to their inability to speak the English language.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Difficulties in communicating with Saudi families are related to their religious beliefs.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Difficulties in communicating with Saudi families are related to their different culture.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I take cultural differences into consideration when I speak with Saudi families.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I do not invite Saudi parents to participate in the class activities.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I gather some information about Saudi families (i.e. using interviews and questionnaires) to help me to deal with the children.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: SA = Strongly Agree (= 1); A = Agree (= 2); Neither A nor D = Neither Agree nor Disagree (= 0); D = Disagree (= 3); SD = Strongly Disagree (= 4)*

Table 22 demonstrates responses to the first category of this part. The largest amount of agreement was given to items 1 (100%) and 6 (100%), which shows that all teachers believed in the importance of collaboration with parents in helping their children adjust to the school and that they all took cultural differences into consideration when communicating with Saudi families. Items 3 and 8 also attracted a large percentage of ‘Agree’ and ‘Strongly Agree’ responses. In contrast, items 2, 4, and 5 attracted a large percentage of ‘Disagree’ or ‘Strongly Disagree’ responses. The same table shows a strong disagreement on item 7 (*I do not invite Saudi parents to participate in the class activities.*). It was indicated by more than half of the teachers.
(n = 20, or 67%) that they did invite Saudi parents to participate in the class activities. Such indications were made by a further 33% of the teachers (n = 10) as well.

In general, items 2, 3, 4, and 5 were used to explore if there were any difficulties while communicating with Saudi families and that sorts of difficulties teachers might face in the process of collaboration. Although 57% (n = 17) of the teachers indicated that they did not have difficulties in communicating with Saudi families (item 2), 40% (n = 12) of the teachers indicated the opposite. It was interesting to know which groups of teachers defied statements made in the literature on acculturation in education by reporting that there were no difficulties in dealing with diverse families. Cross-tabulation revealed that teachers from all ethnic backgrounds, except British (100%) and some Australians (35%), reported that they were able to understand Saudi families and did not have difficulties in communication. This may mean that British and some Australian teachers have less contact with other cultural groups compared to teachers from other ethnic backgrounds (see Table 24 further down below).

According to the teachers’ responses, sources of potential communication difficulties were some parents’ inability to speak the English language (69% of agreement). However, this depends on family or individuals as some of the teachers remarked. Differences in religious beliefs and culture were not acknowledged by most teachers as sources of communication difficulties. Yet, a fairly large proportion of the sample (n = 10, or 33%) agreed that differences in culture led to difficulties in communication with Saudi families (item 5). Some school teachers who agreed on this item commented that cultural practices, such as being on time and issues of singing and mixed dancing were the most prominent. In addition, two school teachers commented that there were worries about offending Saudi parents by accident. Cross-tabulation for distribution of responses on item 5 unexpectedly suggested that teachers who disagreed with the item had more years of experience. This means that either they have better skills to deal with diverse parents as a result from their experience or they do not consider cultural differences as a salient source of communication difficulties because teaching for a long time made them experience more important barriers to communication. The cross-tabulations also revealed that 74% of teachers who had no specialised teaching courses disagreed with item 5,
which suggests that the less training the teachers have, the less aware they are of the role of cultural differences in the collaborating with parents (see Table 24).

*Schools’ techniques and strategies to collaborate with Saudi parents*

According to the literature, parental involvement contributes in creating a welcoming school environment and a sense of belonging required for effective participation of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Researchers such as Smit and Driessen (2005) have argued that parental involvement is a useful means to gain many educational advantages and that collaboration between parents and school should give priority to cooperation and consultation. It has been reported that several constructive methods can be effective in communicating with diverse parents. Some examples required for successful parent-school engagement (mentioned in detail in the literature review chapter) are: the usage of friendly and constructive language during communication (Marino, Nicholl, Paki-Slater, Timperley, & Kuin Lai, 2001), using school committees to guide parents of newcomers to the school rules and regulations (Westendorf & Karr-Kidwell, 2002), involving parents as volunteers in school activities (Gorinski & Fraser, 2006), and using bilingual interpreters during meetings and parent-teacher interviews (Gibbons, 1998; Waterman, 2006; Westendorf & Karr-Kidwell, 2002). Items in this section aimed to investigate whether these methods or other similar methods were used by Australian schools. They concentrate on how schools take action to engage Saudi parents in the classroom, school activities, or decision making.
Table 23
*Frequency of responses to part 4B of the questionnaire in number and per cent (Collaboration with parents)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Frequency N (%)</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>The school fosters parental involvement (e.g. meetings, formal parent-teacher interviews with bilingual interpreters or information sessions with parents).</td>
<td>10 (33%)</td>
<td>18 (60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>The school translates school notes and newsletters into Arabic for those who cannot speak the English language.</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
<td>12 (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>The school initiates activities which use family literacy projects and parent volunteers to assist Saudi children’s acculturation.</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>13 (44%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>The school cooperates with special interpreters or family liaisons to communicate with Saudi parents.</td>
<td>6 (20%)</td>
<td>15 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>The school consults Saudi parents on issues related to their children’s acculturation.</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
<td>24 (80%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* SA = Strongly Agree (= 1); A = Agree (= 2); Neither A nor D = Neither Agree nor Disagree (= 0); D = Disagree (= 3); SD = Strongly Disagree (= 4)

Table 23 shows positive responses to the second category in this part. As can be seen, the largest amount of agreement was given to items 9 (93%) and 13 (93%). The teachers’ positive responses indicate that most of them believe that their schools foster parental involvement through holding meetings, interviews, and information sessions and that they involve Saudi parents in decision making and consult them on issues related to their children’s acculturation. An example provided by a preschool teacher on consulting parents in their children’s school affairs was “clarifying use of music for different families”. Items 10, 11, and 12 also attracted a fairly large percentage of positive responses. Nevertheless, there is a peculiar distribution of responses to item 10 (*The school translates school notes and newsletters into Arabic for those who cannot speak the English language.*). It was reported by half of the respondents (n = 15, or 50%) that a special consideration was given by their schools...
to communicating with Saudi parents not fluent in English by translating school notes and newsletters into Arabic: almost a third of the teachers \( n = 9 \), or 30\% \) disagreed; and six respondents (20\%) expressed uncertainty. Comments of teachers who disagreed declared that translations were actually restricted to specific notes but not all newsletters. They also reported that schools used only what is translated on the DET (Department of Education and Training) websites. Other positive responses revealed that some families advised that translation was not necessary and notes were only translated if needed. Responses to item 11(*The school initiates activities which use family literacy projects and parent volunteers to assist Saudi children’s acculturation.*) were somewhat evenly split between agreement and disagreement. It was found that 14 respondents (47\%) declared that their schools initiated programs that use family literacy projects and parent volunteers, while 12 respondents (40\%) declared that their schools did not. Four respondents (13\%) remained neutral. However, a school teacher commented that Saudi parents were always invited but had never participated. Cross-tabulation, as revealed in Table 24, hints at possible correlations between items 11 and the teachers’ demographic information. However, this issue is directly related to the school policy rather than teachers’ attitudes.
Moreover, neither interviews with the mothers nor the teachers’ survey showed that Australian teachers and schools acknowledge the importance of parents’ involvement in their children’s education and social integration to school. These responses are inconsistent with Nakhid’s study in 2003, which reported that racial, educational, and socio-economic differences between teachers and diverse families might cause a lack of knowledge on the significance of parents’ involvement in their children’s situation in school and thus hinder collaboration (Gorinski & Fraser, 2006). Moreover, neither interviews with the mothers nor the teachers’ survey showed

Table 24
Frequency of responses to part 4 in number and per cent for respondents in categories by years of experience, ethnicity, and specialised teaching courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 4</th>
<th>Item 2 N (%)</th>
<th>Item 5 N (%)</th>
<th>Item 11 N (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Ne A nor D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-5 (n = 6)</td>
<td>3 (50%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>3 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 (n = 8)</td>
<td>2 (25%)</td>
<td>1 (13%)</td>
<td>5 (63%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 (n = 6)</td>
<td>2 (33%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 20 (n = 10)</td>
<td>5 (50%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>5 (50%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Item 2 N (%)</th>
<th>Item 5 N (%)</th>
<th>Item 11 N (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anglo-Australians (n = 20)</td>
<td>7 (35%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>12 (60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo-British (n = 4)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo-Americans (n = 1)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginals (n = 2)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-English Europeans (n = 5)</td>
<td>1 (33%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (67%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>Item 2 N (%)</th>
<th>Item 5 N (%)</th>
<th>Item 11 N (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes (n = 11)</td>
<td>4 (36%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>7 (64%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No (n = 19)</td>
<td>8 (42%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>10 (53%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: A = Agree; Ne A nor D = Neither Agree nor Disagree; D = Disagree

In summary, general responses to this part, especially items 1, 6, 7, 9, and 13, suggest that Australian teachers and schools acknowledge the importance of parents’ involvement in their children’s education and social integration to school. These responses are inconsistent with Nakhid’s study in 2003, which reported that racial, educational, and socio-economic differences between teachers and diverse families might cause a lack of knowledge on the significance of parents’ involvement in their children’s situation in school and thus hinder collaboration (Gorinski & Fraser, 2006). Moreover, neither interviews with the mothers nor the teachers’ survey showed
evidence of stereotyping parents or having doubts about the parents’ attention to their children’s education. However, because of the small sample size, we can not generalise these findings to the whole population of teachers, but leave this for future research. At the end, collaboration with Saudi families was not described to be easy mainly because of the language barrier and worries of insulting the parents’ culture or values. In agreement with the literature (e.g., Coltrane, 2003; Gibbons, 1992, 1998; Waterman, 2006; Waterman & Harry, 2008), findings also revealed that schools’ techniques and strategies to collaborate with Saudi parents or other diverse families are: encouraging attendance to parental meetings and information sessions, translating school notes or permissions notes if necessary, conducting family literacy projects, encouraging parents to volunteer in school activities, communicating with parents using bilingual liaisons or interpreters, and sharing information with parents regarding the children’s situation in the school.

### 6.3.5 Saudi children’s characteristics

Table 25 summarises the teachers’ responses to seven items investigating their views on Saudi children’s characteristics and if the teachers think they have a good understanding of the Saudi culture and Islamic religion. As mentioned previously, numerous studies have emphasised that teachers should have sufficient understanding of ESL children and their families to achieve a high degree of culturally responsive education. According to Ladson-Billings (2001), the numbers of teachers who lack knowledge of other cultures are increasing. Teachers should be culturally competent to support their students in maintaining their identities. Students are influenced in their attitudes and interaction styles by their cultural background (Coballes-Vega, 1992). Therefore, it is important for teachers to use their knowledge about other cultures to avoid generalisations and misconceptions (Vuckovic, 2008).
Table 25  
*Frequency of responses to part 5 of the questionnaire in number and per cent (Saudi children’s characteristics)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Frequency N (%)</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SA (0%)</td>
<td>A (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I have a good understanding of the Saudi culture and customs.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I have a good understanding of the Islamic practices and priorities.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>It is easy to deal with Saudi children when they first enter the school.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I do not see any differences between Saudi children and other Australian children in behaviour or attitudes.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I expect Saudi children to behave in appropriate ways in the class and school and to understand and conform to the rules.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Saudi children have a tendency to socialise with each other rather than Australian children.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Saudi children develop positive, respectful relationships with staff and peers.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: SA = Strongly Agree (=1); A = Agree (=2); Neither A nor D = Neither Agree nor Disagree (=0); D = Disagree (=3); SD = Strongly Disagree (=4)*

As the table above shows, questions 1, 2, 5, 6, and 7 attracted a large percentage of ‘Agree’ and ‘Strongly Agree’ responses. The largest amount of agreement was given to item 7 (*Saudi children develop positive, respectful relationships with staff and peers.*) with 97% of the teachers (*n = 29*) agreeing that Saudi children developed positive, respectful relationships with staff and peers. However, a preschool teacher who agreed on this statement commented that the children developed more respectful relationships with staff than peers, which reminds us of Nydell’s (2006) statement that to raise a “good” child in Arab families, it is a crucial requirement to teach him/her how to show respect and good morality especially in front of adults. At the same time, there were other comments saying that this: “Might take a little longer”. The same table demonstrates that many teachers reported that they had a good understanding of the Saudi culture (57%) and Islamic practices and priorities (47%).
This seems to contradict the participating Saudi mothers’ claims that teachers’ understanding of the Saudi culture and Islamic values is either basic or full of misconceptions. Only one preschool teacher commented: “May be basic understanding”. Another school teacher said: “I think I have”. Other four comments indicated that they were always willing to learn more about the children’s culture and religion.

Having a good understanding of the parents’ culture or religion is mainly affected by other factors such as the number of Saudi children in a school and the degree of the parents’ openness and willingness to discuss culture or religion with the teachers. However, cross-tabulations presented in Table 26 show that years of experience might emerge as a factor in the teachers’ perception of understanding of other cultures. A large proportion of the teachers (70%), with more than 20 years of experience, reported to have a good understanding of the children’s cultures. Also, teachers from all ethnic backgrounds, except for a large percentage of Australian teachers (45%), reported the same. It was unexpected from British teachers to report understanding the Saudi culture since they had indicated before that they had some difficulties in dealing with Saudi families. Table 25 suggests that the mothers’ perceptions of the extent of the teachers’ understanding may be right (in relation to the part of understanding Islamic practices and priorities) because I found that still more than half of the teachers indicated either that they did not have knowledge about Islam or that they were not sure if they had. However, the general numbers of those who reported to have a good understanding of Saudi culture and Islam and those who did not was still relatively close. Cross-tabulations for item 2 (*I have a good understanding of the Islamic practices and priorities.*) seem to suggest that the teachers with many years of experience were more understanding of Islamic aspects. Ethnicity may be another variable as teachers from ethnic groups other than Australian reported that they had more information about Islam.

In addition, the table above shows that the great majority of the teachers (*n* = 24, or 80%) revealed that they expected Saudi children to behave in appropriate ways in class and school and to understand and conform to the rules, but when the children were ready, or within the bounds of their ability, as commented by some teachers.
Conversely, items 3 and 4 attracted a large percentage of ‘Disagree’ or ‘Strongly Disagree’ responses. Half of the respondents (50%) disagreed or strongly disagreed on item 3 (It is easy to deal with Saudi children when they first enter the school.) while a considerable number of the respondents ($n = 12$, or 40%) indicated their agreement. In order to identify the source of this distribution in responses, we cross-tabulated the teachers’ demographic characteristics in categories with the responses to this item (see Table 26). The results showed that most of teachers who reported that it was not easy to deal with Saudi children were Australian and British. However, this may not indicate an adequate finding as most of the participant teachers were actually Australians and British. Teachers with no specialised courses (58% versus 26%) also reported the same problem. Similar to item 3, it was shown that 64% of the teachers ($n = 19$) agreed with the mothers on item 4 (I do not see any differences between Saudi children and other Australian children in behaviour or attitudes.) and reported that there were some differences between Saudi children and Australian children in behaviour or attitudes. A third of the teachers ($n = 10$, or 33%) believed the opposite, indicating that Saudi and Australian children were similar and there were no significant differences between them. Cross-tabulation revealed that experience may be the only source of such disagreement. Most teachers who did not notice differences between the two groups of children were those who have less than five years’ experience.
The children seem to be related to the most common types of difficulties faced by the during the first period of these children attending school. Hindrances to dealing with understanding of the Saudi culture and Islamic religion. These claims stand in.

On one side, general responses stated that the teachers believed that they have a good understanding of the Saudi culture and Islamic religion. These claims stand in opposition to what the mothers asserted in the interviews.

On the other, the teachers admitted that it was difficult to deal with Saudi children during the first period of these children attending school. Hindrances to dealing with the children seem to be related to the most common types of difficulties faced by the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 26</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of responses to part 5 in number and per cent for respondents in categories by years of experience, ethnicity, and specialised teaching courses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 5</th>
<th>Item 1 N (%)</th>
<th>Item 2 N (%)</th>
<th>Item 3 N (%)</th>
<th>Item 4 N (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Ne A nor D</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Ne A nor D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>2 (33%)</td>
<td>1 (17%)</td>
<td>3 (50%)</td>
<td>2 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>4 (50%)</td>
<td>1 (13%)</td>
<td>3 (38%)</td>
<td>2 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 8)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>4 (67%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (33%)</td>
<td>4 (67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 20</td>
<td>7 (70%)</td>
<td>1 (10%)</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>6 (60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 10)</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anglo-Australians (n = 20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo-British (n = 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo-Americans (n = 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginals (n = 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-English Europeans (n = 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes (n = 11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No (n = 19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 19)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: A = Agree; Ne A nor D = Neither Agree nor Disagree; D = Disagree
children when they enter school (discussed in part one). Also, in accordance with the findings of previous research, our respondents reported Saudi children to be different to Australian children in their main character, that they are respectful to others, and that they have a tendency to socialise with each other rather than with English speakers. Contrary to the findings of previous research, our respondents emerged as a group of teachers who were fully aware that individual children from the same ethnic background differ in the way and rate at which they learn a second language and cope with the new school environment. They expected the Saudi children to need time to understand and conform to the rules. This reflects an awareness of cultural variations as well as the difficulties faced by some children in coping with the new situation. The findings in this way contradict McLaughlin’s (1992), and Bryan and Atwater’s (2002) argument that most teachers have unrealistic expectations of learning the L2 and emulating the host culture’s behaviours. Children can be harmed by such incompetent and ignorant assumptions (McLaughlin, 1992).

6.3.6 The effect of religious and cultural background

Table 27 summarises the teachers’ responses to six items investigating attitudes toward culturally diverse students and their views of the influence of Saudi children’s background on their attitudes, learning, and interaction styles. The aim of these items is to answer research question five, regarding the influence of the families’ religious and cultural background on the children’s acculturation attitudes. The literature repeatedly stressed that students bring their culture and values to school and that may influence their teachers’ attitudes toward them (Coballes-Vega, 1992; Jonson, 2002; Tzivinikou, 2005). Teachers’ reactions in class are affected by their attitudes to students’ diversity, which therefore affects the students’ success or failure to survive in the new school context. So, it is highly desirable for teachers to become aware of their own personal views about different cultural issues.
Table 27
Frequency of responses to part 6 of the questionnaire in number and per cent (The effect of religious and cultural background)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Frequency N (%)</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Item</td>
<td>SA (1)</td>
<td>A (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I share a belief that all children should be accepted and appreciated regardless of family background or religion.</td>
<td>25 (83%)</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I have noticed that Saudi children’s attitudes and interaction methods arise from their cultural and religious backgrounds.</td>
<td>6 (20%)</td>
<td>14 (46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Saudi children sometimes talk about their traditions or religious beliefs.</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
<td>15 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I know that Saudi parents are keen in teaching their children about Islam.</td>
<td>6 (20%)</td>
<td>17 (57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Some Saudi parents ask me to include their Islamic or cultural practices while interacting with the children (e.g. washing hands before and after eating, avoiding pork products, and wanting privacy in the toilet).</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
<td>15 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Some Saudi parents ask me to avoid teaching or talking about non-Islamic practices and beliefs in front of their children.</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>10 (33%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: SA = Strongly Agree (= 1); A = Agree (= 2); Neither A nor D = Neither Agree nor Disagree (= 0); D = Disagree (= 3); SD = Strongly Disagree (= 4)

Table 27 reflects strong agreement to item 1 (I share a belief that all children should be accepted and appreciated regardless of family background or religion.) (100%). It was shown that the entire sample shared the belief that all children should be accepted and appreciated regardless of family background or religion. Items 2, 3, 4, and 5 attracted a fairly large percentage of agreement. In responses to item 2 (I have noticed that Saudi children’s attitudes and interaction methods arise from their cultural and religious backgrounds.), the largest proportion of respondents (66%) endorsed the view that Saudi children’s religious and cultural background influences their attitudes and behaviour. A small percentage of the respondents (n = 5, or 17%) denied such an influence and another 17% reported not having any knowledge about this. Some
teachers who agreed with this statement declared that this issue applied to all diverse children as well.

Regarding item 5 (*Some Saudi parents ask me to include their Islamic or cultural practices while interacting with the children*.), a large proportion of the respondents (67%) reported that Saudi parents asked their children’s teachers to incorporate their Islamic or cultural practices while interacting with the children. This shows that Saudi parents are concerned to incorporate Islamic and cultural values in all aspects of their children’s lives. Some of the teachers (26%) indicated the opposite, while 7% indicated that they were not aware of such requests. In relation to non-Islamic practices or beliefs, item 6 (*Some Saudi parents ask me to avoid teaching or talking about non-Islamic practices and beliefs in front of their children*.), which attracted a fairly large percentage of disagreement (47%), suggested that many Saudi parents did not ask teachers to avoid teaching or talking about non-Islamic values in front of their children. These responses go against the mothers’ claims that they prefer to explain non-Islamic practices or beliefs to their children themselves and that they do not like the teacher to explain it to the children. This pattern of results suggests that there is some misconception among the teachers as to what Saudi parents’ expectations regarding the teaching of non-Islamic values are. An odd distribution can still be noticed in the teachers’ responses whereby 40% of the teachers reported being asked by mothers to avoid teaching these things and 13% of the teachers were neutral in their response to statement 5. To identify the source of this distribution for items 5 and 6, we cross-tabulated the teachers’ demographic characteristics with the teachers’ responses. Findings of this cross-tabulation are shown in Table 28.
Table 28
Frequency of responses to part 6 in number and per cent for respondents in categories by years of experience, ethnicity, and specialised teaching courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>Ne</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>Ne</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>5 (83%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (17%)</td>
<td>4 (67%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>4 (50%)</td>
<td>1 (13%)</td>
<td>3 (38%)</td>
<td>2 (25%)</td>
<td>2 (25%)</td>
<td>4 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>5 (83%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (17%)</td>
<td>3 (50%)</td>
<td>1 (17%)</td>
<td>2 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 20</td>
<td>7 (70%)</td>
<td>1 (10%)</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>3 (30%)</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>5 (50%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>Ne</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>Ne</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anglo-Australians (n = 20)</td>
<td>13 (65%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>6 (30%)</td>
<td>7 (35%)</td>
<td>3 (15%)</td>
<td>10 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo-British (n = 4)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
<td>2 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo-Americans (n = 1)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (100%)</td>
<td>1 (100%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginals (n = 2)</td>
<td>2 (100%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (50%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-English Europeans (n = 3)</td>
<td>1 (33%)</td>
<td>1 (33%)</td>
<td>1 (33%)</td>
<td>2 (67%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (33%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>Ne</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>Ne</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes (n = 11)</td>
<td>10 (91%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (9%)</td>
<td>4 (36%)</td>
<td>2 (18%)</td>
<td>5 (45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No (n = 19)</td>
<td>10 (53%)</td>
<td>2 (11%)</td>
<td>7 (37%)</td>
<td>8 (42%)</td>
<td>2 (11%)</td>
<td>9 (47%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: A = Agree; Ne A nor D = Neither Agree nor Disagree; D = Disagree

To conclude, the teachers’ strong positive responses concur with the interview results that Saudi children’s diversity is accepted and appreciated by their teachers. Teachers in this part acknowledged that Saudi families have a strong affiliation to Islam and they reflect various Islamic aspects in their child-rearing methods. This was also stressed by researchers including Abudabbeh, (2005) and Nydell, (2006). They also noticed the strong effect of religious and cultural background on the children’s attitudes in class. This effect can be seen in the children’s tendency to accentuate their traditions and religious values in their behaviour or at least find it worthy to talk
about them in front of their peers. The results suggest that the teachers must have seen some behaviour patterns to assume that Saudi parents are keen to teach their children about Islam. The literature (e.g., Hadi & Al-Fayez, 2003) suggests that Muslim families also wish their children’s teachers to consider their religious beliefs and prohibitions. A large proportion of the teachers reported that some parents asked them to include their Islamic or cultural practices while interacting with the children. Yet, disagreement to this statement confirmed most mothers’ belief that they should have the responsibility to draw their children’s attention to the necessity of applying these values in school because it is difficult on the teacher to concentrate on every child.

6.4 Summary of results of the questionnaire analysis

As mentioned before, the main analyses of the questionnaire survey contributed to answering the research questions 1, 2, 3, and 5 regarding the sociolinguistic situation of sojourning Saudi children in Australian early childhood educational settings as perceived by their teachers (see section 4.1, p. 127 for the research questions). In general, the results for some items seem to suggest that the teachers’ demographic factors may have had an effect on the teachers’ responses. Most importantly, the responses suggest that early childhood teachers in Australia play a very positive role in young sojourners’ acculturation.

*Research Question 1: What sociolinguistic, educational, and other difficulties do Saudi children face in the Australian context?*

Preschool and school teachers were asked to respond to four main possible difficulties emphasised in the literature to be the most common types of difficulties experienced by newcomers to a new environment. The most common types of difficulties faced by Saudi children when they entered Australian schools as indicated by the teachers in their response to items 2, 3 and 5 (table 15) were: lack of English language proficiency, social alienation from English speakers, and culture shock or noted differences between the two cultures. Corresponding with the mothers’ viewpoints, educational problems and difficulties in academic achievement were not acknowledged by most of the teachers. Thus, the results from the analysis of the teachers’ questionnaire indicate that the teachers who responded were well-aware of
the major difficulties that children experience upon entering a new socio-cultural environment.

The results showed that the only mismatch between the teachers’ and mothers’ responses was in regard to considering social interaction with English speakers as a commonly experienced difficulty among Saudi children. Most of the children’s mothers reported in the interviews that their children did not have difficulties in social interaction with Australian children. The small percentage (27%) who agreed with these claims consisted of experienced teachers and those who had taken specialised courses in early childhood or preschool methodology. Such agreement may suggest the veracity of the mothers’ declarations. Moreover, the discrepancy of responses in relation to culture shock might occur because the respondents were not provided with a particular definition or asked about specific aspects of culture shock. The question was general and the teachers were expected to respond according to their own understanding of the term. However, the extent and intensity of integration difficulties were attributed to the experience of each individual child as shown by the results. In the end, both parents and teachers believed that good adjustment to the school environment was achieved by Saudi children since, as the findings from the questionnaire and the two groups of interviews showed, after a period of attending school most children were perceived as able to overcome their difficulties and feel happy at school.

Research Question 2: What types of supportive social networks are surrounding Saudi children?

It emerged from the results of items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 (table 17) that the teachers assigned varying degrees of importance to the supportive social factors, which in the present study were thought to influence young Saudi children and facilitate their social adaptation either inside or outside the school. The analyses above demonstrated that the teachers viewed parents’ attitudes, teachers and educational institutions, and the Australian society including friends and neighbours to have the highest influence in fostering Saudi children’s social adaptation. The number of responses to items 4 and 5 that expressed uncertainty or disagreement ranked the effect of the media and computer-based resources in second place. Nonetheless, this
pattern of responses does not undermine the perception of media and technology as facilitators in the acculturation process.

Research Question 3: What has been done by teachers to support Saudi children’s acculturation and bilingualism in the Australian milieu?

The results of both the qualitative and quantitative methodologies employed in this study point to the teachers’ valuable contribution to the children’s acculturation. It was reported in response to items 1 to 16 (tables 18 and 20) that the children’s integration into the school was a result of receiving extensive support by their teachers in the first place. As mentioned earlier, strategies provided by teachers to support Saudi children’s acculturation as well as SLA were put into two categories: institutional level strategies, which incorporated the use of in-class activities, and culturally responsive methods and personal level strategies, which incorporated holding positive attitudes toward the children’s diversity and making sufficient efforts to understand their culture.

The following points summarise the teachers’ various strategies in relation to the first category, as indicated in responses to part 3A of the questionnaire:

- using regular in-class activities such as stories, games, and songs to support the children’s familiarity to the school environment
- enhancing the children’s English language acquisition in cooperation with an ESL teacher
- utilising literacy (i.e. reading and writing) to facilitate the process of acculturation
- using special activities and culturally responsive methods for ESL learners as recommended by the Department of Education and Training (DET) or other ESL teachers
- utilising available instructional materials and library resources
- promoting peer interactions and using small groups in encouraging the children to socialise

The following points summarise the teachers’ strategies in relation to the second category, as indicated in responses to part 3B of the questionnaire:

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- making additional or personal efforts such as praising and encouraging the children to interact with peers and work groups
- providing the opportunity for the children to talk about their lifestyles and home culture, which maintains their identities
- using the buddy system or peer tutoring to encourage the children to interact with other children
- trying to consider the children’s ethnic diversity during occasional activities mainly through dancing to Arabic music, wearing Saudi national uniforms and including Saudi culture in the school’s cultural day
- trying to obtain some information about the Saudi culture to help deal with the children and their families

Nevertheless, the results in response to item 13 (table 20) revealed difficulties in trying to learn about some of the children’s cultural characteristics due to the limited resources available. For this reason, Saudi children’s ethnic diversity was difficult to address through the daily class activities especially in literacy and role playing. Some teachers appreciated the importance of using some basic Arabic words to facilitate communication with the children. This task, though, was not easy to accomplish. Also, the findings in response to items 14 and 16 pointed to the beneficial role of staff development and in-service specialised courses in early childhood or preschool methodology. Teachers who had specialised teaching courses were more willing to learn about the Saudi culture and make use of other successful approaches in acculturating children from diverse backgrounds.

Another crucial strategy that the teachers perceived as helpful for the children was sustaining successful collaboration with Saudi parents and trying to involve them in their children’s education and adaptation to school. The results in response to items 3, 4 and 5 (table 22) suggest that collaboration with diverse families can be disrupted by their lack of English language skills and cultural differences between the two sides. However, the schools’ and the teachers’ belief about the effect of school-home collaboration in the children’s adjustment made them take cultural differences into consideration when they interacted with Saudi families. Australian schools’ techniques and strategies of collaboration as well as the teachers’ positive attitudes
were praised by most of the mothers through the interviews. This pattern of results suggests that the teachers who responded to the survey highly appreciated the importance of family and implemented school-family collaboration to fulfil their professional and personal responsibilities in helping with the Saudi children’s acculturation.

Research Question 5: Does the attitude toward acculturation differ significantly among various Saudi families? And does the families’ religious and cultural background influence their children’s acculturation?

Despite the contradiction between the two groups of participants (parents and teachers) in the study regarding the depth of Australian teachers’ understanding of the Saudi culture and Islam, the results in general demonstrated the teachers’ awareness that individuals from the same ethnic background may differ in their way and rate of acquiring a second language and adjusting to a new environment. Many teachers acknowledged that Saudi children’s attitudes and interaction methods arose from their cultural and religious backgrounds, and that Saudi parents had a special interest in incorporating these backgrounds in their child-rearing methods. Moreover, the results of both the interviews and the survey revealed that Saudi parents preferred to have Islamic and important cultural practices taken into consideration in children’s interaction at school. This can be taken as evidence that Saudi families’ religious and cultural fervour does influence their children’s acculturation. However, this influence appeared to be positive as Saudi families’ efforts and concerns to maintain their home culture during the sojourn did not hinder or impact negatively on the children’s integration into the host culture. This is supported by the fact that 97% of the teachers reported that the Saudi children developed positive respectful relationships with staff and peers.

In conclusion, the teachers who participated in the present research emerged as a group who understand and appreciate the difficulties sojourning children face. Their responses showed recognition of the importance in the adaptation process of the family, the school and the collaboration between the two. Their expressed eagerness to do their professional and personal best to accommodate cultural differences in the classroom suggests that these teachers exert a positive influence on the young
individuals in their care. The convergence of the results from the quantitative and qualitative methodologies employed in this study leaves little doubt that all the children whose families and teachers participated in the research did achieve positive acculturation to the new context after a short while.
Chapter Seven: Repatriation Interviews

7.1 Introduction

“The endpoint of the cultural transition cycle for the sojourner is the return to the home country” (Sussman, 2002, p. 392). Similar to acculturation, the readjustment process has been found to be influenced by several variables (e.g., education level, length of time abroad, personality traits, and lack of social support and preparation) and thus it has different outcomes (Sussman, 2002). Moreover, findings connect changes in cultural identity to long-term immigrant adaptation (Berry, 1997) and not to temporary sojourner experience (Sussman, 2002). According to Patron (2006), researchers have widely declared that there is a gap in research discussing the repatriation processes of young sojourners who have spent more than six months in an immersion context abroad. Research in the area of repatriation processes has been essentially focused on the overseas experience and as Patron complains: “although sojourners are generally expected to go home at some stage, the significant process of readjustment in one’s own culture is totally taken for granted” (p. 196). Returnees who experience difficulties in coping with their home culture are expected to recover and face their challenges as people in their surroundings may not realise that reverse culture shock is suggested to be even more difficult than the adaptation process itself.

As mentioned, a further concern in the present study was to investigate issues of reverse cultural shock and benefits the children gain from the sojourn experience in different early childhood educational settings. This chapter discusses issues related to the re-entry process and the conflict situations that Saudi children may face when they return to their home country, as well as the advantages gained. Section 7.2.1 examines the mothers’ perceptions on their children’s reactions in the initial period of re-entry. Section 7.2.2 presents perceptions on reverse culture shock and efforts to support their children. It also investigates the potential emergence of certain kinds of problems that the children may encounter with their relatives, teachers, and peers. Reverse linguistic shock and academic problems are discussed in section 7.2.3. After that, the mothers’ reasons to maintain the acquired language is provided and then,
benefits the children have gained from the sojourn experience according to the mother’s point of views are explored.

In these interviews, five Saudi mothers of young returnees drew attention to certain variables affecting the re-entry processes, including age, extent of preparedness, length of the sojourn, the social supportive network, and the child’s personality. With regard to gender, it is important to note that the relatively small sample of interviewees made it difficult to trace effects of gender differences. Therefore, no special attention was paid to the gender of their children when selecting the interviewees. The chosen sample depended on what mothers first contacted the researcher and accepted the invitation to participate. By chance, the focal children all happened to be boys. The young returnees’ and their families’ demographic information including ages, English proficiency, educational levels, and time in Australia has previously been presented in Tables 6 and 7, in section 4.3.1 of the methodology chapter.

7.2 The repatriation experience

7.2.1 The initial period upon re-entry

The literature emphasises the significance of the family’s role, especially the mother’s, in shaping the child’s experience during the sojourn and upon return home (Yoshida et al., 2002). To assess the mothers’ positive or negative perceptions of the re-entry process, they were asked to express their opinions regarding any changes in the Saudi society since they had left. Several social changes were noticed by all mothers yet they had different attitudes about them. Many examples were provided including changes in people’s behaviour, communication style, places, and even the weather. Only one mother expressed her dissatisfaction with the recent changes in the Saudi society claiming that people had adopted more liberal standards. One of the most observed changes was the increasing numbers of people including English words or expressions in casual conversations to appear more sophisticated and knowledgeable. The mothers were also asked if they noticed any changes in the educational system and what they thought of these changes. Three mothers were able to answer that and reported that the educational system in Saudi Arabia had improved
and that the curriculum was much better, yet more difficult than before. The other two mothers (mothers R #1 and R #4, see Table 7, section 4.3.1 in the methodology chapter as child 1 and 4) said that their children were still too young to go to school when they returned to Saudi Arabia, where formal education starts later. Therefore, they were not able to comment on any changes in the educational system. In fact, most of the returnee group had not reached school age upon their return to Saudi Arabia; however, it seems that those who answered this question depended on comparisons between their personal experiences and other sources rather than the experiences of their own children. Therefore, it would not be appropriate to draw any conclusions on this point.

Positive initial re-entry experiences and appreciation were deduced from the children’s reactions toward return to Saudi Arabia. All the mothers reported that their children were very happy to see their relatives and friends again when they first returned. For example, Mother R #1, whose seven-year-old child had spent two years in Australia, stated that her son was generally satisfied with his life upon return home:

My son was happy to see his family after all this time. He was very happy. I noticed that he liked to play with them and sit near them. I felt that he didn’t want to leave them…He was accepting to the fact that he had returned to his home and his old room.

Besides feeling happy to visit and see friends and family, mothers of older children (more than six years when they arrived home) indicated that their children expressed their happiness to return home.

Regarding school, the children’s reactions to enter school in Saudi Arabia varied. Two mothers of seven and eight-year-old children (mothers R #1 and R #3) reported that their children were excited to enter school. The main reason, according to the mothers, was that their children did not enter any schools in Australia. They were either in a family day care or a preschool and this may have made them excited to enter school in Saudi Arabia. These children were unable to make any comparisons between schools in the two countries for the same reason.

In contrast, mothers R #2 and R #5 mentioned that their children were not happy when they entered schools in Saudi Arabia. They said that a lot of comparisons were
made by their children regarding the teaching style, languages, and teachers’ strict treatment for their students. Mother R #5 talked about her nine-year-old son:

He was not happy when he went to school. At least not like in Australia. He complained that the school here is different. The teaching style is different and the teachers’ way in treating students is arrogant and strict.

Through the interviews, it was noticed that the children had two stages of reactions. There was initial happiness due to the opportunity to see their relatives and friends again. This reaction clearly came first. A short period after the return, there were various reactions toward entering school. The data reported a short period of euphoria that is consistent with findings from the literature (e.g., Patron, 2006; Sussman, 2002). All children were happy to see their beloved ones again, but their initial excitement upon returning home was followed by a feeling of missing Australia in three out of five children. Other issues related to reverse culture shock also set in almost immediately after the children’s initial euphoria, similarly to the predictions of the W-Curve hypothesis (see section 2.3, Repatriation of sojourners). The mothers’ perspectives of this phase are presented in the following section.

7.2.2 Reverse culture shock

This section examines the children’s readjustment patterns to life back in Saudi Arabia. Only one mother R #3 reported that her child did not experience any difficulties in coping with the home culture and that he resumed his life normally and with extreme happiness according to his mother. When she was asked about what the reason would be, she replied:

Although my son can speak English very well, he was also able to communicate in Arabic and express himself clearly. He has just started school in Saudi Arabia. There was no schooling in Australia to affect him or to make him compare between the two schools. He was also psychologically prepared for the return. We were talking to him and try to tell him about his culture and how to behave.

Mother R #3’s quotation emphasises the advantages of adequate preparation prior to the re-entry process. Interviewing this mother revealed that the fact that her child readjusted easily to his home culture can to some extent be attributed to family support when they were abroad. Family support included maintaining the first
language, strengthening his cultural identity, teaching him cultural and religious requirements, and preparing him psychologically for the return. However, it was found that although this mother reported that her eight-year-old son had experienced no difficulties, similarly to the acculturation study, analysis of the interview suggested that none of the children escaped at least some form of this phenomenon. This will be discussed later in the analysis.

One of the most important issues that the interviewees considered as a cause of conflict when their children returned to the home culture was their experience of reverse culture shock and differences between the two cultures. The data suggest that this culture shock may have resulted from the children’s exposure to the host culture’s values and behaviours that have now become part of the children’s personality, and which may contradict with some of aspects of the Saudi culture. The children experienced reverse culture shock in different ways and with varying degrees of intensity. However, comparisons between the children suggested that children who returned to Saudi Arabia at younger ages experienced less culture shock than older children. For example, mother R #1 mentioned that her child was three and a half when they returned to Saudi Arabia. The interview analysis for this child revealed that he was happy upon return and when he entered school. The most common types of difficulties he experienced according to his mother were a lack of ability to communicate in Arabic especially at first, and a little difficulty to understand differences in cultural practices. His mother stated:

He did not notice any differences because he was very young. He only noticed simple things. For example, one day we were invited by our family and while we were eating, he asked me about why other people eat with their hands and don’t use the spoon like we do. He got used to particular manners and it was strange for him to see different things here.

Mother R #1 also indicated that her son did not compare his experience in Australia to his recent life in Saudi Arabia from any aspect. Moreover, there were no complaints about living in Saudi Arabia except for trivial things such as the weather and rain. When asked about what the parents did to support the child and help him to face his difficulties, mother R #1 replied that she depended on a private preschool to enhance his Arabic and teach him. No additional activities were provided to this child except for buying him some stories and computer programs in Arabic.
Mother R #5’s son was seven years old when they returned. The child was happy to meet his friends and relatives once again, yet, he could not cope with school like when he was in Australia. He also needed more time than his younger brother to readapt to society. The most common types of difficulties faced by this child were distress, lack of ability to speak Arabic fluently, difficulties in academic achievement (e.g., in reading and spelling), and culture shock. His mother indicated that he encountered culture shock in many aspects. She clarified:

When we first returned, he noticed several cultural differences between the Australian culture and the Saudi culture either in appearance or cultural norms. He was making a lot of comparisons and he kept asking a lot of questions about the hijab, the school, differences in lifestyle and nature, and even the weather.

In addition, Mother R #5 declared that though his teachers were happy with him and he was accepted by his peers at school, he complained about school being different. She continued:

At first, my child refused to come back to Saudi Arabia. After being back a while, he said that he misses Australia and his school and he started to compare between the two schools…There were a lot of complaints about the school and how he hates the teachers’ treatment here … He likes English more than Arabic.

It was clear during the interview that this child had felt distress and experienced a high degree of culture shock socially, academically, and even linguistically. Nevertheless, his mother stressed that they had made considerable efforts to help him overcome these problems. Among the parents’ encouragement and attempts to enhance his Arabic, they took him to a private school that concentrates on teaching Arabic. They were also keen to involve the rest of the family to support him and encourage him to maintain his Arabic. Their efforts concentrated on rewards, encouragement, and activities in literacy.

The other children (R #2, R #3 and R #4) were about five to five and a half when they returned. The data showed that children R #3 and R #4 had experienced similar degrees of reverse culture shock. Both children felt distress and missed their past life in Australia. Both of them encountered some difficulty in understanding cultural differences as well. Although mother R #3, as mentioned previously, reported that her
son readapted to the home culture without any obstacles, the interview afterwards revealed some incidents that may indicate having culture shock. The mother stated:

He always says that he misses Australia and wants to visit his friends there. He was comparing between the two cultures in lifestyle. He also asked me about the reason that I wear a full *hijab* here and cover my face and why women in Saudi Arabia sit in separate places from men.

Through the interview, the mother stated that her child did not complain about returning to Saudi Arabia, but he did make comparisons between Australia and Saudi Arabia in many aspects such as social practices, the shops, the environment, and animals. Regarding education, the mother stated:

He compared the curriculum of the Australian school to the Saudi curriculum. He said that education in Saudi Arabia was more difficult and the teachers were more serious, but generally, he was happy with his school.

No real measures were put into place to deal with these issues, as there were no real problems to solve, according to his mother.

On a different side, although mother R #2 reported that her child faced some difficulties upon re-entry, he did not experience culture shock. There were no comparisons or complaints about the differences between the two cultures and the child was able understand his social norms without difficulty. Many reasons for such reactions were extracted from the interview. An important reason was that during the three-year period that he spent in Australia, he visited Saudi Arabia three times and spent about eight months there just in one visit. He also entered a preschool during these eight months and was going to a religious school to learn the Holy Qur’an. The mother declared that she was keen to teach him their religious and cultural requirements during the sojourn and prepare him for the return in some way. However, she emphasised that he had faced some problems upon return. In her discussion of this issue, she said:

Because he is still affected by the English language, he had some problems in relation to his academic achievement. For example, he writes the Arabic alphabet from left to right. He also has some difficulties in reading and recognising some letters. He also forgot verses from the Holy Qur’an he had learnt before.

This child had just started the first grade in Saudi Arabia. The mother was well educated enough to realise his need to maintain his Arabic and improve his academic
achievement. She also involved his relatives such as aunts and grandparents in the process of education. She asked his relatives to show him their happiness and was proud with anything he accomplished. This motivated him to go to school, memorise his lessons, and be patient with his increasing homework.

Social misunderstandings and conflicts with the home culture emerge largely from interpretation of linguistic and cultural codes during interactions. General lack of interest from family and friends in the children’s experiences and their recently acquired cultural practices or communicative styles may increase the problem (Patron, 2006). This argument is supported by literature especially in relation to international students and adolescents (Martin, 1984; Patron, 2006). However, in the case of young children, the present study did not reveal any type of social misunderstandings with members of the home culture. All the mothers stressed that the family was very understanding and supportive. They were even proud to see the children speak English fluently. As an example of this is what one of the mothers stated:

My family were happy and proud of my son. They were taking him to their friends to hear him speaking English. They were talking to him in English and praising and encouraging him…His English teacher likes him because he is good in English to the extent that he corrects some of his teacher’s sentences. (Mother R #3)

Moreover, it was indicated by all the interviewees that their relatives and the rest of the family observed many changes in their children’s personalities because of the sojourn. Nevertheless, these changes were perceived positively. It was declared that the children’s emergent personalities, as a result of the sojourn and personal growth, were highly appreciated. The family did not comment negatively on such changes or try to modify what the children had acquired from the Australian culture. Mother R #1, who pointed out that the child’s family members were interested in his expatriate experience added that they tried to reduce the child’s estrangement by helping him overcome his difficulties:

They tried to cheer him up and take him to many places. They bought him things such as colours because he likes to paint. They also took him to the theme park. He felt very glad because of these things and because they were with him all the time. (Mother R #1)
The mother’s general comments indicated that the families’ reactions were key to capturing positive outcomes and alleviating the process of readjustment.

Regarding changes that occurred in the children, these related to their personalities, manners, and behaviours, which suggest that the repatriation experience was related to shifts in cultural identity. However, these shifts of cultural identity were suggested to be substantially different from those of immigrants. The findings are similar to Sussman’s (2002, p. 392, 394) argument about the “relationship between cross-cultural adaptation and the subsequent development of a new and broader cultural identity” and that “shifts in cultural identity serve as a mediator between cultural adaptation and the repatriation experience”. It was found from the analysis that the returnees’ interpersonal styles were also different. An incident provided by one of the mothers told how one of their new neighbours assumed that her child had been raised abroad for a period of time when he observed his playing patterns and interaction style. Common changes in the children’s personalities, as reported by their mothers, were mainly positive, such as having a stronger personality and being more daring in social interactions. Also, these changes were in varied degrees of intensity. Once again, the influence of the age factor was salient through the interviews. For example, mother R #5’s son who was the oldest of the returnees (seven years old) in the sample experienced significant changes that evolved during his two-year stay in Australia and studying in a public school until the second grade. In her words:

I noticed that he built greater realisation for his culture and surroundings. His personality is different from his peers and he became more organised and sociable than before. The sojourn had affected him deeply.

On the other hand, mother R #1 reported that her child was about three and a half when they returned. She indicated that she did not feel any serious changes in her child’s identity but that she noticed that the sojourn experience had affected him in some way:

I felt that he became more organised in his life and more polite. For example, he is concerned to greet other people. He said “Thank you” if I gave him anything and “Excuse me” if he needed something. He had acquired all these things from Australian people.

Thus, the results of the mothers’ interviews suggested positive outcomes for the sojourn experience; no negative comments or criticisms were reported by the
mothers. The advantages that the children had gained from living in Australia for a period of time are further discussed in section 7.2.5.

7.2.3 Reverse linguistic shock

The data demonstrated another source of conflict when they returned to Saudi Arabia, which was the children’s lack of management of the Arabic language. In fact, the term ‘linguistic shock’ among various nomenclatures (e.g., ‘acclimatisation shock’, ‘climatic shock’) is related to culture shock in some aspects (Patron, 2006). Unexpectedly, the children’s lack of ability to speak Arabic fluently did not cause any kind of communication problems or misunderstandings with the rest of the family and friends as suggested by the results. The mothers connected this to the families’ openness and positive attitudes toward the sojourn and changes in the children’s linguistic patterns. Actually, the children’s linguistic difficulty upon the return was not described by the mothers as a reduction but more a deficiency in Arabic language skills since all children had begun their sojourn at very young ages and before reaching a full mastery of the Arabic language. The children’s acquisition of English during the critical period had indirectly affected their word choice and grammatical features in Arabic. In regard to Arabic literacy, it was difficult to compare between children’s status during the sojourn and after the return as most of them started their actual schooling in Arabic after they returned to Saudi Arabia. The mothers reported different responses when they were asked whether their children had academic problems in the Saudi school and whether they still suffered from them after having been back for a while. For example, mothers R #2, R #3, and R #4 indicated that their children were five to five and a half when they returned. Nevertheless, only mother R #2, who was interviewed after few months of her return to Saudi Arabia, declared that her child was still affected by the English style in writing and grammar, which caused many academic problems in literacy. These results were surprising because this child is the only child to spend eight months in Saudi Arabia during the period of sojourn and he went into a preschool and a religious school. Besides, he was prepared for the return, according to his mother. This problem was more salient for older children. According to mother R #5 whose son was seven upon return:
[My son] has just started his education in Saudi Arabia. Although he had no previous teaching in Arabic except for the annual assessment in Australia, he faced some difficulties in learning Arabic letters and in reading. He cannot read fluently … He is still experiencing these difficulties.

In addition, the data demonstrated that the mothers perceived the Saudi teachers as being less competent than their Australian equivalents in supporting the children to cope with the school environment and overcome their educational difficulties. According to what the mothers reported, it was implied that Australian teachers were more understanding of the positive effects of their strategies and additional efforts on the children’s academic success and integration to the school environment. This was a main reason that made most of the children make comparisons between the two schools, preferring the Australian school. One of the mothers argued that:

The educational system here is not like the education in Australia. Our children were in public schools in Australia and they were very happy. Here, all public and private schools have a similar style in treating students. I paid a lot of money for my son’s international school thinking that it would be better, but I discovered that it was not very good either. My child hated school.

(Mother R #2)

Mothers R #4 and R #5 declared that the teachers’ effort to help their children was a result of their request for more attention. Mother R #5 said:

We took him to private school and we asked the teacher to pay more attention to enhance his Arabic. Then, he improved his language because she helped him in reading and spelling.

Out of the five mothers, only one (mother R #3) was satisfied with the teacher’s strategies and style. She seemed excited and proud when she was talking about her son’s happiness at school and that her child had no problems whatsoever in his education. In her words:

The teacher was very helpful. He encouraged [my son] a lot. He was satisfied with my child and he used to compliment him in front of other children, which made them jealous of my son. He was supportive. For example, he was giving my son some responsibilities to enhance his self-confidence.

This case cannot be considered as exceptional as the interview revealed that the teacher’s treatment was due to the fact that the child was confident and studious in class and there were no serious problems in his academic achievement to be solved. According to this mother, most teachers’ attention and encouragement are poured on
good students in Saudi schools. Moreover, the mother did not mention any other special activities provided by the teacher.

In general, to investigate the children’s patterns of language use upon return, the interviewees were asked about which language was mainly used by the child in Australia and when they returned. Three mothers R #1, R #2, and R #5 replied that their children were mainly using English when they were in Australia. After return, mothers R #1 and R #2 indicated that their children mixed the two languages at first and then started to depend on speaking Arabic:

At the beginning, he was not good at Arabic. He was talking English all the time. After a while, I felt that he began to speak more Arabic…Now, he is in the first grade. He started to improve his writing skills, but I felt that he started to forget English at the same time…only in speaking. (Mother R #1)

Mother R #5 stressed that her child still mainly uses English at home. She also stated that she and the father still communicate with him in English. It was suggested that these factors, in addition to the child being older when he returned, are associated with his refusal to return, difficulties to integrate to the home culture, negative attitudes toward the Saudi school, and his educational difficulties. On the other hand, mother R #3 reported that her child’s proficiency in Arabic allowed him to interact comfortably within the home society and in school. The main reason according to his mother was that:

He was speaking Arabic at home both in Australia or Saudi Arabia. Now, he has some American and Moroccan friends and he uses English when he plays with them. We also use a lot of English at home to maintain his language.

This child’s successful repatriation can be attributed to his parents’ strategies to use the Arabic language at home in Australia and prepare him religiously and culturally for the return.

7.2.4 What comes next

It was asserted by the literature and confirmed in the findings from the interviews with Saudi mothers in Australia that family strategies and attitudes can influence maintaining the children’s acquired L2. In agreement with these findings, maintaining the returnees’ English language was also found to be correlated with their parents’
attitudes, strategies, and plans to make their children keep speaking English. The data suggested an overall positive attitude toward learning English. Similar to the mothers in Australia, all the returnee mothers emphasised acknowledging the importance of their children being fluent in English and wanting them to maintain the language even in Saudi Arabia. Through the interviews, the reason for acknowledging this was viewed from various angles, yet they all mainly evolve around perusing similar future goals: to get a good education in Saudi Arabia, to further their education abroad in the future, and to enhance their career opportunities. As mentioned, the interviewees seemed aware of the increasing importance of studying and speaking English in Saudi Arabia nowadays. For instance, mother R #4 commented on the status of English by saying:

I wish my child to maintain his English language because it is very important these days. It is very crucial in most countries, in communication, the internet and all fields.

Mother (R #3) asserted:

Of course I want my child to keep his English and I will provide anything to help him doing this … The reason is that I want to ensure him a good education and complete his study like his father. I want him to be a doctor.

These two mothers’ views reflected the majority opinion. Actually, the returnee families employed different strategies to achieve this goal. The key step was to send their children to an international school that depends on English in its program or find a private school that provides additional English courses. In addition to attempting to use English in daily interactions, the children were also provided with stories and materials in English. After all, the gained benefits of studying abroad, either to the family finance or the children’s academic performance, made them more determined to achieve these goals.

The interviewees were willing additionally to attain social psychological benefits through maintaining their children’s English. The social psychological goals commonly mentioned by the mothers were: to be more independent and broad-minded, to feel more confident and special, and to have high self-esteem. As one of the mothers commented:

I feel that my child already achieved these goals. Living in Australia and studying in its schools have increased his self-esteem and made him satisfied.
with everything around him. He is very confident in front of his teachers and his family. (Mother R #3)

This quotation, similarly to the others’ comments, indicates that these goals have already been reached, and the analysis suggested returnee children to have a significantly higher self-concept than their peers in Saudi Arabia. Mother R #3 repeated this view several times in the interview. Also, she was distinct from other mothers because she was the only one to admit that an important reason she wanted her child to maintain his English was to increase the family’s prestige. She realised the prestige that speaking English had in the eye of society. In contrast, this goal was not approved by other mothers. As mother R #1 argued:

There are a lot of families these days with children who studied abroad. I do not think that this is something important to me. Our society is more educated than before and you can find a lot of children who speak good English.

The above quotations conveyed that most mothers wished that their children keep what they have learned during the sojourn for practical reasons, which benefit their education, career, as well as their psychological well-being. The mothers also considered how the cross-cultural transition cycle can cause shifts in their children’s cultural identity and make it broader. Therefore, the interviews indicated a wish to achieve several cultural goals, such as being more open to other cultures and having the ability to communicate with more and various foreigners inside or outside Saudi Arabia. Actually, most of the mothers reported how their life in Australia and learning English enhanced their children’s awareness and acceptance of cultural differences. For example, mother R #3 said:

I found that my child could communicate with foreigners easily when we returned. He became more understanding of other cultures and can accept other people’s diversity.

This declaration may suggest that Saudi returnees have acquired cross-cultural skills and have increased openness to other cultures more than other members of the Saudi society. However, openness to others’ cultures and languages does not mean forgetting their Islamic rites and traditions as repeatedly reported. The data indicated the mothers’ strong attempts to reach a kind of balance in their children’s lives. This aimed-for balance, as viewed by the mothers, can be attained through maintaining the children’s acquired language and cultural knowledge while continuing to teach them their cultural and religious values. Similarly to what the mothers in the Australian
interviews thought, this was of high priority. One of the mothers clarified the reasons by stating:

I believe that it is very important to support my child’s readjustment with our cultural and religious requirements. This is very important because this is his culture and his real identity. There are basic things in our religion that he must understand. Therefore, we still concentrate on teaching and practising our religion. We talk to him about many religious aspects, our costumes and traditions. (Mother R #5)

These words were reflected in the rest of the interviewees’ comments. All of them emphasised it being crucial to assist their children and teach them cultural and religious requirements. There was a hidden fear of the consequences of living abroad for a period of time. They thought that the children might be affected by the sojourn and desert their cultural values. The mothers’ concern to teach their children, instruct them, and practice the Islamic religion with them can be considered as a way to defeat these fears.

This may confirm Sussman’s (2002) theory that cultural identity is dynamic and can shift as a result of the overseas transition and self-concept disturbances. Patron (2006, p. 55) states that these “shifts in cultural identity act as a mediator between the cultural adjustment and repatriation paradigms”.

7.2.5 Benefits Saudi children gained from the bilingual experience

This section examines the mothers’ views of which kind of advantages their children gained from the sojourn experience in general. In the interviews, benefits of living abroad and learning a second language were seen to be overlapped. When the mothers mentioned that their children may indeed have certain advantages because of the sojourn, the analyses suggested that these advantages were mainly gained from learning a second language. There are strong indications in the research literature of the advantages associated with second language acquisition and bilingualism. Having the privilege of speaking two (or more) languages enables learners with a wider capacity for cognitive flexibility and academic achievement (see Akbulut, 2007; Bialystok, 2001; Cummins, 1992; Tzivinikour, 2005), creativity and problem solving (see Zelazo et al., 1996 in Bialystok, 2008, Carlson & Meltzoff, 2008), phonological
awareness (see Rubin and Turner’s study in 1989 in Bialystok, Majumder, & Martin, 2003, and Tingley et al., 2004), enhancing several skills in the L1 (see Archibald, Roy, Harmel & Jesney, 2004), and cultural awareness and intensifying knowledge of different cultures (see Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004, Gass & Selinker, 2008). Likewise, residing for a period of time in Australia was suggested to bring many benefits for Saudi children from different aspects.

Although each interviewee listed many advantages of being abroad, increased proficiency in the English language was seen by all as the most important advantage of the whole experience. Mother R #5, for instance, commented that:

In spite of all the difficulties my child faced while integrating to the Australian society at the beginning, it is more than enough to return with a good language proficiency in English.

This quotation suggests that learning English is appreciated by Saudi mothers. Being bilingual is an undeniable advantage. Some mothers indicated that having English as an advantage served in part to compensate for the Arabic literacy the children did not fully acquire because of their absence from Saudi schools. In regards to this benefit, the mothers’ comments were generally similar to mother R #5’s.

Other common advantages gained from the sojourn were related to social interaction and skills in interpersonal communication. The mothers acknowledged that the sojourn experience had affected their children and had made them more social. They stated that the children had learned how to express themselves and what they need clearly. An example was what mother R #1 said:

I felt that my child has become more social with other people. He can express himself without any fears. He became more polite.

Mother R #4 shared the same insight:

When we returned to Saudi Arabia, I felt that his personality has changed. He was shy and quiet before. Now, he started to be more social. He became more proactive, daring, and likes to socialise with other children without me telling him to go and play with them.

These two comments indicate a shift in the children’s personalities as an important part of their identities. They suggest that identity changes are related to the whole sojourn cycle including the repatriation process. Changes in the children’s identities
resulted in the development of greater understanding of concepts and social interaction. A main reason for this enhancement in the children’s social skills and interpersonal communication is suggested to be related to further psychological improvement.

Another indicator of changes in the children’s identity was the psychological advantages gained from the sojourn experience as discussed above. Four mothers reported that this experience enhanced the children’s self-concept and that it reinforced their self-esteem and confidence. Mother R #3 commented that:

He became very confident. He has high self-esteem to the extent that he corrects some English sentences for his father who has a Master degree. One time, he corrected the pronunciation of a certain word for his English teacher. Surprisingly, the teacher encouraged him and he started to use him to help other students in English.

This child’s mother reported many advantages for the sojourn. In relation to his psychology, she stressed that because of the encouragement and compliments he got from his family, teachers, and neighbours, he became aware of his special gift. He started to feel special and this was reflected in his academic achievement. It was also reflected in his emotional and behavioural characteristics and his relationships with others. This benefit was noticed in the other three children, but to a lesser degree. The analyses indicated the children returned to Saudi Arabia with hybrid identities and different knowledge from their peers. Their awareness of diversity transferred into their self-identity and formed part of their self-image. The bicultural experience positively affected how they see themselves and how they define who they are.

A very important advantage gained from the sojourn was related to cognitive flexibility and problem solving. Although the mothers did not report this openly, this was noticed through the analyses of four interviews. In these interviews, the mothers mentioned how their children were different from their Saudi peers in thinking capabilities and acquired information. The follow up questions in the interviews emphasised this finding. One mother said that:

I noticed that he has a more complex understanding than children his age. I think he is better at cognitive thinking. He is very attentive and he can come up with solutions to his problems and not ask me for help as other children do. (Mother R #5)
This quotation and similar declarations in the interviews indicate that the returnee children have developed specific advantages in thinking style. Having more than one word for each idea or object, the children developed the ability to think more flexibly. However, cognitive development is too complicated to be judged only by the observation of a child’s mother. More results may be better extracted from the children’s teachers. Nevertheless, two mothers R #3 and R #5 acknowledged that their children liked to play rhyming games with words and to make songs or break down words into syllables. As mother R #3 stated:

Yes, he likes to play with words. For example, he likes to sing songs or just say words that end with the same letter such as “cat” and “pat”…and he is able to divide words into simpler parts or syllables.

Such abilities reported by the mothers suggest strengthened cognitive advantages. This observation is concurrent with research about the development of cognitive ability and learning a second language in childhood (e.g. Bialystok, 2001; Tzivinikou, 2005), and the relationship between bilingualism and phonological awareness (e.g. Bialystok, Majumder & Martin, 2003).

As deduced from three interviews, observed abilities that may indicate the children’s intellectual growth and enriched mental development was the children’s advanced phonological awareness, grammar awareness, word decoding, and spelling - especially in English. The mothers’ comments in many places in the interviews, regarding this issue, suggest that their children have greater sensitivity to language and more awareness of meaning and structure in English. Moreover, many mothers declared that their children were using both languages interchangeably in the same sentence especially upon return. An example was what mother R #1 said:

At first, he was trying to speak Arabic with his family but when he could not find the right word or expression or did not know the word in Arabic, he was using English.

This statement shows the child’s ability of code-switching. This ability is considered as a phenomenon that is limited to bilingual individuals. It was found that the children used this technique mainly because they did not know the word in Arabic. Some mothers reported that beside code-switching, their children had the ability to translate from Arabic to English and vice versa easily.
Unfortunately, cognitive elasticity gained from bilingualism was not of great help to those who had educational difficulties at the beginning of the return. Also, strong connections between second language proficiency and academic ability were difficult to find as most children started the primary level in Saudi Arabia and their English proficiency was mainly depending on oral/aural skills. Although three mothers reported that their children had advantages in their academic achievement, these advantages were restricted to English literacy, science, and mathematics. Mother R #3 said about her child:

He is good in mathematics to the extent that he helps his younger brother with his homework and explains some lessons to him. He also good in science

This was supported by mother R #5 who added:

It was a great advantage for my son to get a good education in Australia. He gained many advantages in literacy but they are in English more than Arabic. Regarding science, I feel that he has more information than other children about many things around him. He explains many facts to us and likes to know about these things.

These mothers’ failed to provide evidence that bilingualism per se has a positive effect on achievement in Arabic literacy. On the contrary, mothers R #2 and R #5 declared that their children faced many difficulties in writing in Arabic and reading the Holy Qur’an because they were still affected by English.

An additional advantage resulting from the children’s bilingual experience was cultural awareness. Learning the English language, the children had better access and exposure to different cultures. As one of the mothers said:

I noticed that my child has developed broader culture awareness and understanding for other cultures. He knows a lot of things about other cultures’ values and has a lot of information about their customs and lifestyle.

Thus, we can notice how the children’s proficiency in the English language provided them with knowledge of the traditional aspects, customs, stories, music, literature, and history of different cultures. This may suggest that the children succeeded in maintaining well-defined intercultural identities by which they can make use of their knowledge of the home culture as well as the Australian culture. Provided with the
opportunity to interact with different cultures because of the sojourn, the children developed greater understanding for cultural differences and openness to others.

The interviewees did not report many negative consequences resulting from acquiring the second language or living abroad. The only disadvantage as understood from two mothers R #1 and R #4 was attrition of the Arabic language as a result of the children’s preference to use English over Arabic to communicate. The mothers were afraid that spending a period of time in Australia might jeopardise their first language. These fears disappeared as soon as the children spent some time in Saudi Arabia and started school. It is important to mention that the type of childhood bilingualism in the case of most Saudi children was reported to be sequential or successive bilingualism; hence, most of them establish a considerable proficiency in Arabic before learning English. Learning English usually starts when the child enters preschool, or later. For this reason and because of the relatively short period of the sojourn (compared to immigrant children), the children become able to compensate for Arabic inactivity and develop their skills in Arabic after returning home for a period of time. According to the literature, replacement of the mother tongue seems to be more likely in children of very young ages such as children younger than five (Baker, 2011; Clark, 2000). The present study suggests similar findings.

7.3 Summary of results of the repatriation interview analysis

The interviews with Saudi mothers who have returned to Saudi Arabia after a period of residence in Australia accentuated several factors that influenced the various social and psychological outcomes of the returnees’ experience, at least for these few cases. One of the most effective factors noticed was the age factor. A general view of the focal children’s re-entry suggested that children who sojourned and returned at young ages (before school age) were less likely to experience readjustment problems. It is also suggested that they were less likely to gain as many advantages as older children did. The results suggested that, older returnees (e.g., child R #5) and returnees whose mothers have more positive attitudes toward the sojourn (e.g., mother R #3) were provided with greater advantages. However, the length of the sojourn significantly affected the repatriation process. Those who had lived abroad for an extended time
found it more difficult to socially and psychologically readjust. Personality traits appeared to be related to return home experiences. The role of good preparation for the return also appeared to be important. However, given the small sample size, no generalisation is possible on these points.

It was interesting to find that the mothers’ discussions of their children’s reactions to returning to Saudi Arabia in general agreed with the claims in the literature of different repatriation outcomes resulting from the effects of different variables (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963 in Parton, 2006; Sussman, 2002). The results were consistent with the theory of the transition cycle in which sojourners experience an initial phase of happiness followed by a difficult stage of reverse culture shock. During this stage, the sojourners gradually defeat their readjustment difficulties until they achieve full recovery.

The most common types of difficulties found in the present study were: culture shock and differences between the two cultures, lack of ability to communicate fluently in Arabic, distress, and educational difficulties related to academic achievement (only in some children). Actually, the children’s criticisms of the academic practices of teachers in Saudi Arabia contributed to their readjustment problems. Little or no efforts were made by Saudi teachers to help the children cope with the school environment. Most mothers reported that the school treated their children like other students, and that there were no additional efforts or personal activities provided to help them regain their language skills.

However, the families’ positive response to the outcomes of the children’s sojourn significantly contributed to the recovery process. At the end of the transition cycle, the children were reported to gain several advantages socially, psychologically, cognitively, linguistically, and culturally. It is important to acknowledge that determining the factual accuracy of some of the mothers’ claims (e.g., advantages in phonological awareness and word decoding) can be better proved by tests and empirical studies, and this could be a promising area for future research. Moreover, the limited information available from this part of the study consists only of impressionistic views of this very small number of parents. However, the main goal
of investigating the children’s sociolinguistic situation in Australia reflected from their mothers’ perspectives was achieved.
Chapter Eight: Discussion and Conclusions

8.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the research journey with a summary of the research process and main findings, limitations, and suggestions for future research. It provides a brief summary of the aims of the research and the approaches used to investigate the topic. It offers some practical recommendations to ESL teachers and educational institutions in host countries, Saudi parents and other ESL parents, and teachers and education policy-makers in Saudi Arabia. It is hoped that this exploratory study has provided evidence of the importance of social elements in ESL children’s acculturation, and that it can yield significant insights for further research.

The purpose of this research was to examine the sociolinguistic situation of young Saudi children in formal and informal Australian settings. Its aim was to investigate the influence of surrounding social factors on the children’s acculturation and reacculturation as a salient facet of the sociolinguistic growth of this type of ESL learners. Relying on the perspectives of their mothers and teachers, this research considered the important role of the families’ religious and cultural background in process of acculturation and the evolvement of the children’s identities. It is hoped that this initial study has prepared the ground for further research that could incorporate input from young ESL learners themselves. The study included accounts of three significant stages in the acculturation experience: the early stages of the sojourn and arriving to Australia, the consolidation of the children’s stay in the new culture, and then the repatriation to home country.

This thesis emerged from my personal experiences and close observation of my children who represent a larger group of children experiencing both difficulties and successes during their temporary sojourn in Australia. I have witnessed how my children have succeeded in traversing the stages of culture shock and overcoming their linguistic difficulties, and how they attained a state of full recovery and integrated into the Australian context in a way that allowed them to make use of both cultures. I wanted to investigate methods of supporting them and the effect of our
parenting style on the process of adjustment to the new context. At the same time, like other mothers, I was also concerned about my children losing their language or cultural identity as a result of assimilation to a Western culture like Australia. Conducting this study was a useful source to deepen my understanding of the process of acculturation, which culminated for me in a deep contentment with my children’s situation. In this way, I found my research experience to be extremely rewarding. It was a great privilege to spend more than three years sharing my experiences with other Saudi mothers who enriched this project with their perspectives on the cyclical nature of their children’s sojourn.

8.2 The research process and findings

One crucial issue identified in the literature was the lack of information regarding the socio-cultural integration of young minority children transferring from their origin culture into another one; so little is known about the mediating social factors that may influence their integration. Most of the literature in the field has focused on the adjustment process associated with immigrant or refugee children. Those children’s circumstances may differ from young expatriates who move with their families for the purpose of improving the family’s socioeconomic situation or continuing education for the parent(s), and thus experience easier cross-cultural transitions. In addition, acculturation issues for expatriates coming from Islamic cultures, such as Saudi Arabia, had been neglected in the international research picture before this project was undertaken.

This thesis was based on three major themes: acculturation, reacculturation, and supportive social factors. The nexus of these themes was explored through interviewing a sample of 20 mothers. The two groups of interviewees coming from different socioeconomic backgrounds allowed for deeper understanding of these themes. Questionnaires given to 30 teachers from different Australian schools and preschools contributed in broadening the perspective of the research. Nevertheless, a notion of importance was parental attitude as the themes of the study mainly revolved around how Saudi mothers perceived the acculturation of their young children and how they could support their children through this time, more than
relying on external views. Therefore, the mothers’ comments on acculturation have been respected and their perceptions have been considered as an important source of information. As this research was conceptualised, a central question emerged on what types of social factors surrounding Saudi children in Australia can influence their acculturation, and which strategies are more efficient to support their social adaptation to the host culture.

The exploration of Saudi children’s acculturation patterns demonstrated that the nature of their sojourn was one of a cycle, in which they underwent developmental stages both to adjust to the new context and acquire the second language. The transition cycle ends with the return to the home country causing salient shifts in the children’s cultural identity. These results support the social psychological framework of Sussman’s Cultural Identity Model (CIM) (2002). However, adjustment to the new environment was not found to be easy. Interviewing a cohort of Saudi mothers indicated that their children had to face complicated tasks when they arrived to Australia. While they were still affected by their past and diverse experiences and memories, they had to struggle in order to integrate into the new community. Surviving the first days at school, the children had to deal with a difficult predicament. In addition to their lack of English language skills, they had to cope with a new environment, unfamiliar peers, and anxiety resulting from this unfamiliarity.

It was noted that most of these young newcomers had never attended school before. It was also found that even those who had prior appropriate schooling and familiarity with the environment of the school (though not the language) might find it difficult at the beginning to understand the diverse learning processes and expected standards of behaviour in Australian schools. In general, the results pointed to parents, teachers, and educational institutions as the most influential factors in young children’s acculturation during this stage. The available literature did not shed much light on the kinds of difficulties that may be experienced at the beginning of the acculturation process. Adding to our understanding of the nature of such difficulties and their effects was found to be crucial, as negative experiences at these initial stages may impede the process of acculturation.
Findings from this study showed that Saudi children had attitudes that helped them to adjust to the new cultural environment and function more efficiently. Their English language proficiency had been encouraged, and they gained a desire to preserve their own identity and simultaneously interact effectively within the host culture. Positive changes in the children’s personalities and behaviour were among many life-changing benefits gained from the sojourn experience, which resulted in an enhanced sense of appreciation for the host culture and their culture of origin at the same time. Generally, acculturation was perceived as a multidimensional process that intersects with various variables, is fuelled by continuous contact among cultural groups, and results in various outcomes. These findings are consistent with previous theoretical perspectives and findings on how the acculturation process is experienced (e.g., Berry, 2003; Cuellar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1995; Padilla, 1980; Padilla & Perez, 2003; Pihamaa, 2002; Schumann, 1978).

In addition, the findings revealed that attitudes toward acculturation did not differ significantly among various Saudi families, and that while the families’ religious and cultural background did influence the acculturation of their children, it did so positively. Somewhat surprisingly, the present study did not indicate that the sojourn to Australia brought any apparent relationship or communication conflicts between the children and their parents (although such effects might appear with older children). As mentioned before, most mothers perceived changes in their children’s behaviours as positive and desirable, and not as being opposite to their values.

However, what was not clearly brought up in the interviews is to what extent Saudi children were affected by the values acquired in the Australian context, including communication changes, styles, and the use of Western gestures and expressions. In the interviews, the extent of the children’s accommodation to and/or internalisation of the interactional patterns witnessed or experienced at school or with friends was not clearly discussed. Many interviewees paid closer attention to stressing the significance of maintaining their cultural and religious values and how their children were receptive to their teachings. Their comments signified a desire to keep their children’s behaviours and beliefs consistent with the family’s values and culture. The
children, at the same time, were described as happy and well adjusted to the host culture. These findings suggested that Saudi children have configured a way to satisfy both sides simultaneously. Therefore, their acculturation attitudes according to Berry’s model would be ‘integrationist’ (Torres, 2001; Berry, 2003; Culhane, 2004; Patron, 2006; Rivera, 2009).

Regarding Saudi parents, the potential contradiction between having positive attitudes toward both acculturation and cultural preservation raised additional challenges in relation to keeping the balance between understanding the importance of supporting their children’s social integration so that they would fit in with their peers and friends, and their preoccupation with keeping the children’s customs, beliefs, and values to conform to their cultural perspectives. This reminds us of Choi and Thomas’s (2009) argument that minority groups’ negotiation in both cultures and their social interaction with the new culture facilitate their adaptation.

This study showed very clearly the value of the social supportive network in assisting the children to minimise their problematic moments and enhance their integration when moving to a new culture. It provides deep insight into the significance of the children’s families, teachers, friends, members of the host culture, and the media, as well as indicating promising avenues for future investigations. Results in relation to this part also supported Choi and Thomas’s study (2009) on factors of acculturation attitudes in ethnic minority groups. Their findings likewise highlighted the influence of the extent of social support received from family members and friends from the host culture. The social environment was found to be related to higher degrees of acculturation of young children. Similar emphases were also found by researchers such as Padilla and Perez (2003), Berry (1990, 2003), and Bochner (2006).

In the same vein, some findings in this study added to the existing evidence in the literature. For example, the findings added weight to Aronowitz’s results (1992, in Pihamaa, 2002), which showed that parental attitudes can be used as prominent predictors of the adaptation process as there is a relationship between the social adaptation of minority children and their parents’ attitudes toward the host culture. The literature also focused on the influence of teachers’ awareness of their personal
attitudes about culturally diverse students on their learning process, self-esteem, and coping with the new school situation. This was supported by many researchers including Hamilton, Anderson, Frater-Mathieson, Loewen, and Moore (2005), Espinosa (2005), Richards, Brown, and Forde (2006), Vuckovic (2008), and others. Similar results were reached in this study.

Another example is that the findings supported previous researchers’ views on the potential advantages of peer interactions and small groups in providing learning opportunities and enhancing socialisation (Téllez & Waxman, 2006; Levine, 1996 in Leung, 2007; Hruska, 2000 in Hawkins, 2005; Toohey, 2000) as well as to that which was suggested by Qian (2009), Kong (2006), and Kim (1977) - that host mass media has a major impact on providing an important context for language learning and adaptation to the new culture. The only difference here is that these studies discuss the influence of social elements in a rather fragmented manner. A main issue that confronted me early in the research was the scarcity of studies that provide a general insight into the main social factors surrounding young newcomers in their new experience. More investigation about this theme would be very useful in future research.

On the other hand, there were other results in this study that contradicted Choi and Thomas’s (2009) study. For example, the findings were opposite to their conclusion that although social support was seen as a crucial predictor variable in determining the level of acculturation, a negative correlation was found between the two. Another finding in the same study perceived social support from the community and cultural activities as a hindering factor to positive acculturation; yet the opposite was found in the present study. Similar contradictions were noticed in regard to their finding that older children were likely to receive more social support than younger children.

This study added to the knowledge about acculturation by providing valuable examples of strategies that can be used effectively by parents and teachers to support young children’s acculturation and bilingualism in the Australian milieu. Key factors for parents in supporting the children as found in the study were having and modelling positive attitudes toward the new culture, preparing the child for the
sojourn either linguistically or socially or both, and supporting the children’s SLA. Thus, this study responded to and found support for the call for a socially informed framework that examines language acquisition in a more socially sensitive manner (Block, 2003).

In regard to teachers, many researchers emphasised the role of teachers’ practices in the class on socialising ESL newcomers in the new setting (e.g., Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2006) and providing them with a rich linguistic input (e.g., McLaughlin, 1992). Moreover, the importance of culturally responsive teaching was observed by some researchers including Lee (2004), Au (2001), and Richards, Brown, and Forde (2006). The present study found that using various strategies, teachers have the ability to affirm students’ cultural characteristics, encourage their appreciation for diversity, minimise their alienation, and construct a culturally responsive learning environment for the second language. However, promoting culturally responsive instruction for culturally diverse learners entails an awareness of their values and home culture, which was reported in this study to be somewhat more difficult. The findings in this part also supported Siilata and Barkhuizen’s study on young Polynesian children (2004, cited in Gorinski & Fraser, 2006), which argued for the importance of incorporating learners’ cultural knowledge and aspects into the class environment.

However, this result may prompt some questions. For instance, what if the teacher has children from several different cultural backgrounds (let us say Arabic, Japanese, Russian, Polish, and Spanish)? Can the teacher realistically know a lot about all of these, let alone implement culturally sensitive strategies for each? Would the classroom not be a mess? This may not be a problem in bicultural societies or societies with only a few minority groups, but in multicultural societies like Australia, Canada, and the U.S. this can be a problem and the expectations of teachers have to be realistic. The literature suggests a number of approaches to face this problem and avoid such bias. For instance, the ‘conceptual approach’ presented by Jonson (2002) could be used to avoid presenting superficial tasks or fragmented lessons (see the section about the role of the curriculum and multicultural pedagogy). A key point is to emphasise the daily lives of the home cultures rather than their special events and to concentrate on similarities rather than differences. Nevertheless, implementing
multicultural education still takes time and great effort if effective outcomes are to be achieved. That is why I believe that parents have to be more actively involved with their children’s education and to be told explicitly by the teachers what the educational expectations in Australia are. This requires minority groups to be more acculturated to the majority group, rather than the other way around. Exploring such issues is recommended for future research.

The results showed a crucial mismatch between mothers’ and the teachers’ responses in relation to the depth of Australian teachers’ understanding of Saudi culture and Islam. While Saudi mothers reported that the teachers’ knowledge of Saudi and Islamic values was full of misconceptions or generalisations, I found that the teachers reported the opposite, or at least reported that they thought they had the appropriate knowledge to allow them to communicate effectively with Saudi families. To understand such divergent responses, there are two possibilities: from the one hand, it is possible that the teachers overestimated the extent of their understanding of Saudi culture, but it is also possible that the Saudi mothers were not open-minded enough to admit it possible for others to understand their culture. An interesting issue is that the interviews were conducted with participants from various socioeconomic backgrounds, with different educational levels, and different English proficiencies. I argue that it is hard to believe that all of these 15 mothers were equally lacking in open-mindedness, especially when I have observed similar perspectives in my personal experience either with my children’s teachers or other Australian people. Another relevant observation is that members of a dominant culture (as are the majority of teachers in New South Wales) tend to underestimate the extent and complexity of knowledge required for adequate intercultural understanding, because they do not have enough experience of it. Knowing about other cultures is optional for members of the dominant group, while it is essential for non-dominant groups (as pointed out by Rosenblum and Travis, 2000, among others).

It should be mentioned that the analysis of the data did not seek to provide answers regarding how levels of acculturation correlate with L2 proficiency. Although the results generally corresponded with studies that have been conducted to examine the interdependence between proficiency in the L2 and acculturation, such as Schmidt
(1983 in Kasper & Rose, 2002) and Stauble (1980 in Nitta, 2006), this study was unable fully to verify if failure to acculturate to the host culture can negatively influence individuals’ SLA. While L2 proficiency is generally seen as crucial for social adaptation, the data did not clearly indicate if alienation or separation from members of the host culture can impede young sojourners’ language learning. For example, it was found that the only child who did not achieve successful integration into the Australian culture was described as having a high level of English proficiency. The small sample in this study could be a reason for such ambiguity. This contrasts with the above-mentioned studies that found that social and psychological variables of acculturation have a facilitative influence on the subjects’ SLA, and that having a negative attitude toward the TL group was also found to hinder the acquisition of some components of the L2.

Still, the present study does not consider acculturation as a linear process in which high levels in L2 variables are viewed as a direct indicator of high levels of acculturation. These results may be convergent with Schumann’s Acculturation Model (1978), a major framework in the present study, which declares that acculturation is a variable in SLA but not a direct factor. At the same time, the present findings indicate some reservations about saying that the extent of proficiency in the L2, in informal learning contexts, is dependent on the second language learners’ acculturation to the L2 group. Whether language input received in the formal school context through responding to the teachers’ instructions and participating in class activities can compensate for rejection to interact with members of the target group is a key question for further study.

Finally, this study identified significant predictors or variables to determine the level of acculturation of young Saudi sojourners. These were: social supportive network, English proficiency, age, level of education, parental attitude, and length of residence in the host culture. It is assumed that sojourners to countries that have a multicultural nature with experiences and discourses of diverse groups have more acculturative options than those who sojourn to explicitly monocultural countries (Berry, 1991; Shaw, 2010; Torres, 2001).
The repatriation process or reacculturation to the home culture was presented as an important theme in the present study. The repatriation process was explored as the endpoint of the cultural transition cycle and was also noticed to be influenced by several variables leading to different outcomes. Young returnees were found to undergo several phases and difficulties before reaching full recovery. The general assessment to the focal children’s experiences did not indicate dramatic changes or shifts in their identities. Moreover, reverse culture shock, as a facet of the readjustment process, was not directly described to be more difficult than the adaptation process itself. This may be due to the relatively brief length of the sojourn. Changes in the children’s personalities and communication style were perceived as advantageous by their mothers who asserted the significant role of good preparation for the return. The findings also indicated a possible need for Saudi teachers and educational institutions to support young returnees in ways somewhat similar to how they were supported by ESL teachers in Australia. Further research is required to draw educators’ attention to this issue in Saudi Arabia. However, discussions of Saudi children’s reactions to return to Saudi Arabia in general were consistent with the literature’s findings.

8.3 Limitations and suggestions for future research

Much of the current research literature addresses the potential limitations that may occur in qualitative research, in relation to factors such as generalisability of the findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003a). The present study should be considered in light of several limitations. It has some limitations associated with sampling, the methodology instruments, and some conceptual and measurement issues.

First, the sampling in this study has been limited to a multicultural country with particular socioeconomic features. It is observable that the sociopolitical context of a particular country or culture may substantially influence the acculturation process and patterns experienced by ethnic minority groups. An example is that the host culture’s attitudes toward ethnic or minority groups can interfere with individuals’ selected acculturation strategies. Many researchers have examined the cultural context in which acculturation occurs, and the role of national and institutional policies of the
host culture in the acculturation process (Kohatsu, Concepcion, & Perez, 2009; Schumann, 1978; Nitta, 2006; Berry, 2003; Navas et al., 2005 in Rivera, 2009; Patron, 2006). Consequently, the acculturation patterns observed in the Australian culture may be different from those observed in other monocultural countries.

Like most qualitative research, this study was conducted with a limited number of participants, yet they come from different regions and represent various groups of the Saudi society. It is assumed that this is enough to represent the Saudi culture as whole. However, it would be interesting in future research to explore the same topic in relevance to other Arab Muslim societies living in other countries. There are also limitations in relation to the set of five interviews with returnee mothers. This very small sample happened to include only mothers of boy-children, and whose children had been too young or who had limited experience of (pre)schooling in Australia. Therefore, it must be acknowledged that this small set of returnee mothers does not provide a sufficient basis for any generalisations, or valid evidence regarding the repatriation of sojourners. Nevertheless, the experiences of this group are deserving of attention, and would be a fruitful area for further research.

Another limitation is that the data of the interviews come from the children’s mothers, assuming that the mother figure plays the most vital role in her children’s lives, particularly within Arab family structures. The research instruments are designed based on the mothers’ assumptions and viewpoints. However, many mothers talked about strategies used to support the child’s social adaptation as a result of the efforts of both parents. It is suggested that future research could be conducted involving the experience of both parents in order to obtain a better understanding of the dynamics of acculturation. Also, investigating the sociolinguistic situation of young ESL sojourners in their host cultures would be enriched if it integrated a wider perspective on the topic with accounts from the children themselves.

Third, the teacher questionnaires would ideally be supplemented by focus group interviews in order to elicit more nuanced data from some of the respondents to this instrument. This could be difficult to achieve, especially with the busy nature of the schools and the limitations on the teachers’ time. The results of questionnaires may be
not as informative as the interviews; however, it was the most practicable way within the scope of this study to elicit useful information and make comparisons. The questionnaire design also had limitations associated with the format of presenting statements for respondents to agree or disagree with via the Likert scale. Although very widely used in social research, this format has the weaknesses associated with leading questions, of tending to overdetermine the responses. The contrast is particularly evident here between the richness of the data gained through the interviews, and the relatively limited window on teachers’ perspectives afforded by the questionnaires, for reasons of practicality.

Fourth, this exploratory study is cross-sectional in nature, which does not permit extrapolation about how the same acculturation group would experience reverse culture shock upon return to Saudi Arabia. Time was a factor that operated as a restriction to the study. A longitudinal study of the same children over a period of time extending after the return to the home culture would contribute greatly to understanding the cycle of acculturation.

Finally, language development is seen as a part of the acculturation process. Factors influencing the children’s acculturation were also assumed to have effects on their acquisition for the L2. This account varied between using terms such as social adaptation, adjustment, and integration to refer to the notion of acculturation to the new culture, as the main aim in this study is to draw a general picture of the effects of social factors on the acculturation of Saudi children. For the same reason, determining the children’s acculturation and English proficiency presented in the demographic information depended on their mothers’ assessments and not on precise acculturation scales developed by scholars in the field. The study also has limitations in that it did not specifically address the children’s English proficiency levels in grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, reading and writing performance, communication style, communicative competence, code-switching, etc. All of these could be interesting areas for future research.
8.4 Recommendations

This study used qualitative research methods, in an effort to achieve better understanding of the process of acculturation and L2 development of Saudi children in Australia, with implications also for other ESL young children from diverse backgrounds. The findings from the present study provide some useful insights and information for both parents and ESL teachers, to help them understand the numerous factors influencing their children in the new environment, and extend their knowledge of the most effective strategies and activities to help maintain their linguistic and social attitude to ESL. Academics and researchers interested in the nature of acculturation and social adaptation of young ESL children may find the results of this investigation useful as well, as it suggests areas for further research. Based on the findings of this study and principles found in the literature, the following recommendations can be offered.

8.4.1 Recommendations to ESL teachers and educational institutions in host countries

1- The findings show that the teacher is one of the most significant role models along with the family in supporting young newcomers’ acculturation to the new environment. A positive finding was that many Australian teachers appeared to be aware of the major difficulties that children may experience upon entering a new socio-cultural environment. They also seemed knowledgeable about the importance of supporting these children adjusting, which leads to better learning outcomes. An initial step to gain such an attitude, as revealed by the results and the literature review, is for teachers to be critical and conscious of their personal beliefs and attitudes towards other cultures. Promoting self-reflection on cultural identity was found to be important in motivating teachers to respond effectively to learners from other cultural groups and to be aware of barriers that might impede their learning.

2- The findings confirmed that that many Australian teachers found it difficult to learn about the cultural characteristics of Saudi people because of the limited resources available about this type of cultural group. The teachers’ knowledge of
Islam and Arabs were described by many Saudi mothers to be full of generalisations and misconceptions. Consequently, Saudi or at least Arabic culture was not sufficiently addressed through the daily activities of the class. The state Department of Education could help by providing appropriate resources either online or offline. School libraries also need to be provided with age-appropriate books or stories that shed light on diverse cultural groups.

3- Most importantly, teachers are advised to seek sufficient knowledge of ESL children and their families. Achieving high degrees of culturally responsive education was found to be full of challenges. It is crucial for teachers to develop effective approaches to obtain knowledge of children’s cultural background. Some useful approaches as shown here are the use of formal or informal interviews and questionnaires, and conducting meetings with the children’s parents. Teachers can also obtain a lot of cultural and linguistic information through asking the parents about their cultures and views on school practices when they collect the child from school, for instance. Before that can happen, however, it is crucial to establish a relationship with the family and to gain their trust.

4- The use of in-class activities and the development of culturally responsive strategies for ESL children were reported to be of great value. Moreover, the literature stressed the significance of connecting classroom practices and materials to the actual lives of the students. Teachers in host countries can make good use of regular in-class activities, such as songs and stories to help newcomers be familiar with the school environment and assure a successful transition from home to school. The use of library resources, class materials, and real objects can be modified to achieve various goals.

5- In this study, the teachers acknowledged that enhancing Saudi children’s English language acquisition was helpful in assisting their acculturation. Therefore, teachers would do well to provide newcomers and those whose English is limited with a rich linguistic environment and a good role model while using English in the class. This can be attained by providing a highly qualified input to the L2 and speaking in a natural and simple way in order to expand the children’s vocabulary. Teachers can
also encourage social contexts of L2 input such as using peer interactions and group work, and motivating the children to interact with English speakers. Fostering the love of reading in the children is also vital in enhancing English learning.

6- Teachers will find it beneficial to sustain a successful partnership with ESL parents and find innovative ways to collaborate with them. The first step is to provide the parents with a comprehensible orientation to the school system, including a clear explanation of expectations related to their involvement in the education of their children. Inviting the parents to participate in class activities and family literacy projects, or asking them to volunteer at school events reported to be beneficial. Difficulties in communicating with ESL families can be avoided by utilising cultural liaisons and special interpreters, or seeking the help of ESL families from the same cultural group. Gathering some information about the families also helps in bridging the gap between ESL parents and schools.

7- In general, ESL parents should be consulted on issues related to their children’s education and situation at school. Obtaining translators or interpreters in the parents’ language can help with this process. ESL parents also should be provided with translations of school notes, reports, or newsletters, if required. Doing so can be considered as a valuable part of the school parental involvement plan. On the other hand, the parents should be also urged to contact the school when matters of concern arise. The results show that these methods have dual benefits in relation to ESL children’s social functioning in school and also in relation to their academic achievement.

8- As the results demonstrate, teachers who had specialised teaching courses were more willing to learn about the Saudi culture and make use of other successful approaches in acculturating children from diverse backgrounds. Therefore, the Department of Education is advised to provide school teachers with cultural competency training either by recommending special activities, cultural knowledge and culturally responsive methods to teach ESL learners, or arranging regular teacher training programs that include information on how to put teachers’ knowledge into practice.
9- Making ESL children feel that they have a voice and a place to express themselves can improve their self-confidence and their sense of pride in their cultures. To achieve this, teachers can encourage their students to talk about their cultures in front of the class and share information. It is important to mention that teachers, while talking about other cultures, should avoid discussing religious or cultural norms that they know to be opposite to their students’ beliefs or may evoke misunderstandings with their parents.

8.4.2 Recommendations to Saudi parents and other ESL parents

1- It was clear in the research that parents of ESL children were influential in their children’s lives that they play a crucial role in enhancing their academic achievement, and in facilitating adaptation to the new school context. The results indicated that children can be affected by their parents’ reactions and attitudes towards the transition experience as well as by the host culture. Feelings of fear and anxiety resulting from moving into a new and different culture were suggested to trigger undesirable emotional responses in the family, affecting all members in one way or another. Therefore, it is recommended that parents do their best to show positive attitudes towards the whole sojourn experience and learning the L2 and to influence their children’s attitudes positively. Of equal importance is to solidify the family structure and values, and consider the culture and society of which they are a part.

2- Preparing the child for the sojourn was construed as a protective factor that could affect the extent and duration of the difficulties endured in the new context. Adjustment to the new culture was found to be easier when the children were prepared for it linguistically and culturally. This suggests that children should be equipped with simple essential words and expressions in the second language to survive the first stages of the sojourn. Reasons for the sojourn and expected differences in appearance or practices should be also explained. As a helpful way of preparation, parents can encourage their children to ask questions about what it is going to be like living in a different culture, and allow sufficient time to listen and talk to their children about important issues in advance.
3- Moving to the new culture can be voluntary or by choice for sojourner parents. Unfortunately, children have little choice in their parents’ decisions. Accordingly, it is essential to be aware that children experience such transitions differently and that some of them may find it more difficult to express themselves or convey their feelings about it. Parents also need to cultivate awareness of the types of difficulties may be experienced by their children in the new culture and what they can do to alleviate their effects. In relation to issues of culture shock, it is important to talk to the child in a calm way and avoiding making matters more complicated or expressing negative attitudes as this may lead to undesirable consequences such as alienation from members from the host culture. In general, parents can help their children feel less powerless by seeking out their views and reactions about the sojourn, and evolve them as much as possible in making decisions.

4- It was found that ESL parents’ attitudes, strategies, and practices at home have effects on the rate and quality of second language acquisition. Interactions with members of the host culture were also reported as one of the best methods for fostering language learning. Parents can be reassured that taking advantage of interaction opportunities is important in promoting their children’s cross-cultural understanding and communication, rather than fearing that they will be influenced by the Western lifestyle. There are many online articles that may provide ESL parents with innovative methods to support their children’s acquisition, such as home literacy and play-based activities that depend on repetition and stimulation. Strategies used by Saudi parents in the present study can be of good use.

5- The findings of the present study as well as the literature emphasises the importance of the first language in forming the foundation for all later language development. Maintaining the native language becomes one of the parents’ main responsibilities in the new context, especially in the absence of the support of extended family and peers from the home culture. Parents can be reassured that although the L1 and L2 knowledge are interrelated, maintaining the first language does not interfere with the learning of the second. Limited opportunities to use the native language outside the home increase the necessity to provide the children with opportunities to improve their literacy skills in the first language at home, which was
found to be a crucial dimension not only to learn English, but to prepare the children for school when they return. Moreover, parents can be reassured that interaction with members from the same culture is as important as socialisation with English speakers in assisting acculturation.

6- Parents in the new context still need to be involved in their children’s education and adaptation to school. Strong collaborative relations with teachers are important, if ESL children are to have positive outcomes from the sojourn experience. Various ways for collaboration were discussed in the study. Parents can also facilitate teachers’ mission to build up a sufficient profile of their children by providing information about the home environment, food preferences, and other relevant cultural or religious factors. Parents taking an active part in their children’s schooling and participating in school events was found valuable in enhancing the self-esteem and sense of belonging of their children.

7- Long term cross-cultural encounters can influence young returnees’ identities, producing stress or conflict with extended family members. Many returnees may feel different from their peers after returning to their home country. These differences include interpersonal styles, behavioural signs, and self-assertion. Consequently, parents have an additional responsibility in preparing their children for the repatriation process. Communication with children prior to, during, and after the return is recommended to avoid readjustment problems or assessing the whole returnee experience negatively. As child-parents relationships can predict various outcomes of the returnee experience, linguistic, religious, and cultural preparation are increasingly required for smooth readjustment. Teachers, friends as well as other members of the family can also help with readjustment.

8.4.3 Recommendations to educators in Saudi Arabia

Investigating issues of reverse cultural shock is a concern in the present study, yet, neither the sample nor time spent with the returnee group could give adequate details on the real situation of young returnees in their Saudi schools. However, the findings were able to evoke some key issues to be considered in this case. One important issue
is that Saudi teachers are recommended to find methods to help the children’s reacculturation to the home culture and, most importantly, assist them to overcome linguistic and reverse culture shock. For example, improving their Arabic language skills, helping them to keep up with peers in the class, and encouraging and motivating their learning were reported to be useful strategies, that are considered part of the teachers’ main responsibilities at the same time. Moreover, the transformations experienced by these children may affect relationships with those around them, especially during the first stage of repatriation; therefore, Saudi teachers need to be aware of the children’s conditions and needs at this stage. Some returnees may demonstrate unfamiliar perspectives and behaviours as a result of many changes in their cultural identities. Teachers are thus recommended to show more culturally responsive behaviour, patience with and acceptance of the children’s new identities. They should also understand that such changes can potentially enrich the class and school, especially if the offered diversity is appreciated and acknowledged.

8.4.4 Recommendations to policy-makers in Saudi Arabia

The present study yielded some interesting findings that have education policy implications for improving the performance of Saudi teachers in regards to the reacculturation issue. The findings indicate a lack of interest and preparedness in Saudi teachers and schools to meet the special needs of young returnees who have just returned to Saudi Arabia and entered school. These children were expected to perform like other students without consideration to their inadequate Arabic language skills. These findings lead us to realise that education policy-makers can play a significant role in reducing the difficulties many children encounter when entering the school. As they are responsible for the whole education system in Saudi Arabia, education policy-makers are recommended to provide teachers with relevant information, resources, and training courses in order to enable them to assist the readjustment process of their students and strengthen their literacy skills. Training courses and information sessions are also helpful in expanding teachers’ awareness of models and strategies required to respond effectively to the substantial numbers of Saudi families who will be returning from overseas study in the coming years.
References


Research Information for Teachers, 2(1), 31-34.


Appendices
Appendix A

Information Statement for Mothers in Australia:

**Social factors affecting the acculturation of young Saudi children in the Australian context**

Document Version 2; dated 15/3/10

You are invited to participate in the research project identified above which is being conducted by Athari Al-Muraikhi from the School of Humanities and Social Science at the University of Newcastle. The project is part of Athari’s PhD research at the University of Newcastle, supervised by Dr Jean Harkins and Dr Catriona Malau from the School of Humanities and Social Science.

**Why is the research being done?**

Learning a second language has a great influence on a young child’s educational development. This study looks at one particular group of ESL learners: young children (aged 4-8) of Saudi families living in Australia. Taking into account the background of the Saudi and Islamic culture and some of their specific aspects (religious and social), we look into the social factors that influence Saudi children’s acculturation and participation in the new situation. We aim to learn more about these issues:

- Sociolinguistic, educational and other difficulties facing Saudi children in the Australian context
- What types of supportive social networks are surrounding Saudi children
- What parents and teachers are doing to support their acculturation and bilingualism
- Relationships between parents’ perceptions of their children’s acculturation, and social support
- How the families’ religious and cultural background influence their acculturation

By investigating these things, we hope to gain useful knowledge and insights to help teachers and families assist the social and educational development of young Saudi children. Any conclusions from this study will of course apply only to this particular group, but may also contribute to understanding of the factors affecting other young ESL learners.
Who can participate in the research?
We hope to invite about 15 mothers of Saudi children aged 4-8, to be interviewed by Athari Almuraikhi about their child’s learning. You have been contacted through the Saudi Association of Newcastle because you have children in this age range.

What choice do you have?
Participation in this research is entirely your choice. Only those people who give their informed consent will be included in the project. Whether or not you decide to participate, this decision will not disadvantage you.

What would you be asked to do?
If you agree to participate, you will be asked to talk with Athari in an interview at a time convenient to you, in Arabic and/or English, about your experiences and thoughts about your child’s learning in Australia. The interview asks about your experiences but not about personal details. It also asks a few general questions about family background, education and languages.

How much time will it take?
The interview should take about one hour to complete in one session.

What are the risks and benefits of participating?
We cannot promise you any benefit from participating in this research. There is a small risk that you might feel uncomfortable with questions about your intercultural experiences, or differences of opinion about these things that could affect your personal relationships. If you feel uncomfortable during the interview, you can stop participating at any time, and if you need more support Athari can refer you to appropriate counselling or religious support services.

How will your privacy be protected?
Any information collected by the researchers which might identify you will be stored securely and only accessed by the researchers, except as required by law. The interview does not ask for your name or other identifying information. What you say might be quoted or paraphrased in reports of the research, but not in a way that could identify you. Data will be stored for at least 5 years at the University of Newcastle.

How will the information collected be used?
The results will be reported in a thesis to be submitted for Athari’s PhD degree, and may be presented at conferences and in professional journals. Individual participants will not be identified in any reports arising from the project. You will be able to review the audio recording after your interview to edit or erase your contribution. The results will be reported to you in an information sheet or poster sent to schools and community groups after completion of the study, and you can ask for a copy of it by emailing the researcher.
What do you need to do to participate?
Please read this Information Statement and be sure you understand its contents before you consent to participate. If there is anything you do not understand, or you have questions, contact the researcher. If you choose to participate, please complete the attached Consent Form, and contact Athari.Almuraikhi@studentmail.newcastle.edu.au to arrange a time convenient to you for the interview.

Further information
If you would like further information please contact Dr Jean Harkins from the School of Humanities and Social Science at the University of Newcastle, Jean.Harkins@newcastle.edu.au, (02) 4921 5179.

Thank you for considering this invitation.
Your participation would be greatly valued.

Dr Jean Harkins
Lecturer in Linguistics

Dr Catriona Malau
Lecturer in Linguistics

Athari Almuraikhi
Student Researcher

Complaints about this research
This project has been approved by the University’s Human Research Ethics Committee, Approval No. H-2009-0282. Should you have concerns about your rights as a participant in this research, or you have a complaint about the manner in which the research is conducted, it may be given to the researcher, or, if an independent person is preferred, to the Human Research Ethics Officer, Research Office, The Chancellery, The University of Newcastle, University Drive, Callaghan NSW 2308, Australia, telephone (02) 49216333, email Human-Ethics@newcastle.edu.au
Appendix B
Information Statement for Teachers:

Social factors affecting the acculturation of young Saudi children in the Australian context

Document Version 2; dated 15/3/10

You are invited to participate in the research project identified above which is being conducted by Athari Al-Muraikhi from the School of Humanities and Social Science at the University of Newcastle. The project is part of Athari’s PhD research at the University of Newcastle, supervised by Dr Jean Harkins and Dr Catriona Malau from the School of Humanities and Social Science.

Why is the research being done?
Learning a second language has a great influence on a young child’s educational development. This study looks at one particular group of ESL learners: young children (aged 4-8) of Saudi families living in Australia. Taking into account the background of the Saudi and Islamic culture and some of their specific aspects (religious and social), we look into the social factors that influence Saudi children’s acculturation and participation in the new situation. We aim to learn more about these issues:

- Sociolinguistic, educational and other difficulties facing Saudi children in the Australian context
- What types of supportive social networks are surrounding Saudi children
- What parents and teachers are doing to support their acculturation and bilingualism
- Relationships between parents’ perceptions of their children’s acculturation, and social support
- How the families’ religious and cultural background influence their acculturation

By investigating these things, we hope to gain useful knowledge and insights to help teachers and families assist the social and educational development of young Saudi children. Any conclusions from this study will of course apply...
only to this particular group, but may also contribute to understanding of the factors affecting other young ESL learners.

**Who can participate in the research?**
We hope to invite up to 30 teachers who have taught Saudi children aged 4-8, to complete an anonymous questionnaire about their experiences of teaching young Saudi ESL learners. You were selected by your principal or director to receive this invitation because of your relevant teaching experience.

**What choice do you have?**
Participation in this research is entirely your choice. Only those people who give their informed consent will be included in the project. Whether or not you decide to participate, this decision will not disadvantage you. The questionnaire is completely anonymous and no personal information is collected.

**What would you be asked to do?**
If you agree to participate, you are asked to complete the enclosed anonymous questionnaire about the situation of young Saudi learners in your experience. The questionnaire also asks for basic demographic information about qualifications, experience and languages, but not your name or personal details.

**How much time will it take?**
The questionnaire should take about 15 minutes to complete in one session.

**What are the risks and benefits of participating?**
We cannot promise you any benefit from participating in this research. There are no identified risks associated with the questionnaire survey.

**How will your privacy be protected?**
The questionnaire is anonymous and it will not be possible to identify you from your answers. Data collected during the research will be stored for at least 5 years at the University of Newcastle.

**How will the information collected be used?**
The results will be reported in a thesis to be submitted for Athari’s PhD degree, and may be presented at conferences and in professional journals. Individual participants or organisations will not be identified in any reports arising from the project. The results will be reported to you in an information sheet or poster sent to your school after completion of the study.

**What do you need to do to participate?**
Please read this Information Statement and be sure you understand its contents before you consent to participate. If there is anything you do not understand, or you have questions, contact the researcher. If you choose to participate, please complete and return the attached anonymous questionnaire in the reply paid envelope provided. This will be taken as your informed consent to participate.
Further information
If you would like further information please contact Dr Jean Harkins from the School of Humanities and Social Science at the University of Newcastle, Jean.Harkins@newcastle.edu.au, (02) 4921 5179.

Thank you for considering this invitation.
Your participation would be greatly valued.

Dr Jean Harkins
Lecturer in Linguistics

Dr Catriona Malau
Lecturer in Linguistics

Athari Almuraikhi
Student Researcher

Complaints about this research
This project has been approved by the University’s Human Research Ethics Committee, Approval No. H-2009-0282. Should you have concerns about your rights as a participant in this research, or you have a complaint about the manner in which the research is conducted, it may be given to the researcher, or, if an independent person is preferred, to the Human Research Ethics Officer, Research Office, The Chancellery, The University of Newcastle, University Drive, Callaghan NSW 2308, Australia, telephone (02) 49216333, email Human-Ethics@newcastle.edu.au
Appendix C

Information Statement for Mothers in Saudi Arabia:

Social factors affecting the acculturation of young Saudi children in the Australian context

Document Version 2; dated 15/3/10

You are invited to participate in the research project identified above which is being conducted by Athari Al-Muraikhi from the School of Humanities and Social Science at the University of Newcastle. The project is part of Athari's PhD research at the University of Newcastle, supervised by Dr Jean Harkins and Dr Catriona Malau from the School of Humanities and Social Science.

Why is the research being done?
Learning a second language has a great influence on a young child's educational development. This study looks at one particular group of ESL learners: young children (aged 4-8) of Saudi families living in Australia. Taking into account the background of the Saudi and Islamic culture and some of their specific aspects (religious and social), we look into the social factors that influence Saudi children's acculturation and participation in the new situation. We aim to learn more about these issues:

- Sociolinguistic, educational and other difficulties facing Saudi children in the Australian context
- What types of supportive social networks are surrounding Saudi children
- What parents and teachers are doing to support their acculturation and bilingualism
- Relationships between parents’ perceptions of their children’s acculturation, and social support
- How the families’ religious and cultural background influence their acculturation

By investigating these things, we hope to gain useful knowledge and insights to help teachers and families assist the social and educational development of young Saudi children. Any conclusions from this study will of course apply only to this particular group, but may also contribute to understanding of the factors affecting other young ESL learners.
Who can participate in the research?
We hope to invite about 5 mothers of families who have returned to Saudi Arabia after living in Australia with their young children, to be interviewed by Athari Almuraikhi about their child’s learning and bilingual experiences. You have been contacted with the assistance of the Ministry of Education, General Administration for Girls’ Affairs in Al-hassa, Educational Projects and Research Administration, because your family lived in Australia while your children were young.

What choice do you have?
Participation in this research is entirely your choice. Only those people who give their informed consent will be included in the project. Whether or not you decide to participate, this decision will not disadvantage you.

What would you be asked to do?
If you agree to participate, you will be asked to talk with Athari in an interview at a time convenient to you, in Arabic and/or English, about your experiences and thoughts about your child’s learning in Australia. The interview asks about your experiences but not about personal details. It also asks a few general questions about family background, education and languages.

How much time will it take?
The interview should take about one hour to complete in one session.

What are the risks and benefits of participating?
We cannot promise you any benefit from participating in this research. There is a small risk that you might feel uncomfortable with questions about your intercultural experiences, or differences of opinion about these things that could affect your personal relationships. If you feel uncomfortable during the interview, you can stop participating at any time, and if you need more support Athari can refer you to appropriate counselling or religious support services.

How will your privacy be protected?
Any information collected by the researchers which might identify you will be stored securely and only accessed by the researchers, except as required by law. The interview does not ask for your name or other identifying information. What you say might be quoted or paraphrased in reports of the research, but not in a way that could identify you. Data will be stored for at least 5 years at the University of Newcastle.

How will the information collected be used?
The results will be reported in a thesis to be submitted for Athari’s PhD degree, and may be presented at conferences and in professional journals. Individual participants will not be identified in any reports arising from the project. You will be able to review the audio recording after your interview to edit or erase your contribution. The results will be reported to you in the form of an information sheet if you ask for a copy of it by emailing the researcher.
What do you need to do to participate?
Please read this Information Statement and be sure you understand its contents before you consent to participate. If there is anything you do not understand, or you have questions, contact the researcher. If you choose to participate, please complete the attached Consent Form, and contact Athari.Almuraikhi@studentmail.newcastle.edu.au to arrange a time convenient to you for the interview.

Further information
If you would like further information please contact Dr Jean Harkins from the School of Humanities and Social Science at the University of Newcastle, Jean.Harkins@newcastle.edu.au, (02) 4921 5179.

Thank you for considering this invitation.
Your participation would be greatly valued.

Dr Jean Harkins
Lecturer in Linguistics

Dr Catriona Malau
Lecturer in Linguistics

Athari Almuraikhi
Student Researcher

Complaints about this research
This project has been approved by the University’s Human Research Ethics Committee, Approval No. H-2009-0282. Should you have concerns about your rights as a participant in this research, or you have a complaint about the manner in which the research is conducted, it may be given to the researcher, or, if an independent person is preferred, to the Human Research Ethics Officer, Research Office, The Chancellery, The University of Newcastle, University Drive, Callaghan NSW 2308, Australia, telephone (02) 49216333, email Human-Ethics@newcastle.edu.au; or the following local contact: The Ministry of Education, General Administration for Girls’ Affairs in Al-hassa, Educational Projects and Research Administration: telephone (001196603)5881296, central: 5800250, Code:255, Email: Edm@age.gov.sa
Appendix D

Invitation to Participate in the Research Project:

*Social factors affecting the acculturation of young Saudi children in the Australian context*

Dear Saudi Community Association President,

Your community association is cordially invited to participate in the research project identified above which is being conducted by Athari Almuraikhi from the School of Humanities and Social Science, Faculty of Education and Arts at the University of Newcastle. The project is part of Athari's PhD research at the University of Newcastle, supervised by Dr Jean Harkins and Dr Catriona Malau from the School of Humanities and Social Science. The study examines the sociolinguistic situation of bilingual Saudi children aged 4-8 in Australian early childhood educational settings, through a qualitative analysis of data from teachers and parents. We hope to recruit approximately 30 teachers who have had Saudi children in the 4-8 age range in their classes.

**Your help is needed** to

- circulate the enclosed information and interview consent forms to mothers in Saudi families living in Australia with children in the 4-8 age range, and
- arrange for the information and interview consent forms to be sent to families who have returned to Saudi Arabia after living in Australia with their young children.

The mothers are invited to consider the information at their leisure and to complete and return the interview consent form and make contact with the researcher if they choose to participate in an interview. A summary of the results of the study will be sent to you after completion of the research.

For more information, please read the information statement, consent forms, and interview questions which are all enclosed with this letter. If you would like further information please contact Dr. Jean Harkins from the School of Humanities and Social Science/ Faculty of Education and Arts at the University of Newcastle at Jean.Harkins@newcastle.edu.au, telephone +61-2-4921-5179, or contact: Dr Ali Albishri from The Royal Saudi Cultural Mission, Australia, on +961262693201.
Your co-operation and assistance in the project would be very highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Jean Harkins
Lecturer in Linguistics

Dr Catriona Malau
Lecturer in Linguistics

Athari Almuraikhi
Student Researcher

Complaints about this research
This project has been approved by the University’s Human Research Ethics Committee, Approval No. H-2009-0282. Should you have concerns about your rights as a participant in this research, or you have a complaint about the manner in which the research is conducted, it may be given to the researcher, or, if an independent person is preferred, to the Human Research Ethics Officer, Research Office, The Chancellery, The University of Newcastle, University Drive, Callaghan NSW 2308, Australia, telephone (02) 49216333, email Human-Ethics@newcastle.edu.au
Appendix E

Invitation to Participate in the Research Project:

Social factors affecting the acculturation of young Saudi children in the Australian context

Dear Principal or Director,

Your preschool / primary school is cordially invited to participate in the research project identified above which is being conducted by Athari Almuraikhi from the School of Humanities and Social Science, Faculty of Education and Arts at the University of Newcastle. The project is part of Athari's PhD research at the University of Newcastle, supervised by Dr Jean Harkins and Dr Catriona Malau from the School of Humanities and Social Science. The study examines the sociolinguistic situation of bilingual Saudi children aged 4-8 in Australian early childhood educational settings, through a qualitative analysis of data from teachers and parents. We hope to recruit approximately 30 teachers who have had Saudi children in the 4-8 age range in their classes.

Your help is needed to circulate the enclosed information and questionnaires to teachers with the relevant experience in your school or centre. The teachers are invited to consider the information at their leisure and to complete and return the questionnaire to the researcher if they so choose, in the envelope provided. A summary of the results will be sent to you after the completion of the research.

For more information, please read the information statement, consent forms, and questionnaires which are all enclosed with this letter. If you would like further information please contact Dr. Jean Harkins from the School of Humanities and Social Science/ Faculty of Education and Arts at the University of Newcastle at Jean.Harkins@newcastle.edu.au, telephone +61-2-4921-5179, or contact: Dr Ali Albishri from The Royal Saudi Cultural Mission, Australia, on +961262693201.
Your co-operation and assistance in the project would be very highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Jean Harkins  
Lecturer in Linguistics

Dr Catriona Malau  
Lecturer in Linguistics

Athari Almuraikhi  
Student Researcher

Complaints about this research
This project has been approved by the University’s Human Research Ethics Committee, Approval No. H-2009-0282. Should you have concerns about your rights as a participant in this research, or you have a complaint about the manner in which the research is conducted, it may be given to the researcher, or, if an independent person is preferred, to the Human Research Ethics Officer, Research Office, The Chancellery, The University of Newcastle, University Drive, Callaghan NSW 2308, Australia, telephone (02) 4921 6333, email Human-Ethics@newcastle.edu.au
Appendix F

Consent Form for Interviews in Australia:

Social factors affecting the acculturation of young Saudi children in the Australian context

Document Version 2; dated 15/3/10

I agree to participate in the above research project and give my consent freely.

I understand that the project will be conducted as described in the Information Statement, a copy of which I have retained.

I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time and do not have to give any reason for withdrawing.

I consent to
• participating in an interview and having it recorded
• what I say being quoted or paraphrased in a way that does not identify me

I understand that I can stop the interview at any time, or choose not to answer any question.

I understand that I can review the recording after the interview to edit or erase my contribution.

I understand that my personal information will remain confidential to the researchers.

I have had the opportunity to have questions answered to my satisfaction.

Print Name: ____________________________________________________________
Signature: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________
Contact no: ___________________________ Email: ________________________
Appendix G

Consent Form for Interviews in Saudi Arabia:

_Social factors affecting the acculturation of young Saudi children in the Australian context_

Document Version 2; dated 15/3/10

I agree to participate in the above research project and give my consent freely.

I understand that the project will be conducted as described in the Information Statement, a copy of which I have retained.

I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time and do not have to give any reason for withdrawing.

I consent to
- participating in an interview and having it recorded
- what I say being quoted or paraphrased in a way that does not identify me

I understand that I can stop the interview at any time, or choose not to answer any question.

I understand that I can review the recording after the interview to edit or erase my contribution.

I understand that my personal information will remain confidential to the researchers.

I have had the opportunity to have questions answered to my satisfaction.

Print Name: __________________________________________
Signature: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________
Contact no: ___________________________ Email: ___________________________
Appendix H
Interview Questions for Mothers in Australia:

Social factors affecting the acculturation of young Saudi children in the Australian context

These questions are part of the research project identified above which is being conducted by Athari Almuraikhi from the School of Humanities and Social Science at the University of Newcastle. The project is part of Athari's PhD research at the University of Newcastle, supervised by Dr Jean Harkins and Dr Catriona Malau from the School of Humanities and Social Science.

Please make sure you have read the Information Statement and be sure you understand its contents before you participate in the interview, and that you have given your signed Consent Form to the researcher. You are reminded that you can stop at any time, or choose not to answer any question. After the interview you will be able to review the recording to edit or erase your contribution.

Limitations of the study: The questionnaire asks specifically about Saudi children aged 4-8 because this project is looking at that particular group of young ESL learners. Any findings from this study will of course apply only to this particular group, but may also contribute to understanding of the factors affecting other ESL learners.

Please complete the section below before going on to page 2.

(Families’ information)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which region in Saudi Arabia?</th>
<th>* Father: .................* Mother: ..............</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you speak English? How well?</td>
<td>* Father: .................* Mother: ..............</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your job (profession)?</td>
<td>* Father: .................* Mother: ..............</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long has your family lived in Australia?</td>
<td>.......................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What language(s) do you speak with your child(ren) at home?</td>
<td>.......................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you speak English with your child(ren) at home?</td>
<td>.......................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children you have:</td>
<td>......... Their ages: ........................................</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interview Questions

---------------------------------------------------
Part one: Saudi children in the Australian context:

Q. 1\ When your child first started school, did he/she face difficulties in integrating with the new environment? *(The interviewer asks for examples).*

☐ Yes ☐ No

Q. 2\ What do you think are the most common types of difficulties faced by your child at the beginning of school:

☐ lack of ability to communicate?
☐ social interaction with English speakers?
☐ educational or related to academic achievement?
☐ culture shock and differences between the two cultures?
☐ other? *(The interviewer asks for examples).*

Q. 3\ After a while of attending school, did he/she still have these difficulties or he/she felt happy with the school?

Q. 4\ Did you do anything to help your child to face these difficulties or assist his/her integration with the new situation? Did the teacher do anything? *(The interviewer asks for examples).*

☐ Yes ☐ No

Q. 5\ Which number do you give your child’s degree of acculturation to the Australian culture?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Part two: Supportive social factors surrounding Saudi children:

Q. 1\ From your own viewpoint, what are the factors that were useful in fostering your child’s social adaptation in Australia?
family’s attitudes and strategies?
- teachers and educational institutions?
- the Australian society (e.g. friends and neighbours)?
- the media and TV programs?
- other? (The interviewer asks for examples).

Q. 2\ How did these factors foster your child’s social adaptation?

Part three: Strategies provided by parents to support Saudi children’s acculturation:

Q. 1\ What do you think are the most effective strategies you can use to assist your child’s acculturation?
Q. 2\ Do you practice some English language with your child? Do you speak English when you play with your child?
Q. 3\ Do you let them watch English TV programs for children (educational or other types)? Do they watch Arabic TV programs?
Q. 4\ Do you make them play computer games which teach English? Arabic?
Q. 5\ What did you do to enhance his/her social integration and interaction with the Australian community?
Q. 6\ Do you read over your child’s homework everyday? Why?
Q. 7\ Do you read to your child or listen to him/her read in English? In Arabic?
Q. 8\ What did you do to help your child to overcome culture shock and to understand differences among cultures?

Part four: What is the relationship between parent’s perceptions of acculturation and social support?

Q. 1\ Do you want your child to learn English? Why?
- to get a good education in Australia
- to further his/her education in Saudi Arabia
- to ensure a good career in the future
- to be more independent
- to feel more confident
☐ to express feelings/opinions freely in the Australian context
☐ to communicate with more and various people in the future
☐ to establish friendships with Australians
☐ to understand the Australian culture
☐ to participate in the Australian community
☐ other reasons (specify)

Q. 2\ Do you want your child to play and socialise with Australian children? Why?
Q. 3\ In your opinion, what are the benefits that your child gained from coming to Australia?
Q. 4\ What do you think the relationship between your child’s acculturation and the social supportive network?

Part five: Collaboration with the school:

Q. 1\ Do you believe that collaboration with the school is important in assisting your child’s acculturation?
Q. 2\ Have you ever attended a meeting with your child’s teachers? Did you benefit from the meeting?
Q. 3\ Do you read all the notes the school send you everyday?
Q. 4\ Do you visit your child at school?
Q. 5\ Do you communicate with the teacher? Do you face any difficulties?
Q. 6\ Do you feel that the teacher takes your cultural diversity into consideration when communicating?
Q. 7\ If there is a problem, do you feel comfortable going to the school staff and asking them?
Q. 8\ What is your response if you are asked to participate in family literacy projects or volunteer in the school activities?

Part six: Saudi children’s characteristics:

Q. 1\ Do you feel that your child’s teacher has a good understanding of the Saudi culture and customs?
Q. 2\ Do you think that your child’s teacher knows much about Islam and its practices?

Q. 3\ What do you think are the differences between Saudi children and Australian children? (in behaviour- in manner- in social relationships-relations with family-religious side-friendship patterns)

Part seven: The effect of the religious and the cultural background:

Q. 1\ Do you teach your child that he/she is different from Australian children? Why? How?

Q. 2\ Are you concerned to teach your child his/her religious and cultural believes? Why? How?

Q. 3\ Do you instruct your child’s attitudes and interaction methods to suit your cultural and religious backgrounds? What is your child’s reaction when you do that?

Q. 4\ Do you speak with your child about Islam or Saudi culture? Does he/she have religious or cultural enquiries?

Q. 5\ Which one do you prefer to talk to your child about non-Islamic practices or beliefs? you or the teacher?

Q. 6\ Do you worry that your child might lose his/her religious or cultural identity?

Q. 7\ Do you ask the teacher to include your religious or cultural practices while interacting with your child? (e.g. washing hands before and after eating, avoiding pork products and privacy in the toilet)

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

This is the end of the interview. Thank you for participation!

Your input to this research is greatly appreciated.
Appendix I

Questionnaire for Teachers:

Social factors affecting the acculturation of young Saudi children in the Australian context

You are invited to participate in the research project identified above which is being conducted by Athari Almuraikhi from the School of Humanities and Social Science at the University of Newcastle. The project is part of Athari's PhD research at the University of Newcastle, supervised by Dr Jean Harkins and Dr Catriona Malau from the School of Humanities and Social Science.

Please read the accompanying Information Statement and be sure you understand its contents before you consent to participate. If there is anything you do not understand, or you have questions, contact the researcher. If you choose to participate, please complete and return this anonymous questionnaire in the reply paid envelope provided. This will be taken as your informed consent to participate.

Limitations of the study: The questionnaire asks specifically about Saudi children aged 4-8 because this project is looking at that particular group of young ESL learners. Any findings from this study will of course apply only to this particular group, but may also contribute to understanding of the factors affecting other ESL learners.

Please complete the section below before going on to page 2.

(Teachers’ demographic information)

Your gender: ☐ male ☐ female
Your ethnicity: ..........................................................................................................
Degree or qualification: ..........................................................................................................
☐ School ☐ College ☐ University
Years of teaching experience: ..........................................................................................................
Have you taken any courses in preschool methodology? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Your last annual teaching performance appraisal score: ............................................
Your first language: ..........................................................................................................
What other language(s) do you speak? ..........................................................................................................
Do you speak any language(s) with your pupils other than English? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, which language(s)? .............................................................................................................
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>When they first start school, all Saudi children integrate easily with the new environment (e.g. talk to or interact with English speakers in the first days of class).</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The most common type of difficulties Saudi children face at the beginning of school is lack of the ability to communicate (i.e. because they cannot speak English).</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The most common types of difficulties Saudi children face at the beginning of school are in social interaction with English speakers. (e.g. can speak English but do not socialise).</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The most common types of difficulties Saudi children face at the beginning of school are educational and related to academic achievement.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The most common types of difficulties Saudi children face at the beginning of school are related to culture shock and differences between the two cultures.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I believe that Saudi parents actively help their children to face these difficulties or assist their integration with the new situation.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Some Saudi children resist my efforts to help them cope with the class rules or their Australian peers.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>After a while, most Saudi</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I believe that parents’ attitudes are influential in fostering Saudi children’s social adaptation in Australia.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Teachers and educational institutions are influential in fostering Saudi children’s social adaptation.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The Australian society (e.g. friends and neighbours) is influential in fostering Saudi children’s social adaptation.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The media and TV programs are influential in fostering Saudi children’s social adaptation.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Computer-based resources available for children in the school are influential in fostering Saudi children’s social adaptation.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Part two: supportive social factors surrounding Saudi children**

**Part three: strategies provided by teachers to support Saudi children’s acculturation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I use regular in-class activities (e.g. stories, games and songs) to assist Saudi children’s acculturation.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>No special activities, just time and playing with other children is the best way to help Saudi children to fit in.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Enhancing Saudi children’s English language acquisition is helpful in assisting Saudi children’s acculturation.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Literacy (i.e. reading and writing) is helpful in assisting Saudi children’s acculturation.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>I use special activities and</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>culturally responsive methods for ESL learners recommended by the Department of Education or other ESL teachers to assist Saudi children’s acculturation.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>I depend on library resources and class materials to assist Saudi children’s acculturation.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>I use real objects taken from the Saudi culture to make the child feel familiar with the classroom environment.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>I use additional or personal efforts (e.g. praising and invitation) to encourage Saudi children to interact with peers and work groups.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Asking Saudi children to talk about their lifestyles and home culture is valuable in assisting their acculturation and improve their self-esteem.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>I use the buddy system (i.e. specifying a friend for each child) to encourage Saudi children to interact with peers.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Peer interactions and small groups are helpful in encouraging Saudi children to socialise.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Saudi children respond happily when I invite them to play with me or other children.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>I try to recognise Saudi children’s ethnic diversity during activities (e.g. reading Arabic stories, dancing to their music, having cultural day, etc.).</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>I use some Arabic words while interacting with Saudi children.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>I try to obtain some information about Saudi culture to help me to deal with the children and their</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
29. I learn about successful approaches to acculturate children from diverse backgrounds by visiting or reading about successful teachers in diverse settings.

| 29 | I learn about successful approaches to acculturate children from diverse backgrounds by visiting or reading about successful teachers in diverse settings. | Strongly agree | Agree | Don’t know | Disagree | Strongly disagree |

Part four: collaboration with parents

30. I believe that collaboration with all parents is important in helping their children to adjust in the school.

| 30 | I believe that collaboration with all parents is important in helping their children to adjust in the school. | Strongly agree | Agree | Don’t know | Disagree | Strongly disagree |

31. I have difficulties in communicating with Saudi families.

| 31 | I have difficulties in communicating with Saudi families. | Strongly agree | Agree | Don’t know | Disagree | Strongly disagree |

32. Difficulties in communicating with Saudi families are related to their inability to speak the English language.

| 32 | Difficulties in communicating with Saudi families are related to their inability to speak the English language. | Strongly agree | Agree | Don’t know | Disagree | Strongly disagree |

33. Difficulties in communicating with Saudi families are related to their religious beliefs.

| 33 | Difficulties in communicating with Saudi families are related to their religious beliefs. | Strongly agree | Agree | Don’t know | Disagree | Strongly disagree |

34. Difficulties in communicating with Saudi families are related to their different culture.

| 34 | Difficulties in communicating with Saudi families are related to their different culture. | Strongly agree | Agree | Don’t know | Disagree | Strongly disagree |

35. I take cultural differences into consideration when I speak with Saudi families.

| 35 | I take cultural differences into consideration when I speak with Saudi families. | Strongly agree | Agree | Don’t know | Disagree | Strongly disagree |

36. I do not invite Saudi parents to participate in the class activities.

| 36 | I do not invite Saudi parents to participate in the class activities. | Strongly agree | Agree | Don’t know | Disagree | Strongly disagree |

37. I gather some information about Saudi families (i.e. using interviews and questionnaires) to help me to deal with the children.

| 37 | I gather some information about Saudi families (i.e. using interviews and questionnaires) to help me to deal with the children. | Strongly agree | Agree | Don’t know | Disagree | Strongly disagree |

38. The school fosters parental involvement (e.g. meetings, formal parent-teacher interviews with bilingual interpreters or information sessions with parents).

| 38 | The school fosters parental involvement (e.g. meetings, formal parent-teacher interviews with bilingual interpreters or information sessions with parents). | Strongly agree | Agree | Don’t know | Disagree | Strongly disagree |

39. The school translates school notes and newsletters into Arabic for those who cannot speak the English language.

| 39 | The school translates school notes and newsletters into Arabic for those who cannot speak the English language. | Strongly agree | Agree | Don’t know | Disagree | Strongly disagree |

40. The school initiates activities which use family literacy

<p>| 40 | The school initiates activities which use family literacy. | Strongly agree | Agree | Don’t know | Disagree | Strongly disagree |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>The school cooperates with special interpreters or family liaisons to communicate with Saudi parents.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>The school consults Saudi parents on issues related to their children’s acculturation.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Part five: Saudi children’s characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I have a good understanding of the Saudi culture and customs.</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>I have a good understanding of the Islamic practices and priorities.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>It is easy to deal with Saudi children when they first enter the school.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>I do not see any differences between Saudi children and other Australian children in behaviour or attitudes.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>I expect Saudi children to behave in appropriate ways for their class and school and to understand and conform to the rules.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Saudi children have a tendency to socialise with each other rather than Australian children.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Saudi children develop positive, respectful relationships with staff and peers.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Part six: the effect of the religious and the cultural background**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I share a belief that all children should be accepted and appreciated regardless of family background or religion.</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>I have noticed that Saudi children’s attitudes and interaction methods arise</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
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</table>
from their cultural and religious backgrounds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Saudi children sometimes talk about their traditions or religious beliefs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I know that Saudi parents are keen in teaching their children about Islam.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Some Saudi parents ask me to include their Islamic or cultural practices while interacting with the children. (e.g. washing hands before and after eating, avoiding pork products, and wanting privacy in the toilet)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Some Saudi parents ask me to avoid teaching or talking about non-Islamic practices and beliefs in front of their children.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire!*

*Your input to this research is greatly appreciated.*
Appendix J
Interview Questions for Mothers in Saudi Arabia:

Social factors affecting the acculturation of young Saudi children in the Australian context

These questions are part of the research project identified above which is being conducted by Athari Almuraikhi from the School of Humanities and Social Science at the University of Newcastle. The project is part of Athari’s PhD research at the University of Newcastle, supervised by Dr Jean Harkins and Dr Catriona Malau from the School of Humanities and Social Science.

Please make sure you have read the Information Statement and be sure you understand its contents before you participate in the interview, and that you have given your signed Consent Form to the researcher. You are reminded that you can stop at any time, or choose not to answer any question. After the interview you will be able to review the recording to edit or erase your contribution.

Limitations of the study: The questionnaire asks specifically about Saudi children aged 4-8 because this project is looking at that particular group of young ESL learners. Any findings from this study will of course apply only to this particular group, but may also contribute to understanding of the factors affecting other ESL learners.

Please complete the section below before going on to page 2.

(Families’ information)

Do you speak English? How well? * Father: ..................* Mother: ..................
What is your job (profession)? * Father: ..................* Mother: ..................
How long has your family lived in Australia? ..........................................................
How many times did you visit Saudi Arabia? ..........................................................
How long has your family spent in Saudi Arabia since return? (the year of arrival) .......
What language(s) do you speak with your child(ren) at home? .................................
Do you speak English with your child(ren) at home? ..............................................
Number of children you have: .................. Their ages: .................................................
.................................................. ..................................................
Highest educational level obtained: * Father: ..................* Mother: ..................
Interview Questions

--------------------------------------------------- -------------------------------------

Part one: The initial period upon re-entry:

Q. 1\ Did you think that Saudi Arabia has changed since you left? Any changes in education or in society?
Q. 2\ Was your child happy to see his/her relatives and friends once again?
Q. 3\ Was your child happy to enter Saudi schools?
Q. 4\ What was your child’s reaction towards return to Saudi Arabia? (The interviewer asks for examples).

Part two: Reverse culture shock:

Q. 1\ Some time after your child’s return to Saudi Arabia, did he/she have difficulties or problems to cope with the home culture?
☐ Yes  ☐ No

Q. 2\ What do you think were the most common types of problems faced by your child in Saudi Arabia?
☐ distress
☐ feelings of alienation and loneliness
☐ social misunderstandings from relatives and friends
☐ general lack of interest from relatives and friends in their experiences
☐ lack of the ability to communicate in Arabic
☐ educational or related to academic achievement difficulties
☐ culture shock and differences between the two cultures
☐ other? (The interviewer asks for examples).

Q. 3\ What did the family (parents and relatives) do to solve these problems?

Q. 4\ Did your child experience any changes in his/her cultural identity as a result of your sojourn?

Q. 5\ Did your child express any social comparisons between the Australian culture and the Saudi culture? (The interviewer asks for examples).
Q. 6\ Were there any complaints by your child about the situation in Saudi Arabia?
Q. 7\ What were your relatives’ perceptions about the changes in your child’s personality? Was there any support?  *(The interviewer asks for examples).*
Q. 8\ Did your child feel accepted by his/her peers and teachers in Saudi Arabia?

**Part three: Reverse linguistic shock:**

Q. 1\ Were there any reduction in your child’s written or oral skills in Arabic? *(The interviewer asks for examples)* What about now?
Q. 2\ Were there academic problems (in literacy) at school? *(The interviewer asks for examples)* Are they still there?
Q. 3\ Did the teacher do anything to reduce or solve your child’s academic problems?
Q. 4\ Which language was mainly used by your child in Australia? In Saudi Arabia when he/she first returned?
Q. 5\ Does your child still use English at home in Saudi Arabia?
Q. 6\ Do you or the father use English at home in Saudi Arabia?

**Part four: What comes next?:**

Q. 1\ Would you like to maintain your child’s English language? Why?
- □ to get a good education at Saudi Arabia
- □ to further his/her education outside Saudi Arabia in the future
- □ to ensure a good career in the future
- □ to be more independent and wide-minded
- □ to feel more confident and special
- □ to have high self-esteem
- □ to communicate with more and various foreign people
- □ to increase your prestige
- □ to be more opened to other cultures
- □ other reasons (specify)
Q. 2\ Do you support your child to readjust with the cultural and religious requirements? How and why?

**Part five: Benefits children gain from the bilingual experience:**

Q. 1\ Do you think that your child benefited from living in Australia? If not, why?
Q. 2\ What benefits did your child gain from living in Australia?
☐ social advantages in interpersonal communication skills
☐ cognitive advantages
☐ psychological advantages
☐ phonological awareness
☐ grammar awareness
☐ word decoding and spelling
☐ problem solving
☐ prestigious advantages
☐ advantages in literacy
☐ mathematical advantages
☐ cultural advantages
☐ other (specify)

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*This is the end of the interview. Thank you for participation!*  
*Your input to this research is greatly appreciated.*
نشرة توضيحية عن مشروع البحث (خصص بالأمهات في استراليا):

عنوان البحث: العوامل الاجتماعية المؤثرة على التكيف الثقافي و الاجتماعي للأطفال السعوديين في استراليا.

مستند رقم 2: تاريخ: 15/03/2010

أختي الفاضلة:

أنتي مدعوة للمشاركة في مشروع البحث الموضح أعلاه والذي تقوم به الباحثة عذاري عبد الرحمن المريفي من كلية العلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية / قسم التربية والآداب بجامعة نيوكاسل. هذا البحث هو جزء من دراسة عذاري المريفي في جامعة نيوكاسل لمرحلة الدكتوراه. حيث تقوم الدكتوراه جبن هاركنز والدكتورة كاتريونا مالار من كلية العلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية / قسم التربية والآداب بجامعة نيوكاسل بالإشراف على هذا البحث.

ما الهدف من القيام بهذا البحث؟

يؤثر تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية لكلغة ثانية تأثيرًا بالغاً على التطور التعليمي للطلف. تتناول هذه الدراسة فئة محددة من متعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية ألا وهي أطفال الأسر السعودية التي تعيش في استراليا (من سن 4-8 سنوات).

أخذًا بالإعتبار الجوانب المتعددة للثقافة الإسلامية والسعودية للطفل. فإن الهدف من القيام بهذا البحث هو دراسة العوامل الاجتماعية المحيطة بالطفل السعودي المؤثرة على تكيفه الثقافي والاجتماعي في السياق الجديد. لذلك سيتم البحث في هذه الأبرز:

1. الصعوبات اللغوية والثقافية والتنظيمية التي تواجه الطفل السعودي في السياق الأسترالي.
2. العوامل المساندة المحيدة بالطفل السعودي.
3. النشاطات أو الاستراتيجيات التي تقوم بها الوالدين والمعلمين لدعم التكيف الثقافي واللغوي للطفل السعودي في استراليا.
4. العلاقة بين موقف الأباء السعوديين نحو عملية التكيف الثقافي لأبنائهم والعوامل المحيطة المساعدة.
5. كيف تؤثر الخلفية الدينية والثقافية للأسر السعودية على تكيفها الثقافي والاجتماعي.

بالبحث في هذه النواحي فإننا نأمل الحصول على معلومات مفيدة تساعد كلا من المعلمين والأسر على دعم التطور التعليمي والاجتماعي للطفل السعودي. بالإضافة إلى ذلك فإن معطيات هذه الدراسة ستطبق على هذه الفئة المحددة ومع ذلك فإن النتائج قد تساعده في فهم العوامل المؤثرة على فئات أخرى من متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية.

من هم الأشخاص الذين يحق لهم المشاركة؟

من المتوقع أن يشمل هذا المشروع 15 وحدة سعودية لأطفال (من سن 5-8 سنوات). وذلك من خلال إجراء مقابلات شخصية مع البدلة ذوي الأعمار المليء بالذكاء. وقد تم الاتصال بك من قبل نادي الطلاب السعودي في نيوكاسل لأن لديك أطفال من نفس الفئة العمرية.

ما الخيارات المتوفرة؟

تعتبر المشاركة في هذا البحث اختيارية حيث أن خيار المشاركة متاح فقط من يومك المواقفة على استمارة الإقرار المرفقة و في حال مشاركتك أو عدمك فإن هذا لن يؤثر عليك بأي حال من الأحوال ولن يشكل عليك أي ضرر.

ما المطلوب منك؟

في حال موافقتك على المشاركة فإن المطلوب منك هو إجراء مقابلة شخصية مع البدلة. يمكنك تحديد هذه المقابلة الشخصية (التي سوف تسجل) في أي وقت بالانك. تحتوي هذه المقابلة على أسئلة تتعلق بكثيرك وليس بياناتك الشخصية. كما تحتوي على بعض الأسئلة العامة التي تختص بالخلفية التعليمية والغذائية والثقافية للأسرة.

ما المدة المطلوبة للمشاركة؟

تستغرق مدة المشاركة في المقابلة الشخصية 60 دقيقة في اجتماع واحد.
هل يترتب على مشاركتي أي أضرار أو فوائد ربحية؟

لا تستطيع أن تعتقد أن عوائد ربحية مباشرة أو غير مباشرة من خلال مشاركتك في هذا البحث. قد تشعرين بعدم الارتياح إزاى بعض الأسئلة عن خبراتك المتعلقة بالعيش في ثقافتين مختلفتين أو ما ينتج عنها من اختلاف الآراء والتي قد تؤثر على علاقاتك الشخصية. في حال شعورك بذلك أثناء المقابلة الشخصية، فيمكنك التوقف في أي وقت تشاءين. وإذا كنت بحاجة إلى المساعدة فيمكن للباحثة أن تحلك للجهات الاستشارية أو الدينية المختصة.

كيف ستُحفظ خصوصياتي؟

سوف يتم حفظ أي معلومات قد تحدث شخصيتك بشكل آمن ولن يكون هناك أي وسيلة غير مصرف بها للوصول إلى سجلك الشخصي إلا من قبل الباحثين أو من خلال ما ينصه القانون. لا تتطلب المقابلة الشخصية الإدلاء بأسماء المشاركين أو أي بيانات شخصية. قد يتم الاستفسار أو الاستجواب من أفراد في المقابلة الشخصية ولكن ليس بالشكل الذي قد يحدد شخصيتك. سوف يتم الاحتفاظ بالمعلومات الخاصة بالمقابلات لمدة خمس سنوات على الأقل في جامعة نيوكاسل.

كيف ستعمل المعلومات بعد جمعها؟

ستحلل نتائج البيانات التي ستحصل عليها الباحثة وسنقدم النتائج ضمن أطروحة علمية لرسالة الدكتوراه. وتحيط الباحثة علما بأن تلك النتائج قد تنشر في أي مشارع علمي سواء كان كتابا أو مجلة أو المشاركة في مؤتمر علمي أو غيره. ولن يتم نشر أي بيانات خصوصية عن المشاركين في أي مسما سبق. يمكنك مراجعة التسجيل الصوتي الخاص بمقابلتك قبل انتهاء وقت المقابلة. كما يمكنك تعديل أو حذف أي جزء من مشاركتك. وسيُزود المشاركون بملخص عن نتائج مشروع البحث بعد إكماله على شكل أوراق أو وسائل إعلامية إلى المدارس والجماعات المشتركة. يمكنك مراسلة الباحثة للحصول على تسجيل الخاصة.

ما الذي احتاجه للمشاركة؟

رجاءً، قم بقراءة هذه النشرة التوضيحية وتأكد أنك استوعبت كل ما فيها قبل أن توقيع إقرار المشاركة. إذا كان هناك أي أمر لم تفهمه أو إذا كان لديك أي استفسار فرجاء الإتصال بالباحثة. وإذا رغبت بالمشاركة فقومي بتبني نموذج الإقرار المرفق مع هذه النشرة (هذا يعني أنك موافق على المشاركة). يمكنك مراسلة الباحثة علىالإميل التالي: Athari.Almuraikhi@studentsmail.newcastle.edu.au

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معلومات إضافية:

إذا كنت ترغب في الحصول على معلومات إضافية، فالرجاء الاتصال بالدكتورة جين هاركنز - كلية العلوم الإنسانية والعلوم الاجتماعية / قسم التربية والأدب بجامعة نيوكاسل على البريد الإلكتروني: Jean.Harkins@newcastle.edu.au أو هاتف: 9179 (02) 4921 603

شكرًا لك على قبولك للدعوة ومشاركتك في هذه الدراسة. مشاركتك محل اهتمامنا وتقديرنا.

رئيسة الباحثين:

د. جين هاركنز

الباحث:

طلابية/ عدلي عبد الرحمن المريخي

في حال وجود شكوى بشأن البحث:

تصادق لجنة مشاركة الأفراد في البحث العلمي بالجامعة على هذا المشروع رقم 0209-2009 و في حال وجود أي تساؤل عن حقوقك في المشاركة في هذا البحث أو في حال وجود أي شكوى بشأن أسلوب أو طريقة إجراء البحث فيمكنك التحدث مباشرة مع الباحث أو في حال الضرورة للتحدث إلى شخص مستقل فيامكنك الاتصال بمكتب لجنة مشاركة الأفراد في البحث العلمي بالجامعة على العنوان: شانسليري - جامعة نيوكاسل - نيوكاسل درایف - كاليهان - نيو ساوث ويلز 2308 – أستراليا – هاتف رقم: 49216333 (02) أو مراسلتنا على البريد الإلكتروني: Human-Ethics@newcastle.edu.au

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نشرة توضيحية عن مشروع البحث (خاص بالأمهات في المملكة):

عنوان البحث: العوامل الاجتماعية المؤثرة على التكيف الثقافي والاجتماعي للأطفال السعوديين في أستراليا.

مستند رقم 2: تاريخ: 15/03/2010

أقتحم الفاضلة:

أنتي مدعوة للمشاركة في مشروع البحث الموضوع أعلاه والذي تقوم به الباحثة عذاري عبدالرحمن النمر مريشي من كلية العلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية / قسم التربية والأدب بجامعة نيوكاسل. هذا البحث هو جزء من دراسة عذاري النمر وهي في جامعة نيوكاسل لمرحلة الدكتوراه حيث تقوم الدكتوراه جين هarkinز والدكتورة كاثارينا مالاو من كلية العلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية / قسم التربية والأدب بجامعة نيوكاسل بالإشراف على هذا البحث.

ما الهدف من القيام بهذا البحث؟

يؤثر تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كالية ثانية تأثيراً بالغاً على التطور التعليمي للطفل. تتناول هذه الدراسة فئة محددة من متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كالية ثانية ثانية ألا وهي أطفال الأسر السعودية التي تعيش في أستراليا (من سن 4-8 سنوات). أخذ بالاعتبار الجوانب المتعددة للثقافة الإسلامية والسعودية للطفل. فإن الهدف من القيام بهذا البحث هو دراسة العوامل الاجتماعية المحيطة بالطفل السعودي وتأثيرها على تكيفه الثقافي والاجتماعي في السياق الجديد. لذلك سيتم البحث في هذه الأمور:

1. الصعوبات اللغوية والثقافية والتعليمية التي تواجه الطفل السعودي في السياق الأسترالي.
2. العوامل المساعدة المحيطة بالطفل السعودي.
3. النشاطات أو الاستراتيجيات التي يقوم بها الوالدان والمعلمين لدعم التكيف الثقافي اللغوي للطفل السعودي في أستراليا.
4. العلاقة بين موقف الأباء السعوديين نحو عملية التكيف الثقافي لذويهم والعنوان المحيطية المساعدة.
5. كيف تؤثر الخلفية الدينية والثقافية للأسر السعودية على تكيفها الثقافي الاجتماعي.
بالبحث في هذه النواحي فإننا نأمل الحصول على معلومات مفيدة تساعد كلاً من المعلمين والأسر على دعم التطور التعليمي والاجتماعي للطفل السعودي. بالإضافة إلى ذلك فإن معطيات هذه الدراسة ستطبق على هذه الفئة المحددة ومع ذلك فإن النتائج قد تساعد على فهم العوامل المؤثرة على فئات أخرى من متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلهة ثانية.

من هم الأشخاص الذين يحق لهم المشاركة؟

من المتوقع أن يشمل هذا المشروع 5 مهارات لأسر سعودية عادت إلى المملكة العربية السعودية بعد أن عاشت في استراليا مع أطفالها. وذلك من خلال إجراء مقابلات شخصية مع الباحثة عذاري المريخي بخصوص تعلم أطفالهم وخبراتهم اللغوية. وقد تم الاتصال ببعض من قبل وزارة التربية والتعليم - الإدارة العامة لتربية وتعليم البنات بالبحوث - إدارة البحوث والبرامج التربوية لأن استرلينا لفترة تابعة تابعة حينما كان أطفالك صغاراً.

ما الخيارات المطلوبة؟

تعتبر المشاركة في هذا البحث اختيارية. حيث أن خيار المشاركة متاح فقط لمن يوقع بالموافقة على استمارة الإقرار المرفقة. و في حال اتفاقك أو عدمك فإن هذا لن يؤثر عليك بأي حال من الأحوال ولن يشكل عليك أي ضرر.

ما المطلوب منك؟

في حال موافقتك على المشاركة فإن المطلوب منك هو اجراء مقابلة شخصية مع الباحثة. يمكنك تحديد هذه المقابلة الشخصية (التي سوف تسجل) في أي وقت بدلاً منك. تحتوي هذه المقابلة على أسئلة تتعلق بخبراتك وليس بياناتك الشخصية. كما تحتوي على بعض الأسئلة العامة التي تختص بالخلفية التعليمية واللغوية والثقافية للأسرة.

ما المدة المطلوبة للمشاركة؟

تسغرق مدة المشاركة في المقابلة الشخصية 60 دقيقة في اجتماع واحد.
هل يترتب على مشاركتك أي أضرار أو فوائد ربحية؟

لا نستطيع أن ننعدم بأن عوائد ربحية مباشرة أو غير مباشرة من خلال مشاركتك في هذا البحث قد تشعلين بعدم الارتباك إذا كان بعض الأسئلة عن خبراتك المتعلقة بالعشق في تفاعلين مختلفين أو ما ينتج عنها من اختلف الأراء والتي قد تؤثر على علاقاتك الشخصية. في حال شعورك بذلك أثناء المقابلة الشخصية، ففيك التوقف في أي وقت تشاء. وإذا كنت بحاجة إلى المساعدة فيمكن للباحثة أن تُحيلك للجهات الاستشارية أو الدينية المختصة.

كيف ستُحفظ شخصيتك؟

سوف يتم حفظ أي معلومات قد تحدد شخصيتك بشكل أم، ولن يكون هناك أي وسيلة غير مصرح بها للوصول إلى مسجلك الشخصي إلا من قبل الباحثين أو من خلال ما ينصه القانون. لا تطلب المقابلة الشخصية الإلءاء بأسماء المشاركين أو أي بيانات شخصية. قد يتم الاستشهاد أو الإقتباس من أفكارك في المقابلة الشخصية ولكن ليس بالشكل الذي قد يحدد شخصيتك. سوف يتم الاحتفاظ بالمعلومات الخاصة بالمقابلات لمدة خمس سنوات على الأقل في جامعة نيوكاسل.

كيف ستعمل المعرفة بعد جمعها؟

سلسلة نتائج البيانات التي ستحصل عليها الباحثة ستقدم النتائج ضمن أطروحة علمية لرسالة الدكتوراه. وتحيط الباحثة علمًا بأن تلك النتائج قد تنشر في أي شيوخ علمي سواء كان كتابًا أو مجلة أو المشاركة في مؤتمر علمي أو غير. ولن يتم نشر أي بيانات خصوصية عن المشاركين في أي ماه مسبق. يمكنك مراجعة التسجيل الصوتي الخاص بمقابلتك قبل انتهاء وقت المقابلة. كما يمكنك تعديل أو حذف أي جزء من مشاركتك. وستعود المشاركات بهدف أن نتائج مشروع البحث بعد اكتماله. لذلك يمكنك مراسلة الباحثة للحصول على نسختك الخاصة.

ما الذي احتاجه للمشارك؟

رجاء قم بقراءة هذه النشرة التوضيحية وتأكد أنك استوعبت كل ما فيها قبل أن توقيع إقرار المشاركة. إذا كان هناك أي أمر لم تفهمه أو إذا كان لديك أي استفسار فرجاء اتصل بالباحثة. وإذا رغبت بالمشاركة فقم بإبتعث نموذج الإقرار المرفق مع هذه النشرة (هذا يعني أنك موافق على المشاركة). يمكنك مراسلة الباحثة على أيام الإميل التالي: Athari.Almuraikhi@studentsmail.newcastle.edu.au

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معلومات إضافية:

إذا كنت ترغب في الحصول على معلومات إضافية، فارجع الاتصال بالدكتورة جين هاركرز - كلية العلوم الإنسانية والعلوم الاجتماعية/ قسم التربية والآداب بجامعة نيو كاسل على البريد الإلكتروني: Jean.Harkins@newcastle.edu.au أو هاتف: 5179 4921 (02)

شكرًا لك على قبولك للدعوة ومشاركتك في هذه الدراسة. مشاركتك محل اهتمامنا وتقديرنا.

رئيسة الباحثين:

د. جين هاركرز

الباحث:

طالبة/ عنادي عبدالرحمن المريخي

في حال وجود شكاوى بشأن البحث:

تصادق لجنة مشاركة الأفراد في البحوث العلمية بالجامعة على هذا المشروع رقم 02 ح- 2009، وفي حال وجود أي تساؤل عن حقوقك في المشاركة في هذا البحث، أو في حال وجود أي شكوى بشأن أسلوب أو طريقة إجراء البحث، فامكّنك أن تحدث مباشرة مع الباحث أو في حال الضرورة للتحدث إلى شخص مستقل في مراكزنا. الاتصال بمكتب لجنة مشاركة الأفراد في البحوث العلمية بالجامعة على العنوان: شانسلري – جامعة نيو كاسل – نيو كاسل دريف – كاليفورنيا – نيو ساوث ويلز 2308 – أستراليا – هاتف رقم: 49216333 (02) أو مراسلتنا على البريد الإلكتروني: Human-Ethics@newcastle.edu.au

على البريد الإليكتروني: الاتصال وزارة التربية والتعليم - الإدارة العامة للتربية وتعليم البنات بالأحساء - إدارة البحوث والبرامج التربوية: هاتف: 5881296 (0001196603) ستائل: 5800255 تحويلة: 255

Email: Edm@age.gov.sa
نموذج موافقة للمشاركة في مقابلة شخصية: (خاص بالأميات في استراليا):

عنوان البحث: العوامل الاجتماعية المؤثرة على التكيف الثقافي والاجتماعي للأطفال السعوديين في استراليا.

الباحثة: عذاري عبد الرحمن المريخي
مستند رقم 2: تأريخ: 15/03/2010

أوافق على المشاركة في البحث المذكور أعلاه وهذه الموافقة معتادة بحرية تامة.

أدرك تماما أن هذا البحث سوف يقام بالشكل الموصوف في النسخة المتوفرة لدى من النشرة التوضيحية عن المشروع (باللغة العربية والإنجليزية).

أدرك تماما أن من حق الانسحاب من المشاركة وفي أي وقت قبل انتهاء وقت المقابلة من دون إعطاء أي تفسير للإنسحاب.

أوافق على:
- المشاركة في إجراء مقابلة شخصية شبه محددة ومسجلة.
- قد يتم الاستهداف أو الاقتباس من أقوالي بشكل لا يحدد شخصيتي.

أدرك تماما أنه يمكنني إيقاف المقابلة في أي وقت كما يمكنني عدم الإجابة على أي من الأسئلة.

أدركني تماما أنه يمكنني مراجعة أو تعديل أو حذف أي جزء من مشاركتي بعد المقابلة فورا.

أدرك تماما أن معلوماتي الشخصية سوف يتم الاحتفاظ بها بشكل آمن من قبل لدى الباحثين.

وقد أتيحت لي الفرصة للاستفسار أو الحصول على معلومات إضافية خاصة بالبحث.

الاسم:
التوقع:
التاريخ:
هاتف رقم:
البريد الإلكتروني:
نموذج موافقة للمشاركة في مقابلة شخصية: (خاص بالأعمال في المملكة):

عنوان البحث: العوامل الاجتماعية المؤثرة على التكيف الثقافي والإجتماعي للأطفال السعوديين في استراليا.

الباحثة: عذاري عبد الرحمن المريخي
مستند رقم 2: تاريخ: 2010/03/15

وافق على المشاركة في البحث المذكور أعلاه وهذه الموافقة معطاة بحرية تامة.

أدرك تماما أن هذا البحث سوف يقام بالشكل الموصوف في النسخة المتوفرة لدي من النشرة التوضيحية عن المشروع (باللغة العربية والإنجليزية).

أدرك تماما أن من حق الانسحاب من المشاركة وفي أي وقت قبل انتهاء وقت المقابلة من دون إعطاء أي تفسير للإنسحاب.

وافق على:

المشاركة في إجراء مقابلة شخصية شبه محددة ومسجلة.

- قد يتم الاستشهاد أو الاقتباس من أقوالي بشكل لا يحدد شخصيتي.

أدرك تماما أنه يمكنني إيفاق المقابلة في أي وقت كما يمكنني عدم الإجابة على أي من الأسئلة.

أدرك تماما أنه يمكنني مراجعة أو تدويل أو حذف أي جزء من مشاركتي بعد المقابلة فورًا.

أدرك تماما أن معلوماتي الشخصية سوف يتم الحفاظ عليها بشكل آمن من قبل لدى الباحثين.

وقد أثبتي لي الفرصة للاستفسار أو الحصول على معلومات إضافية خاصة بالبحث.

الإسم: ____________________________
التوقع: __________________________
التاريخ: __________________________
هاتف رقم: ________________________
البريد الإلكتروني: __________________

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غلاف للمقابلة الشخصية (خاص بالأمهات في أستراليا):

عنوان البحث: العوامل الاجتماعية المؤثرة على التكيف الثقافي والاجتماعي للأطفال السعوديين في أستراليا.

هذه الأسئلة جزء من مشروع البحث الموضح أعلاه والذي تقوم به الباحثة عبد الرحمن المريخي من كلية العلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية / قسم التربية والآداب بجامعة نيوكاسل. هذا البحث هو جزء من دراسة ع耷ري المريخي في جامعة نيوكاسل لمرحلة الدكتوراه حيث تقوم الدكتوراة جين هاركرز من كلية العلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية / قسم التربية والآداب بجامعة نيوكاسل بالإشراف على هذا البحث.

الرجاء التأكد من قراءة النشرة التوضيحية المرفقة والتأكد من استبعاد كل ما فيها قبل المشاركة في المقابلة الشخصية. كما يرجى التأكد من إعداد نموذج الأقرار المرفق بعد تعبئته إلى الباحثة. لقد تم إشعاركم بأنه يمكنك إيقاف المقابلة في أي وقت كما يمكنك عدم الإجابة على أي من الأسئلة. كما يمكنك مراجعة أو تعديل أو حذف أي جزء من مشاركتك بعد المقابلة فوراً.

حدود الدراسة: تتناول هذه الأسئلة أطفال الأسر السعودية (من سن 4-8 سنوات) لأن هذا البحث يسلط الضوء على هذه الفئة المحددة من متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كثافة ثانية. لذلك فإن أي معطيات من هذه الدراسة سوف تطبق على هذه الفئة المحددة وبالأمر من ذلك فإن نتائج هذه الدراسة قد تساعد في فهم العوامل المؤثرة على فئات أخرى من متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كثافة ثانية.

الرجاء القيام بتبني القسم التالي قبل الانتقال للصفحة التالية.

(معلومات الأسر)

من أي منطقة من المملكة العربية السعودية؟ * الأب:................................. * الأم:.................................
هل تتحدث اللغة الإنجليزية؟ هل تجدها؟ * الأب:................................. * الأم:.................................
ما هي مهنتك؟......
كم عاشت الأسرة في أستراليا؟
ما هي اللغة أو اللغات التي تتحدث بها أطفالك في المنزل؟
هل تتحدث اللغة الإنجليزية مع أطفالك في المنزل؟
ما هو عدد أطفالك؟................................. ما هي أعمارهم؟.................................
أعلى مستوى دراسي تم الحصول عليه؟ * الأب:................................. * الأم:.................................
غلاف للمقابلة الشخصية (خاص بالأمهات في المملكة):

عنوان البحث: العوامل الاجتماعية المؤثرة على التكيف الثقافي والاجتماعي للأطفال

المصريين في أستراليا.

هذه الأسئلة جزء من مشروع البحث الموضح أعلاه والذي تقوم به الباحثة عذاري عبد الرحمن المصري من كلية العلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية / قسم التربية والآداب بجامعة نيوكاسل. هذا البحث هو جزء من دراسة عذاري المصري في جامعة نيوكاسل لمرحلة الدكتوراه حيث تقوم الدكتورة جين هاركنز من كلية العلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية / قسم التربية والآداب بجامعة نيوكاسل بالإشراف على هذا البحث.

الرجاء التأكد من قراءة البداية التوضيحية المرفقة والتتأكد من استيعاب كل ما فيها قبل المشاركة في المقابلة الشخصية. كما ارجو التأكد من إعادة نموذج الإقرار المرفق بعد تعيينه إلى الباحثة. لقد تم اشعارك بأنه يمكنك إيقاف المقابلة في أي وقت كما يمكنك عدم الإجابة على أي من الأسئلة. كما يمكنك مراجعة أو تعديل أو حذف أي جزء من مشاركتك بعد المقابلة فوراً.

حدود الدراسة: تتناول هذه الأسئلة أطفال الأسر السعودية (من سن 4-8 سنوات) لأن هذا البحث يسلط الضوء على هذه الفئة المحددة من متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية. لذلك فإن أي معلومات من هذه الدراسة سوف تطبق على هذه الفئة المحددة، وبالرغم من ذلك فإن نتائج هذه الدراسة قد تساعدها في فهم العوامل المؤثرة على فئات أخرى من متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية.

الرجاء القيام ببعض البيانات التالية قبل الانتقال إلى الصفحة التالية.

### معلومات الأسر

من أي منطقة من المملكة العربية السعودية؟ * الأب: * الأم:

هل تتحدث اللغة الإنجليزية؟ هل تجيدها؟ * الأب: * الأم:

ما هي مهنتك؟ * الأب: * الأم:

كم عاشت الأسرة في أستراليا؟

كم مرة قمت بزيارة المملكة العربية السعودية عندما كنت في أستراليا؟

كم مدة الإقامة في المملكة منذ الربع؟ (سنة الوصول)

ما هي اللغة أو اللغات التي تتحدث بها مع أطفالك في المنزل؟

هل تتحدث اللغة الإنجليزية مع أطفالك في المنزل؟

ما هو عدد أطفالك؟

ما هي أعمارهم؟

أعلى مستوى دراسي تم الحصول عليه؟ * الأب: * الأم:
القسم الأول: المرحلة الأولى بعد العودة إلى الوطن:

السؤال الأول: هل شعرت بأن المملكة قد تغيرت منذ مغادرتك لها؟ هل حدثت أي تغيرات في النظام التعليمي أو المجتمع ككل؟

السؤال الثاني: هل كان الطفل سيعد يرؤى الأقارب والأصدقاء مرة أخرى؟

السؤال الثالث: هل كان الطفل سعيداً بدخول المدرسة في المملكة العربية السعودية؟

السؤال الرابع: ما هي ردة فعل طفلك إزاء العودة للمملكة؟ (اذكر بعض الأمثلة)...

القسم الثاني: صممة ثقافية معاكسة:

السؤال الأول: بعد فترة من عودة الطفل إلى المملكة، هل واجهت الطفل صعوبات أو مشكلات في التأقلم مرة أخرى مع مجتمع؟

نعم □ لا □

السؤال الثاني: من وجهة نظرك، ما هي أهم أنواع الصعوبات التي واجهت الطفل بعد العودة إلى المملكة؟ (يمكن اختيار أكثر من واحد)

□ الحزن
□ شعور بالوحدة والعزلة
□ سوء الفهم من قبل الأقارب والأصدقاء، في الأمور المتعلقة بالمواحي الاجتماعية
□ عدم اهتمام الأقارب والأصدقاء بترحيب سفره السابق
□ عدم القدرة على التواصل مع الآخرين باللغة العربية
□ صعوبات دراسية خاصة بالتحصيل الدراسي
□ صعوبة ثقافية واختلاف بين الثقافتين (الأسترالية والسعودية)
□ صعوبات أخرى (اذكر بعض الأمثلة)...

السؤال الثالث: ماذا فعلت العائلة (والدان والأقارب) لحل هذه المشكلة؟

السؤال الرابع: هل قد استلقت أي تغيرات في ماهيتك الثقافية كنتاجية للإقامة في استراليا؟

السؤال الخامس: هل تحدثت وأن قارنت طفلك بين الثقافتين الاسترالية والسعودية (في المواحي الاجتماعية)؟ (اذكر بعض الأمثلة)

السؤال السادس: هل أبدى الطفل أي نفر أو شكوك إزاء العودة للمملكة؟

السؤال السابع: ما هي وجهة نظر الأقارب أتجاه التغيرات التي نشأت في شخصية الطفل؟ هل كان هناك أي دعم؟ (اذكر بعض الأمثلة)...

السؤال الثامن: هل شعر الطفل بقلق زمالاته ومعمله في المدرسة (في المملكة العربية السعودية)...

القسم الثالث: صممة لغوية معاكسة:

السؤال الأول: هل تراجعت في مهارات الطفل اللغوية والكتابية باللغة العربية؟ (اذكر بعض الأمثلة) ماذا عن الوقت الحاضر؟

السؤال الثاني: هل واجه الطفل صعوبات دراسية تتعلق بالكتابة والقراءة؟ (اذكر بعض الأمثلة) هل مازلت هذه الصعوبات موجودة؟
السؤال الثالث: هل ساهمت المعالمة في تقليل أو مواجهة هذه الصعوبات الدراسية؟

السؤال الرابع: هل تودين المحافظة على اللغة الإنجليزية لدى الطفل؟ لماذا؟

السؤال الخامس: هل تستخدمين أتى أو الأب اللغة الإنجليزية في المنزل (هنا في المملكة العربية السعودية)؟

القسم الرابع: ماذا يأتي بعد؟

السؤال الأول: هل تودين المحافظة على اللغة الإنجليزية لدى الطفل؟ لماذا؟

السؤال الثاني: ماذا تكسبنها الأطفال من تجربتهم اللغوية؟

القسم الخامس: الفوائد التي يكتسبها الأطفال من تجربتهم اللغوية:

الفوائد الاجتماعية في مهارات التواصل والعلاقات الشخصية مع الآخرين

الفوائد الادراكية ومعرفية (حاسة بال قادرات العقلية)

الفوائد نفسية

الفوائد الخاصة بالنقاط النظمية (الوعي بأصول النقاط ومخرج اللغة)

الفوائد النحوية (نوعية وإدراك بقواعد اللغة)

ترجمة الكلمات وتحديتها

الفوائد خاصة تقام الأسرة في المجتمع (prestige)

الفوائد في الكتابة وقراءة

الفوائد في العلوم الرياضية أو حل المسائل الرياضية

الفوائد الثقافية (من خلال معرفته واطلاعه على الثقافات الأخرى)

فوند أخرى (حديدي)

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هذا هي نهاية المقابلة...شكرا جزيلا على قبولك للدعوة ومشاركتك في هذه الدراسة. مشاركتك حل اهتمامنا وتقديرنا