ACADEMIC SOCIALIZATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCES

OF THE EMIRATI AND SAUDI STUDENTS AT U.S. UNIVERSITIES

A Dissertation in

Curriculum and Instruction and Comparative and International Education

by

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ABSTRACT

The present study examines academic, cultural, discipline-related challenges Emirati and Saudi students face at U.S. universities and investigates Emirati and Saudi students’ coping strategies to face their challenges. Based on a sample of 219, a mixed methods approach was used to analyze responses from participants who responded to a 15 item Likert-type scale Gulf Region Students’ Questionnaire that had been posted online (Qualtrics). The results of the questionnaire instrument reveal that the majority of Emirati students and Saudi students indicated that their linguistics deficits “rarely” prevent them from classroom participation. Also, the survey shows that the majority of Emirati and Saudi students indicated that gender is not an issue when collaborating with other students. However, the interviews results indicate that the language challenges kept the Emirati and Saudi students silent and afraid to participate in the classroom. Also, female Emirati and Saudi students stated that they try to avoid interaction with male students in their classroom interaction. Writing is the most difficult aspect the Emirati and Saudi students’ face, so to overcome this difficulty they go to writing centers, take more writing courses and use dictionaries to improve their writing. Further analysis used in-depth interviews from six participants to expand the analysis of their lived experiences. Some categories are produced from the data, related to academic preparation and literacy; classroom environment; cultural adjustment and gender issues. In general, results show more similarities between Emirati and Saudi students because UAE and Saudi Arabia are global countries and have strong connection with U.S., are the wealthiest countries among the Gulf Region countries, have similar history of education system reform, and similar religion that has been impacted by “Sharieah” in Education and social life. The dissertation appendices contain details of the quantitative and qualitative research instruments used in the study.
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DEDICATION

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In some ways, this dissertation is a story of a personal journey. It is about my long-time quest to pursue graduate study in the United States. Upon arrival to my destination, I realized that I was not adequately prepared or nearly ready as I should be for the new challenges that lay ahead in academia. One of the many challenges had to do with academic language socialization. As a discourse community, each academic discipline seems to represent particular ways of talking about the discipline with which members communicate, address issues, and so on. I realized I was not part of this discourse community. Another challenge was about how to deal with my own culture shock in this new environment. Though culture shock is expected every time someone changes one’s cultural environment, the impact varies from person to person and the experience can alter one’s perception of anticipated outcomes.

This dissertation analyzes my story and the stories of academic socialization among students from the Gulf States (e.g., UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain, and Kuwait) pursuing post-secondary studies in the United States. My goal in this study is to explore what their challenges are and how widespread they might be among the population of students coming from the Gulf region to study in U.S.A. That is: How do students cope with these challenges? How do they compare between countries with regards to acculturation, preparations before entry and language skills. The following chapters in this dissertation tell this story and analyze what the findings mean for future studies in higher education in the Gulf countries and the U.S.A.
Statement of the Problem and Context

The overarching quest of the proposed research is to examine the mechanics and dynamics of individual adjustment processes within the academic environment, the sources of difficulty, and the reason some students adjust more easily than others. The motivation for this comparative research arises from personal struggles in academic endeavors as an international student at a U.S. university. This pursuit of academic goals and my quest to understand my own struggles hopes to illuminate the complex matters underlying the dilemmas, choices, and challenges such as linguistics practices, cultural shock, cross-cultural differences, students’ advisor /mentor relationships, and meeting academic expectations of various student populations and the constituents of success while in an academic institution. In sum, how do these populations (e.g., Emirati and Saudi) socialize and acculturate in their new academic environments?

The goal of this comparative case study is to identify important variables and analyze them to determine which variables cause Gulf-region students’ academic and social challenges as they transition through U.S. universities. This examination includes the interaction of a variety of factors including, linguistic, cultural, policies, and departmental environments.

Focusing on an exploratory comparative case study of students from the Gulf-region is particularly important in investigating the context of higher education programs in which the issue of institutional transition may be just as important and play a greater role than linguistic and cultural influences. Specifically, this comparative case study investigates Emirati and Saudi students’ academic experiences in their academic discourses as they transition through U.S. universities, to identify important variables which cause Gulf-region students’ academic challenges: What are the challenges? How do students cope with the challenges? How do
students compare between countries in terms of their ability to cope, acculturate, and socialize in their academic disciplines?

**Autobiographical Context of the Study**

I recognize that a study of academic challenges is not new but every story is unique. My journey and struggles to acquire academic writing skills to become a legitimate participant in an academic discipline are complex and long term. The initial struggles began with my decision to study English in my native country, the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Some of these struggles are both linguistically and socio-culturally based. Evidently, as a Muslim woman from the UAE, my primary language is Arabic, and English is my second language. Although my studies of the English language began at an early age, several issues in future years would impact the way I speak, write, and communicate in “academic speak.” This process was primarily influenced by my teachers and mentors, who relied mostly on grammar translation as opposed to communicative language teaching, speaking and listening. Collectively, these processes, totally unknown to me, accounted for the ways in which, in later years, I would communicate whether in my academic writing or in an academic discipline in a U.S. university context.

This situation, though not necessarily accurately perceived at the time, equally accounted for the many challenges I encountered during my first year at a US university setting. Even though I spoke English reasonably well, these communicative challenges provoked an internal struggle between my self-esteem and the quest to remedy the situation, and often not finding a method of oral or written expression that was acceptable to my peers and teachers. Because of these dilemmas and contradictions, I have determined to do something about it: to investigate the little known complexity of this phenomenon, particularly in the Gulf region.
The underlying assumption of my predicament is that my bachelor’s degree preparation in the UAE did not prepare me adequately to tackle the new situation in American graduate education. For example, I remember my writing drills in High school was kind of memorizing some sentences and connecting them through simple paragraphs. I recall my teacher at my university writing class telling us we have the freedom to choose any topic we wish to write about. In one of these classes, I decided to write about smoking, a subject I had strong opinions about and wanted to voice. My first draft was horrible. But as Silva (1930, p.33) noted long time ago: “Arabic learners of English wrote everything as an argumentative essay, they did less reporting of conditions, less defining, and less exemplifying, less paragraphing, less rhetorical connectedness; sometimes position statements interrupted the flow of their texts; they provided a looser segmental (introduction, discussion, conclusion) structure, less variety and more errors in the use of conjunctive elements, and less explicit formal closure.”

Silva’s characterization of writing among Arab students typifies much of how I was taught to write. Even though, my teacher sometimes explained to me how to shape the thesis statement, main ideas, supporting details, refuting details and conclusion during the semester, there were few examples in class or in practice that modeled this style of writing.

I should note further that English language classes were not taught in a vacuum. They were taught among other subjects that happened to be predominantly taught in Arabic. In fact, learning how to write better in English and Arabic at the same time was confusing for me because there are some differences between them. For example, Arabic is written from right to left which is different than English. The English written text has capitals and small letters but, Arabic does not have such convention. Arabic has joined letters while English has separate letters. Arabic sentence has “two parts which are a subject and a predicate” (Wright, 1862, p. 30). Arabic requires “a maximal break in
the sentence between the theme and the predicate in thematic structures, and between the verb and
the agent in verbal structures” (Ostler, 1987, p. 65). These superficial but significant differences can
explain the difficulties students from Arabic linguistic regions encountered as a language student
since knowledge of Arabic was not instrumental or helpful for me to transition to English as a
second language. Such differences are markedly dissimilar in the ways in which learners are
socialized into these two distinct language spheres.

In spite of these conflicts and gaps in my writing skills, I have not given up even though
errors I made then have persisted to worry me in graduate school until today. Simply put: though
expected, and rightly so, but not inevitable, acculturating into the academic world at the doctoral
student level becomes more complex when it involves students whose home language and culture
are different than that of the mainstream within the university. Such situation makes their first year
to be the most challenging and stressful year (Golde, 2000).

Having reflected on my own struggles as a graduate student, I would like to understand the
experiences of others who go through academic socialization in U.S. universities and use newly
gained knowledge to support students from Gulf Regions and other areas of the world.

Like other international students from Gulf countries who speak Arabic, I have faced
struggles during my graduate study. I joined Penn State University three years ago when I was
admitted to the Applied Linguistics Department to further my language studies. As explained in the
previous paragraphs, the difficulties I experienced in the first year have influenced me to examine
these challenges among other students from the region I come from.

A scan of the literature reveals little or no significant studies have been undertaken recently
in the Gulf area and I believe research on this topic will be important to educators and policymakers.
In recent informal conversations with a few international students at Penn State, I learned that Arab
students experience challenges and struggles in their first year compared to the succeeding years of study as they may lack certain cultural and linguistic capital that is necessary to successfully function in their disciplines, particularly at the doctoral level. I was surprised to find that I was not alone in this situation. These students are away from their families; therefore, they merge their social and academic lives. Most UAE students for example, are returning adult students who typically have interrupted their careers to earn degrees that permit them to return to their country to help others to grow. Some of these students told me how they got shocked and lost when they did not get support in their academic work from their classmates, instructors or friends. As a result of their linguistic barriers, they kept silent during discussions in class. As some studies have indicated, some international students view themselves as less competent and linguistically less experienced. However, stories of success are rarely discussed which in and of itself might impose misconceptions or stereotypes that international students, particularly Arab students, are inferior to mainstream students.

The highly interactive and collaborative nature of post-secondary education in the US (i.e., writing papers, working on group projects, making presentations inside and outside the classroom, engaging in academic conversations and discussions), collectively demand Western academic literacy practices and require individuals to construct pieces of writing on the way to becoming scholars in their chosen disciplinary realms. Stories of these challenges, which are still happening repeatedly on a daily basis for many international students, need to be told, documented, and analyzed. Clearly, these are only some of the motivating factors that persuade me to look further into this phenomenon.

My selection of the students who are from the UAE and Saudi Arabia to be my participants and conduct this comparative study is based on several factors:
1. The UAE and Saudi Arabia are different in size. Saudi Arabia is the largest country in the Gulf region.

2. Saudi Arabia dominates the culture of the Gulf. It has a lot of influence over the Gulf states than the UAE.

3. Saudi Arabia has strong ties relationships with the U.S. than the UAE.

4. Emirati and Saudi students have maintained the highest enrollments in U.S. universities (e.g., Penn State University) among the Gulf region students over the years.

5. Measuring the decision and preference of the Emirati and Saudi higher education administrators to send their students to U.S. universities over other countries such as Australia, Canada and others.

Comparison of countries such as those proposed in this study is not without problems. For example, Farell (1979) cautioned researchers that the concept of comparability should not be confused with the idea of sameness. Farell also quoted J. S. Mill who assured that the process of convergence and divergence is vital in establishing a causal relationship. Mill thinks that “the phenomena under the comparison may be alike in all properties except one, and they may also be different in all but one of their properties.” Thus, Mill asserted no logical reason why the comparison made must be grounded only on the principles of convergence (Farell, 1979, as cited in Raivola, 1985, p. 364).

The similarities between Emirati and Saudi students are multiple. These students, generally considered to be Arabs, share the same religion (Islam), and native language (Arabic). They are non –immigrants and entered the U.S. via students’ visas. They are enrollees of different U.S. universities. They have transitioned to U.S. universities for higher education and
plan to return to their native countries. However, the differences between the UAE’s and Saudi Arabia’s students are numerous. They have different experiences and language proficiency levels. Based on their differing native countries, they represent divergent experiences from educational systems, college preparation, and teachers.

The United Arab Emirates and its Education System

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) with a total area of 83,600 sq km, is sited at the Southern tip of the Arabian Gulf. The Gulf region surrounding countries are Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Sultanate of Oman. It has a tropical desert climate with very little or no rainfall. It encompasses united seven emirates: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Ummal-Quwain, Ras al-Khaimah and Fujairah and governed by a federal system instituted on the 2 December 1971. Abu Dhabi city is the capital of UAE.

The discovery of crude oil and its commercial production in the UAE established a new economic position that was reflected in the availability of substantial financial resources and investment in the country development. Over the past thirty years, the UAE developed economically as a result of the oil and gas discovery and tourism. The population has been increased and influenced by the rapid development. Various cultural groups are settled in these seven emirates with the nationals such as Arabs, Iranians, Filipinos, Indians, Europeans and Americans. They are known as expatriates which are approximately 70 percent of the population.

The education system of the UAE is new comparing to other countries. It is divided into public and private sectors. The public schools are funded by the government which all nationals have access to them. The public schools’ curriculum is influenced by the Islamic religion and Arabic language (Gaad, Arif & Scott, 2006). The classes in public schools are single gender.
classes (Gaad, 2001). The majority of expatriates go to private schools to meet their religious, cultural and education needs. The language of instruction in most private schools is English, which some Emirati parents send their children to improve their English. Based on the analysis of the UAE education system, some researchers found that the public education system is ineffective despite the government funding (Shaw et al., 1995). In the past, the dropout rate and repetition rates are higher in the UAE than any other gulf states (Muhanna, 1990). The attrition rates in the public schools are critical (Badri, 1998).

Emirati students come to the U.S. universities and they have studied their high school or the bachelor or Master degree in their native countries which the educational system, the language of instruction, culture, are different than the U.S. culture and universities. The majority of Emirati students sponsored by the UAE Ministry of higher Education to study in the U.S., U.K., Canada, Australia and other counties around the world. Its mission is to

keep abreast of the progress and developments in the international teaching and training methods; to strive to improve performance and acquire further experiences, where the instructional outputs will represent a key component of the overall development of the community, through which future leaders are well prepared and developed so as to satisfy the UAE needs for academically qualified national manpower (Students’ Guide for scholarship, 2011)

Other sponsors of the Emirati students are the United Arab Emirates University, Abu Dhabi Education Council, Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, Dubai Police, and Presidential Scholarship Program. Most of these students attend orientations in their institutions before traveling to the U.S. These orientations are mostly focus on student financial benefits, medical issues, travel, reimbursements, housing, banking, driving in the US, safety tips, universities accreditation, diplomas authentication, student visas, etc. Most the sponsors offer a whole year
for admission and language preparation programs such as TOEFL, IELTS, GRE, GMAT, etc. The focus of these preparation programs is preparing the students’ linguistically and academically more than socially.

Saudi Arabia and its Education System

Saudi Arabia traces its roots back to the earliest civilizations of the Arabian Peninsula. Over the centuries, the peninsula has played a significant role in history as an ancient trade center and as the birthplace of Islam, one of the world’s major monotheistic religions. Since King Abdulaziz Al-Saud established the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932, its transformation has been astonishing. In a few short decades, the Kingdom has turned itself from a desert nation to a modern, sophisticated state and a major player on the international stage (Information Office of the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington, DC, 2011).

The Saudi educational policy objectives are to ensure the affectivity of the Saudi students’ education that meets the religious, economic and social needs of the Saudi Arabia and to decrease illiteracy among Saudi population. The Ministry of Education sets overall regulations for the Saudi Arabia educational system that encompasses public and private sectors. Moreover, it oversees special education for the handicapped. The Ministry of Higher Education was established in 1975 to apply the Saudi Arabia higher education policy. The Ministry of Higher Education supervises scholarships of Saudi students studying abroad, coordinates international inter-university relations and oversees the educational and cultural mission offices in various countries (Saudi Arabia Cultural mission to the U.S., 2011).

The Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission (SACM) is to apply Saudi national educational and training policies to provide Saudi Arabia with qualified individuals capable of achieving Saudi Arabia objectives of progress. Saudi Arabia tries to provide Saudi students with the best possible
educational opportunities at the best educational institutions in the U.S.A. The Cultural division in the Saudi Arabia Embassy in Washington, DC tires to support Saudi students academically and financially so that they may concentrate on achieving their academic goals. Moreover, the cultural division tries to collect and publicize information that reflects Saudi culture, tradition, and heritage through their active participation in academic, cultural, and social activities in the U.S. (The Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission, 2011).

The issue of untrained teachers affects the quality of Saudi students’ learning and education over the past 40 years (Cross, 1995). The Ministry of Education has recruited non-Saudi EFL teachers, especially from Arab countries, who are not well trained (Al-Awad, 2002). The English teachers are not qualified to undertake such a task. They lack subject knowledge, language proficiency, and competence in second/foreign language teaching methodology (Al-Ahaydib, 1986; Zaid, 1993). The Ministry of Education has tried to improve and update English language curricula since 1991 (Sheshsha, 1982; Zaid, 1993).

The Gulf Region Students’ Linguistics Challenges

The Gulf region countries encompass the states of Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Iraq, and Islamic Republic of Iran. Emirati and Saudi students are considered Gulf region students as well because they are from the Gulf region countries. The Gulf has been developed rapidly in a short period. Based on this expansion, the education has gone through that progress as well. Gulf region students have gone from small, ill-equipped huts to classes with laptops. The number of students in universities has been increased in the latest years. For instance, the number of students in the United Arab Emirates increased by 67.5% and the number of schools by 62.0% between 1985 and 1996 (Mograby, 1999). Progress has arisen at all levels, which gives little time for students’ adjustments. The rapid development has had influence on the strategic
planning of the English language preparation programs. The Gulf region countries are multicultural and multilingual countries which their populations speak Arabic, Urdu/Hindi, Malayalam, and especially English. Policy makers in these countries encouraged learning English to keep up with the modernization, which is a significant subject to teach in their curriculum at all educational levels. However, Gulf region students see no significance in communicating in English in their native countries where the surroundings are mostly communicating in the native language, Arabic. English might not be used beyond their classroom (Syed, 2003).

Emirati and Saudi students are considered Arabs. They face similar challenges as Arab learners because they share common language and culture. For instance, Arab learners of English face difficulties in speaking and writing (Abdul Haq, 1982; Harrison, Prator and Tucker, 1975; Abbad, 1988 and Wahab, 1998). For instance, Jordanian students learn English in their native countries which the official language is Arabic as the Gulf region countries. The opportunities of learning and practicing English naturally are very limited to communicating with tourists.

The most obvious problems that hinder the progress of Arab students at University level may be attributed to the “inadequate mastery of the four language skills; namely listening, speaking, reading and writing” (Sulieman, 1983: 129). The Arabs students face difficulty in communicating in the target language at the university level (Sulieman, 1983) The native language, Arabic, interference is not the only factor of the Arab students’ challenges, but the teaching and language process also contribute to their challenges in English (Rababah, 2002).

The language of instruction in most the Gulf region and Arab courtiers is English. The Gulf region students face linguistics challenges to communicate in English fluently in their native countries. Some of these students decide to travel to the U.S. for their post-secondary education. Most of them are sponsored by their governments. For instance, at Pennsylvania
University, in 2010, the number of the Emirati students was 74 and the number of the Saudi students was 128, as shown in table 1-1.

Table 1-1: Distribution of Gulf Region students at Pennsylvania State University

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gulf Cooperation Council</th>
<th># students 2005</th>
<th># students 2006</th>
<th># students 2007</th>
<th># students 2008</th>
<th># students 2009</th>
<th># students 2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotals</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is noticed that number of Emirati and Saudi students is increasing. Also, the number of Saudi students is the highest among other Gulf regions students who attend Pennsylvanian State University. The lowest number of Gulf Region students is Bahraini students because the population of Bahrain is very small compared to the other Gulf Region countries.

During the transition process of the Emirati and Saudi students to the U.S. culture and universities, they try to adjust to the new environment. This cross-cultural adaptation process causes some social and academic challenges. Understanding these challenges is important for the sponsors of these countries and the U.S. universities as well.

Most the sponsors of the Emirati and Saudi students send their students to a language institute to prepare them linguistically. These students usually do not have admission to a university. Therefore, they have to prepare for some admission requirements such as the TOEFL, IELTS, GRE, GMAT, etc. The students try to manage their time between their study in the language institute and their admission requirements work which guarantees their study in U.S.
universities. Spending half of the day in the language institute and its daily work, take most the students’ time instead of focusing on their admission requirements which are more important for the students to get admitted in a university. The issue is that the absence is associated with the F1 visa and the students’ immigration status. Failure in the language preparation program is not an issue for the students so; they do not care that much on doing well in the language institute. The problem is that most these language institute prepare just for the language sake not for TOEFL or IELTS or GRE or GMAT which the students really need to get admission. Another problem is that some of these language institutes which are part of a university, if the students pass all the levels, the university will not give them admission, the students still have to meet all the language admission requirements. Moreover, in some cities which have known universities, they do not have tests centers to take the required tests. The students have to travel to other cities to take these tests.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore the major factors affecting the Emirati and Saudi students’ social and academic experiences in U.S. universities. The focus is whether or not these students were successful in their adaptations to western cultural leading into higher levels of English language proficiency and academic achievement. More specifically, the purposes of this exploratory cross-cultural comparative case study are to explore academic, cultural, discipline-related challenges Emirati and Saudi students face at U.S. universities, and to investigate Emirati and Saudi students’ coping strategies to face their challenges.
Significance of the Study

The Gulf-region students’ social and academic experiences in U.S. universities have not had extensive research, thus this focus deserves scrutiny and has value for higher education through creation of a “global lens.” This study is beneficial for illuminating the situations students from Gulf-region countries and other international students who lack certain cultural and linguistic capital necessary to successfully function in their disciplines, and in broader communities outside higher education. This study’s value accrues to sponsors of international students, particularly for its potential to expose fault lines in higher education and study-abroad preparatory programs that are inattentive to the needs of first-time international students attending American Universities. A scan of available literature reveals few or no recent, noteworthy studies involving Gulf-region scholastic endeavors. This study becomes extremely important for retention programs and for educators and policymakers in the Gulf-region and elsewhere.

Limitations of the Study

With only six students from each group as interviewees, generalizing the results from this study is problematic; likewise, despite each group of students’ similar characteristics, variance in number of residence years in the U.S. and academic levels complicate students’ U.S. universities characteristics and their unique and diverse experiences as they interact within the university, frustrate generalization. Moreover, data from each interview represents the unique experiences of the twelve individual students. The findings represent experiences of the participants interviewed for this study, and therefore may not represent all the Emirati and Saudi students. Since the survey questionnaire was self-reported instrument, perhaps, the participants reported inaccurate data. Finally, the questionnaire instrument, despite sensible construction, has not had previous application
in studies, so no published information exists on which to form comparisons. Therefore, care in interpreting results is necessary, although actual results have their merit. Academic Socialization studies have considered Latino and other minority students in the U.S. as research subjects and rarely consider Emirati and Saudi students.

**Delimitation of the Study**

One of the delimitation was to exclude the financial issues because most the Emirati and Saudi students are sponsored from their governments that pay their tuitions and their living expenses. Moreover, I have decided to exclude Emirati and Saudi students who have been in the U.S. with their families for more than ten years and have studies their high schools in the U.S because they have already adjusted to the U.S. educational system and social life.

**Definitions**

*The Gulf region students:* The students who are from the Gulf region countries that encompass the states of Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Iraq, and Islamic Republic of Iran.

*Cross-Cultural Adaptation:* “stress-adaptation-growth’s” dynamics of cross-cultural experiences, which “bring about cultural strangers’ gradual transformation toward increased functional fitness in the host milieu” (Kim, 1988, p. 200).

*Culture shock:* It is the international students’ feelings of anxiety, surprise and confusion when they travel to a foreign country and contact with an entirely different social environment. Initially, they feel unable to assimilate to the new culture, causing challenge in knowing what is appropriate and what is not (Oberg, 1955)
**Cultural identity**: It is the mental framework through which individuals interpret social cues, choose certain behaviors, respond to their surroundings, and evaluate the actions of other people (Sussman, 2001). Identity’s basis is “membership of many different and simultaneously overlapping demographic categories such as religion, culture, and nationality” (Brown 2009, p. 60).

**Language adjustment**: It refers to the newcomers’ acquiring a second language during their social interaction with the hosting people (Yang and Clum, 1994).

**Language socialization**: It is the socialization of individuals “through the use of language and socialization to use language” (Schiefelin and Ochs, 1986; p. 163).

**Academic Socialization**: it is a process in which students undergo a social and cultural transformation from one cultural and linguistic context to acquire academic writing skills in another context or language in order to become legitimate or proficient participants in a given academic discipline

**Academic Literacy Socialization**: It is a complex process which the academic writing practices are embedded in cognitive, linguistic, social, political and institutional frameworks (Golde, 1998)

**Organizational socialization**: it is “the process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role” (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979, p. 211).
Summary

Despite challenges that could otherwise cripple Emirati and Saudi students’ academic success, some are able to graduate from U.S. universities. Such students face their social and academic challenges, which propel them to achieve their academic pursuits. The present study considers the social and academic challenges of Emirati and Saudi students and their coping strategies to face these challenges and succeed in their studies. The study includes a comparison of experiences of academic socialization of students from the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. Analysis of the participants’ interview transcripts and narrative accounts of their social and academic experiences as students in U.S. universities identifies the factors that influenced these individuals and enabled them to overcome obstacles. Moreover, the discussion includes a comparison of the United Arab Emirates and its education system with the Saudi Arabia and its education system. Also, it discusses some of the Gulf region and Arabs (Emirati and Saudi) students’ linguistics challenges. The next chapter introduces empirical studies on cross-cultural adaptation and academic socialization, language adjustment, identity adjustment, language socialization, academic literacy socialization, disciplinary socialization, and impact of academic socialization on international students’ success and retention.

Organization of the Study

This study organization constitutes five chapters. Chapter 1 is the introduction and includes, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, limitations of the study, delimitation of the study, research questions, organization of the study, and definition of terms. Chapter 2 includes a literature review including empirical studies on cross-cultural adaptation and academic socialization, language adjustment, identity adjustment, language socialization, academic literacy socialization, disciplinary socialization, and impact of academic
socialization on international students’ success and retention. Chapter 3 describes the research method used in the study population, data collection and analysis method, and research questions. Chapter 4 presents the analysis of the data and the findings. Chapter 5 discusses the results and offers discussion of the study’s findings, and offers conclusions and implications for future practice, research, and policy.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

In response, the current research will address these questions by discussing academic socialization. The process of acquiring academic competencies that account for successful performance at a U.S. university is complex and largely depends on the cultural backgrounds of the international Gulf region students in question. To better understand the key concepts and main ideas that frame the study, the research explores, in this literature review, concepts such as cultural adaptation theory, socialization, language socialization, and more specifically, academic socialization, a concept which is understood to be a “situated” process within which college students from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds become socialized or acculturated (Barton and Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 2000).

Empirical Studies on Cross – Cultural Adaptation and Academic Socialization

Scholars define academic socialization as a process in which students undergo a social and cultural transformation from one cultural and linguistic context to acquire academic writing skills in another context or language in order to become legitimate or proficient participants in a given academic discipline (Belcher, 1994; Canagarajah, 2002; Casanave, 1995, 2002; Hirvela and Belcher 2001; Ivanic, 1998; Ivanic and Camps, 2001; Lea and Street, 1999; Prior 1995). However, understanding the complexity of this concept improves with inclusion of “cross cultural adaptation” as anchored in multiple disciplines: anthropology, communication, psychiatry, psychology, sociology, sociolinguistics, and other related disciplines.
In a classic work, Kim (1988) presented a model of cross-cultural adaptation based on socio-psychological adjustment theory and situates cross-cultural adaptation in an integrative theory that emphasizes “stress-adaptation-growth’s” dynamics of cross-cultural experiences, which “bring about cultural strangers' gradual transformation toward increased functional fitness in the host milieu” (p. 200). Even though the literature on “socialization” and “adaptation” overlap in some respects, this exposition distinguishes the two and proposes ways to reconcile them in a unique study of academic socialization. According to Kim (1988), cross-cultural adaptation occurs when people from one culture move to a different culture, learn the rules, societal norms, customs, and language of the new culture. By bringing their existing thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and beliefs with them, a person integrates those into their new society while adjusting and accepting to the new standards, thereby creating a multicultural person. Kim (1988) relieves part of the confusion by theorizing that effective intrapersonal (cognitive, affective, and behavioral) and social (interpersonal and mass) communication activities are at the heart of successful adaptation (or socialization, for that matter)—along with individual background characteristics and the host country’s environmental conditions.

The current need to study these perspectives arises from possibilities realized from current technological advances and student migration patterns. The contraction of time and space, acceleration of technological innovations, and globalization has created greater mobility and access to information. For example, in 2007, about 2.8 million international students were “mobile,” 1 million more than in 1999. In other words, every year, the annual increase of mobile tertiary students to the U.S. universities is 4.6% (UNESCO 2009). Of the numerous populations of students, 20% of the internationally mobile student population is United States enrollees (ACE 2009). The current study addresses this group of students.
Researchers such as Kim (1988) and others (e.g. Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto, Shuart-Faris, 2005; Gumperz, 2001; Hymes, 1974; Barton and Hamilton, 1994, 1998; Gee, 2000) developed several theories that explain the phenomenon of academic socialization. Central to these theories is the idea that the concept of cross-cultural adaptation, which entails moving from one culture to another culture, usually (but not always) learning the rules, norms, customs, and language of the new culture encompass several social science disciplines, including anthropology, sociology and psychology. The limitation of the current research is however inclusive of only sojourners, those who travel to a culture for an extended time, but with projected limits—that is, ultimately plan to return to the home country. Such sojourners are international students or those on extended business assignments perhaps one to three years. Psychologists and communication scholars tended to focus on individual levels of adjustment, that is, the thought, emotional, and behavioral processes of adjustment (psychology), and the role of communication in both leading to “culture shock” or “cross-cultural transition stress,” and in helping to reduce these stresses.

The notion of “culture shock” (Oberg, 1955) for example, summarizes the often dramatic effect of the adjustment experience. As a consequence, the tendency is toward automatic initiation of a series of psychological mechanisms to regain comfort, a feeling of security and positive thoughts. Even though the central interest of the research centers on academic socialization, a review the extensive literature, signals the necessity of attending to issues of cross-cultural adaptation, including stresses resulting from culture shock. In other words, a systemic approach within which the notion of adjustment (which involves psychological self-transformation) that incorporates forms of socialization (that is, social factors within the new culture, including the people contacted, known, interacted [e.g., particular interactions with staff
members or other students] while trying to acclimate to this new environment) is necessary. And, as noted by Kagan and Cohen (1990), the terms adjustment, acculturation, and assimilation “are used interchangeably to denote behavior, value, and attitude changes associated with feelings of mental health and social integration” (p. 133). Therefore, the overarching quest of the research is to examine the mechanics and dynamics of individual adjustment processes within the academic environment, the sources of difficulty, and the reason some adjust more easily than others.

The motivation for this topic arises from personal struggles in academic endeavors as an international student at a U.S. university, and pursuit of academic goals may illuminate the complex matters underlying the dilemmas, choices, and challenges of various student populations and the constituents of success while in an academic institution. The study is comparative, focusing on Saudi and Emirati students enrolled in U.S. universities. This comparison is particularly important in the context of graduate programs where the issue of institutional transition may be is important, and perhaps likely to assert a greater role than linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Typically, expectations direct doctoral students to be active participants in their academic communities and to acculturate into the world of academia by building and producing academic knowledge and social and professional relationships. Consequently, expectations applied to doctoral students may vary depending on many factors, such as diversity of learners, audiences, and stakeholders from many backgrounds: geographical, cultural, linguistic, or international, all of whom encounter these institutions upon arrival to the United States. These factors may very well determine the success or failure of transitioning through the academic world, and perhaps, linguistic or cultural differences may only exacerbate the inherent difficulties of academic socialization.
To better understand the challenges, such as linguistics practices, cultural shock, cross-cultural differences, students’ advisor/mentor relationships, and meeting academic expectations, international students from the UAE and Saudi Arabia experience as they transition through U.S. universities, this study examines the tasks these students undertake and the extent to which they succeed in meeting their academic goals. More importantly, however, the study includes the expectations of the socialization and acculturation process in theses populations’ academic lives.

Theoretical Considerations

The theoretical orientations framing this study are several and due to space limitations, only a few receive detailed consideration. A scan of the literature reveals many types of socialization related to academic socialization, and therefore potentially influence this study. References abound, among which are concepts of cultural adaptation/adjustment (Kim, 1988), language socialization (Hymes, 1977; Heath, 1993; Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986; Watson-Greco, 2004; Gee, 1996, 1999; Gumperz 1981, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978), academic socialization (Duff, 1995; Ochs, 1988), Community of Practice perspectives (COP), legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), and socio-cultural theory. This literature review focuses on only a few of these socializations: (1) cultural adjustment, (2) academic, (3) language, (4) academic literacy, (5) and disciplinary.

Cultural Adjustment Socialization

Cultural adjustment is about learning to bridge, alter, change, or adjust to cultural differences. In order to understand adjustment strategies, this literature review seeks to define cultural adjustment and explore its variations, including social, linguist, and identity adjustments, and the interface of these adjustment with academic socialization. As explained, adjustment is a
complex and multi-faceted concept, referring to the dynamic processes that can ultimately lead the achievement of appropriate fit between the person and the new environment.

Definitions of cultural adjustment within international education, international business, cross-cultural studies, and sociological literature tend to be very ambiguous (Brein and David, 1971; Church, 1982; Ward and Searle, 1990), since definitions of adjustment has varied throughout the years. For some scholars the terms adjustment, acculturation, and assimilation are interchangeable (Kagan and Cohen, 1990).

Other researchers, however, defined adjustment as satisfying one’s needs, satisfaction with daily activities (Brislin, 1981), accommodating and coping with a new environment, interacting freely and accepting hosts, developing a sense of well-being, mood states (Feinstein and Ward, 1990), functioning with minimum strain, developing appropriate habits, skills and behaviors (Bochner, Lin, and McLeod, 1980), achieving academic and personal performance and satisfaction, and evaluation of job performance (Harris, 1972). Other researchers also related adjustment definition to psychological distress (Befus, 1988), developing a positive attitude toward hosts/host country (Noesjirwan, 1978), and obtaining psychological comfort and familiarity for the new environment (Black, 1988; Oberg, 1960; Nicholson, 1984). Perkins, Guglilmino, and Reiff, 1977) incorporate many of these variables in a broader definition of cultural or sojourners’ adjustment, including them as essential parts of the adjustment process.

Since scholars from different disciplines have an interest in this multi-faceted topic, an apparent consensus among them as to what transpires during such adjustment processes is absent. For example, Ramsay, Jones, and Baker (2007) suggested that sometimes adjustment involves ongoing learning cycles, usually triggered by significant, often negative experiences. They insisted that these experiences broadly focus on the environment (e.g. particular
interactions with staff members or with other students) or on the person (e.g. lack of confidence, homesickness), reflecting the person-environment-fit perspective. While the characteristics and quality of the environment are important, in most cases people appear to be active agents who can potentially influence or change their environments and even contribute to their own adjustments (Ramsay, Jones, and Baker, 2007).

Researchers found several factors that influence the cultural adjustment of international students. These include language differences and skills (Klineberg and Hull, 1979), motivation for coming to study to the United States (Gardner and Lambert, 1972), general attitude toward the host country and its hosts (Norris, 2001), age and maturity of the student (Brett and Stroh, 1995), and length of time in the United States (Pinder and Klaus, 1987). The most important factor, however, is social interactions within the host country (Church, 1982).

The view that adjustment to a new culture is the product of multiple, interacting factors has led to the development of various multi-dimensional models. Most of these models incorporate behavioral, personal, and social networking elements. Goldust and Richmond in 1974 (as cited in Kagan and Cohen, 1990) offered one of the earliest cultural adjustment models. Their multidimensional model included internalization, identification, values and attitude change, and pre-migration influences. Similarly, Rosenthal and Hrynevich (as cited in Kagan and Cohen, 1990) conceptualized multidimensional ethnic identity as involving languages, religion, social activity, maintenance of cultural tradition, family life, and physical characteristics. These multidimensional factors complicate international students’ cultural adjustments.

**Adjustment Complications of International Students**

Several studies on the topic of international students’ cultural adjustments found that through social interaction with hosts, international students have a better opportunity to develop
skills and behaviors that can help them adjust to their new cultural environment (Furnham and Bochner, 1986; Shaffer and Harrison, 2001). Most research devoted to understanding the experiences of international students indicates that these students often face problems with acculturation, and decreased access to their existing or familiar support systems add to the challenges (Charles-Toussaint and Crowson, 2010; Kagan and Cohen, 1990). However, research of adjustment and assimilation of international students studying in the United States, in particular ethnic sub-groups, such as the Gulf region international students, appears limited.

Despite the recognized importance of international students’ participation in higher education in the United States, few studies explored the adjustment process of Gulf region international students, who arrive in the country with myriad looming challenges, such as attitudes towards religion, language, study habits, dress code, and not to mention, food, all of which require adjustments. For these reasons, these students encounter many changes and difficulties in adjusting to colleges and universities in the United States. Easing the adjustment of the Gulf region international students to college life has become an increasingly important concern of administrators in recent years due to the potential impact of adjustment problems on student attrition (Al–Sharideh and Goe, 1998).

Cultural adjustment of international students is cause for concern for educators and college administrators throughout the United States, mainly because the negative impact the lack of adjustment or unsuccessful adjustment to the new environment can have on international students’ academic careers, personal satisfaction, and general well-being. Anecdotal stories gathered during a recent pilot study recount students’ adjusting to college with many of them sharing feelings of anxiety, confusion, and homesickness, among others concerns. International
students, however, have the additional burden of confronting prejudice and cultural differences, which may hinder or prolong their adjustments.

These concerns are not unique to students from the UAE and Saudi Arabia, but they seem to face many particular challenges since they are geographically distant from familiar environments and support, and English is not their first language. Students’ experiences in the host country diverge from their own cultures in terms of norms, roles, attitudes, values, and expectations, with the host cultures ‘greater differences expected to create greater difficulties and stress (Al – Sharideh and Goe, 1998). Moreover, Gulf region’s students may suffer from loneliness due to loosing of social ties with people in their native countries. Faced with these problems, Gulf region international students must develop strategies of adjustment for coping with the exigencies of their new social environments, meeting their personal needs, and performing satisfactorily in their academics. These challenges make the current research relevant but also very complex and thought-provoking. Bochner (1972) categorizes the complications of adjustment for international students into some aspects: a student adjusting to the general stress of college; a foreigner with special culturally-related learning problems; a maturing, developing individual, and a national representative, sensitivity to native speakers’ background and national status.

Ward and Searle (1990, p. 210) proposed dividing adjustment into two aspects: *physiological*, which “refers to feelings of well-being and satisfaction,” and *socio-cultural*, which “relates to the ability to ‘fit in’ in the host culture. Ward and Searle (1991) explained that sojourner adjustment has attracted three main theoretical positions for the aspects that influence the adjustment: clinical perspectives (e.g., personality, life events and social support), social learning models (e.g., acquiring appropriate skills and behaviors, cross-cultural experience and
training), and social cognition approaches (e.g., variables such as attitudes, values, expectations and self-concept). The literature suggests that these three dimensions and all the variables they include influence international students’ adjustment problems. Notably perhaps, some of the most important are language difficulties, financial problems (Klineberg and Hull, 1979), homesickness (Hull, 1978; Jammaz, 1973; Klineberg and Hull, 1979; Shepard, 1970), discrimination (Church, 1982), adjusting to a new educational system, and adjusting to new social customs and roles.

**Social Adjustment**

The way in which informal relationships influence the sojourner’s attempts to cope with uncertainty and change has had research consideration (Albrecht and Adelman, 1984; Feinstein and Ward, 1990). One finding suggested that loneliness predicts a sojourner’s psychological distress (Ward and Searle, 1991). Sojourners who feel helpless in a new culture might seek to communicate with those they believe can assist them to find answers to their questions. Albrecht and Adelman (1984, 1987a) found that the underlying function of social support is to reduce uncertainty, and defined social support as the “verbal and nonverbal communication between the recipients and the providers that reduces uncertainty about the situation, the self, the other, or the relationship, and the functions to enhance a perception of personal control in one’s life experience” (1987a, p. 19). According to Adelman (1988), people also seek to feel they have control over a particular situation through social support, which, apparently, influences the sojourner’s psychological well-being (Ward and Searle, 1991).

When individuals move to a new country, they find disruption to their old support networks (e.g., family and friends), and they would need to create new support systems. International students, arriving in a new culture, experience culture shock express anxiety
through behavior such as trying to avoid the hosts and looking for company from their co-nationals (Church, 1982). In an attempt to feel safe in the new environment with new cultural values, they also seek to feel comfortable by speaking their native languages, and giving value to their own culture and ethnicity.

Support from co-nationals can help alleviate the feelings of homesickness and stress during the adjustment process; at the same time, such associations help international students reaffirm their cultural values, since the associates experience essentially the same problems when they arrived (Bochner, 1981; Furnham and Bochner, 1982; Kim, 1987). According to Giordano and Giordano (1976), ethnicity fulfills a psychological need for security, identity, and a sense for historical continuity. Co-nationals represent a “low-risk informant” (Adelman, 1988, p. 188) who can offer answers, while reducing the student’s uncertainty for affecting the relationship by the help-seeking process. In other words, international students feel more comfortable asking questions of those felt to be non-judgmental. Sojourners who do not have the support of a group of co-nationals, apparently, have greater problems of adjustment (Torbion, 1982). Kagan and Cohen (1990) believe that the relationships with co-nationals are important to students; however, those relationships might negatively affect cultural adjustment.

When confronted with stressful conditions, as in a new culture, internationals students might also seek the companionship of other new co-nationals (Wills, 1983), and to share resources and information to cope with their adjustment problems. In this kind of informal support groups, members self-disclose their fears and concerns and participate in mutual problem-solving (Greenberg, 1980). Support systems among those who are experiencing similar cross-cultural stresses, however, could also interfere with satisfying the needs of these individuals (Fontaine, 1986). Stressed individuals can negatively affect those who are vulnerable
(Adleman, 1986; Albercht and Adelman, 1984, 1987b), when sharing tensions and concerns. Also, co-nationals might unintentionally worsen the stress and anxiety of the new sojourner, as they share information from home (Adelman, 1988).

Even though international students might benefit initially from the support of their co-nationals, eventually the international students will need to reduce their interaction and dependence on their co-nationals, and in turn increase their interaction with hosts in order to acquire the skills necessary to adjust successfully to the new environment. Restricting their interaction with hosts will only inhibit learning the new language, values, and norms of the culture and will reinforce feelings of alienation (Aresberg and Niehoff, 1964; Garraty and Adams, 1959; Gullarhorn and Gullarhorn, 1966; Kang, 1972; Lundstedt, 1963). Insulation among national compatriots may also create protection from cultural change (Alberchet and Adelman, 1984), adding to the difficulty of acquiring skills necessary to adjust to the new environment. Essentially, interaction with members outside the co-nationals group is important for their integration (Kim, 1987).

In the beginning of an experience in a new culture, international students tend to avoid interacting with hosts and seek the company of co-nationals (Church, 1982); however, upon arrival, while the interaction with co-nationals is important for new international students to feel supported, eventually, seeking interaction with hosts becomes equally important. Apparently, detachment from one’s co-national community facilitates cultural adjustment (Bruner, 1956; Kagan and Cohen, 1990; Masuda, Matsumoto, and Meredith, 1970; Montgomery and Orozco, 1984; Spiro, 1955; Weinstock, 1964; Yao, 1985), and the interaction with representatives of the host culture positively facilitates cultural adjustment (Bruner, 1956; Fugita and O’Brien, 1985; Kagan and Cohen, 1990; Roskin and Edleson, 1984; Smith, 1976; Weinstock,
Kagan and Cohen (1990) found that students who had close American friends were more likely to have an easier shift to the new culture than those without the same relationships.

**Language Adjustment**

Language adjustment refers to the newcomers’ acquiring a second language during their social interaction with the hosting people (Yang and Clum, 1994). The emphasis on English is significant because difficulties with English language are often an attribution for one cause of stress experienced by international students. Yang and Clum (1994) stated that among many factors that affect international students’ adjustments, language proficiency is the most important determent. Barrat and Huba (as cited in Mallinckrodt et al., 2008) also found that a high level of language proficiency leads to international students’ academic success and adjustment to the host culture. This proficiency enhances international students’ performances in classes and feelings of comfort when participating in discussions. Skill with language also facilitates socialization with American peers, who play an important role in international students’ cultural adjustments (Mallinckrodt et al., 2008). Mallinckrodt et al. (2008) contended that international students who speak English fluently tend to be less embarrassed and less self-conscious about their accents or ethnic backgrounds, and thus exhibit higher levels of self-esteem and better adjustment. Although realizing the importance of English, Gulf region international students mostly reported having difficulty with writing. Holmes (2005) said that “inadequate language skills have been found to mask other problems stemming from other causes such as lack of familiarity with a new educational and social environment, and with a new culture and its associated cultural norms and behavior” (p. 294). Mallinckrodt and Wang (2006) stated that “international students who have higher self-rated English abilities and have resided longer in the United States tend to
be more acculturated with American culture and experience less sociocultural difficulty and less psychological distress” (p. 431).

Identity Adjustment

Cultural identity is another factor that impacts the process of adjustment experienced by international students. Cultural identity is the mental framework through which individuals interpret social cues, choose certain behaviors, respond to their surroundings, and evaluate the actions of other people (Sussman, 2001). A logical prediction is that international experiences have tremendous impact on identity formation or identity adjustment. According to Brown (2009), identity’s basis is “membership of many different and simultaneously overlapping demographic categories such as religion, culture, and nationality” (p. 60). To illustrate this in practical terms, Brown (2009) showed that Indonesians share a common language, religion, and culture. Indonesian Muslims identified themselves with a shared religion, while Chinese, a major group in the country, gained further distinction from their inter-group’s Chinese language (besides speaking Indonesian), a distinct marker based on a shared culture (Brown, 2009).

The situation is not different in the Gulf region. For example, to maintain cultural identity and native language, a general reluctance existed to teach English throughout the early history of education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), (Elyas and Picard, 2010). Not until 2003 was English included in the curriculum of all primary schools in KSA, and then only after considerable international pressure (Elyas, 2008a, b), and although English is generally accepted in KSA, debates still rage as to instructional methodology (Elyas and Picard, 2010). Academic reforms have, in the majority of Gulf countries, resulted in an uncritical adoption of Western (mainly American) university curricula, content, and teaching practices, all of which have not always met the needs of the learners (Mazawi, 2003). As a result, an Islamized English
curriculum often ensues, and consequently, learners experience a culture shock when studying in an American university since their English and western education is not equivalent to the actual English language and western culture in America. Bahgat (1999) mentioned that Omani’s male illiteracy rate was twice that of Saudi’s and three times Emirati’s.

In addition, the Prophet Mohammed directed his followers to search for knowledge, including knowledge characteristic of non-Muslims and broader education in general. International graduate students have become an integral part of many major U.S. universities and their adaptation to American academic and social cultures can be an arduous task (Gonzalez, 2004) but even so, international graduate students from the Gulf actively pursue education in America.

**Academic Socialization**

The previous section, explained that the literature review reveals an overlap of cultural adjustment, acculturation and assimilation in social and academic contexts. This finding is important for the study of the extent to which academic socialization accounts for success among international students in meeting their academic goals and expectations. When novice, Gulf-region students come to the U.S. universities, they expect that their programs will teach them the fundamental academic requirements such as the academic writing in their disciplines. Few students expect that their program involve learning how to perform social and cultural roles expected of them in their academic fields.

The teaching in the educational programs of U.S. institutions may focus on skills, the pragmatic application of learning, an expectation perhaps new to these students since most studies in their native countries are predominantly based on memorization (Bourdieu, 1988).
Within the U.S. universities context, socialization is defined as the process by which newcomers learn the encoded system of behaviors specific to their areas of expertise and the system of meanings and values attached to these behaviors (Doyle, 1990; Goodlad, Soder, and Sirotnik, 1990). Throughout this socialization process, an individual learns to adopt the values, skills, attitudes, norms, and knowledge needed for membership in an academic community (Merton, 1957; Tierney, 1997; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979).

Learning is a socially constructed process that students experience with peers and instructors while participating in academics. The Morita (2000) study of classroom activities examined graduate students’ academic socialization through presentations in the classroom. This study indicated that non-native English-speaking students’ linguistic, socio-cultural and psychological difficulties tend to impact their engagement in the classroom activities. Students’ lack of confidence, knowledge, social skills, and critical thinking, all challenge their interactions. Negotiating conflicting identities and shifting epistemic stances influence the students’ academic performance and self-worth. Students view themselves as novices or experts in their social interaction when they display some cultural knowledge. As observed by Morita, during the dynamic process of academic socialization, students begin to gain competence and membership in their new academic communities.

Language Socialization

Language socialization draws on multi-disciplinary approaches for applying social and linguistic competence (Och, 1988; Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986) to define language socialization as the socialization of individuals “through the use of language and socialization to use language” (Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986; p. 163). Consequently, language socialization is a
lifelong, interactive process that begins with the respective human being’s initial social contact (Hollman, 1994). Language socialization, specifically, is of particular interest to the current study. By now, clearly, academic socialization and language socialization’s have an overlapping relationship because often they occur simultaneously: Language learning is part of academic achievement, and academic achievement occurs with mastery of language skills. Clearly, language socialization research is significant in studying the complex process of students’ academic socializations in oral, written, and online discourses. Academic language socialization has the perception of being a set of values and beliefs that appear in academic discourse (i.e., L2 academic writing) which the students encounter in their academic communities (Seloni, 2008).

This significant theoretical perspective for the current research describes the use of language to mediate social interaction in academics (e.g., Bizzell, 1992; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1998; Lave and Wenger, 1991, 1998). Socialization occurs when bilingual or multilingual students learn the language of academia through their interaction with students more proficient in the language and who have more cultural knowledge of the target academic communities’ capabilities for mentoring or learning the appropriate uses of language, ideologies, values, and identities of community members (Duff, in press). The process of second language socialization is critical for Gulf students who are characteristically second language students (Duff, 2003; Moore, 1999; Poole, 1992; Watson-Gecgo, 1992; Willett, 1995).

L2 socialization research shares interest with other disciplines such as such as linguistic anthropology (e.g., Hymes, 1977; Heath, 1993; Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986; Watson-Greco, 2004), cultural psychology (e.g., Rogoff, 1990), sociolinguistic ethnography (e.g., Gee, 1996, 1999; Gumperz 1981, 2001), and socio-cultural theories (e.g., Vygotsky, 1978). Linguistic anthropologists Elinor Ochs and Bambi Schieffelin (1986) developed the language socialization
framework during their study of daily social interaction of natives of Western Samoa. Schieffelin and Ochs (1986) identified learning in their framework as “socialization through language and socialization to use language” (p.2). For instance, children acquired the knowledge of the values and norms of their communities when they use language to mediate their interactions. The researchers noted that the language socialization process begins early in the childhood and continues to be a life-long process in which newcomers to a culture attempt to attain proficiency, competence, and membership and legitimacy in the community (Duff, 2007).

Although the focus of some of these studies was the children’s and adults’ first language socialization in their communities, these theories suggested researchers turn their attentions to novices’ second language socialization processes in new communities. As the result of the increasing number of international students in the U.S., the emphasis on theories of second language socialization expanded to include the processes of gaining membership and legitimacy in a new community (Schiefflin and Ochs, 1986). The impact of “social turn” in the 1980s and 1990s was to focus on the social perspectives of language learning instead of only focusing on cognitive orientations (Firth and Wegner, 1997; Kasper, 1997; Hall, 1997; Lantof, 1996, 2000 among others). Firth and Wegner (1997) turned their attention from second language learning, cognitive orientations to socio-cultural perspectives explaining the natural and interactive use of the language.

First and Second language socialization

First and second language socializations have commonality in their processes (Duff, 2003; Watson-Greco, 2003, 2004). First language use is easier than second language use because learners already had linguistic and cultural knowledge of the first language, which facilitates social interaction; however, second language socialization is a complex process. Second
language learners face challenges when attempting to gain legitimacy in their new communities. These difficulties might cause learners’ resistance to the second language community’s norms and beliefs, leading to negotiation of their identities, which complicates socialization processes (e.g., Kanno, 2003; Kramsch, 2002; Norton and Toohey, 2001; Pavlenko and Lantof, 2000; Pierce, 1995). The studies emphasizing the disconnection between learners’ native languages and cultures and the second language examined L2 students’ acculturation into second language discourse communities and socialization in different settings (e.g., Kanno, 2003; Norton and Toohey, 2001; Pierce, 1995).

Acquisition focuses on linguistic knowledge; cognitive orientations perceive acquisition as information processing, and thereby separate learners’ minds from their environments. However, participation is the perception that learning the second language is a process of gaining membership in a new community (Sfrad, 1998, cited in Pavlenko and Lantof, 2000). Sfrad, (1998) indicates that the narratives of second language learners emphasize the significance of participation in new communities and exemplify the ongoing difficulties these learners face.

Some second language socialization studies conducted to investigate elementary, secondary and post-secondary students’ socialization process in different contexts such as Canada. Other studies focused on immigrants’ interactive challenges in elementary, secondary, and post-secondary classrooms in the U.S and Canada (Duff, 2002; Harklau, 2003; Kobayashi, 2003; Norton, 1995, 1997, 2000; Norton and Toohey, 2001; Morita, 2000, 2004; Toohey, 1998). These studies showed the significance of second language speaking and writing strategies, and scaffolding and peer feedback in new academic communities.

In sum, language socialization theory shows that people learn ideologies, linguistics, culture, history, and identity through the appropriate use of language and engage in the new
communities. Kramsch (2002) proposed that language serves as a tool for gaining membership linguistically, negotiated in a particular community of practice, to allow immersion in a community’s systems, and socio-cultural attitudes, values, and beliefs. These theoretical considerations illustrate that international students have to submerge themselves in the American culture as the cultural shock that many face diminishes, since negotiation of participation, struggles with gaining legitimacy, and attainment of membership in English academic discourse communities (Barnawi, 2009) is necessary. Accomplishing these goals can be daunting to achieve academic assimilation since socio-cognitive interactions become more complicated in a classroom settings, which include populations of linguistically and culturally diverse students (Hirst, 2007).

Notably therefore, dampening of students’ academic socializations and linguistic and conceptual repertoires has occurred, since international graduate students’ typical training concentrates on English-as-a-second-language for cognitive or academic functions within formal contexts only. They may lack informal, culturally appropriate, social use of the language in within the context of American college culture. As noted in this review, language difficulties cause problems to cascade. For instance, informal, casually made remarks, the use of slang and euphemisms, and a lack of English proficiency reduce socio-academic acclimatization, and international students often miss vital information.

**Academic Literacy Socialization**

Literacy socialization and language socialization complement each other. This section discusses *situated* and *multiple* academic literacy (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000; Barton et. al, 2000; Hull and Schultz, 2000; Street, 1984; Lea and Street, 1999). This theoretical consideration
applies to the academic literacy socialization process of Emirati and Saudi students. A study of literacy socialization concerns students’ learning the norms of their academic communities, the students’ academic socialization and learning processes of second language academic literacy, and the process of acquiring legitimacy in their academic communities.

Several studies attempted to investigate the academic and social processes international students’ undergo to succeed in their academic disciplines. In the study of academic literacy socialization, scholars examined the rhetorical and linguistic continuum in acquisition of academic English writing skills (e.g. Brett, 1994; Swales, 1990), academic voices and identities (e.g. Hirvela and Belcher, 2001; Ivanic and Camps 2001), relationships between students’ vernacular communities and their academic communities (e.g. Belcher, 1999; Canagarajah, 2002), and students’ academic discourse socialization processes and experiences, with emphasis on speaking (e.g. Duff, 2003; Kobayashi, 2003; Morita, 2002; Seloni, 2008; Zappa-Hollman, 2007) and writing (e.g., Belcher, 1995; Casanave, 1995, 2002; Prior, 1995; Spack, 1997; Zamel, 1998, 2000).

Based on the language socialization framework, some researchers examined literacy socialization in different situations. For example, Heath (1987), for some children, investigated the use of language and writing in the home and school, merged language and literacy socialization theories, and demonstrated the effect of children’s written interaction and cultural practices at home and school with writing proficiency. Other researchers, such as Barton (1994) and Barton and Hamilton (1998) studied the development of the social view of literacy. Barton’s (1994) view of literate practices emphasized the connection between individuals and their social environments.
Literate practices focus on “(A)n ecological approach is…one which examines the social and mental embeddedness of human activities in a way which allows change (Barton, 1994, p. 32). Grounded in the Street and Heath social views of literacy, Barton and Hamilton (2000) identified literate practices as “the link between the activities of reading and writing and the social structures in which they are embedded and which they help shape” (Barton and Hamilton, 2000 p. 7), and literacy events as “activities where literacy has a role” (p.8). The perception of literacy’s situation is one of daily social processes (Barton et al., 2000), “positioned in relation to the social institutions and power relations which sustain them” (Barton et. al 2000, p.1).

Other researchers use the concept of literacy in its plural form to refer to a variety of knowledge and competencies (e.g., computer literacy, visual literacy, political literacy, cultural literacy and academic literacy). The social view of literacy also refers to being “competent and knowledgeable in specialized areas” (Barton, 1994, p.19). Viewing the plural form of literacy broadens the conceptualization of an individual’s connections with literacy. The first and second language research and theories of literacy turn scholars’ attention to the ideological view of literacy. Some researchers conducted ethnographic studies to understand the learners who have diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds that emphasize the social, cultural and political processes of their conflicting literacy experiences in U.S. and non-U.S. contexts.

Grounded in the L1 literacy field, Street (1984, 1993) defined two literacy models, which are the “autonomous and the “ideological.” First, the autonomous model of literacy reflects literacy as isolated skills, independent of social context (product oriented). Second, the ideological model of literacy refers to literacy as culturally and politically involved practices (process oriented). Literacy, viewed in the ideological model, is “inextricably linked to cultural and power structures in society” and recognizes “the variety of cultural practices associated with
reading and writing in different contexts” (Street, 1993, p.7). Street (1984) conducted ethnographic studies and analyzed different literacy practices such as a study of Iranian villagers’ reading and writing practices, which employed the ideological perspective of literacy practices. Street believed that literacy practices include individual’s knowledge of reading and writing and “behavior and conceptualizations related to the use of reading and writing” (p.12). Street conducted many studies in different places throughout the world showing the disconnection between the pedagogies teachers use in literacy practices and local people’s ways of performing these literacy practices.

Lea and Street (2000) identified three models according to three contexts of literacy socialization in higher education research: study skills, academic socialization, and academic literacy. The study skills model represents the autonomous literacy perspective that emphasizes writing skills and knowledge isolated from any particular context. The academic socialization and academic literacy models are embedded in institutional contexts. The study skills view focuses on the mechanical characteristics of language (e.g., grammar and spelling) and the significance of teaching these skills outside any specific context. Based on the model of these skills, teachers’ instruction encourages students to focus on the technical aspects of writing. This model accrued criticism from its lack of addressing the needs and expectations of students who have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and the contexts brought to learning the reading and writing skills. This criticism led some scholars to investigate the perspective that learning academic writing is a process of academic socialization that includes more than just learning the technical aspects of writing. Negotiation of meaning and students’ enculturation into new discourses and discourse practices is the focus of the academic socialization model; therefore, the context is significant for acquiring the literacy.
Overall, these studies indicate that international students face many challenges to accommodate the different discourses needed to succeed (Lea and Street, 2000). Students face challenges in their studies when beginning to acquire new sets of literacy practices. Therefore, the academic literacy model, as Street (2005) contended, “targets the institutions themselves and the professional development of tutors as well as the students ‘needs’ for academic support, and it stresses the need for unpacking and making explicit what is taken for granted in terms of literacy requirements” (p. 6).

**Disciplinary Socialization**

Disciplinary socialization is another area that is important for the current research. International students transition through different socialization processes in U.S. universities, and especially within their academic disciplines; these are organizational and disciplinary socialization processes. Van Maanen and Schein (1979) described organizational socialization as “the process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role” (p. 211). Consequently, the graduate student acquires the skills and knowledge necessary for entrance to, and success in, the professional milieu.

Socialization in the U.S. universities, constructed and constrained by particular policies, regulations and committees, include combinations of informal expectations established within the academic discipline (Schutz, 1970). These common interests and processes create formal and informal constructs that represent the organizational culture (Tierney, 1988). Discipline-based cultures are the main source of professors' identities and professionalism. These disciplines share common expectations, responsibilities, performance standards, academic publications, professional communications, and social and political stances (Becher, 1989). Some norms and practices in research vary among different disciplines Becher (1989). Each discipline has its own
philosophy of academic achievement. Even though the varieties, the differing disciplines, and the idiosyncrasies of universities, share some common values such as academic liberty, the academic community, the quest for truth, individual independence, and service to society (Kuh and Whitt, 1986), the socialization process allows doctoral students to learn the norms of their academic communities.

Organizational socialization is a "ritualized process that involves the transmission of culture" (Tierney and Rhoads, 1993, p. 21) which is the culture through which doctoral students attempt to adapt to the academic discipline. Tierney and Rhoads' framework of faculty socialization includes two stages: anticipatory and organizational socialization. Anticipatory socialization begins when students join particular programs. Students learn professors’ norms, expectations and the standards the discipline and for the academic career. During the anticipatory socialization process, the students collaborate closely with professors; they observe and learn the norms of conducting research, writing for publication, peer reviewing.etc. (Anderson and Seashore Louis, 1991). The organizational stage appears when the students emerge into their academic professions in program and develop their anticipatory socializations. During the organizational stage, students face challenges for gaining membership to their professions.

Gardner (2010) conducted a study to understand the disciplinary context and cultural impact on the doctoral students’ socialization and attrition at one institution with regard to three phases: admission, candidacy examination, and the dissertation-job phase. He interviewed 60 doctoral students in six disciplines during winter and spring semesters. The students discussed four issues regarding their socialization experiences including: support, transition, ambiguity, and self-direction. Freedom to do whatever the students want in a communication department and learning how to research independently in and engineering department are examples of self-
direction. Therefore, supportive faculty, students mentoring relationships, clear expectations clear graduate school guidelines, continuous orientation sessions are all essential but the graduate students’ socialization experiences cannot be generalized (Gardner, 2010).

Students’ persistence connects with students' successful socialization processes (Golde, 1998, 2000; Tinto, 1993). Students must be intellectual, successful students and engage in the disciplines ‘academic endeavors (Golde, 1998, 2000, Staton and Darling, 1989). Golde (1998) stated that students experienced four socialization tasks in their disciplines, represented by four questions: (1) "Can I do this?" (2) "Do I want to be a student?" (3) "Do I want to do this work?" (4) "Do I belong here?"

A summary of this section, presents a clear, emerging picture that indicates students socialize to the values and standards of the discipline and the school, beginning with anticipatory socialization (Van Maanen, 1976). Students, exposed to particular academic skills and expectations, initiate their preparation for intellectual work. Through the socialization process, students attempt to engage the academic community and interact with the professors and students in their disciplines. Students attempt to inculcate the values, expectations and attitudes of their colleagues and the discipline’s culture by communicating with its members (Corcoran and Clark, 1984; Staton and Darling, 1989; Van Maanen, 1976).

Students enrich the discipline academically and socially. This academic socialization process is bidirectional (Tierney and Bensimon, 1996). Students learn how to fulfill their roles in their disciplines when they participate in the dialectical process of interacting with the faculty members and fellow students (Staton and Darling, 1989; Staton-Spicer and Darling, 1986; Zeichner, 1980). Therefore, the academic socialization process is dynamic, indicating that students come to U.S. universities with their cultural and linguistic backgrounds and impose
them on their disciplines. In short, the socialization process in a discipline’s program includes three perspectives, which are the socialization system, the conceptualization of academic work, and students’ reactions to the program.

**Impact of Academic Socialization on International Students’ Success and Retention**

While countless articles discuss the success and retention of domestic students entering post-secondary institutions, the literature of the success and retention of international students is not nearly as extensive. Although researchers and practitioners may find instructive research, which considers the success of particular populations of international students, such as Chinese, Indian, Turkish, Libyan, European, and Latin students, studies based on the retention and success of Gulf-region students are in shorter supply. Researchers and practitioners who try to create curricula, programs, and services to support the international success and retention. As a result of the shortage of information on particular segments of the population, the institutions rely on best practices for international student success and retention, without tailoring those practices for specific groups.

Best practices for success and retention require that institutions assess students’ individual needs, attitudes, and motivation levels, and then predict “drop out” proneness before that eventuality. Therefore, institutions must have functioning systems that allow for identification of potential academic difficulty, potential educational stress, and potential social, emotional, and spiritual obstacles before the problems and consequences become apparent.

Effective models of retention stress the need for students to integrate into the academic and social dimensions of the college community. Establishment of these connections must occur during the first weeks of the first year of college (Tinto, 1993; Tinto in Spann, 1990). “[T]he
earlier one attends to students’ problems or potential problems, the easier it is to deal with that problem and the less likely it is that it will manifest itself in the form of student withdrawal” (Tinto, 1993, p. 171). Research suggests concentration on academic support activities during college students’ first year (Upcraft, Gardner, and Associates, 1989).

Students matriculate with pre-entry attributes such as grades from secondary school and TOEFL scores. According to one study, success and retention of international students begins with admitting academically appropriate students and those with appropriate English language skills (Byrd, 1991). Proficient English language skills are critical since researchers have found that not only does English fluency mediate classroom success, but it also influences the effects of acculturation levels on incidents of depression for both males and females Kwon (2009).

Assessing English fluency accurately is a challenge for admissions, nationwide, given that fluency (as opposed to proficiency) in a language other than one’s native language is a lengthy process that can take many years. Consequently, institutions of higher education have responded by offering a wide variety of academic services for international students and English language learners including formal classroom instruction to support the processes of language acquisition. Investing in academic support services is not only a valuable strategy to augment student academic achievement, but also they are more cost effective for retention given the documentation that retaining students, particularly international students, is less costly than recruiting them (Byrd, 1991).

The only factor consistently shown to have a statistically significant effect on persistence of international students (N=454) between first and second years is academic achievement during the first year (Kwai, 2010). Parikh’s (2008) recent study on international student academic achievement supported the research of Upcraft et al. (1989) that asserted: “[I]t is best to
concentrate on academic support activities in the first year.” The Parikh (2008) study found that international students display greater engagement with activities positively correlated to GPA: library and computer use, reading unassigned material, hours in academic work, use of scientific methods, and experimentation.

Perhaps the strongest evidence suggesting that focusing resources on academic support services is a wise investment for institutions of higher education that value the success and retention of international students is one longitudinal study, which focused on non-cognitive variables as predictors for academic success of international students (Boyer and Sedlacek, 1988). The Boyer and Sedlacek study is a solitary research that followed international students from matriculation to graduation and examined both persistence and GPA. This study showed that for persistence and GPA over eight semesters, availability of a strong support person for international students is necessary. Further, the ability to focus on long-range goals was a variable that contributed to persistence over the period. This finding is logical given that self-regulation of behavior, over time, is the heart of being successful in college (Hazard, 1997). The primary activities that focus on helping students develop behavior management strategies typically occur in advising and learning assistance programs on college campuses during the early college years. Another non-cognitive variable, while affecting persistence, not GPA, was acquired knowledge in a discipline.

**Summary**

This literature review on theories of socialization presents several considerations (e.g. L1 and L2 socialization, academic socialization, academic literacy socialization, and discipline-related socialization of second language speakers) which can influence the proposed research. This review illustrates the complex and multidimensional nature of academic socialization.
experiences of students from diverse backgrounds. The literature review has explored theories and research of international students’ cultural adjustments and associated factors (e.g., language differences and skills, general attitude toward host country and hosts, and social interaction within the host country). Apparently, previous studies indicate that socialization is an important and critical condition for the success of international students.

In addition, second language socialization studies, drawing from the framework of language socialization, have emphasized diverse students’ participation in different academic communities. The overarching finding of these studies indicates that although international students have access to the host community’s discourses, they encountered complex situations in the socialization process due to a variety of factors, such as lack of engagement in the second language community’s culture or the disjunction between students’ native cultures and the schools’ cultures, which eventually impacted achievement.

The social view of literacy, particularly the research and theory produced under the umbrella of the “New Literacy Studies” is significant for the current research. Examinations of the major underpinnings of this social view of literacy are: literacy as process, situated literacy and academic literacy, which serve as significant reference points; these are significant for the proposed research. The theories discussed primarily concern differing individuals and their techniques for socialization into mainstream communities through the use of literacy. Finally, this literature review presents findings related to the influence of the academic socialization process for international students’ successes and retentions that focus on English language proficiency levels, academic support services, and involvement in the academic communities.
Chapter 3
Research Design and Method

Introduction

The focus of this research is a comparative study of Saudi Arabia’s and Emirati students who transition into U.S. universities. These students, arriving the U.S. as non-immigrants and enrolling in academic programs for limited periods, intend to return to their home countries upon graduation. Since the educational systems of the countries of origin are significantly different from that in the U.S. these students face enormous challenges. This study provides opportunities to compare, not only the educational systems of the UAE and Saudi Arabia, but also the educational systems of these two countries in comparison to that of the U.S. This section restates the research problem, its context, purpose, the research questions, the significance of the study, and shows the research procedure. The discussion includes identity of target population, sampling, and data collection method.

Research Questions

To attain the main purpose of this study requires responding, the constituents of this inquiry are: What academic, cultural, discipline-related challenges do Emirati students face at U.S. universities? What are the Emirati and Saudi students’ coping strategies to face their challenges? What are the difference and similarities between the Emirati and Saudi students’ challenges and coping strategies to face these challenges?

The Research Design

This case study combines quantitative and qualitative strategies involving surveying 250 students followed by interviews. Such a mixed-method research design is the combination of
quantitative and qualitative approaches in a single or multi-phase study (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Both the quantitative and qualitative approaches have their strengths and weaknesses, generally, and for this research in particular. The strength of the qualitative methods is in its ability to provide detailed information regarding a small group of people (Patton, 2002). In other words, qualitative research illuminates the individual differences between participants in a study, and creates a more detailed portrait of the findings. However, studying a limited number of participants creates difficulty for generalizing findings. The quantitative approach allows evaluating the responses to a limited number of questions from a large number of students, and comparing and statistically analyzing the responses are possible (Patton, 2002). It allows a researcher to specify variables and assess their relationships in means that can be measured accurately and with consistency. It also allows the researcher to formulate unbiased explanations for a given phenomenon. This is done through a formal instrument that reduces data to statistical numbers. According to Patton (2002), one type that applies quantitative research methods is survey. It is one of the most common data-gathering techniques (Merriam & Simpson, 1995). It is an sufficient tool for getting useful information from a study's participants. A self-administered on-line survey was assumed an effective way to capture survey data (Rossi, Wright, & Anderson, 1983). Although utilizing surveys can be expensive, its advantage for using surveys is that the instructions are consistent for all subjects and confidentiality of participants can be maintained. A disadvantage of using a self-administered survey is the absence of the control over participants’ response particularly in the case of open-ended questionnaires (Bourque & Fielder, 1995). On the other hand, quantitative research methods’ limitation lies in weak, direct representation of the participants’ voices (Creswell & Clark, 2007). Using modified, mixed
methods allows greater evidence inclusivity to investigate research problems than if using qualitative or quantitative methods alone (Creswell et al., 2007).

The aim of qualitative research is to understand the ways in which people create and give significance to occurrences they have experienced in their lives (Patton, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Qualitative methods for this study enabled participants to describe their experiences in their own terms, which then aided the researcher in identifying salient themes with respect to the social adjustment and academic socialization. Qualitative research method is a way of understanding the experiences of students as they move into the culture of higher education and socialize in their academic communities. The present qualitative study provided an opportunity for the voices of Emirati and Saudi students to emerge. It gave a descriptive analysis of the social and academic experiences of Emirati and Saudi students who were selected for interviews. Due to the limited research on the experiences of Emirati and Saudi students in higher education found in the literature, the study focused on the analysis of their responses to examine the Emirati and Saudi students’ social and academic experiences and challenges in U.S. universities. Table 3-1 outlines the approaches and aligns the research questions with the methods.
Table 3-1: Summary of the Sequential Research Design Aligned with Research Method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Type of Data Collection</th>
<th>Instruments/Methods Used</th>
<th>Data Obtained</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 and 2</td>
<td>N= 219 (94 Emirati and 125 Saudi Students)</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>The Gulf Region students' academic socialization Questionnaire Demographic Questionnaire</td>
<td>Demographic data social academic experiences and challenges</td>
<td>Descriptives Frequencies Means t-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 and 2</td>
<td>N= 12 (6 Emirati select Students and 6 Saudi select students)</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Semi structured interviews</td>
<td>Interview Responses</td>
<td>Thematic Analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This exploratory case study employed a modified, sequential, mixed-model strategy. A sequential mixed model exploratory investigation design (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998) will be used to collect qualitative and quantitative data that will be analyzed in a complementary manner. Sequential mixed models employ multiple approaches to data collection, analysis and inference in a sequence of separated phases. Qualitative phase of this proposed study will be dependent on the findings from the quantitative - phase. The priority is given to the quantitative aspect of this study. The findings of these two phases are then integrated during the interpretation phase (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003).

For this study, the research begins with quantitative data collection through Questionnaires followed by qualitative interviews. The rationale for the choice of this design is (1) Quantitative and qualitative methods, used in separate phases of the study allows for one researcher to collect all data; (2) Findings of each phase, presented in different sections, eases
comprehension of explanations (Creswell et al., 2007); (3) Findings of the qualitative (interviews) gain explanatory value from the quantitative methods (questionnaires) findings.

Using different methods is a recommended technique for achieving triangulation to reduce errors related to a specific method (Patton, 2002). The study begins with quantitative data that constitutes a questionnaire, created to explore the targeted populations’ academic socialization experiences and their influences on academic challenges and progress, (a unique perspective in the literature). Contact with as many students as possible is necessary to achieve statistically reliable results. The followed phase of the study consists of interviewing a manageable number of students.

**Research Method**

The purpose of the current study is to explore the academic socialization process of students from the Emirati and Saudi Arabia in different U.S. universities. The study coincides into a category of comparative study because of its two non-native populations residing in U.S. universities. Researchers consider a comparative study to have two or more groups in culturally different settings to allow for realization of a “convergence” (Farell, 1979, as cited in Raivola, 1985, p.364).

Comparative research has proven to be an efficient strategy for attaining understanding of social realities. Making comparisons among countries, cultural groups and/or time-frames allow researchers to differentiate between universal and particular phenomena. Comparative research also makes possible identification of the influence of environmental factors on individual values, opinions, and behaviors. For these reasons, unsurprisingly comparative research occupies a high position on the international research agenda.
Comparative education is defined as “the intersection of the social sciences, education and cross-national study” (Noah & Eckstein, 1969, p. 191). Comparative education is a field which developed to conduct studies related to the educational systems of other countries (Kelly, Altbach, & Arnowe, 1982, p.505). Bereday (1964) provided further explanation of the definition by asserting that comparative education is analytical examination of educational systems in other countries by having an “intellectual purpose” whose main goal is to search for lessons that can be learned from the different educational practices in diverse countries. Therefore, the field of comparative education transcends multiple disciplines (e.g., political science or sociology) to investigate educational systems in developed and developing countries, and the studies urge intellectual questioning of our educational systems and to examine the effect of the societal values in our attitudes about our way of educating our students (Kubow & Fossum, 2003).

During the 1960s and 1970s, Noah and Eckstein attempted application of the scientific method in the comparative education field as a way to enhance its’ credibility as a field of study. This application is significant for assuring the relevance and benefit of the comparative education to educational policy planners, administrators, and funders (Trethewey, 1976). Nevertheless, many scholars argued that the scientific method is not the answer to establishing credibility for research of comparative education, since researchers should not ignore the human and the socio-cultural nature that could challenge the predictability (King, 1968, p.62). Therefore, King projected that comparative education research should consider “both rationality and half-rationality of those who inhabit schools and those who study them” (King as cited in Kubow & Fossum, 2003, p.12).
In this paper, I will discuss: (1) Cross-cultural comparison, (2) Comparability, (3) Equivalence, (4) Implications of “Comparability” and “Equivalence,” and (5) Convergence and Divergence concepts.

As a result of technological innovations, the world has become as a connected global village, and the emphasis of comparative and international educational research is attaining new dimensions. The use of technologies overcomes the physical borders among the countries; the economic changes affect the relationships among developed and developing countries, and the consumption of the human resources from developing countries increases (brain drain). Developing countries face difficulties (e.g., lack of stable democratic, political systems, poverty, and corruption) and aspire toward stabilization and development. The developing countries lack the progressive materials, but retain richness of cultures and costumes, which make the economic, political, and social practices insightful. As a result of the closeness of the world, virtually, events in the west, due to knowledge and information flow influence practices in developing countries. For example, the Western idea of sufficient teaching and learning practices influences educational systems in developing counties. Notably, comparative and international educational research attempts to transcend Western-centric ideas, and focus on organic cultural and traditional practices in other parts of the world for a better understanding of educational practices.

The field of comparative education values critical inquiry for assessing issues or dilemmas, to allow “bringing the interested inquirer into a deeper examination of tension among society, development, and education and the roles that citizen, either directly or indirectly, play in the educative process” (Kubow & Fossum, 2003, p.6).
It is important to consider the different countries educational perspectives to be able to identify the primary factors that influence the educational practices in these countries especially in looking at similar issues within the context of these countries (Kubow & Fossum, 2003). This identification is significant especially if some missing factors have potential application to development of the educational system in these countries.

Raivola (1985) offered insight into the concept of comparison by advocating that the purpose of comparison is not only for the purpose of constructing an explanation, but also for bracketing references to which varying observations relate. The purpose of comparative education is to understand how two systems are relevant to each other and analyzing its individuals’ influence on these systems (Triandis, Berry, 1981). Another function of comparisons of international education is encouraging inter-cultural understanding and collaboration (Crossley, Broadfoot, 1992). Three facets represent the purposes of comparative education: scientific, pragmatic, and global. The first facet creates a theory of the relationship between schools’ systems and larger communities. The second facet lends and borrows educational practices. The third facet creates mutual understanding among nations. Therefore, the purpose of comparative educational research is to expand the study of social sciences to include non-western countries and avoiding only western centric concepts and research (Arnove, Torres 2007).

One important feature of a comparative study is its centering on cross-cultural and cross-national perspectives of education. Culture plays a prominent role in education and investigation of educational matters must consider “culturally determined needs, objectives, and conditions” (Raivola, 1985, p.362). Therefore, according to Trethewey (1976), comparative education “may take the form of study of responses in other societies to problems that appear very (much) similar
like the ones that you recognize in your own educational system” (p.2). Exploring the educational value system of other countries through comparative methodology allows evaluating one’s own culture and educational values (Kubow & Fossum, 2003). Therefore, constructive steps can improvis in one’s own education system, as Epstein (1983) suggested, comparative education can be useful for improvement. Epstein asserted that comparative education not only provides deeper understanding through the process of critical questioning, but also contributes to practical benefits derived from the comparative study of educational systems of other countries.

The concept of comparison is significant because its definition indicates “a process of studying two or more things to see how they are alike or different – gives attention to certain aspects through the co-presence of the others” (Eckstein, 1983). Hence, the process of comparison is vital in educational research as it challenges researchers to be less judgmental of foreign educational systems that might form the basis of a restricted, limited, and localized point of view. In other words, comparative education enables researchers to view and analyze educational issues not only from the perspective of the home culture, but also open the scope to include diverse cultural factors.

Policy and politics associate with education in many ways. Another prominent feature of comparative education is how the field urges researchers to analyze the policy and the political aspects of matters by asking, “What kinds of educational policy planning, and teaching are appropriate for what kind of society?” (Kubow & Fossum, 2003, p.6). The discussion on policy reveals significant information, such as the appropriateness of applying certain educational policies in a particular society or country and underlying factor for implementation. Therefore, researchers learn to be aware of the political interplay that impacts the educational system of the society or the country being studied.
A comparative study of a specific educational issue is one way to examine this educational issue in depth, because the comparative method offers broader perspectives and sharpens the focus of the educators or researchers from diverse countries who view similar issues and strategies employed to address the similar issues but from different cultural, social, and political contexts uniquely based the idiosyncrasies of each country (Kubow & Fossum, 2003).

**Cross-cultural Comparison**

Culture is a critical issue in comparative educational research due to its various characteristics among communities and its impacts on teaching and learning processes. Cross-cultural comparison in educational research identifies particular cultural values when analyzing individual communities’ value systems. Furthermore, cross-cultural comparison “demands that a theoretical concept be expressible by a different operational counterpart, with its culture-specific features, for each culture under comparison” (Raivoli, 1985, p. 364). Therefore, the core function of cross-cultural comparison is to reveal institutions and their functions that are nonexistent within some other culture (Raivola, 1985, p.364). In explaining the concept of cross-cultural comparison in education, Farell (1979) argued that “each hypothesis concerning education calls for cross-cultural treatment” and emphasized that “a claimed relationship holding true in a given community is not particularly useful unless the nature of that relationship is understood.” (Farell, 1979, as cited in Raivola, 1985, p.365) Comparative research illustrates the ethnocentric nature of an issue. Cross-cultural comparison assists studying issues heuristically, which “enables terms to be more precisely formulated, helps in the classification of phenomena, and points to testable hypotheses.” (Raivola, 1985, p.365) Nevertheless, in conducting an international cross-cultural comparison, a conscious effort must consider that assumptions, cultural backgrounds,
and systems of values could induce prejudice and cultural bias in the process of gathering and analyzing data. A systematic basis for the comparison reduces the potential for this prejudice in cross-cultural research.

The aspect of culture is a vital factor that requires consideration when conducting a comparative study. For that reason, Raivola (1985) maintains that it is “out of the question for researcher from a foreign culture to penetrate the relationship using only statistical methods” (p.373). Hamlyn (1974) suggested that to achieve some degree of comprehension of foreign culture, researchers should: (a) acquire inductively derived knowledge of human beings and their environments, (b) assume identities of those undergoing study (i.e. empathetic observation), (c) make observation of external properties and attempt to determine, subjectively, what significance the external properties they have for those under study, and last (d) implement general (theoretical) knowledge, objectively, to the observations acquired (as cited in Raivola, 1985, pp.373-374). Therefore, no phenomenon is too diverse to escape comparison, and researchers must adopt comparative studies as opportunities to explore their subjects, not only from personal cultural perspectives, but also from the stance of other people in other countries who experience similar situations. In fact, the field of comparative education is crucial for analyzing educational issues or phenomena in a cross-cultural context.

Osborn (2004) criticized comparative and international studies by arguing that some of studies do not give full consideration to culture. The recommendation is to analyze the historical antecedents of phenomena in education to elucidate a clear image of these phenomena (Phillips, 2006). Therefore, borrowing successful educational policies and practices from one country and applying them to another country is critical. The problem is that sometimes comparative educationists try to combine policies and practices to achieve “convergence” without considering
the independent variables that affect comparability and equivalence (Dale, 2005). Comparativists must attend to the units of analysis and the experiences at the macro- (national) level with the micro- (local) level when conducting comparative and international studies (Phillips, 2006). Comparative educationists must investigate the practices in local settings and understand the local community’s perceptions of these practices. Therefore, “comparability” and “equivalence” issues are significant in comparative and international education research. In this regard, this study explains the terminology as applicable to comparative and international research and the implications for the current study.

**Comparability**

Comparability in comparative and international educational research explains a situation that occurs “when two measures are expressed in the same units thus making possible direct comparison” (Good cited in Raivola 1985, p. 362). Applying this meaning of comparability indicates that study of components of phenomena should appear at the same level. For example, when examining similar income levels and their effects on providing education in different countries, comparative and international research attempts to understand comparable policies and practices to assist practitioners’ understanding of the local community (Binder, 2009). Triandis and Berry (1981) explained comparability to be “…when a common underlying process exists can there be the possibility of interpreting differences in behavior? When such dimensional identity or common underlying process is demonstrated, then comparability is established” (p. 8). Therefore, comparative and international educational research is important because “…multilevel approaches can provide important insights into the multiple dimensions of schooling in highly stratified societies for various stakeholders” (Bajaj 2010, p.177).
Research comparing diverse cultures is multifaceted due to the complex nature of the cultures themselves. The meaning of comparability, as Warwick and Osherson (1977) demarcate, includes primary questions essential to completing cross-cultural research. The foremost question is whether or not the possibility exists to compare, scientifically, various social and/or cultural systems and units. Warwick and Osherson proceeded by dividing the question into three explicit parts: (a) Do the concepts under comparison correspond? This question emphasized that specific concepts have identical definitions, but the construing of the meanings may be different in different contexts. In other words, this part of the primary questions that essential to completing cross-cultural research relates to correspondence between the ideas under comparison based on a “general-specific continuum,” definition given to concepts and “linguistic and operational formulation” of the concepts. Warwick and Osherson indicated instances of concepts of “formal education” which identify different conditions in different cultures. (b) How is the correspondence of measurements to be assessed? In this matter, Warwick and Osherson (1977) expect researchers to question the valid indicators for adopted or potentially adoptable concepts since most concepts often have bonds with culture. The instance used to exemplify this question is on the concept of “age,” which, in some cultures, has a purely chronological perception, while in some other cultures age is a socially normative factor. Another example of valid indicators for concepts in various cultures is “care,” which has culturally diverse interpretations. In Asian cultures, spanking indicates care; however, such an act might be child abuse in Western cultures. (c) Can the problem of how concepts are linguistically expressed be resolved? The features of culture and language, inextricably linked occur from semantic fuzziness even within the same culture, and obviously among various cultures. Some terms might not exist to refer to a similar concept in different cultures. Hence, Warwick and Osherson (1977) cautioned researchers to be
conscious of this facet, particularly in attempts to translate international documents into diverse languages. Warwick and Osherson recommended the assistance of bilingual or multilingual experts for this task and also the use of repeated translations, back and forth, in order to limit vagueness. These questions associated with the “equivalence” concept, which is a “property of a specific cross-cultural comparison” (Vijver & Leung 1997, p.9), and will be discussed in the following section.

**Equivalence**

The meaning of equivalence is “a function of characteristics of an instrument and of the cultural groups involved” (Vijver & Leung, 1997, p.9). The purpose of equivalence is making comparisons by creating individuality/uniqueness levels of the studied instrument and the groups. Generating the instrument equivalence is significant because instruments in research demarcate indicators that capture different characteristics of a concept, phenomenon, or systems in cultures.

Nowak (1977) identified five kinds of relationships that must become a foundation for the comparison of issues or phenomena in comparative educational research. These kinds rely on the concept of equivalence or correspondence. These relationships are: (a) Observations and judgment of phenomena occur in the same way in different cultures (cultural equivalence). (b) The objects of comparison (people or institution) are part of a higher level of systems that have earlier definition as equivalents (contextual equivalence). (c) The objects have the same role in the functioning of the system (functional equivalence). (d) Phenomena correlate empirically in the same way with the criteria of variables (correlative equivalence). (e) Phenomena under comparison derive from the same source, namely the same conceptual class (genetic
equivalence). The comparative and international education literature identifies other equivalences, but Triandis and Berry (1981) specified three basic types of equivalence: (a) Functional Equivalence, (b) Conceptual equivalence, and (c) Metric equivalence.

**Functional Equivalence**

Functional Equivalence reflects a comparison between people or institutions. Triandis and Berry (1981) described functional equivalence as the presence of a similar problem that establishes behavior with a similar purpose. For instance, in different cultures, mothers try to comfort their children when they cry by feeding them or carrying them. In this situation, the similar problem is children crying, which generates a behavior with a similar response (i.e. mothers’ reaction to comfort children). Another example that indicates functional equivalence is, “if an Arab boy enters a mosque in his sandals or a Finnish girl the primary school classroom in her rubber boots, the teachers will immediately instruct the offenders to take them off. The students have offended against norms of two completely different kinds, however, and the measures taken by the teachers after their initial reactions may differ from others, considerably” (Raivola, 1985, p. 368). These examples indicate that, the objects of comparison act from the same role in the systems to achieve functional equivalence. For example, a comparison might encompass college students’ experiences with social and academic challenges in the United Arab Emirates with college students’ experiences with academic challenges in the United States. Comparative studies in two or more cultures would include the same level of teachers, students, socio-economic backgrounds, and genders of the students and teachers. Therefore, sampling is critical in comparative and international educational research. Researcher should avoid using “non-comparable or low-quality sampling frames; differing procedures for selecting the sample,
oversampling of some groups and under sampling of others; high, or varying, non-response rates” (Osborn ,2004, p. 271).

**Conceptual equivalence**

Conceptual equivalence indicates a representation of common ground between theory and phenomenon. Triandis and Berry (1981) advised, “Researchers must search for and discover the local meaning of concepts within the cognitive systems of the people and groups being compared. Only if common meaning is discovered, can comparison legitimately take place.” (p.9) This indicates the need to find equivalent meaning among studied concepts in different cultures. This type of equivalence, called “cultural equivalence,” suggests the “comparative analysis should focus attention on the isomorphism of the elements of the systems” (Raivola, 1985), as demonstrated through proof, which contains stories, rules, and the norms of the specific culture. For example, to understand the meaning of comforting children in different cultures, mothers can describe the common ground as comforting their children. The proof could be done by observing or interviewing the mothers.

Osborn (2004) discussed equivalence of measurement as referring to the equivalence of indicators that capture different aspects of a concept in diverse cultures. For instance, discussing sex and gay/lesbian topics is taboo in some cultures. In this case, comparative study is inappropriate because the sex and gay/lesbian matters could have open discussion in one culture but ignored in another culture. For example, if a scenario elicits answers from respondents in one culture, considering the same scenario to elicit responses from participants in other cultures is essential. In addition, Raivola (1985) discussed “genetic equivalence” that refers to the same source, which establishes a phenomenon or concept. For example, concept of education in the
United Arab Emirates has its foundation in Islamic norms; however, education in the United States tends to be oriented toward either Judeo-Christian customs or democratic values. The same source cannot analyze education for both countries; therefore, a comparative study is not possible. This example signals that education as a concept creates genetic equivalency problems when defined in diverse cultures such as the United Arab Emirates and the United States.

*Metric equivalence*

Metric equivalence refers to practical correlation in which validity and reliability values are the underpinnings for demonstrating comparisons. Triandis and Berry (1981) portrayed metric equivalence as “psychometric properties of two (or more) sets of data from two (or more) cultural groups exhibiting essentially the same coherence or structure” (p.10). Variables that occur in two or more cultures qualify for study. Moreover, Crossely and Watson (2003) mentioned limitations from raw data, which “may be misleading if they are compared with data from another system where an entirely different set of background information would be needed to explain their figures” (p. 42).

**Implications of “Comparability” and “Equivalence” for the Current Study**

The proposed current study does carry an essence of comparison due to its centering in different U.S. universities and involves two groups of students. One of the sub-purposes of the study is to transcend ethnocentric notions of academic socialization processes and challenges, and determine Gulf-region students’ social and academic experiences unfold in various U.S. institutions. Personal background and experiences studying in the U.S. allow the analysis of phenomenon to be comparative because the contextual perspectives of concepts and events are
both Gulf-region oriented and Western. In addition, the proposed study contributes to existing literature of cross-cultural adaptation and academic socialization processes of Gulf-region students in U.S. universities. The concepts of “Comparability” and “Equivalence” are fundamental to conducting the study that is relevant to comparative and international education.

First, as Osborn (2004) identifies a gap arising from international studies’ failure (probably not all of them) to “take culture into account.” The proposed research will analyze different aspects of the academic socialization process of the UAE and Saudi Arabia students by examining the educational systems and cultures of the UAE, Saudi Arabia and the U.S. Second, the three types of equivalences explained in detail earlier are the basis for the research:

Functional equivalence, as described by Triandis and Berry (1981), is the presence of a similar problem that generates behavior with a similar purpose. The proposed study explores the major factors affecting international students’, from the Gulf region, specifically, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates (UAE), social and academic experiences in U.S. universities. The academic socialization processes for UAE students may not be as similar as those for students who are from the Saudi Arabia. This study provides opportunities to compare not only the educational systems of the UAE and Saudi Arabia, but also the educational systems of these two countries with the U.S.

Conceptual equivalence: The proposed study attempts to discover local meanings of academic socialization processes of Gulf-region students in the U.S. universities before making comparisons. Thus, the conceptual equivalence in the proposed study means developing an understanding of the academic socialization process from an insider’s perspective for Gulf-region stakeholders. This will help develop an understanding of the academic socialization
process in a different culture to allow understanding the Gulf-region students’ experiences and challenges in the U.S. universities.

Metric equivalence refers to quantitative studies in which statistical measures develop equivalence; whereas, qualitative studies consider variables present in two cultures. Metric equivalence is a significant measurement in comparative studies and the proposed research engages in evaluating metric equivalence in a specific context. The proposed study is an exploratory case study that uses a modified, sequential, mixed model strategy, and combines quantitative and qualitative methods: a survey and interviews. The research employs mixed-methods research design and modifications specifically for the study.

Comparability and equivalence are significant fundamental concepts for studies that consider understanding a system, local and cultural similarities, and differences, implying differences among diverse stakeholders. These concepts provide a foundation for conducting a comparative study. Furthermore, these concepts have direct implications for the proposed study. They will assist conducting a comparative study in a more informed manner.

**Research Instrumentation**

To answer the research questions, this includes three phases: (a) preliminary instrument development and revision, (b) data collection via questionnaires, and (c) interviews with the students from the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

*Preliminary Instrument Development and Revision*

In this phase, I will discuss the content and face validity of the developed questionnaire for this study. In this step, higher education experts’ review of items is to judge content to assure content validity (Gable & Wolf, 1993; Trochim & Donnelly, 2007). American and Gulf region
higher education experts, including one American university professor and one Gulf-region university professor, a higher education practitioner, two Emirati students, and two Saudi students receive copies of the items developed for the survey. Based upon the opinions of the experts and others, the items deemed most appropriate for determining Gulf-region students’ academic socialization become the items in the questionnaire (Stone, 1978).

Along with the questionnaire developed in the earlier step are directions for responding to the instrument, and guidelines for an administrative format. Subsequently, the instrument, written in English undergoes translation into Arabic. A review of the translation by a panel of three Gulf-region doctoral candidates in the United States determining the translation’s appropriateness (van de Vijver & Leung, 1997) is the final step prior to distribution to participants for data collection. Member checks is employed (Merriam, 2002) in this study assures validity.

The Questionnaire and the Demographic Data Form

The study instrument, the Gulf Region students’ Academic Socialization Questionnaire consists of 15 items and measures Emirati and Saudi students’ academic socialization process in the U.S. universities. The author’s view of academic socialization was based on her examination of social and academic experiences of Emirati and Saudi students. According to her, academic socialization is a complex process that students from one cultural and linguistic context undergo to acquire academic competencies in another context and become legitimate participants in their academic disciplines. Kim (1988) guides her in defining students’ academic socialization, which identifies social and academic experiences and challenges as a result of cross-cultural adaptation process.
Contact for data involves Emirati and Saudi students enrolled in various U.S. universities is distribution of e-mail to prospective participants’ academic advisors from their embassies and international offices, and to students through e-mail to associations of Gulf-region students, and associations of Emirati and Saudi students in the universities. The emails’ request is for permissions to contact the students directly. The students signal their acceptance of the invitation to participate in the research, by a reply to a recruitment e-mail (See Appendix D), and the questionnaire to complete follows. Face-to-face conversation or online meetings with the students permit explaining the purpose of the study and introduction of the questionnaire and the consent form (see Appendix E). Also, these contacts provide notification of a future interaction for the followed phase of the study. The implied consent form is the first page of the questionnaire. The questionnaire’s items are created based on research questions and the demographic information.

The Gulf-region students’ academic socialization questionnaire (see Appendix F), is developed through Qualtrics, which identifies important variables that influence the participants’ academic and social challenges in their disciplines. The survey consists of 15 multiple-choice questions, whose responses use a Likert-scale and demographic questions identifying native country, gender, number of years residing in the U.S. and additional language fluencies. The Likert questions use a 5, 6 and 7 point scale ranging from “very comfortable” to “It does not matter” and “Never” to “always”. Some items are 5-point Likert scale. Other items are 7-point Likert scale. Only one item is 6-point Likert scale. In some of the responses, the students rate their difficulty and comfort levels for writing process and classroom activities. Moreover, other questions relate to students’ access to information, academic socialization,
language socialization, expertise/power relations, and classroom socialization. These survey items cover themes found from reviewing the literature.

**Interviews with Emirati and Saudi students**

In this phase, six students from the UAE and other six students from Saudi Arabia, who had previously agreed, participated in interviews. This step of the study involves contacting the students who had agreed to do the interview to schedule an appropriate time. Before beginning the interviews, the participants agreed to and signed a separate consent form (See Appendix B), and agreed to or decline permission to use a video recorder during the interview.

Demographic information from the interviews’ participants include: age, gender, country of origin, number of years residing in the U.S. academic program, English as a Second language classes. These questions, provide a profile of the sample group for the study. An evaluation of the demographic data creates an association with participants’ academic socialization experiences.

The interviews, approximately 40 minutes long follow a sequence of prepared, open-ended questions (See Appendix C). The purpose of the interviews is to identify the social and academic processes the Gulf-regions’ students tend to experience in their academic disciplines and to examine the interaction of linguistic, cultural, policy, and departmental environments that contribute to these students’ academic challenges.

**Pilot Study**

During the spring and summer of 2011, a pilot study foreshadowed probable obstacles (Stewart, 2004). The primary goals of the pilot study were to better design the instrument, develop the research process. Other goals of the pilot study were: determine the sample size of
Emirati and Saudi students who would participate in completing the survey and the interview. The pilot study’s further intent was to assess the role of the researcher and practices as an insider especially for conducting the interviews.

**Sample Size and Site**

A pilot survey, conducted via email used the Qualtrics survey system. Ninety Gulf-region students in different U.S. Universities received the survey. The basis for selecting the sample was: 1) all participants are native speakers of Arabic. 2) All have resided in the US for no longer than ten years. The 90 recipients were international students from different Gulf-region countries: UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and others. From the 90 individuals contacted, 53 returned responses. The respondents constituted 12 females and 41 males. Table 1, in Appendix G, shows demographics of the respondents by gender and country. Also, five male students from the UAE and Saudi Arabia participated in interviews. The participants were attending different U.S. universities, similar to those for the proposed study.

**Discussion of the Pilot Study**

The piloting method for interviews confirmed that two or three students from each country provided sufficient data; therefore, interviewing six students from each country is appropriate for the proposed study. A pilot test of the online survey via email targeted one American professor, three American doctoral students, one Emirati student, and one Saudi student.
Benefits of the Pilot Study

Regarding the interview, students had choice of an interview in English or Arabic, which allowed students to feel more comfortable in describing their experiences. The interviews changed from structured to semi-structured for the comfort of participants and encourage answering the interview’s questions. Sometimes, the interview took longer than 40 minutes because some students explained their experiences more details than needed, and sometimes redirection was necessary. After transcribing the interviews, two doctoral students, one from UAE and one from Saudi Arabia received copies of the Arabic and English versions to check the translations for validity.

The pilot study allowed improvement of the survey items, the Likert scales, and the interview structures and questions. Caution and polite circumspections guided asking for responses to the research requirements expected of participants, such as the survey and interviews. To increase the survey response rate, reminders to the students to complete the survey encouraged participation, especially among female students. Some students with low proficiencies in English requested use of an Arabic version of the survey. This necessitated creating surveys in two languages, English and Arabic. Some Likert scale choices were very similar so, changes created clear distinctions (e.g., often, many times, and occasionally). Another limitation of the survey was the design of the Likert-scales. In the majority of the questions and answers, requiring a Likert-scale response, the participants highlighted neutral. Removing the neutral option forced respondents toward a definitive judgment instead of consistently choosing the middle ground. Eliminating the neutral choice may result in the assumption of skewed results, and coincidently, the findings may be more significant.
Future efforts will concentrate on increasing the sample size and validating the results of this research. Another change will be the range of “the number of years spent in the U.S.” to be less than 8 because that is the indication from most Emirati and Saudi students. Moreover, indication of the spoken languages, most students responded with English or Urdu. Therefore, the full study will limit the languages to English and Urdu. In addition, the final survey eliminates open-ended questions because in the pilot study, some students skipped these or did not complete the survey. Also, participants in the proposed study include only students from the UAE and Saudi Arabia and exclude Omani students who are rare in U.S. universities.

In sum, the students’ pilot interviews provided unforeseen ideas, approaches, and clues for use in the proposed research. Such incorporated ideas and clues increase the chances of obtaining clearer findings from the proposed study. The pilot study permitted a thorough check of the planned statistical and analytical procedures, and an opportunity to evaluate their usefulness. Alterations are necessary for data collection, such as eliminating classroom observations, and therefore, improving efficiency of analysis of data for the proposed study. The pilot study greatly reduces the number of unanticipated problems, since it affords the opportunity to redesign parts of the proposed study to overcome difficulties revealed by the pilot study.

**Study Sample**

The study was open to any Emirati and Saudi students who are enrolled in an Extensive Communication Language Institute or university in U.S. The investigator worked with various Emirati and Saudi academic advisors to get study participants. At the beginning, the researcher intended to work with population of 400 Emirati and Saudi students. However 300 respondents responded to the survey. Eligibility characteristics of students consisted of the Emirati and Saudi
nationality and residence in the U.S for less than seven years. Additional participants were identified from students’ associations and recruited via email. Still more participants were recruited from embassies who subscribe to Face book (an Internet social utility that connects people that share the same cause, friends, etc.). For this purpose, the investigator worked with Face book website administrators for permission to contact participants from the target groups (Emirati and Saudi students who are currently enrolled in U.S. universities). All responses were anonymous. Respondents were only allowed one submission. Multiple electronic submissions from a single address were denied. In the initial participant recruitment posting, a brief summary of what the research study would entail was shared. Once recipients expressed a willingness to participate, an email was sent (see Appendix D) with a link to Quartlics, where the survey was posted between April 12 and July 29, 2011.

The target population of this study is from the Gulf-region, specifically from the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Research criterion-based purpose sampling (Patton, 2002) frame of this study includes selection of students from different U.S. universities who are Gulf-region natives. The selection of the sample follows the criteria: 1) all participants are native speakers of Arabic; 2) all participants have resided in the US for a period no longer than seven years.

Data Collection Procedure

The Institutional Review Board Office (IRB) at The Pennsylvania State University was involved from the onset of this study. With regard to the ethics of the research, conducting data collection follows the approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (See the IRB approval letter for the proposed study in Appendix A). The Pennsylvania State University provides approval to assure human subjects’ protection. An informed consent form (see Appendix B) was attached to the online survey for participants to read and accept before taking
the survey. Logging into Survey, the study’s informed consent form appeared first, with instructions followed by demographic items, and, finally, the survey instrument itself (see Appendix C). Demographics were also collected by use of the survey. Demographics (including age, gender, country, number of years in the U.S.), were collected as participants ‘self-report using this survey. Participants indicated their gender identification from two choices: male, female. For the language variable, participants responded by checking the other languages they speak. Also, an informed consent form, distributed and filed, protects participants’ rights and confidentiality before the interviews. The data collected for this study and the informed consent forms become archives for at least 3 years according to regulations for human subjects’ protection.

The sample of participants received the survey and the informed consent form via e-mail, which requested every participant to complete and submit the survey. Following Dillman’s (2007) suggested sequence, a two-week window allows participants to respond to the survey after the first e-mailing. Two weeks after distribution of the questionnaire, a follow-up email, with an additional two-week response-window, reminds participants to complete the questionnaire in an effort to ensure a high response rate.

At the end of the survey, participants were requested to provide contact information should they be willing to participate in a post interview. For the qualitative section of the study, participants who agreed to participate in the interview were contacted by email or Facebook to set a time for the interview. These participants were informed that the interview was to be recorded with their permission, and that the video recording tapes would be stored in the investigator’s home under lock and key, to be destroyed after a period of three years. Interviewees were assured that none of the procedures would cause risk. The consent forms gave
specific contact numbers for respondents to call if they had any questions. Furthermore, interviewees were told that they could refuse to answer any questions depending on how it was presented.

After the data were analyzed quantitatively using descriptive and inferential statistics, interview data were collected from three Emirati respondents and three Saudi respondents. Face to face meeting in September 2011. These six students are from Penn State University. These interviews sought to highlight many of the issues that Emirati and Saudi students face and to gain an in-depth understanding of the complexity of their challenges. Specifically, these data sought to answer the question: What academic, cultural, discipline-related challenges do Emirati students face at U.S. universities? And how they cope with these challenges to succeed in their U.S. universities? The following Tables 3-2 and 3-3 list the six interviewees and their pseudonym, gender, age and degree, program and major.

Table 3-2: The Emirati Participants Participated in the Qualitative Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Degree / Program/ Major</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hoor</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Bachelor in genetics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zayed</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Bachelor in nuclear engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaled</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Bachelor in architecture engineering</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3-3: The Saudi Participants Participated in the Qualitative Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Degree / Program / Major</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sheikha</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Bachelor in engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalifah</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Master in risk management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hassan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>the Intensive English Communication Program (IECP)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Eventually, six respondents were agreed to participate in the interviews, with two acting as back up just in case any of the original six could not be reached or had changed their minds. Three participants of each group provided enough cases to examine similarities and differences but not too many that one is in danger of being overwhelmed by the amount of data produced (Seidman, 2005).

**Data Analysis**

This study collected two types of datasets. For the quantitative data, the researcher created a database to store the results from the Quartlics website. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 16.0 was used to conduct statistical analyses. SPSS was seen to be essential for tabulating the data in order to answer a survey research question posted in this study and to identify Emirati and Saudi students’ social and academic challenges such as in writing or reading assignments, working in large or small group discussion doing presentations, working in dependently, working with the same gender, discussing their cultural and regional issues etc. The researcher used descriptive statistics to report the responses for the academic socialization difficulty level in writing process, classroom socialization, socialization with the same gender and discussing their regional issues scores. Additionally, the researcher calculated and identified the mean, range, and standard deviation scores for all these categories using SPSS software. Inferential statistical tests included t-test, which was used to determine who have greater difficulty in writing papers in terms of style, grammar, word choice, sentence construction and organization. Also, t-test is used to examine who are more comfortable in classroom socialization in terms of working with the same gender, working in large or small group or working independently, etc. This was of special
interest to the researcher who is female and comes from a conservative background that female and male students study in separate schools and as indicated in the literature that writing process is one of the greater difficulties for international students. The researcher used simple descriptive statistics to analyze the majority of the data for the Gulf region students’ questionnaire. For the qualitative portion of the study, the researcher asked the six participants about their educational backgrounds, English language preparation programs, writing difficulties, classroom socialization, advisor/student relationship, strategies to develop their English, etc. The researcher asked general questions to examine the students’ academic and social challenges in the U.S. universities. The responses from the interview were coded and sorted in appropriate tables according to themes (Patton, 2002). Content analysis was used to interpret the data. To summarize, the methods utilized for the study were considered adequate to answer the research questions.

**Reliability of Study Results**

All study participants were Emirati and Saudi students who are enrolled in U.S. universities. Therefore, dependability for this study can be seen in the selection of participants who were qualified to address the issues related to the research problem. In addition, changes that occurred throughout the research process are documented and reported to the IRB. All participants in this study had uniquely different experiences as students enrolled in U.S. universities. The concept of Triangulation in this study uses the strategy of two different research methods (survey questionnaire and interviews). The study used a survey to gauge the academic socialization of the participants as per the Gulf region students’ survey scores after which the interviewees agreed. Internal consistency using Cranbach’s alpha was not appropriate
to use in this study to assess reliability. The Likert type responses items were examined individually rather than combined into a summated subscale score (Salkind, 2006, pp.46-47)

**Role of the Researcher**

The role of the researcher for this study is that of insider. In terms of research, as insider is simply someone who is a member of the group of the research’s participants. In the particular situation of this study, the researcher is a member of the Emirati group of students. The researcher is a fourth year graduate student, acquainted with some Gulf-region international students who arrived in the U.S. simultaneously. A benefited of the close association is an ease of building trust among participants, and establishing rapport with the participants to enhance those individuals’ feeling secure and comfortable to discuss their daily lives. With the first-hand knowledge of these particular ethnic groups, as an insider for the interviews discussions can probe participants’ social and academic experiences. Perhaps a familiar associate of equal experience renders the interview process more comfortable for everyone.

To address the qualitative portion of the study, I identified the following areas where my personal bias might influence the research process or findings. As an Emirati student myself, I had similar challenges and obstacles to graduate degree completion as the students Emirati and Saudi students who I research. Because of my struggle to understand the culture of U.S. culture and Universities coupled with the lack of guidance and mentoring, I strongly identified and empathized with the challenges faced by Emirati and Saudi students. My personal experiences are the basis for this study, because of my strong commitment to Emirati and Saudi students who are enrolled in U.S. Universities. I was aware of the personal values and biases that could lead me to empathize with the elements of the students' accounts of their experiences that
related with mine at each phase of the research process. To guard against this, I developed the following protocol to ensure credibility in the research process:

1. I continuously reviewed the data and emergent themes to ensure the findings represented the experiences of all participants.
2. Some university professors on my committee and a colleague with knowledge of higher education and academic socialization critically evaluated the research methods employed in this study.

**Interpretation of the Results**

In this work, I focused on the Emirati and Saudi students’ social and academic challenges in the U.S. universities because this group of students have not been studies to understand their challenges. Through my interpretations of the meanings students ascribe to their experiences in U.S. universities, I hope to make this work useful for scholars and practitioners who are interested in understanding the challenges of the Emirati and Saudi students and how they cope to face these challenges in U.S. universities. Though my research draws on open-ended interviews, with six students who enrolled in U.S. universities, the research participants reflect the larger Emirati and Saudi students’ population in U.S. universities.

**Summary**

This study used a mixed methods approach (quantitative and qualitative) for data gathering and analysis (Creswell, 2003). It was conducted to further understand the academic socialization process of the Emirati and Saudi students, their social and academic challenges and coping strategies to reduce their challenges. In order to do this, the Gulf region
students’ Questionnaire was posted online where study participants recruited for the study responded to the survey. The researcher used six participants from the 300 who responded to the survey to accurately personify the social and academic experiences of Emirati and Saudi participants in relation to academic socialization. I have provided a summary of sample and the measures taken to analyze the data. Descriptive data analysis was used to describe the basic features of the data collected by survey. Inferential statistics using t-tests which was used to determine who have greater difficulty in writing papers in terms of style, grammar, word choice, sentence construction and organization. Also, t-test is used to examine who are more comfortable in classroom socialization in terms of working with the same gender, working in large or small group or working independently, etc. For qualitative data, six interviewees provided information that showed the Emirati and Saudi students’ educational backgrounds, English language preparation programs, writing difficulties, classroom socialization, advisor/student relationship, strategies to develop their English, etc.
Chapter 4
Results

This chapter presents the findings from the mixed methods data collection protocols. A mixed method approach is an appropriate method for capturing students’ perspectives of their experiences and challenges in U.S. universities. The aim of this study is to examine challenges facing students from the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia in U.S. universities, and the students’ methods for responding to these challenges to succeed in their studies. Through a questionnaire, completed by Gulf Region students, participants’ responses document their social and academic challenges. In addition, six participants agreed to participate in in-depth, qualitative interviews which elicited their life experiences and challenges in U.S. universities. Their responses provided background dating from their first enrollment in U.S. universities through their current status in college or afterward.

The organization of the data summarized in this chapter reflects areas corresponding to the quantitative and qualitative research questions, which guided the study. The chapter’s sections are: Demographic data, Questionnaire Results related to Research Questions 1 and 2, Interview analysis, Interview Format, participants’ profiles, common themes from the interviews, answers to the qualitative questions, and summary.

Demographic Data

Two hundred and sixty two students completed online questionnaires, which provided data for analysis, using SPSS (Statistics Package for Social Sciences /16.0 for Windows® PC version; SPSS 2000). Email and Facebook were the media for contacting potential respondents. Participants were Saudi students (57.34%) and 42.66 % were students from the UAE (See Table
4-1). Of the 95 Emirati respondents, 21 (22.58%) were females, and 74 (77.42%) were males. Of the 125 Saudi respondents, 19 (15.2%) were females, and 106 (84.8%) were males (See Figure 4-1). The ages of students who participated in this study ranged from 18 to 33. Of the Emirati students 34.83% and 51.61% of the Saudi students had spent one to two years in the U.S. (See Figures 4-2, 4-3, and 4-4)

Table 4-1: Number of Emirati and Saudi Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>57.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>83.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4-1: Distribution of participants by gender and country
Figure 4-2: Distribution of Emirati participants by number of years in the U.S.
Figure 4-3: Distribution of Saudi participants by number of years in the U.S.
Questionnaire Results

Development of the Gulf-region students’ academic socialization questionnaire occurred through Qualtrics, which identifies important variables that influence the participants’ academic and social challenges in their disciplines and their coping strategies to decrease these challenges and, consequently, succeed. Kim (1988) guided definition of students’ academic socialization, which identifies social and academic experiences and challenges arising from necessary cross-
cultural adaptation. The survey consists of 15 multiple-choice questions, whose responses use a Likert-scale. Demographic questions identify native country, gender, number of years residing in the U.S. and additional language fluencies. The Likert questions use 5, 6, and 7 point scales ranging from “very comfortable” to “It does not matter” and “Never” to “always”. In some of the responses, the students rate their difficulties and comfort levels for the writing process and classroom activities; other questions relate to academic socialization, language socialization, classroom socialization, linguistics challenges, and social and cultural challenges. Additional questions examine coping strategies which Emirati and Saudi students use such as American students’ support, Gulf region students’ support, teachers’ support, discussions of cultural knowledge, preferences in individual work, and improving writing skills. These survey items cover themes derive those suggested in the literature.

**Questionnaire Results related to Research Question 1**

*What academic, cultural, discipline related challenges do Emirati and Saudi students face at U.S. universities?*

Five items from the Gulf Region students’ questionnaire examine linguistics, social and cultural challenges:

**Linguistics Challenges**

When Emirati and Saudi students responded to queries involving their linguistic deficits’ preventing participation in classroom, the highest number of Emirati students (34.4%) and Saudi students (45.1%) indicated that their linguistics deficits “rarely” prevent classroom participation. A few Emirati students (1.1%) indicated that linguistics deficits “always” prevented class
participation; however, 3.3% of Saudi students indicated linguistics deficits “very often” prevented participation (See Table 4-2 and Figure 4-5). Differences between Saudi and Emirati students are insignificant regarding linguistics deficits preventing classroom participation. Emirati students reported rare influence from linguistic deficits for classroom participation (M = 2.17; SD = .97) as did Saudi students (M = 2.34; SD = 1.01) (See Table 4-3).

Table 4-2: Item 1 (Linguistic abilities and classroom participation) Responses by Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>45.1%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE and SA</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SA n = 122 and UAE n = 93
Figure 4.5: Item 1 (Linguistic abilities and classroom participation) Responses by Percentage

Table 4-3: Independent t-test results for item 1 (Linguistic abilities and classroom participation).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Cohen’s d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In class, my linguistic abilities prevent me from participating in classroom discussion.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Response scale: 1= Never; 2= Rarely; 3= Occasionally; 4= Very Often; 5= Always.
na = not applicable, t-test results > 0.05
When Emirati and Saudi students expressed their feelings that native English speaking students are more competent in classes, the highest number of Emirati students (34.4%) and Saudi students (36.4%) (M = 2.45, SD = 1.04) indicated “rarely” feeling that native English speakers are more competent. The next highest percentage of Emirati students (31.2%) indicated “never” feeling native English speakers are more competent in class. However, the second highest percentage of Saudi students (27.3%) indicated feeling “occasionally” native English speakers are more competent in class (See Table 4-4 and Figure 4-6). Differences between Saudi and Emirati students are significant for identifying their feeling that the native speakers’ students are more competent than them in their classes. Saudi students reported that they “rarely” feel that the native speakers’ students are more competent than them in their classes as did Emirati students (M = 2.17, SD = 1.03). This difference was significant (p = .04) and represents a small effect difference (Cohen d = .27) (See Table 4-5).

Table 4-4 : Item 2 (Native speakers’ competence) Responses by Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>31.2%</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE and SA</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SA n = 122 and UAE n = 93
Figure 4-6: Item 2 (Native speakers’ competence) Responses by percentage

Table 4- 5: Independent T-test Results for Item 2(Native speakers’ competence).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Cohen’s d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel that native English-speaking students are more competent than you in your classes?</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Response scale: 1= Never; 2= Rarely; 3= Occasionally; 4= Very Often; 5= Always.
na = not applicable; t-test results > 0.05
Several other Likert-scale responses obtained further data for classroom socialization. In terms of comfort level in participating in classroom activities, such as the large and small group discussions, the results shown 26.7% of Emirati students are “less comfortable” participating in large group discussions. However, 36.0% of the Emirati respondents are “very comfortable” participating in small group discussions. Similarly, the results show 29.2% of Saudi students are “less comfortable” participating in large group discussion; but 34.2% of Saudi respondents are “very comfortable” participating in small group discussions. This implies some Emirati and Saudi students’ perceptions of participating in group discussions, is a challenging classroom activity. (See Tables 4-6, 4-7 and 4-8)

Table 4- 6: Item 3 (Large group discussion) Responses by Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>UAE</th>
<th>Saudi Arabia</th>
<th>UAE and Saudi Arabia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Comfortable</td>
<td>Comfortable</td>
<td>Less Comfortable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>country</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4-7: Item 4 (Small group discussion) Responses by Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Very Comfortable</th>
<th>Comfortable</th>
<th>Less Comfortable</th>
<th>Uncomfortable</th>
<th>Sometimes Uncomfortable</th>
<th>Very Uncomfortable</th>
<th>It Does Not Matter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>country UAE</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE and Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4-8: Independent T-test Results for Items 3 (Large group discussion) and 4 (Small group discussion).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Cohen’s d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In class, I am most comfortable doing...</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large group discussion</td>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In class, I am most comfortable doing...</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group discussion</td>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Response scale: 1= Very comfortable; 2= Comfortable; 3= Less Comfortable; 4= It Does Not matter; 5= Sometimes Uncomfortable; 6= Uncomfortable; 7= Very Uncomfortable.

Regarding the comfort level of doing written assignments, 27.8 % of Emirati students indicated feeling “comfortable” completing written assignments. Similarly, 30.5 % of Saudi students stated being “comfortable” completing written assignments. Regarding the comfort-level for reading assignments, 22.5 % of Emirati students indicated feeling “comfortable” in
doing reading assignments, and 30.3% of the Saudi students stated feeling “comfortable” with written assignments. Regarding comfort—for completing presentations, 24.4% of Emirati students indicated feeling “less comfortable”; however, 32.5% of Saudi students stated being “comfortable” with presentations. Saudi students reported being “comfortable” with reading assignments (M = 2.70; SD = 1.52) as did Emirati students (M = 3.42; SD = 2.01). This difference is significant (p < 0.01) and represents a small effective difference (Cohen’s d = 0.41). The means between Saudi and Emirati students for written assignments and presentations show no significant differences (See Tables 4-9, 4-10, 4-11 and 4-12).

Table 4-9: Item 5 (Written assignments) Responses by Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Very Comfortable</th>
<th>Comfortable</th>
<th>Less Comfortable</th>
<th>Sometimes Uncomfortable</th>
<th>Uncomfortable</th>
<th>It Does Not Matter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The country</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The UAE</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The UAE and Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4-10: Item 6 (Reading assignments) Responses by Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Very Comfortable</th>
<th>Comfortable</th>
<th>Less Comfortable</th>
<th>Sometimes Uncomfortable</th>
<th>Uncomfortable</th>
<th>It Does Not Matter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The country</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The UAE</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The UAE and Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4- 11: Item 7 (Presentations) Responses by Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The country</th>
<th>Very Comfortable</th>
<th>Comfortable</th>
<th>Less Comfortable</th>
<th>Uncomfortable</th>
<th>Sometimes Uncomfortable</th>
<th>Very Uncomfortable</th>
<th>It Does Not Matter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The UAE</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The UAE and Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4-12: Independent T-test Results for items 5 (Written assignments), 6 (Reading assignments), and 7 (Presentations).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Cohen’s d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In class, I am most comfortable doing...</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written assignments</td>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In class, I am most comfortable doing...</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading assignments</td>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In class, I am most comfortable doing...</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Response scale: 1= Very comfortable; 2= Comfortable; 3= Less Comfortable; 4= It Does Not matter; 5= Sometimes Uncomfortable; 6= Uncomfortable; 7= Very Uncomfortable.

na = not applicable. t-test results > 0.05

**Challenges Encountered by Emirati and Saudi Students in Writing Papers**

Seven items measured challenges students encountered for completing writing assignments (grammar, word choice, sentence construction, organization, concept, and theory).
Table 4-13 summarizes the results. Differences between Saudi and Emirati students were significant for two of those challenges. First, Saudi students reported grammar was not easy ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 1.75$), as did Emirati students ($M = 4.61$, $SD = 1.63$). This difference was significant ($p = 0.03$) and represents a small effect difference ($Cohen \ d = 0.31$). Emirati students (27.1%) indicated that grammar was “somewhat difficult.” In comparison, 22.5% of Saudi students indicated that grammar is “easy.” Second, Saudi students reported word-choice (diction) was not as easy ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 1.46$) as did Emirati students ($M = 4.46$, $SD = 1.48$). This difference is significant ($p = < 0.01$) and represents a medium effect difference ($Cohen \ d = 0.50$). Emirati students (29.4%) reported word-choice to be “somewhat difficult” in writing. On the other hand, 26.7% of Saudi students mentioned concepts to be “somewhat easy” (See Tables 4-13 and 4-14). No significant differences are apparent in means between Saudi students and Emirati students for the other five challenges.

When deciding to remove a natural option from analysis, three considerations are necessary: First, when removing a neutral option, the number of people in the analysis decreases by about 20-25%. Second, the important examination is the degree of change means. Examining the means in the two tables, very little change in values is apparent. This represents be evidence that leaving the neutral option in the analysis is appropriate. Third, the size of the standard deviations increases slightly from removing the neutral option; fewer participants explain the expected phenomenon. Since removing the neutral options causes little change in mean values, the neutral option could remain in the analysis (See Tables 4-15, 4-16 (a) and (b)).
Table 4-13: Summary of Emirati participants’ Responses to Writing Process Items (Item 8 Responses by Percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Process Item</th>
<th>Very Difficult</th>
<th>Difficult</th>
<th>Somewhat Difficult</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat easy</th>
<th>Easy</th>
<th>Very Easy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are your challenges in writing papers?</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td>37.4%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are your challenges in writing papers?</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concepts</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Choices</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence Construction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4-14: Summary of Saudi Participants’ Responses to Writing Process Items (Item 8) Responses by Percentage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Process Item</th>
<th>Very Difficult</th>
<th>Difficult</th>
<th>Somewhat Difficult</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Easy</th>
<th>Easy</th>
<th>Very Easy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are your challenges in writing papers? - Style</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are your challenges in writing papers? - Concepts</td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are your challenges in writing papers? - Theory</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are your challenges in writing papers? - Grammar</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are your challenges in writing papers? - Word Choices</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are your challenges in writing papers? - Sentence Construction</td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are your challenges in writing papers? - Organization</td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4-15: Independent t test results for item 8 (Writing Process Items) (Statistics Keeping Neutral in the Analysis).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Cohen’s d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are your challenges in writing papers? - Style</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are your challenges in writing papers? - Concepts</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are your challenges in writing papers? - Theory</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are your challenges in writing papers? - Grammar</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are your challenges in writing papers? - Word Choices</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are your challenges in writing papers? - Sentence Construction</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are your challenges in writing papers? - Organization</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Response scale: 1= Very Difficult; 2= Difficult; 3= Somewhat Difficult; 4= Neutral; 5= Somewhat Easy; 6= Easy; 7= Very Easy.

na = not applicable, t-test results > 0.05

Table 4-16.1: Independent T-test Results for Item 8 for all participants (Writing Process Items) (Neutral Option Included).
What are your challenges in writing papers? - Style
What are your challenges in writing papers? - Concepts
What are your challenges in writing papers? - Theory
What are your challenges in writing papers? - Grammar
What are your challenges in writing papers? - Word Choices
What are your challenges in writing papers? - Sentence Construction
What are your challenges in writing papers? - Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Missing</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.590</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.392</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.464</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.754</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.542</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>1.590</td>
<td>1.392</td>
<td>1.464</td>
<td>1.754</td>
<td>1.542</td>
<td>1.447</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Response scale: 1= Very Difficult; 2= Difficult; 3= Somewhat Difficult; 4= Neutral; 5= Somewhat Easy; 6= Easy; 7= Very Easy.

Table 4-16:2: Independent t test results for item 8 for all participants (Writing Process Items) (Statistics Removing Neutral from the Analysis)
Social and Cultural Challenges

When the participants were asked about their comfort level of working with the same gender, Emirati students (29.0 %) were very comfortable working with the same gender; 26.0 % of the Saudi students were comfortable working with the same gender (See Table 4-17).
Table 4-17: Item 9 (Gender issue) Responses by Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Very Comfortable</th>
<th>Comfortable</th>
<th>Less Comfortable</th>
<th>Uncomfortable</th>
<th>It Does Not Matter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The country</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>37.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE and Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questionnaire Results Related to Research Question 2

How do Emirati and Saudi students cope with these academic, cultural and discipline related challenges to succeed in the U.S. universities?

The study identified six coping strategies of Emirati and Saudi students from analyzing the Gulf Region students’ responses to the questionnaire: The questions query perspectives for re American students’ support, Gulf Region students’ support, teachers’ support, improving writing, comfort of discussing cultural knowledge, and preferences for individual work.

American Students’ Support

When Emirati and Saudi students indicated their preferences for collaborating with native English speakers for class presentation or writing projects, the highest number of Emirati students (40.2%) and Saudi students (36.9%) indicated a greater preference for working with native English speakers for presentation or writing projects. Differences between Saudi and Emirati students were significant for preferences for collaborating with native English speakers.
for class presentations or writing projects. Emirati students’ reported preference (M = 2.20; SD = 1.22) as did Saudi students (M = 2.19, SD = 1.22) (See Tables 4-18 and 4-19, Figures 4-7).

Table 4-18: Item 10 (Working with native speakers) Responses by Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>More Preferable</th>
<th>Preferable</th>
<th>Less Preferable</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>It Does Not Matter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE (92)</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA (122)</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE and SA (214)</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you prefer to work with native English speakers for presentations or writing projects?
Do you prefer to work with English native speakers in doing class presentation or writing project?

Figure 4-7: Item 10 (Working with native speakers) Responses by percentage

Table 4-19: Independent T-test Results for Item 10 (Working with native speakers).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Response scale: 1= More Preferable; 2= Preferable; 3= Less Preferable; 4= Sometimes; 5= It Does Not Matter.
Gulf Region Students’ Support

Academic socialization experience was also a study topic and the questionnaire caught responses related to classroom socialization, including comfort levels and their expectations for classes’ activities. Specifically, this investigates the presence of the target populations’ loyalties toward memberships in groups’ influential for decisions for associations for classroom activities. A single item was examined comfort levels for association with students from home regions. In terms of this comfort level, 31.2% of Emirati students felt “comfortable” associating with students from the same region; however, 31.7% of Saudi respondents emphasized that the region of peer-associates by choosing “It does not matter.” Only 2.2% of Emirati students and 6.5% of the Saudi students expressed “uncomfortable” for working with regional peers (See Table 4-20).

Table 4-20: Item 11(Working with Gulf Region students) Responses by Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>country</th>
<th>Very Comfortable</th>
<th>Comfortable</th>
<th>Less Comfortable</th>
<th>Uncomfortable</th>
<th>It Does Not Matter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>31.2%</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE and Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers’ Support

Concerning participants’ accessibility to information, the questions pertain to the identities of types of individuals with whom respondents felt most comfortable communicating and associating during classes. Do students prefer work and communicate freely with Native American students or students from the Gulf Region or even the same gender? A further focus of
attention was expertise and power relations which may be closely interdependent or correlated. Often, an individual with greater expertise has greater power; therefore, examination of expertise and power relations used two measures: knowledge and explicit, socially constructed hierarchical systems. Knowledge test items deal with the ideas of expertise and focus on respondents’ perceptions of lack of academic knowledge or cultural knowledge, and professors’ perception of an individual student. When asked to estimate the level of comfort when discussing challenges with professors, 70.9 % of Emirati students were “very comfortable” and “comfortable”; however, 29 % of Emirati students were “less comfortable” and “uncomfortable” when sharing their difficulties with their professors. In comparison, when evaluating the level of comfort when discussing challenges with their professors, 64.3 % of Saudi students were “very comfortable” and “comfortable”; however, 35.8 % of Emirati students were “less comfortable” and “uncomfortable” sharing difficulties with professors (See Table 4-21).

Table 4-21: Item 12 (Academic difficulties) Responses by Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>country</th>
<th>Very Comfortable</th>
<th>Comfortable</th>
<th>Less Comfortable</th>
<th>Uncomfortable</th>
<th>It Does Not Matter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
<td>42.3%</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE and Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Improving Writing
When Emirati and Saudi students indicated the use of their native “Arabic” for writing ideas and then translating to English, the highest number of Emirati students (44.1%) and Saudi students (41.8 %) professed to use English when initiating writing activities. The difference between Saudi and Emirati students was insignificant; Emirati students reported that they avoided beginning to write in Arabic and then translating to English (M = 1.76; SD = .85) as did Saudi students (M = 1.91 SD = .99) (See Tables 4-22, 4-23, and Figure 4-8).

Table 4- 22: Item 13 (Translation) Responses by Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>44.1%</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>41.8%</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE and SA</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 215
In your writing, do you start with writing your ideas in Arabic and then translating what you have written to English?

Table 4-23: Independent t test results for item 13 (Translation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Cohen’s d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>0.085</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Response scale: 1= Never; 2= Rarely; 3= Occasionally; 4= Very Often; 5= Always.
na = not applicable, t-test results > .05
When asking Emirati and Saudi students to identify the areas for emphasis in writing, 17.7% of Emirati students and 20.5% of Saudi students indicated writing style, and 31.6% of Emirati students and 23.9% of Saudi students indicated an emphasis on content. Both style and content were areas of emphases for 47.9% of Emirati students and 62.0% of Saudi students (See Table 4-24).

Table 4-24: Chi Square Analysis of Areas of Emphasis for writing and Country of Origin (Item 14) (Writing emphasis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 14</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where do you put your emphasis in your writing?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Style</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Where do you put your emphasis in your writing?</td>
<td>64.9%</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Country</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Where do you put your emphasis in your writing?</td>
<td>62.7%</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Country</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equally on Both</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>113</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Where do you put your emphasis in your writing?</td>
<td>49.6%</td>
<td>50.4%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Country</td>
<td>47.9%</td>
<td>62.0%</td>
<td>54.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>54.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>209</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Where do you put your emphasis in your writing?</td>
<td>56.0%</td>
<td>44.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Country</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 14</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>UAE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where do you put your emphasis in your writing?</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Where do you put your emphasis in your writing?</td>
<td>64.9%</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Country</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Style</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Where do you put your emphasis in your writing?</td>
<td>62.7%</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Country</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Where do you put your emphasis in your writing?</td>
<td>49.6%</td>
<td>50.4%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Country</td>
<td>47.9%</td>
<td>62.0%</td>
<td>54.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>54.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equally on Both</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Where do you put your emphasis in your writing?</td>
<td>56.0%</td>
<td>44.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Country</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>56.0%</td>
<td>44.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi square = 4.16 (p = .125).
Comfort of Discussing Cultural Knowledge

When Emirati and Saudi students expressed their comfort levels in discussing cultural issues in class, the same percentage of Emirati students (43.0%) felt both “very comfortable” and “comfortable” discussing regional issues. Most Saudi students (48.0%) felt “comfortable” discussing topics related to their region with classmates (See Table 4-25).
Table 4-25: Item 15(Cultural knowledge) Responses by Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Very Comfortable</th>
<th>Comfortable</th>
<th>Less Comfortable</th>
<th>Uncomfortable</th>
<th>It Does Not Matter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>43.0%</td>
<td>43.0%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
<td>48.0%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE and Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
<td>45.1%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Preference for Individual Work

When participants indicated their comfort levels for working independently in class, 41.3% of Emirati students emphasized that they are “very comfortable” in working independently. Similarly, 30.0% of the Saudi students stated feeling “very comfortable” working independently. No significant differences in means were apparent between Saudi and Emirati students regarding comfort with independently work (See Tables 4-26 and 4-27)
Table 4-26: Item 16 (Independent work) Responses by Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>country</th>
<th>Very Comfortable</th>
<th>Comfortable</th>
<th>Less Comfortable</th>
<th>Sometimes Comfortable</th>
<th>Uncomfortable</th>
<th>It Does Not Matter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The UAE</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The UAE and Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4-27: Independent t-test results for item 16 (Independent work).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Cohen’s d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Response scale: 1= Very comfortable; 2= Comfortable; 3= Less Comfortable; 4= It Does Not matter; 5= Sometimes Uncomfortable; 6= Uncomfortable; 7= Very Uncomfortable.

na = not applicable, t-test results , p > .05

Interview Analysis

The purpose of this mixed method study is to explore Emirati and Saudi students’ challenges in U.S. universities, and their methods of confronting these challenges to succeed in their studies. The results of this study are a comparison of Emirati and Saudi student’s social and academic challenges in the U.S. universities. Qualitative data analysis, such as interview data,
serves to expand the breadth of the study and offer details of schooling experiences of Emirati and Saudi students in U.S. universities. Interview data garnered from details of participants’ specific experiences, educational backgrounds, socialization processes, adjustments to American universities and life, challenges, and setbacks encountered during their academic journeys. Six participants from the Pennsylvania University agreed to interviews. These six students marked their questionnaires indicating willingness to participate in interviews for study. After contacting these six students by telephone, email, and Facebook and explaining the interview protocol including the importance of the signed consent form, arrangements scheduled face-to-face interviews which began with signing the consent form.

**Interview Format**

After initial contact, establishing a suitable date and time for the interview, the recording the face-to-face interviews on videotape ensured accurate data. As part of the confidentiality protocol, participants received reminders of the interview consent form, of the videotapes transcription only purpose, and of security measures for the recordings (locked vault, off-site) for a period and then destroyed. Each interview consumed approximately 60 minutes, followed by transcription and examination for common themes. The discussion of interview data uses fictitious names for participants to protect their identities. Of the six participants who were interviewed, four were male and two were female (See Table. 4-28 and 4-29).

**Profiles of Interview Participants**

For the purposes of familiarity, this section constitutes a narrative describing the the Emirati and Saudi participants. These introductory vignettes provide insight into the educational backgrounds and preparation of the Emirati and Saudi students before travelling to the U.S. and
their current educational situations in U.S. universities. The introduction provides a context for the perspectives of the participants and characterizations their backgrounds from various aspects: country, gender, past educational backgrounds, parental influence in learning English, influence of schooling types (public or private) in learning English, and English language preparation programs in the students’ native countries or the U.S. Using these contexts should convey the individuality of each student and the connections between the students that influenced the students’ experiences in U.S. universities. Tables 4-28 and 4-29 list the six interviewees and their pseudonyms, genders, age, and degrees.

Table 4-28: The Emirati Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hoor</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Bachelor in genetics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zayed</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Bachelor in nuclear engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaled</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Bachelor in architecture engineering</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4-29: The Saudi Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Degree / Program / Major</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sheikha</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Bachelor in engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalifah</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Master in risk management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hassan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>the Intensive English Communication Program (IECP)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Emirati Participants

Participant 1: Hoor

Hoor is an Emirati female student, 23 years old, holds a bachelor’s degree from the Pennsylvania State University with a major in biology, specifically, genetics. She is completing her third year in college after spending one year at the language institute in New York. She has no previous experience in any European country. High school education occurred in Abu Dhabi, UAE and moved among schools. Study of English began in a private kindergarten, continued through private elementary schools and in public middle and high schools. Studying English required little effort with not time spent preparing for English classes, and the materials for English in grades seven through twelve were repetitive. Memorizing grammatical rules was unnecessary from previous natural knowledge (e.g., verb, subject, object, etc.) without explicit instruction. In private school, she learned sentence construction sentences without specifying sentence constituents, such as subject, verb, and object. She feels public schools confused her learning English, especially grammar, but was fluent in English upon entering public school. Her mother encouraged learning English, by bringing English books home. Despite being Arab, her mother’s first language is English due to education in non-Arabic schools and living in predominately in Kenya and gaining English education there, which prompted a focus on English at home. Her mother speaks and reads Arabic but does not write Arabic. She learned Urdu instead of Arabic because Kenya did not have Arabic schools. Hoor knows only Arabic, English and little Spanish, would like to speak Urdu. To have a one year language preparation is obligatory by sponsorship (The Scholarship Coordination Office –SCO) regulations to get the TOEFL score. This language preparation program did not prepare Hoor for the TOEFL or SAT. The teachers at the language institute did not prepare the students for the required admissions’
tests for U.S. universities. She felt that this year was a waste of her time. A TOEFL preparation program would be a better choice, and completed one in the summer 2009 in the UAE, resulting in the required TOEFL score for admission. Hoor stated that the benefit from the language preparation program writing ability development, with grammar instruction similar to that in the UAE schools. Her speaking and listening did not develop as well, but writing was progressed, especially academic writing which is different from that taught in high school. Hoor stated that in the UAE high school writing was just paragraph constructions, with a maximum length of one page. However, the teachers in the language institute taught writing multiple-page manuscripts for a single topic and emphasized thinking in English rather than Arabic. The language institute philosophy encouraged students to speak fluently, in immediate English, without trying to translate from Arabic to English.

**Participant 2: Zayed**

Zayed is an Emirati student from Fujairah. Zayed scholarship is from UAE ENIC Petroleum Company, and he is an undergraduate student at the Pennsylvania State University. As a sophomore, his major is nuclear and mechanical engineering. He completed one year of a language preparation program at Georgia Technology center. He transferred from public schools to the higher technology high school in seventh grade and remained there through grade twelve. He had challenges in the higher technology high school, including difficulty constructing sentences and correct grammar. Students from different cities were in the same school such as Diba, Korfakkan, and Fujairah. He had placement test based on the students’ language proficiency and their grades in the test. He stated that the placement test was easy for him because he used to attend some English preparation programs during summer. Also, they had a
mathematic test. He started with A-level. Other students mentioned that the test was difficult
because they depend only on the public schools. The language which he learnt in the higher
technology school is similar to what he has studied in the language preparation program in
Georgia. Most Emirati students were in level 5 to 6 in the language preparation program in
Georgia because we were prepared in the higher technology school. The higher technology
schools are different than the public schools. For example, some majors are specified for the
students. Zayed’s major was engineering science. He took some engineering courses which were
different scientific courses. All subjects were taught in English. Only Arabic and Islamic studies
were in Arabic language which were only once a week. The curriculum is a little bit different
than the public schools. For instance, Zayed had studied Calculus II which is also similar to a
course at Penn State University. This was advantage for him. The physics and chemistry were
similar to the public school but it was in English. The English was easy in Level A but when the
higher technology school realized the easiness of teaching materials for students, revised
materials changed and became more complicated. Teaching focused on academic writing instead
of writing paragraphs as in the public schools. When he came to the English preparation program
in Georgia, the teachers were surprised at Emirati students’ English language proficiency. The
higher technology school facilitated Zayed’s English language and academic studies in his
engineering major at Georgia Technology University and Pennsylvania State University. Zayed
stated that some Emirati parents prohibit their sons from attending the higher technology schools
even though their sons’ desires to do so. The higher technology schools annually select forty to
fifty Emirati students from each emirate, totaling one or two hundred students, to study abroad to
learn English and attend engineering colleges during summer. For instance, Zayed went to
Scotland and his nephew went to France. After graduating from the higher technology school,
students apply for scholarships and attend career fairs, which introduce students to appropriate careers to pursue. Zayed applied to U.S. universities during the language preparation year, which ENIC Petroleum Company requested. He had a supervisor who helped him in application process and applied for him for Georgia technology Centre. He scored 80 in TOEFL which was an admission requirement for Pennsylvania State University. He is taking 21 credits each semester because he is a double major student and to graduate on time. He thinks that the double major is not that difficult because he is trying to keep his GPA high and take the required courses. The double major will open other possibilities of careers. He has a contract with ENIC to return graduation and work with ENIC. He is planning to apply for a Master degree immediately after his bachelor’s degree.

**Participant 3: Khaled**

Khaled is a 24-year old male Emirati student, married and living with his wife and daughter. He is a bachelor’s degree student at Penn State University and he will graduate in 2012. His major is architectural engineering, sponsored by the (The Scholarship Coordination Office –SCO). His language preparation year occurred in Utah, and he sat for the TOEFL tests many times and achieved a score of 89, which meets requirements for admission to Pennsylvania State University. He attended various English preparation classes at Penn State and ESL classes such as ESL 15, English 202 which is for Engineering students, and CAS 100 A that focuses on speaking and presentation. In his last year, he is planning attend CAS 202 C that focuses on writing. He studied at all male, public high schools in Abu Dhabi.
The Saudi Participants

Participant 1: Sheikha

Sheikha is a 19-year old Saudi student from Al Qatif, near the UAE and with similar culture. She received her scholarship from the Saudi Aramco petroleum company. The first time when she came to Pennsylvania State University, she was with her father. She visited some European countries such as Britain for five weeks. Her sister was there but she was working most the time in the hospital as part of her internship and Medical graduate study. She went to Britain when she was 16 years old to take a summer course to improve her English. Her family was paying the tuition for the language preparation program. ARAMCO/ramco assigned her to attend a one year language preparation program in Al Thahran in Saudi Arabia, and then sent her to the U.S. At Aramco, female and male teachers instructed Sheikha for TOEFL, SAT and other tests. Sheikha did not attend public school in Saudi Arabia where Arabic is the language of instruction, and only female teachers taught female students. Most ARAMCO students come directly to U.S. universities without attending language preparation programs in the U.S. For students who do not meet all the American universities’ requirements, ARAMCO sends them to British universities. When Sheikha came to Penn State University, she gained one year advanced placement because she had already completed courses, chemistry and calculus with good grades, equivalent to U.S. universities’ requirements. Most teachers in ARAMCO were foreigners or Arabs but with American nationalities who lived abroad. ARAMCO, one of the largest petroleum companies in the world, has a branch in Huston, London and Hong Kong. This company’s origin is in Saudi Arabia beginning with King Abdullah’s contract with American Petroleum Company. Then, the King bought the company, and Aramco began a program of sponsoring Saudi female students. English in the high school was really poor, and not all
teachers were prepared to teach English. In Sheikha’s case, English teachers were proficient. Sheikha thinks that teaching English in high school is like teaching them to be only tourists, and not a language which will have continued to use in colleges. Teaching English was very basic, using traditional methods and focused only on grammar. Fatima’s family prepared her to learn English while she was a child by sending her to summer language preparation programs. In Fatima’s home, her family members speak English because they lived abroad for 17 years before returning to Saudi Arabia. At this year, Sheikha was born in Saudi Arabia. Her father studied medicine in Britain and practices in Saudi Arabia. At ARAMCO, Sheikha was in higher a level studying for TOEFL, but other lower level students studied IELTS. She was in a higher English level so she took courses but teachers were not that serious. She passed TOEFL the first time. The TOEFL course was for taking notes. The language preparation program for the students who were studying for IELTS was extensive. For three classes a day, these students practice IELTS continually and take samples of IELTS tests. However, for TOEFL preparation, students had no extensive preparation because Sheikha had English basics. They were using Academic English textbooks. Her teacher was not following some textbooks. For instance, Sheikha was discussing politics and current events in some countries in their class. Her major will be engineering.

Participant 2: Khalifah

Khalifah is a 25 year old, single, Saudi student from Al Qasim, and he lives with his brother who is studying in the U.S. Khalifah is pursuing a master’s degree in risk management after completing a bachelor’s degree in Business Management in the U.S. Saudi Higher Education provided his scholarships for his bachelor and master degrees. He has spent six years for his education, a year for language preparation four years for his bachelor degree, plus one
year toward his master’s degree. His first time to the U.S. was a week before Ramadan. He stayed with American family. In Saudi Arabia, he studied in public school and his English ability was limited. After a language preparation program for eight months, he completed the IELTS and gained admission to Pennsylvania State University.

**Participant 3: Hassan**

Hassan is a 31-year old Saudi student from Al Qasim, and currently attends the Intensive English Communication Program (IECP) at the Pennsylvania State University. He arrived in America on the 6th of April 2010. He has been in the U.S. almost a year and a half. He studied Lock Haven University in Pennsylvania, and after almost 4 months, transferred to Penn State. He did not benefit from the Lock Haven language institute and stated that the teachers are discriminators. The university is small and the language institute focuses only on business. They care only about money and not improving the students’ learning. They do not care about the student. Then, he transferred to the language institute at Penn State in August 2010 which varies in its administration, curriculum development and teachers each semester.

All his education has been in Arabic, including his master’s degree, for which his thesis was written in Arabic but the abstract in English. He stated that, currently, his university in Saudi Arabia has changed to an English system. Hassan thinks the Saudi universities’ levels are the best among the universities in the Arabic countries. Internationally, Saudi Arabia has only Abdullah king university. It might be the only one that has graduate programs in Saudi Arabia. The study is in English, and it has international students from America, Japan, Korea, China, almost from all countries, not only from Saudi Arabia. He is planning to study for a doctorate in microbiology.
The Phases of qualitative Analysis

1: Become Familiar with the Data

In the phase of becoming familiar with the data, I tried to follow the procedures Seidel, (1998), Aronson, J. (1994) and Braun & Clarke, (2006) recommended which involved familiarizing myself with the data by reading and re-reading my data. I tried to know “all aspects of the data”, notice things, collect ideas, think about them and take notes during this process. I immersed myself in the data and my research notes, I engaged deeply in the words, impressions, and flow of events. My intention is becoming familiar with the depth and breadth of the content. Reading through the data many times assisted me in extracting the inherent meanings. This enabled me to become more familiar with the data, generating an initial list of ideas about what is in the data and what is interesting about them, and helped me generate codes, the next phase of the analysis.

Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes

I looked over their data to find patterns within the data that could be positioned into categories, which were used to code the data. A code is something that stands for a piece of information that depicts what each piece is about, and a category stand for a class of objects. I worked systematically through the entire data set, giving full and equal attention to each data item, identifying interesting aspects in the data items and collating data relevant to each code. I followed Braun and Clarke’ advice (2006) in this phase, which is: (a) code for as many potential themes/patterns as possible; (b) code extracts of data inclusively; (c) remember that you can code individual extracts of data in as many different ‘themes’ as they fit into. I retained accounts that departed from the dominant story in the analysis understanding that they might be of interest later.
Phase 3: Searching, Reviewing, Refining Themes

This phase of the analysis re-focused the analysis at the broader level of themes. Through the pulling apart of data into categories and analyzing its content themes began to emerge (Stake, 1995). I began analyzing the codes and understanding how various codes may combine to form an overarching theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I sorted the different codes into potential themes and collated all the related coded data extracts within the indicated themes. I continued noticing things, collecting things (ideas), thinking about the relationship between the codes, between themes and between various levels of themes. Checking if the themes worked in relation to the coded extracts, I read all the collated extracts for each theme, and considered whether they appeared to form a coherent pattern. I ended this phase with a collection of candidate themes and sub-themes, and all extracts of data that had been coded in relation to them. I had a quite clear image of my themes, how they fit together, and the overall story they tell about the data.

Phase 4: Refining, Defining & Naming Themes

At the refining, defining and naming the themes phase of the analysis, I defined and further refined the themes I would present for my analysis. ‘Define and refine’ means indicating the ‘essence’ of what each theme is about and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures. For each theme I did and wrote a detailed analysis, and I identified the story that each theme informs. Some general themes are noticeable from the pulling apart and putting back together of the data. In finding the core themes I gave “priority to topics on which substantial amount of data has been collected and which reflected recurrent or underlying patterns of activities in the setting under study” (Emerson, 1995, p. 157). Within the themes are sub-themes
that help shape the themes through thick description. These eventual final themes and sub-themes resulted from a process of refinement of initial themes and sub-themes.

**Common Themes**

Successful qualitative study requires clear understanding of procedures to ensure that the data receives appropriate analysis, especially capturing the voices and lived experiences of the participants (Cresswell, 2003; Moustakas, 1994). To obtain authentic interpretations of Emirati and Saudi students’ experiences and challenges in U.S., this section includes the participants’ individual words that express their thoughts on these topics. Each participant shared common characteristics and yet brought individual perspectives to the interviews. In addition, students discussed their sense of obligation to succeed as being an important factor. Analysis of transcriptions of all six interviews attempted to identify common themes. This effort at accuracy required listening to the recordings and reading of the transcriptions to avoid missing anything of importance in the responses. The process of transcribing the data highlighted significant proclamations or phrases from the interviewees that provided meaning for the academic socialization phenomenon. Following the identification of the significant assertions and phrases present in the data, a reduction of the interview transcription data produced categories and themes (Moustakas, 1994) and commonality among themes emerged. The emerging themes ranged from participants’ academic, cultural, discipline-related challenges to their coping strategies to succeed in U.S. universities and adjustments to American culture. This approach developed into final, dominant and overarching themes of the academic socialization process of Emirati and Saudi students. The categories that are produced from the data are related to academic preparation and literacy; classroom environment; cultural adjustment and gender issues. The emerging themes of the first research question “What academic, cultural, discipline
related challenges do Emirati and Saudi students face at U.S. universities?” are: 1) Inadequate Saudi schools’ and universities’ English preparation; 2) Admission requirements’ challenges; 3) Linguistics challenges (writing, reading, presentation, listening, accent, vocabulary, and grammar); 4) Differing classroom expectations; 5) Communication challenges with American students; 6) Arabs’ negative influence on their peers; 7) Cultural and social challenges; 8) Lack of Cultural Knowledge; and 9) Women’s communication challenges with men.

The emerging themes related to the second research question “How do Emirati and Saudi students cope with these academic, cultural, and discipline related challenges to succeed in the U.S. universities?” are: 1) Orientations and preparation programs; 2) Language and Cultural Preparation Programs; 3) Importance of English; 4) Improving writing skills; 5) Improving vocabulary; 6) Ease of doing presentations and speaking; 7) Learning strategies; 8) Family support in the U.S.; 9) Gulf Region students’ support; 10) Classroom participation and socialization; 11) Socialization with Americans; and 12) Teachers’ socialization and support.

The analysis of the experiences of the participants revealed the core or essence of the phenomenon of academic socialization and most importantly, accurately reflected in the literature review (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

**Research Question 1**

*What academic, cultural, discipline related challenges do Emirati and Saudi students face at U.S. universities?*

**Category 1: Academic Preparation and Literacy**

**Theme 1: Inadequate Saudi schools’ and universities’ English preparation**
Saudi student “Hassan” emphasized the inadequate English language preparation of the Saudi public schools especially the elementary and preparatory schools. He stated that private schools prepare their students to use the English language socially and academically. However, Saudi students have limited chances for admission to private schools because some parents are unable to meet the expense of tuitions. The number of years of English instruction is not a measurement of the Saudi students’ English proficiency level because English teachers speak Arabic most the time. The Saudi students learn only the basics of English. Even at the university level, the language of instruction in most Saudi universities is Arabic. Hassan’s comments regarding the difference between public and private schools in Saudi Arabia are:

In Public schools, English teaching is ineffective. For instance, we have four classes for teaching English in a week; however, its level is very poor. The students care only about passing not learning English at the end of the year. Learning English is not a goal for the students so the high school graduates do not learn English. However, in the private schools, the students learn English in elementary stages and its level is very good. I strongly believe that private school is better than public schools in teaching English. The outcomes of the private schools are always good according to the English language and any other sciences. The outcomes are very good.

He completed relating his six years’ experience of inadequate learning of English:

During my study in Saudi Arabia, I studied English for six years in preparatory school. I studied two courses in English in my Bachelor degree. I studied two courses in English in my Master degree. At the end, I learned only the basics because the teachers speak Arabic. For example, if the teacher mentioned an English word which we did not understand, the teacher will translate it immediately to Arabic. At the end, I did not benefit.

Hassan mentioned a specific name of a Saudi university which prepares Saudi students to communicate in English properly:

Only graduate students from Fahd King University will be good at English because they study English in their Bachelor degree. They have language. However, any graduates from any other university, they will not have a language.
Theme 2: Admission requirements’ challenges

Most Emirati and Saudi students come to the U.S. for language preparation programs for a year or more because their sponsors usually provide the opportunity. However, most Emirati and Saudi students’ priorities is attaining admission to a U.S. university. They must meet admission requirements, such as TOEFL, IELTS, GRE, etc. The problem is most language preparation programs do not prepare the students for these requirements. The students must manage their time before admission, and before universities’ deadlines to complete their intensive work in language preparation. Comments from some Emirati and Saudi students regarding admission requirements challenges are:

Khaled commented;

I studied my language preparation program in Utah. To get admission in a university, we have to score 80 which is a high score that led many students to change their universities.

Hassan commented;

Al hemdellah, there are no challenges until now. The only difficulty I face now is the TOEFL test. It is the only difficulty I face now. The time left for me is until the end of this year. It is the final. I have to bring up the TOEFL score or I have to go back to Saudi Arabia.

Hassan also indicated that language preparation programs do not prepare the students for admission requirements:

The Intensive English Communication Program at Penn State University does not focus on preparing us for TOEFL or IELTS or GRE. During levels 4 and 3, they start to prepare the students for the TOEFL. That means they will not teach the student only the TOEFL. But, they teach them how to do in the TOEFL. For example, the teacher explains on the board, he/she will say this point is one of the TOEFL questions. We do practice; the teacher brings something from outside, not from the required curriculum. Here, I see their preparation for the TOEFL is good.
Hassan emphasized the problem of a local TOEFL test that does not apply to other U.S. universities:

The paper based TOEFL which we are taking in the language institute is accepted at Penn State University only, not other universities. This is the problem.

**Theme 3: Linguistics Challenges (Writing, Reading, Presentations, Listening, Accent, Vocabulary, and Grammar)**

Emirati and Saudi students identified linguistic challenges in their writing, reading, listening, and presentations that influence the language socialization process in classrooms. English vocabulary and grammar are linguistics aspects which Emirati and Saudi students emphasized as creating difficulties. Emirati student “Zayed” expressed his difficulty in understanding American accents, and some Saudi students’ claimed linguistic difficulties prevent them from participating in class.

Hassan commented

My language when I came here was very poor. I have the basics only. This is an important problem which Saudi students face. 90% of Saudi students are not proficient in English.

Khalifah commented:

At the beginning, I was silent in the classroom in the language preparation program. I was afraid to talk. My linguistics ability was zero. I was shy, afraid to talk and make mistakes because others may laugh.

**Writing Challenges**

Some comments identify writing difficulty; Khaled commented:

I am worried a lot because writing is not easy. Writing is very difficult for us.
Khaled emphasized that writing is always a challenge for himself and his Emirati peers:

This semester I worked with two American students and one of my Emirati friends. I and my friend are not good at writing because writing is always a challenge for us.

In working with a group of Emirati students and two American students, Khaled expressed his upset from a low grade because of his writing weakness. His response to the low grade is:

If my student partner were American, it would be better a little bit because he will know how to write. He will be proficient in English. The American students did not care about our work. I and my Emirati friend were writing to reach 300 words. We write and sit to think deeply. We give the ideas to the American students and he reaches 500 words. We have ideas but we do not know how to express our ideas and write them fluently.

Khalifah commented:

When I was in the language preparation program, I was writing around 250 words for preparation for IELTS. When I started my first class in college, the teacher told us to write around 1000 words. I was shocked and thinking how I will write that. I was thinking why I came to this university?

Sheikha commented

Today, I had submitted a report for my class. It was easy. It had two tables and was reporting results of our project. I enjoy doing reports more than just essays”.

Vocabulary and Grammar Challenges

Emirati students indicated vocabulary and grammar difficulties.

Zayed commented:

Most Arabs students told that not having vocabulary or grammar is difficult. For me, grammar is okay but my difficulty is how to choose the appropriate word for a sentence.

Hoor commented

When I write my reports, I have reread my report again because I am sure I will have some grammatical mistakes because English is not my first language. I used to write immediately without revision. At the end, I try to edit the paper which takes double the time of writing the report itself because while I am editing I feel that some new
ideas come up so I want to add them but I do not know how to add them. This process takes time.

Reading Challenges

Hassan expressed the difficulty of reading specific topics:

The specialized reading topics were very difficult. For example, last week, we had a reading about music in the markets. It was a research study. We had to read and answer some questions. The research is based on the student’s opinion. I think research study is very advanced for the student’s level in the language institute.

Reading will be more complicated when it has difficult terminologies that are need translation. Hassan uses Google translator when he reads complicated topics which will eventually facilitate his reading comprehension. However, his method leads to not learning English:

I think there is a problem with Arabs in translating Arabic words to English using Google translators. I am not sure about Americans. This is one of the biggest problems we face. The problem is the person is depending on it. For instance, I am searching in a website and I saw some paragraphs in English which I do not understand, I do not bother to read it in English I just copy and paste on Google translator and it will be translated to read. This is a problem because the person will not bother to read or try to understand the word from the context. This is a problem. It is a service but it causes a problem in learning the language.

Listening Challenges

Kalifah listened to British English in the UAE; therefore, socializing with Americans who speak with American English accent is a challenge as he indicated:

The listening is difficult because in the UAE, we used to learn British English and here it is American English. The people speak faster here and they might not understand us because of our accent. In the language preparation program, the teachers understand us because they used to teach international students.

Presentation Challenges
Khalifah expressed worry for his first presentation. After his academic socialization process, doing a presentation became easy. Two female students emphasized the easiness of doing presentations:

Khalifah commented:

My first presentation, I was worried. It is not because of lack of my knowledge. I was scared because of the audience. I felt it was difficult. But after that, I am fine with doing presentations

Hoor commented:

I present the results of my experiments. Presentation is very easy for me.

Sheikha commented

I prefer presentation and I am not shy to stand and speak up.

Accent Challenges

Understanding the American accent was a challenge for Zayed:

When I was in the language preparation program in Georgia, we used to listen to a tape-recorder and write what we hear. Sometimes, we cannot understand because of the accent.

Category 2: Classroom Environment

Theme 4: Different Classroom Expectations of Teachers

Emirati and Saudi students come from different educational systems to study in U.S. universities. They face social and academic challenges and try to adjust to the new educational system with different expectations. Their expectation for teaching strategies, group socialization, examinations, grading systems have not been met or they do not understand the expectations,
causing difficulties in understanding and adapting smoothly to American education. Teachers in the UAE and Saudi Arabia explain all the details in a textbook. However, in the U.S. universities, Khalifah was surprised that

The teachers gave us only the main points and we have to read the details and understand the materials

Khaled expected that his teachers would guide him in writing his reports. He commented;

I have to write an individual report in Chemistry lab. Teachers do not teach you how to write a report. They give us the topic of the report.

Zayed commented on the different cultural expectations for group work:

I usually talk while I am working as when I was in the UAE. However, American students only focus on work. They do not like to talk.

The first class in college was a shock for Khalifah when his teacher asked him to write 1000 words. He stated:

I was shocked because I did not have any background about the U.S. universities and their teaching methodologies.

Hoor commented on her challenges when her teachers did not provide details of test question types:

My major is biology. In the exam, the teacher’s test questions related to real life which is practical. Some classes, teachers explain to us the test questions in advance so I understand the questions types for the exam. Other teachers do not tell us the questions types which make our tests more difficult. Some teachers give us samples of the test questions to practice, which I like.

Khaled spends hours studying every detail in his textbook because he did not attend school in the American Educational system.

The good thing with American students which I cannot figure it out until today is that American students know what the professor wants. They know what is important and what is not important. They know that the professor wants us to focus on this point and they know that the professor does not care about this point. I do not know that so, I focus on everything. The American students spend two to three hours on a task but I usually spend almost five to six hours on the same task. I tend to focus on all the points because I do not know what exactly is important.
Khaled expressed being upset as a result of his low grades even though he worked hard on his reports. The problem is he was not able to understand the teacher’s expectation for the reports. Khaled further comments about his frustration:

I and my Emirati friend were working hard in the chemistry lab report but at the end we did not get a good grade because we did all the work even though we have two other American students working with us in the same report. Khaled’s perception of the grades’ significance as indicators of his success lead him to spend hours on his work and focus on every detail in his books; he stated:

I focus here and here to get a better grade and at the end I do not get a good grade.

**Theme 5: Communication Challenges with American Students**

Different communication skills might influence students’ relationships especially if they come from different cultures. For instance, Emirati student “Zayed” experienced ignorance from American students and Saudi student “Khalifah” emphasized the American students’ preference to work with their American peers:

Zayed commented:

I am talkative in the classroom. Some American students do not like to communicate with us. Other American students just communicate with us in our group work. They do not like to know us.

Zayed wonders whether the American students’ have a fear regarding communicating with international students in general.

American students have no rapport with us. They may not be used to communicate with us or they may be afraid of us. I see American students communicate effectively with each other. American students do not communicate well with international students.

Khalifah that his observation relates to American student preferences for working in class
tasks with fellow American students;

American students prefer to work with each other. I do not know the reason. Also, some of them work part-time which complicates our meeting to do our work.

**Theme 6: Arabs’ Negative Influence on Their Peers**

Learning English is one of Emirati and Saudi students’ main goals when coming to the U.S. The existence of Arabs surrounding these students increases opportunities for practicing English, especially in language preparation programs especially if the Arabs students are mocking on each other. That is when we make mistakes we should be working with each other to learn English and improve our communications in English. However, that does not necessarily happen.

Hassan indicated this opportunity may not be utilized.

“Our problem is here we have many Arabs so we speak Arabic most the time.”

Khalifah commented that sometimes fellow Arab students are not helpful at all.

When I made mistakes, Arabs students laugh at me. Therefore, I was shy to talk in the classroom. Once, I had a fight with an Arab student because he was laughing at me. I asked him: “Why are you laughing?” “He did not give me any response.

**Category 3: Cultural Adjustment**

**Theme 7: Cultural and Social Challenges**

The Gulf region culture protects women. If a daughter is not married, the father remains responsible for his daughter. Culturally, men do most of the work and women stay at home as a princess. Women must have permission from their guardians for most issues. When Sheikha, a Saudi student, wanted her father to obtain an apartment for her in the US, the rental office refused to give him the keys and requested to make his daughter available, which is different from the cultural expectation in Saudi Arabia. Sheikha commented:
I was at Huston and my father came here to my apartment. My father paid the rent for the first month. The rental office manager told him that I have to be available to give him the apartment’s keys. In Saudi Arabia, my father has to be with me to receive the keys of an apartment. Also, I heard from some Saudi female friends that they are freer here in the U.S. They can go out any time without anyone questioning. For me, it is okay to go out with my friends even though I was in Saudi Arabia. Driving a car here is possible which I am planning, but in Saudi Arabia women are not allowed to drive. In ARAMCO, women can drive at their compound. Some Saudi women do not wear hejab.

Hoor adjusted to the American culture faster. She did not notice a big difference between the American culture and Abu Dhabi culture, which is a global city in the UAE. Hoor commented:

When I came here, I did not feel of culture shock. I was living in Abu Dhabi which the life a little bit similar to the culture here. However, I know some students who were shocked when they arrived here and saw women wearing shorts.

However, Hoor misses her family members whose relationship is a close tie amoong Emirati extended families; different from American families. Hoor commented

Even though I have some family members in the UAE such as my aunts, I still feel expatriated. My relationship with my aunts is not close like my relationship with my mother and sisters.

Changes in male’s role

Men in the Gulf region once received service and respect from women. Men do not cook or care for the house, normally women’s work. Hassan, a Saudi student, came to the U.S. and received a cultural shock. He has to care for himself; he commented on the situation in America:

It might be the person’s status in his country is changed and decreased. I mean I was in Saudi Arabia, others serve me. Here, I have to do my stuff by myself. This makes a psychological stress. Thinking of how the person was in his country and how he is here in the U.S. The person is affected by that. Now, I am used to my situation in America’
Theme 8: Lack of Cultural Knowledge

Jokes in a new language are difficult to understand because students have to learn the needed vocabulary in order to appreciate the humor and the culture. Emirati and Saudi students find difficulty following some classroom discussions and socializing with American students because they miss the meanings of the American jokes because of the language barrier or the meaning of certain words in the context that the word or phrase is being used.

Zayed commented specifically about such situations.

Sometimes American students tell jokes in classrooms but we do not understand the jokes because it is cultural. It is like the Emirati cultural jokes which I understand. There are some issues related to American traditions which I do not understand that complicates understanding the classroom discussions.”

Sheikha also commented regarding the difficulty of really understanding certain conversations because of the cultural context.

When American students tell a joke and laugh, I do not laugh because I do not understand the meaning of the metaphor of the phrases. I do not understand their idioms but now, I understand some of their jokes.

Lack of the cultural knowledge decreases Hoor’s understanding of her test questions, which influences her grades. Hoor commented regarding the difficulty associated with communication challenges on written exams. ;

Sometimes, my mistakes in tests resulted from my misunderstanding of the language. If I did not understand a word, I cannot contact the teacher because the test is controlled by a computer program. American students know most of the words which I do not understand because they relate to their tradition or history or economy. These words might be important to understand and I get confused. I cannot use a dictionary. This affects negatively my grades.
Category 4: Gender issues

Theme 9: Women’s communication challenges with men

Conservative cultural attitudes lead Gulf region female students to avoid any kind of communication with men. At one time, female and male Emirati and Saudi students studied in separate schools and classes in their native countries. The communication between women and men is very limited even in work. Moving to American mixed classes triggers communication difficulties especially for female students. Comments from male and female Emirati students explaining their attitudes regarding this issue are.

Zayed commented:

In my classes, I have an Emirati female student who I work with. There are some other Emirati female students who avoid talking with male Emirati or gulf region students even if they are in same classes.

Hoor regarding how she attempts to avoid interacting with all male classmates regardless whether they are from the Gulf or whether they are American males.

I try to avoid male students in our discussions in our classes. It does not matter if the male students are American or Arabs. I noticed that male students like to talk, and I want to focus in the class. In some cases, I will choose to speak with American male students instead of male students from the Gulf region because I heard a lot that male students form the Gulf region talk about the girls. I know that I do not do something wrong. I respect myself. However, male students still talk about girls.

Hoor added:

We have an Emirati association at Penn State University. Female Emirati students do not want to be members because they do not want to mix with the male Emirati students. We design activities for female Emirati students separate from the male Emirati students’ activities.

Women in the Gulf region did not leave their homes alone. They usually have their fathers or brothers accompany them. To see a native woman who bikes in Saudi Arabia or UAE, outside her
home is a wired view. Hoor expressed her annoyance when she moved to Penn State University whose Arabs community is greater than she expected. She feels that those Arabs limit her freedom:

> When I was in the langue preparation program, I was relaxed more than Penn State University. There were no Arabs. I bike and do whatever I want but here if I do anything, everyone will know. It is like I am still at UAE. Arabs men talk about girls more than women, which is weird.

**Research Question 2**

*How do Emirati and Saudi students cope with these academic, cultural and discipline related challenges to succeed in the U.S. universities?*

During the interviews the researcher asked questions to assess how the students coped and the strategies students used to cope with the challenges they encountered. Using the same process as described previously, the researcher read through the transcriptions to identify common coping themes. Summarized below are the 12 strategies identified through the interviews with the six interviewees.

**Category 1: Academic Preparation and Literacy**

**Theme 1: Orientations and Preparation Programs**

The purpose of orientations is to ensure that new students have a successful transition and integration into U.S. college life and assist students in feeling engaged and prepared to succeed academically, socially, and culturally. Emirati and Saudi students have orientations designed by their sponsors in their native countries and their U.S. universities.

Hoor had her first orientation in the UAE:

> We had orientations for six weeks which were langue and cultural preparation. We had a course that discussed America in general such as culture, policy, etc.
Her second orientation was at Penn State University:

I had orientations for a week when I came to Penn State. They explain to us how to open a bank account, rent a place, how to use the library, academic integrity, health insurance, etc. Everything was organized. It was helpful for the students.

**Theme 2: Language and Cultural Preparation Programs**

College is a life-changing experience and a catalyst toward personal and academic success. Being able to speak English fluently is essential for study in the U.S. universities. The Emirati and Saudi students need language and cultural preparation programs to meet college admissions requirements and increase their cultural and academic readiness. Some Emirati and Saudi students had college and preparation programs in their native countries, with beneficial results. Other students had a one-year language preparation program in the U.S. and they commented on the benefits of the preparation programs.

Sheikha commented

The study at Penn State University is easier than studying at ARAMCO. It was a college preparation program in ARAMCO in which the questions in the tests were harder than here. In ARAMCO, we were dreaming to get 80. Here, I and my friends got 90. At ARAMCO, I studied computer programming which was not equivalent to any courses at Penn State University. I took Advanced Placement test which is international and equivalent to Penn State course.

Sheikha added:

In the ESL 15, we are doing critical writing which is easy because I practiced writing critical essays in ARAMCO preparation program.

Some sponsors prepare students for settling immigration issues, as Sheikha commented:
ARAMCO helped us with the visa application but university application is my responsibility. ARAMCO was responsible for sending our transcripts and other documents to universities.

Some Saudi students were prepared to adjust to the American culture, as Sheikha stated:

When I was in ARAMCO, they prepared us for the American culture and to overcome cultural shock. We studied the stages of culture shock. We were reading American lives book in which we read real stories about how people live in America, especially international students in America and how they entertain themselves, in comparison between Saudi and American culture, “hejab” The class was useful but we honestly did not take it seriously.

Hoor, an Emirati student, whose sponsor is the Scholarship Co-ordination Office, mentioned her academic advisor who solved academic problems at Penn State University:

“We have academic advisors at Penn State University. We do not have an academic advisor in the UAE embassy. She helped us on the academic level such as with grades.

Some students changed their language preparation programs due to unmet expectations, as Hassan commented:

I tried Lock Haven University and Penn State language preparation programs, I did not try others. I found the Penn State language institute is better. Some students have different opinions regarding this. I heard some students complain and move to other language institutes. From my point of view, I tried this language institute and I have some friends in LES which is not good. LES institutes have many branches in America. It is similar to Kaplan. It is for teaching language and these LES institutes are in some universities. The graduates from these language institutes enter the university immediately. They enter the universities without tests. I knew many students do not like these institutes and complain. These language institutes are known internationally. The students are surprised that after they start their schools, their language is poor, and they did not benefit from the language institute. They felt that they enter a new world. They felt that they did not study English. They take a test and pass a level to go to the advanced level. After some levels, they start their school. They are not required to take the TOEFL to get admitted to their major. I am very convinced of the IECP. When the institute is developed from time to time, that means the institute is on the right track even if it did not reach the required point but it will be on the right track.
Theme 3: The Importance of English

Hassan emphasized the significance of learning English as a result of experience in research:

Imagine that I am Arab and I faced this problem. My research was about camel milk. The camel is originally from Arabic countries, but we do not have research in Arabic. My research was almost the only study I did in the Arab countries. We used a very specialized machine for measurements. Other researchers used traditional methods. They did not use modern machines. I searched for many research studies. All the research studies are in English and the researchers are foreigners, not Arabs. Therefore, if I do not have the English language, how I will search for these studies and read? You know that Americans in general are more developed than us in all research fields. We are in the third and fourth level in the world. How can we reach their level? How can we learn from the knowledge they have? The second point is who will be able to read the research? A person who has a language will be able to read it. A professor in a university or some educated people. Translation can be a solution but who will translate the research studies? The professor will not waste his time to translate the research studies for us. Do we have to go every time to some translating centers?

Hassan recommended future plans for teaching English in Saudi Arabia:

We can teach the new generation English to prepare them for the new challenges. They will take some positions in the society. Why would we think of hiring translators?

Theme 4: Improving Writing Skills

Emirati and Saudi students indicated that academic writing is a difficulty they face. Their past schooling experiences did not prepare them to write academically especially in English. Their assignments were writing simple paragraphs which they memorize most of the time. They are aware of their writing difficulty; therefore, most of them attempt to improve by attending more writing courses, visiting writing centers, and using dictionaries.
Writing Courses

Some of the participants commented on their experiences in their writing courses and the benefits received.

Khaled commented

I wrote a paper about fire safety in 202 C writing class. The paper was about 15 pages with pictures. This paper was individual. Also, I learned how to cite, write and modify our writing only from English 15. I use Word Document and a website called Easy Citation. I enter the book name, the date of publication, and then I choose MLA, or APA, or Chicago. MLA is free but for other types of citations, I have to have register. The name of the website is easyBib. It means easy bibliography. There are many websites like that. Also, at the end of English 15, the teachers told us to go to a website about the citation after we learned how to do that. Honestly, it was good that they did that because I learned how to do it manually.

Hassan commented:

If anyone wants to write a paragraph or essay, he has to have the basics. What we have learned here is we have to write introduction, body and conclusion because these are basics to write a paragraph. Of course, writing a body in an essay is different from one teacher to another. Every person has his/her own style. Then, I will provide more details and examples.

Hoor commented:

I took ESL 15 and other writing courses in the language preparation program, which prepare me to write biology lab reports and other research papers. I learned how to write reports, paraphrase and cite correctly.

Writing Center

Some Emirati and Saudi students visited the writing center for help editing their papers.

However, their expectations might not be met, as Khalifah commented:

I go to the writing center to edit my papers. However, the writing center helps me 10%. They ignore some of the mistakes. I have to get an appointment. I have to wait days to get that appointment and get my chance. When I have the appointment, I read the paper loudly. The editor will highlight some mistakes. The editor does not tell us
how to correct the mistakes. I did not like the editor’s way of helping me in my writing because I was my first year in college. It was my first time to write a paper. I did not write more than 300 words. I think if the editor in the writing center explains to me my mistakes, these rules will stick in my mind.”

Hoor expressed her preference to have a native speaker of English edit her papers:

I revise my papers in the writing center which I prefer because the editors are native English speakers”

Sheikha’s worrier for her grades encourages her to visit the writing center:

I go to the writing Centre especially when a paper weight a high grade. In ESL 15 course, I was writing a paper when I was on Facebook and I got A. Now, I got A- for my papers. I have to focus on my writing to get A in this course which is demanding.

Using dictionaries

Emirati and Saudi students use dictionaries for translating the unfamiliar vocabulary.

Hassan described his use of the dictionary:

The dictionary is necessity for me and I think other students as well. For instance, if a word is in Arabic and I want to know it in English, I will translate it.

Khalifah commented:

Oxford Dictionary was my close friend when I am writing to use it for translation from English to Arabic.

Theme 5: Improving Vocabulary

Emirati and Saudi students recognize the importance of vocabulary which is critical to reading success because comprehension improves when the students know what the words mean.

When the students improve their vocabularies, their academic and social confidences and competencies improve.
*Vocabulary Use and Comprehension*

Students expend great effort to learn vocabulary by reading articles relevant in their fields of study or watching movies. However, they still face difficulties expressing ideas succinctly. The students use different strategies for comprehending vocabulary and its use. Regarding vocabulary use, Zayed commented:

In writing, I usually use many words just to explain a meaning of a specific word which I do not know.

Regarding vocabulary comprehension, Zayed commented

While I am reading, I do not use a dictionary. Since I was child, I used to understand the meaning of the new vocabulary from the context.

Zayed added:

Watching a movie is easier because we can understand the meaning of some new vocabulary from body movement.

Regarding vocabulary learning, Zayed commented:

My advisor in the UAE usually sends me some articles related to my major, which updates me with the new information in my major and I learn new vocabulary.

Zayed added:

I watch movies and I learn the vocabularies while I am watching. I read the subtitles.

Hassan commented:

I watch movies. Every night, I have to watch at least one movie to learn more words. I do not like to listen to English songs. I listen to Arabic songs.
Studying Scientific Terminologies

Hoor commented on her teachers’ complicated vocabulary use;

We study the scientific terminologies in detail. However, there are some complicated words which are used by teachers which I do not know the meaning. However, when I try to find the meaning in thesaurus, these words are very simple. I do not know why the teachers use these complicated words.

Unique Way of Learning Vocabulary

Hassan described his unique way of improving his vocabulary:

I am trying to improve my vocabulary. I am using a way to learn vocabulary for a month now approximately. I am trying to write paragraphs which are already written. I use the TOEFL book. I rewrite the paragraphs to learn English. If I did not understand vocabulary in a paragraph, I translate it because I am sure it will come again in the essay. When I read it once and twice, I will memorize it. This is a way I am using for a month now.

Theme 6: The Ease of Presentations and Speaking

Hassan described in detail his past experiences doing several presentations in Saudi Arabian universities; these prepared him adequately for presentation in U.S. universities. He has confidence present papers before an audience, despite grammatical mistakes, which he does not consider a problem. The most important characteristic is to have a good content.

I do presentations. Every semester, students have to do two or three presentations at the IECP. I do not have a problem with doing presentation. When I was in my bachelor’s degree program, I did many presentations. For instance, in my bachelor’s degree, I did two presentations. Of course, it is in front of professors
and they ask questions while I am presenting. In my master’s degree program, each semester, I have to do presentation, I read a research paper and discuss the paper to find out the weakness and strengths in the research paper and discuss them with the professor. Some professors and students attend the discussion. At the end of each semester, we have a progress report for the master’s thesis to report what we have done. At presenting the final results, it is open to the public and some professors from the college or the department or the university, attend the presentation. Al hemdellah, I did not have any issue with doing presentations. My presentation in Saudi Arabian universities during my master’s and bachelor’s degree programs were in Arabic. Here, I have to present in English. The language is different but the basics in giving presentations are similar such as standing in front of people and being confident. It will be no issue even if I make some linguistics mistakes once or twice, it will be no problem. I practice before my presentation. I learned this from my own experience to practice before doing anything.

Khaled expressed ease for communicating with professors in English through speaking with the assistance of body language:

If a professor is in front of me, I can explain to him a little bit what I want to say with some grammatical mistakes, which is acceptable. The professor will still understand me.

Theme 7: Learning Strategies

Hassan learned how to adjust to American life. He commented:

I am alone here. The person learns how to do things by himself. The person does not learn only language. He learns more than that. I am used to the American life. Now, I am learning how to cook.

Khaled expressed his comfort level for discussing regional, cultural, and religious issues. He was trying to teach American students about Islam. He commented:

My presentation was about the discrimination against Muslims.

Khalifah is aware that making mistakes is part of learning. He fought with an Arab student because the student laughed at Khalifah:

If I do not make mistakes, you will not see me here with you studying English. I came here to make mistakes and learn from my mistakes.
Zayed stated that Internet facilitates his study:

I use the Internet to understand some physics and chemistry concepts if I did not understand that from my teacher. Also, I use the Internet to understand, for instance, the American laws because it is different than our laws.”

Hassan stated that reading improves English proficiency:

The reading was two pages and the questions were around four pages. It took me around three days to answer the questions because I did not do it continually. I was reading around two to three hours every day. It was good for learning but the material was higher than the student’s level. But it is good for learning.

Hassan stated that his study skills are similar when studying Arabic and English materials:

I use the same skills in studying Arabic and English. There is nothing new in my way. It is the same way. Nothing has changed.

Khaled prefers to work alone. He stated:

I prefer to present individually because I will choose the topic I want. I will not be responsible for other students’ work if they did not get their part done. I really prefer to work alone. I do not prefer working in a group.

Zayed commented:

I usually prefer to study alone.

Hassan checks his grammatical mistakes in his Arabic writing but he is not comfortable to do that by himself in English:

In my mother language, I might read my writing aloud to check grammatical mistakes; I did not try to read aloud in English to check my grammar.

Hassan noticed that his native language does not influence his English learning:

I do not feel that Arabic has a negative effect on my English learning.
Category 2: Classroom Environment

Theme 8: Classroom Participation and Socialization

The Emirati and Saudi female students expressed their experiences in communicating with their classmates. Influences could include lack of knowledge, class size, or gender.

Hoor commented

When I do not know the answer for a question, I will ask some students next to me in the class but if I know the answer, I will not bother to ask and I will focus to the teacher’s discussion”

Sheikha commented:

My classes are big and include 700 students. I communicate with Gulf region male students rarely for academic help. I do not find any difference to work with American or Gulf region students.

Hassan described his participation experiences in class and emphasized his ignorance of his mistakes. He noticed his native language interferes with his speech;

I do not have a problem in participating. If I make mistakes, I try to repeat and say it again. I have experience of saying some Arabic words instead of English. I did that a lot. During my English speech, suddenly, I say an Arabic word. I think it is normal.

Khalifah expressed his adjustment for participating in class and overcoming shyness:

After two months in the language preparation program, I was trying to decrease my shyness and trying to speak. Then, I started to learn.

Theme 9: Socialization with Americans

Emirati and Saudi students socialize with Americans in their daily lives. These socialization experiences influence the students’ adjustments to American culture. When the
students receive respect from Americans, the students enjoy their residences and school. Positive socialization processes in classrooms transfers to strong relationships outside the classroom. Emirati and Saudi students will ask American students for support, which leads Emirati and Saudi students, prefer to work with Americans.

*Americans’ Respect*

Hassan expressed his fondness for Americans’ morals and respect. He did not experience any kind of discrimination. Hassan commented:

My way of thinking has changed for the better. Honestly, I like the Americans’ ethics such as respecting other people and respecting the system in general. The system is respected everywhere. I mean they respect the person they talk to. They really respect people. There are some exceptions but I did not find rude people at Penn State. I have been here a year and a half and thank God, I did not have any problems with people here. In any place I go, I feel that I am respected. Even in the immigration, I feel respected. They treat us with respect.

*American friends*

Hoor’s adjustment to the American culture was smooth because she had some American friends when she was in private school. She even celebrated American ceremonies. Hoor commented:

I had American friends before I came to the U.S. I know them from when I was in private schools. I saw their pictures and discussed their culture. We used to celebrate Thanksgiving when I was in private school. When I came here, I did not find a big difference.
Sheikha described her adaptation experiences in socializing with American students. She commented:

The first time when I communicated with American students, I felt expatriated but now I am more comfortable to work with American students because I started to understand their communication style. American students considered me shy even though everyone knows that I am not shy.

Classroom socialization strengthens Zayed’s relationship with American students outside the classroom, as he described:

I was walking on campus. Three American girls who were my classmates saw me and said, “Hi,” and asked me about my classes. These students know me because I helped them when they needed some clarifications for some assignments.

Zayed added:

In small classes, we usually communicate with American students and know them well.

The dormitory is a way of strengthening the relationship between Gulf region’s students and American students, as Zayed commented:

Some of my friends told me that if I stayed at the dorm, American students might communicate well with us.

American students’ assistance to Emirati students for writing

Saudi students seek assistance from American students for writing, especially in group work, as Khaled stated:

I have the ideas in Arabic and I do not know how to write them. I try to tell the information to the American student. He does not know Arabic so, it is difficult to deliver the idea to him. I ask help from American students in our group. I tell them that I want to write this and this so, how can I write it? Another option is that I will write it by myself and then ask the American students to edit it.
Writing is a challenge for Emirati and Saudi students, so having American students in their groups provides the Emirati and Saudi students with confidence to complete better work.

Zayed commented:

During this summer, we have American classmates in our group. They wrote the report. We did the presentation. We brought the needed materials.

Preference for Working with Americans (Native Speakers of English)

Emirati and Saudi students expressed their preference for collaborating with American students:

Khaled commented

I prefer to work with American students.

Zayed commented:

I prefer to work with American students because they do their work well. We communicate through e-mails and divide the work. Everyone will do his/ her work which is fair. Some Americans do not want to work but others want to study and do their work.

Theme 10: Teachers’ Socialization and Support

Teachers support the Emirati and Saudi students’ participation, writing papers, and examinations

Khalifah commented:

My teachers were supporting me. They encourage me to be relaxed when speaking.
They told me the important strategy to learn English is continually practicing.

Khalifah expressed his teacher’s understanding of their difficulties:

The teacher was very cooperative and when we have questions, we go to her. The teacher told us that she will help us in our research paper and will give us the main points to focus on.

Hoor commented:

Some classes, the teachers will be available during test time, so we can ask him/her and he/she will explain to us. He/she can remind us of what we have taken and in which section, which is better than the computer-based test, for which we cannot contact the teacher or use Google to search for information or translate some words.

Zayed expressed his comfort level in discussing his difficulties with his teacher:

If I have questions, I will ask my teacher. Sometimes, to prepare for exams, I answer the exam sample and if I have some mistakes, I show it to my teacher for an explanation of my mistakes.

Zayed discovered that American teachers do not discriminate against Arabs, a fear he had when attending American University. He commented:

The teachers are friendly if we are friendly. Although, I expected that some American teachers would discriminate against Arab students, as I heard, but I did not find that.

Emirati female student “Hoor” expressed how her teachers try to facilitate her learning by providing summaries and providing training for some programs. Also, she mentioned the important role of the teaching assistants.

Hoor commented:

Instead of buying books, teachers give us materials, summaries of the important points in the books with some information which the teachers create from different resources. We do not need to read the books. These readings with my notes are important for study.
Hoor added:

My major is biology. I used some database for writing my research. Our teachers teach us how to use these databases and guide us on the process of using the databases. Before using any programs, teachers teach us how to use them. Also, if we find difficulties in using these programs and databases, teaching assistants help us as well. We have to go to the teaching assistants early before the class starts.

Hassan mentioned his experience with the language institute support:

I have only an advisor in the language institute who is responsible for solving the students’ issues. He is responsible for checking the students’ absences. The advisor will send an e-mail to ask the student what the problems he/she faces that makes him absent. From my personal experience of the language institute, the first semester, I had a problem in my country and I went back home. I did not start the semester. I was absent for three weeks. I told the Saudi Arabian Embassy about my situation and I travelled. I stayed three or four weeks in Saudi Arabia and went back. I think I missed more than five weeks. The semester was only 40 classes. Only 20 classes are the limit to be absent in the language institute. I completed the semester and I returned after 20 days. The language institute accepted my situation and I competed the semester. Also, in another semester, I was playing football and I had accident. My leg was broken. I went to the hospital and I was absent for three weeks for a sickness absence. They accepted the situation. They are cooperative if a student is following the rules. If a student is playing and does not come to class, they will expel him. They had already expelled some students because of absence. If a teacher gives a student a warning for a semester and he/she gives him another warning in the following semester, the student will be spelled too. That is evidence that they have rules and they follow these rules.

The Need for Arab teachers

Emirati and Saudi students have different opinions about having Arabs teachers. Some students have good experiences; however, a Saudi student stated his preference for native English speakers in his language preparation program to teach English.

Khalifah commented:

My friends’ advisor in Architecture Engineering was Arab. He helped them many times.
Hoor commented:

We do not have Arabs teachers. I think if we have Arabs teachers, it will be better. They will understand our linguistics difficulties and will try to explain the complex concepts.

Hassan commented:

We do not have Arabs teachers in the language institute. I do not prefer to have Arabs teachers because I want to not to use Arabic any more to learn.

**Category 3: Cultural Adjustment**

**Theme 11: Family support in the U.S.**

The Gulf region supports protecting women. Very few women travel by themselves. Guardians usually travel with Gulf Region women. In the case of Saudi female students, their government obligates them to have dependents such as a father, brother or husband, which pays their language preparation tuitions and living expenses. The UAE government does not obligate female students to have dependents. However, few UAE sponsors pay for husbands only to be guardian for his wife. The participants provided examples of family members’ supporting Emirati and Saudi students’ residing in the U.S. and opinions on the dependents issue.

Hoor commented;

The first time, I came to the language preparation program, my father came with me to settle down. When I came to Penn State University, my mother came with me and stayed two weeks and then she went back to UAE. I have my aunts in California and Ohio. I call them when I need them.

Hoor added:

The husband is the only dependent who can come with a SCO student. If the scholarship provider could offer a dependent for the students like the father or brother, it will be nice. However, I think the expense will increase. That money is
Sheikha commented

ARAMCO did not obligate students to have a dependent like a father. I think there is no need to have dependent. My sister went to Britain and my father was her dependent in name only, but she was alone there. Her scholarship was from the Saudi Higher Education which obligates having a dependent”

Theme 12: Gulf Region Students’ Support

Emirati student “Zayed” prefers to work with particular Emirati students who are dependable. He seeks their support if he does not understand classroom materials.

Zayed commented:

I work with specific Emirati students who I know are active, and they do their work well. I do not work with students who depend on us to do their work.

Zayed added:

Sometimes, if I do not know or understand some points from the class materials, I will ask my Emirati classmates.

Emirati and Saudi students seek help from Gulf region’s senior students who have more experiences in an academic discipline when completing writing assignments. Also, they seek help from students who are at the same level and exchange papers for peer reviews.

Khalifah commented:

When I was in my foundation year, I usually sought help from a Kuwaiti Master’s Student. Once, I had to write a research paper for law class. After I had written the paper, I asked him about how to rewrite some sentences and correct some grammatical mistakes. He is better than American student because I can explain to him my ideas in Arabic. Also, he is my best friend and our relationship is informal. I am more relaxed to discuss my writing difficulties with him. I trust him.

Khaled commented:
I asked my friend to explain to me how to write a chemistry lab report because he took the course before.

Hoor commented:

I have a female friend from the UAE in my major. She was here before me. She helped me in some assignments, which I did not know how to do. We had some classes together. We spent time to study together especially for midterms and finals.”

Hassan commented:

“Al hemdellah . I came here and I have English basics. My language was not that poor. For sure, there are many words I do not understand but I tried to communicate to tell them what I want. I try to ask my Arab friends or Saudi students to tell me how to structure the questions to ask for information.

Hassan commented:

I do not know about any writing center here. I have my peer who is at my level. I gave him my writing to read for me and check it. Especially, I give it to my Saudi roommate to read. When I finish writing my paragraph, I give it to him to read. Also, I have some friends who are Emirati students. Our relationships with the Emirati students are good. They occurred through the language institute. They helped me a lot in reading. We have a teacher who gave us difficult specialized readings and comprehensive questions.

Summary

The aim of this mixed-methods study is to compare Emirati and Saudi students’ academic, cultural, and discipline-related challenges in U.S. universities, their coping strategies to adjust to American universities’ life, and to succeed. A quantitative survey and qualitative interviews of Emirati and Saudi students capture the essence of academic and social experiences that influenced and continue to influence each participant’s academic socialization process and success in U.S. universities.. T-test scores of the Gulf Region students’ surveys show that Emirati and Saudi students felt more comfortable doing small group discussions than large group discussions. The significant findings show that Saudi students felt more comfortable than Emirati
students with reading assignments. Regarding challenges of writing papers, Emirati students indicated that word choice is “somewhat easy”; however, Saudi students stated that word choice is “somewhat difficult.”

This chapter also presents findings of the qualitative study. The categories that are produced from the data are related to academic preparation and literacy; classroom environment; cultural adjustment and gender issues. The emerging themes of the first research question “What academic, cultural, discipline related challenges do Emirati and Saudi students face at U.S. universities?” are: 1) Inadequate Saudi schools’ and universities’ English preparation; 2) Admission requirements’ challenges; 3) Linguistics challenges (writing, reading, presentation, listening, accent, vocabulary, and grammar); 4) Differing classroom expectations; 5) Communication challenges with American students; 6) Arabs’ negative influence on their peers; 7) Cultural and social challenges; 8) Lack of Cultural Knowledge; and 9) Women’s communication challenges with men.

The emerging themes related to the second research question “How do Emirati and Saudi students cope with these academic, cultural, and discipline related challenges to succeed in the U.S. universities?” are: 1) Orientations and preparation programs; 2) Language and Cultural Preparation Programs; 3) Importance of English; 4) Improving writing skills; 5) Improving vocabulary; 6) Ease of doing presentations and speaking; 7) Learning strategies; 8) Family support in the U.S.; 9) Gulf Region students’ support; 10) Classroom participation and socialization; 11) Socialization with Americans; and 12) Teachers’ socialization and support.

Interview findings indicate that Saudi students emphasize the inadequate English language preparation of the Saudi public schools especially the elementary and preparatory schools. Both Saudi and Emirati students indicate their struggles for meeting U.S. universities’
admission requirements. The participants stated that the problem is mostly that language preparation programs do not prepare the students for the admission requirements. Emirati and Saudi students face academic challenges as a result of different educational systems in U.S. universities than those in their native countries. The different expectations from teaching strategies, group socialization, examinations, and grading systems causes difficulties for Emirati and Saudi students in understanding and adapting smoothly to the American educational system. Emirati and Saudi students identified their linguistics challenges in their writing, vocabulary, grammar, reading, listening, and presentations. Among these linguistics difficulties, writing was the most challenging, and Emirati and Saudi students seek to improve. Female Emirati and Saudi students face communication difficulties with male students because they come from a conservative culture. Family, Americans, Gulf Region students and teachers’ support facilitate Emirati and Saudi students’ adjustment to American universities and culture. A discussion of the significance and implications of the findings as well as recommendations for further research are included in Chapter 5 along with essential conclusions of this study and their implications for educational practice.
Chapter 5
Conclusions and Discussion

The purpose of this mixed-method study is to explore academic, cultural, discipline-related challenges Emirati and Saudi students face at U.S. universities and their coping strategies to confront these challenges and succeed. A comparison of results of documented experiences of these students’ academic socialization processes provides further depth. Interviewees’ shared insights, experiences, and suggestions serve as examples for other Emirati and Saudi students who are entering and enrolling in universities in the U.S. Chapter Five contains a summary of this research, discussion, and implications for Emirati and Saudi students, their sponsors, U.S. universities, language preparation programs, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Findings

Two research questions are the foundation for achieving this study’s purpose.

Organization of the summary of the research follows a pattern according to statistical analyses and interview analysis for each question.

Questionnaire Results Related to Research Question 1

What academic, cultural, discipline related challenges do Emirati and Saudi students encounter at U.S. universities?

Five items from the Gulf Region students’ questionnaire examine linguistics, social and cultural challenges:

1) The majority of Emirati students and Saudi students indicated that their linguistics deficits “rarely” prevent them from classroom participation.
2) Emirati students “rarely” feel that native English speaking students are more competent than they are in classes. However, Saudi students “occasionally” feel that native English speaking students are more competent than they are in classes.

3) Emirati and Saudi students are “less comfortable” participating in large group discussions, and “comfortable” participating in small group discussion in classes.

4) Emirati and Saudi students are “less comfortable” completing writing assignments and presentations. Emirati students are “less comfortable” completing reading assignments than are Saudi students.

5) Regarding challenges encountered by Emirati and Saudi Students for writing papers, Emirati students stated that grammar, word choice and sentence construction are “somewhat easy”; however, Saudi students indicated that grammar, word choice and sentence construction are “Somewhat difficult.”

6) Emirati and Saudi students stated that concepts and style are “somewhat easy.” Emirati and Saudi students stated that organization is “easy.”

7) The majority of Emirati and Saudi students indicated that gender is not an issue when collaborating with other students. All are comfortable working with a different gender.

Questionnaire Results Related to Research Question 2

How do Emirati and Saudi students cope with these academic, cultural and discipline-related challenges to succeed in U.S. universities?

Some items from the Gulf Region students’ questionnaire examine Gulf Region students’ support, teachers’ support, improving writing, comfort of discussing cultural knowledge and preference for working as individuals or with American students.
1) Emirati and Saudi students prefer to work with native English speakers for class presentations or writing projects.

2) The majority of Emirati students felt “comfortable” working with students from their home region. However, the majority of Saudi students emphasized that the students’ region is not a factor in choosing partners.

3) The majority of Emirati and Saudi students felt “comfortable” discussing their challenges with their professors.

4) The majority of Emirati students and Saudi students indicated their avoiding of using Arabic as starting point for writing in English.

5) Emirati students and Saudi students attend to both writing style and content for writing.

6) Emirati and Saudi students felt comfortable discussing regional issues in their classes.

7) Emirati and Saudi students emphasized that they are “very comfortable” working independently.

**Interview Results Related to Research Question 1**

*What academic, cultural, discipline-related challenges do Emirati and Saudi students encounter at U.S. universities?*

The major findings related to the first research question examine the efficiency of English preparation programs, admission requirements, cultural and social, and linguistics challenges, communication challenges with American students and Arabs’ negative influence on their peers’ differing expectations for classroom experiences.

1) Saudi public schools and some Saudi universities have not prepared Saudi students adequately to cope with linguistics challenges in U.S. universities.
2) Most Emirati and Saudi students face challenges to achieve U.S. universities’ admission requirements (TOEFLS, IELTS, and GRE) while attending language preparation programs.

3) Giving Saudi female students more freedom to deal with personal life differs from country-of-origins’ traditions.

4) Saudi male student tried to adjust to the challenges of American culture, which requires independence and completing household chores.

5) Emirati and Saudi female students face communication challenges with male classmates.

6) Emirati and Saudi students face challenges because their experiences in the American educational system differs from expectations with regard to teaching strategies, group socialization, examinations, and grading systems.

7) Emirati and Saudi students experienced ignorance from American students and noticed that American students’ prefer to work with American peers.

8) The presence of other Arabs around Emirati and Saudi students decreases opportunities to practice English, especially in a language preparation programs, and if mocking occurs.

9) Writing is the most difficult aspect of linguistic challenges facing Emirati and Saudi students.

10) Linguistics difficulties prevent Emirati and Saudi studies from participating in class.

11) Emirati and Saudi students learned British English in their native countries; therefore, understanding American accent and socializing with Americans are difficult.

**Interview Results Related to Research Question 2**

How do Emirati and Saudi students cope with these academic, cultural, and discipline-related challenges to succeed in U.S. universities?
The major findings relate to the second research question, which examines orientation and language and cultural preparation programs, family’s, American students’ and teachers’ support for Gulf Region students, socialization with Americans, classroom participation, importance of English, improving writing skills and vocabulary, ease of completing presentations and speaking, and learning strategies:

1) Emirati and Saudi students had orientations and preparation programs in their native countries and U.S. universities, which facilities transitions and integration into U.S. college life and culture.

2) Saudi female students had language and cultural preparation program in Saudi Arabia. Some Saudi students changed language preparation programs due to a lack of preparation for admission requirements or preparation for academics in specific disciplines.

3) Having parents accompany female students during the first experience in the U.S. helps accommodation. Also, having dependents with female students smoothes transitions.

4) Emirati and Saudi female students communicate with male students to seek information, but socialization with students in large classes is limited.

5) Saudi students appreciate that Americans respect other people. Positive communication with American classmates strengthens Emirati and Saudi students’ relationships with Americans, which facilitates cooperation and assistance.

6) Emirati and Saudi students seek help from Gulf Region senior students who have greater experience in specific academic disciplines.
7) American teachers support Emirati and Saudi students for participation, writing papers, and examinations.

8) Saudi student indicated the importance of English in reading research papers.

9) Emirati and Saudi students attempt to improve writing by attending more writing courses, visiting writing centers, and using dictionaries.

10) Watching movies and reading articles are strategies Emirati and Saudi students use to increase their vocabularies.

11) Saudi graduate programs adequately prepare students to do presentations, affording confidence for those tasks.

12) An Emirati student stated that the Internet facilitates study.

Discussion

The major findings of this study allow discussion of cultural, language and disciplinary socialization and adjustment.

1) Major findings related to cultural socialization and adjustment

The view that adjustment to a new culture is the product of multiple, interacting factors led to the development of various multi-dimensional models. Rosenthal and Hrynevich (as cited in Kagan and Cohen, 1990) conceptualized multidimensional ethnic identity as involving languages, religion, social activity, maintenance of cultural tradition, family life, and physical characteristics. These multidimensional factors complicate international students’ cultural adjustments.

For instance, an Emirati student, Khaled, tried to defend his religious identity:
“My presentation was about the discrimination against Muslims.” Arabic is Hassan’s native language, a Saudi student, and it is the language of the Holy Quran. Arabic represents his religious and ethnic identity. He emphasized that Arabic does not influence his English learning negatively so using Arabic language with learning English is not a problem: “I did not feel that Arabic has a negative effect on my English learning.” Coming from an extended family, in which all surrounding family members comment on behavior and decisions, is part of the Emirati female student, Hoor’s ethnic identity. She misses her family members whose relationship is tie, common among Emirati extended families and differs from American families: “Even though I have some family members in the U.S. such as my aunts, I still feel expatriated. My relationship with my aunts is not close like my relationship with my mother and sisters.” Hoor’s feeling of expatriation is one of the adjustment challenges that Emirati students face, as indicated in most research devoted to understanding the experiences of international students. The current research indicates that these students often face problems with acculturation, and decreased access to their existing or familiar support systems add to the challenges (Charles-Toussaint and Crowson, 2010; Kagan and Cohen, 1990).

Emirati and Saudi students try to socialize with Americans and adjust to the foreign culture. They try to develop positive attitudes toward hosts/host countries (Noesjirwan, 1978). Hassan, a Saudi student, expressed his positive attitudes toward Americans: “Honestly, I like the Americans’ ethics such as respecting other people and respecting the system in general.” Researchers found several factors that influence the cultural adjustment of international students. The most important factor is social interactions within the host country (Church, 1982). Zayed, an Emirati student, indicated that his socialization with American students in his courses strengthens his relationship with Americans outside the classroom and smoothes his adjustment to the culture: “I was walking on campus. Three American girls who were my classmates saw me
and said, “Hi,” and asked me about my classes. These students know me because I helped them when they needed some clarifications in some assignments.” Zayed’s friend recommended live in a dormitory to allow for more social interaction with Americans. Sheikah, a Saudi female student, emphasized that interaction with Americans decreases the expatriation feeling and facilitates adaptation to the American culture: “The first time when I communicate with American students, I felt expatriated, but now I am more comfortable to work with American students because I started to understand their communication style.”

Several studies on the topic of international students’ cultural adjustments found that through social interaction with hosts, international students have better opportunities to develop skills and behaviors that can assist adjustment to a new cultural environment (Furnham and Bochner, 1986; Shaffer and Harrison, 2001). Hoor’s adjustment experience to the American culture was smooth because she had some American friends when she was in private school. She even celebrated American ceremonies: “I had American friends before I came to the U.S. I knew them when I was in private schools. I saw their pictures and discussed their culture. We used to celebrate Thanksgiving when I was in private school. When I came here, I did not find a big difference.” Kagan and Cohen (1990) found that students who had close American friends were more likely to have an easier shift to the new culture than those without the same relationships.

Students’ experiences in the host country diverge from their own cultures in terms of norms, roles, attitudes, values, and expectations. With host cultures, greater differences expectedly create greater difficulties and stress (Al – Sharideh and Goe, 1998). Zayed, an Emirati student, experienced attitudes different from those in the UAE for group work with American students: “I usually talk while I am working as when I was in the UAE. However, American students only focus on work. They do not like to talk.”
Even though international students might benefit initially from the support of their co-nationals, eventually the international students will need to reduce their interactions and dependence on co-nationals, and increase their interactions with hosts in order to acquire the skills necessary to adjust successfully to a new environment. Restricting interaction with hosts will only inhibit learning the new language, values, and norms of the culture and will reinforce feelings of alienation (Aresberg and Niehoff, 1964; Garraty and Adams, 1959; Gullarhorn and Gullarhorn, 1966; Kang, 1972; Lundstedt, 1963). Essentially, interaction with members outside the co-nationals’ group is important for integration (Kim, 1987). Khaled, a Saudi student, tried to interact with American students in his classes. He even sought assistance from them for group writing assignments. He did not restrict his interaction to co-nationals in order to learn the language and do well in school. Khaled stated: “I have the ideas in Arabic and I do not know how to write them. I try to tell the information to the American student. He does not know Arabic, so it is difficult to deliver the idea to him. I ask help from American students in our group. I tell them that I want to write this and this so, how can I write it? Another option is that I will write it by myself and then ask the American students to edit it.”

Dampening of students’ academic socializations and linguistic and conceptual repertoires has occurred, since international graduate students’ typical training concentrates on English-as-a-second-language for cognitive or academic functions within formal contexts only. They may lack informal, culturally appropriate, social use of the language within the context of American college culture. Language difficulties cause problems to cascade. For instance, informal, casually made remarks, the use of slang and euphemisms, and a lack of English proficiency reduce socio-academic acclimatization, and international students often miss vital information. Zayed, an Emirati student, discussed his difficulty to understand American cultural jokes, thereby
complicating classroom socialization: “Sometimes American students tell jokes in classrooms but we do not understand the jokes because it is cultural. It is like the Emirati cultural jokes, which I understand. There are some issues related to American traditions which I do not understand that complicate understanding the classroom’ discussion.” Moreover, Sheikha, a Saudi student, felt that she alienated from her classmates circle. She loses her feeling of legitimacy in her classes: “When American students tell a joke and laugh, I do not laugh because I do not understand the meaning of the metaphor of the phrases. I do not understand their idioms but now, I understand some of their jokes.” Lacking the cultural knowledge does not affect negatively Emirati and Saudi students’ socialization with American peers, but influences understanding classroom materials or tests questions as Hoor, an Emirati student, faced: “Sometimes, my mistakes in tests resulted from my misunderstanding of the language. If I did not understand a word, I cannot contact with the teacher because the test is controlled by a computer program. American students know most of the words, which I do not understand because the words related to their tradition or history or economy. These words might be important to understand and I got confused. I cannot use a dictionary. This affects negatively my grades.” Moreover, Emirati and Saudi students expressed their comfort levels with sharing their cultural knowledge. Students may view themselves as novices or experts in their social interactions when they display some cultural knowledge (Morita, 2000). The current study shows that Emirati and Saudi students felt both “very comfortable” and “comfortable” when they discuss regional issues in their classes.

Support from co-nationals can help alleviate feelings of homesickness and stress during the adjustment process; at the same time, such associations help international students reaffirm their cultural values, since associates experience essentially the same problems (Bochner, 1981; Furnham and Bochner, 1982; Kim, 1987). According to Giordano and Giordano (1976), ethnicity
fulfills a psychological need for security, identity, and a sense of historical continuity. Co-nationals represent a “low-risk informant” (Adelman, 1988, p. 188) who can offer answers, while reducing the student’s uncertainty for affecting the relationship through the help-seeking process. In other words, international students feel more comfortable asking questions of those felt to be non-judgmental. Hassan, a Saudi student, has his co-national friends from Saudi Arabia and UAE, who support him when he needs them: “Al hemdellah. I came here and I have English basics. My language was not that poor. For sure, there are many words I do not understand but I tried to communicate to tell them what I want. I try to ask my Arab friends or Saudi students to tell me how to structure the questions to ask for information.” Hassan added: “I do not know about any writing center here. I have my Saudi roommate who is at my level. I give him my writing to read for me and check it. When I finish writing my paragraph, I give it to him to read. Also, I have some Emirati students. Our relationships with the Emirati students are good. They are done with the language institute. They helped me a lot in reading.

Kagan and Cohen (1990) asserted that relationships with co-nationals are important to students; however, those relationships might negatively affect cultural adjustment. As Hassan, a Saudi student indicated: “Our problem is here we have many Arabs so we speak Arabic most the time.” Also, Khalifah, a Saudi student, expressed the negative effect of Arabs friends who increase psychological stress and complicate adjustment: “When I made mistakes, Arabs students laugh at me. Therefore, I was shy to talk in the classroom. Once, I had a fight with Arab student because he was laughing at me. I asked him: why are you laughing? He did not give me any response.”

Conservative cultural attitudes lead Gulf region female students to avoid any kind of communication with men. At one time, female and male Emirati and Saudi students studied in separate schools and classes in their native countries. The communication between women and
men is very limited even at work. Moving to American mixed classes triggers communication difficulties, especially for females. The current study shows that gender is not an issue among the majority of Emirati and Saudi students. They are comfortable working with a different gender. The interview findings show that Emirati male students are more comfortable with a different gender than Emirati female students are. Zayed, an Emirati student, commented: “In my classes, I have an Emirati female student who I work with. There are some other Emirati female students who avoid talking with male Emirati or Gulf Region students even if they are in same classes.” Hoor, an Emirati student, stated: “I try to avoid male students in our discussions in our classes. It does not matter if the male students are American or Arabs.”

2) Major Findings Related to Language Socialization and Adjustment

Language socialization is significant theoretical perspective for the current research that describes the use of language to mediate social interaction in academics (e.g., Bizzell, 1992; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1998; Lave and Wenger, 1991, 1998). Khaled, an Emirati student, expressed his use of body language with words to communicate with his professor: “If a professor is in front of me, I can explain to him a little bit what I want to say with some grammatical mistakes, which is acceptable. The professor will still understand me.”

Socialization occurs when bilingual or multilingual students learn the language of academia through their interaction with students more proficient in the language and who have more cultural knowledge of the target academic communities’ capabilities for mentoring or learning appropriate uses of language, ideologies, values, and identities of community members (Duff, in press). Current study shows that the majority of Emirati and Saudi students prefer to work with English native speakers for class presentations or writing projects. Zayed, an Emirati student, did his work with American students who are proficient in English, so the writing part
was their responsibility. He stated: “During this summer, we have American classmates in our
group. They wrote the report. We did the presentation. We brought the needed materials. ”

Researchers found several factors that influence the cultural adjustment of international
students. Some of these factors are language differences and skills (Klineberg and Hull, 1979).
A Saudi student, Khalifah, indicated his experience with silence upon arriving in the U.S.
language preparation program due to language differences. He is fluent in his native language
“Arabic” and trying to improve his English proficiency. Adjustment required time to adopt the
speaking language: “At the beginning, I was silent in the classroom in the language preparation
program. I was afraid to talk. My linguistic ability was zero. I was shy, afraid to talk and make
mistakes because others may laugh.” However, the survey results indicate that the majority of
Emirati students and Saudi students stated that their linguistic deficits “rarely” prevent them
from classroom participation. Hoor, an Emirati female student emphasized that language
difference is a challenge and suggested having Arabs teachers in American universities, which
will facilitate their learning because Arabs teachers will understand Arabs students and their
linguistics difficulties: “We do not have Arabs teachers. I think if we have Arabs teachers, it will
be better. They will understand our linguistic difficulties and will try to explain the complex
concepts.”

Yang and Clum (1994) stated that among many factors that affect international students’
adjustments, language proficiency is the most important detriment. Barrat and Huba (as cited in
Malkinckrodt et al., 2008) found that a high level of language proficiency leads to international
students’ academic success and adjustment to the host culture. This proficiency enhances
international students’ performances in classes and feelings of comfort when participating in
discussions. As Zayed, an Emirati student indicated, his high English language proficiency
facilitated his academic success in engineering studies in Pennsylvania State University as a result of good preparation in the UAE higher technology school.

The literature suggested some dimensions and variables that influence international students’ adjustment problems. Notably, perhaps, of the most important are language difficulties (Klineberg and Hull, 1979). The current study shows some contradictions in the Emirati and Saudi students’ responses. The survey results indicated that the majority of Emirati students and Saudi students stated that their linguistics deficits “rarely” prevent them from classroom participation. However, some Emirati and Saudi interviewees expressed their linguistic challenges in their writing, reading, listening, and presentations that affect their language socialization process in their classrooms. English vocabulary and grammar are linguistics aspects which Emirati and Saudi students emphasized as creating difficulties. Emirati student “Zayed” expressed his difficulty in understanding American accents, and some Saudi students’ claimed linguistic difficulties prevent them from participating in class. As Khalifah commented: “At the beginning, I was silent in the classroom in the language preparation program. I was afraid to talk. My linguistics ability was zero. I was shy, afraid to talk and make mistakes because others may laugh.”

Emirati and Saudi students indicate that they are “less comfortable” in doing writing assignments and presentations. Emirati students are “less comfortable” with reading assignments than Saudi students. Emirati and Saudi students have different opinions regarding writing difficulties. Khaled, an Emirati student, stated: “I am worried a lot because writing is not easy. Writing is very difficult for us.” However, Sheikha, a Saudi student, expressed the easiness of her writing assignments; “Today, I had submitted a report for my class. It was easy. It had two tables and was reporting results of our project. I enjoy doing reports more than just essays.”
These different opinions of writing difficulties result from students’ different linguistic proficiencies and language preparation programs. Sheikha, had a good preparation program at ARAMCO and her parents’ English preparation in her early years prepared her for academic writing. However, Khaled’s public schools did not prepare him for sophisticated academic writing in English.

Several studies attempted to investigate the academic and social processes international students’ undergo to succeed in their academic disciplines. In the study of academic literacy socialization, scholars examined the rhetorical and linguistic continuum in acquisition of academic English writing skills (e.g. Brett, 1994; Swales, 1990). Hoor, an Emirati student, expressed her experience of learning to write biology lab reports that are required in her academic community: “I took ESL 15 and other writing courses in the language preparation program which prepared me to write biology lab reports and other research papers. I learned how to write reports, paraphrase, and cite correctly.” Hoor, an Emirati student, also learned specific skills to use particular databases for writing research papers: “My major is biology. I used some databases for writing my research. Our teachers teach us how to use these databases and guide us on the process of using the databases. Before using any program, teachers teach us how to use them. Also, if we find difficulties in using these programs and databases, teaching assistants help us as well. We have to go to the teaching assistants early before the class starts.”

Lea and Street (2000) identified three models according to three contexts of literacy socialization in higher education research: study skills, academic socialization, and academic literacy. The study skills model represents the autonomous literacy perspective that emphasizes writing skills and knowledge isolated from any particular context. The study skills’ view focuses on the mechanical characteristics of language (e.g., grammar and spelling) and the significance
of teaching these skills outside any specific context. Based on the model of these skills, teachers’ instruction encourages students to focus on the technical aspects of writing, which Emirati and Saudi students used to focus on for their English learning. Regarding challenges encountered by Emirati and Saudi Students in writing papers, the current study shows that Emirati students stated that grammar, word choice and sentence construction are “somewhat easy”; however, Saudi students indicated that grammar, word choice and sentence construction are “Somewhat difficult.” Emirati and Saudi students still face difficulties using appropriate grammar or word, as Zayed, an Emirati student, stated: “Most Arabs students are told that we do not have vocabulary or grammar. For me, grammar is okay but my difficulty is how to choose the appropriate word for a sentence.” Moreover, Hoor, a female Emirati student, expressed her worry for grammatical mistakes, which she tries to correct: “When I write my reports, I have to reread my report again because I am sure I will have some grammatical mistakes because English is not my first language. I used to write immediately without revision. At the end, I try to edit the paper, which takes double the time of writing the report itself because while I am editing I feel that some new ideas come up so I want to add them but I do not know how to add them. This process takes time from me.” This model accrued criticism from its lack of addressing the needs and expectations of students who have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and the contexts brought to learning reading and writing skills. This criticism led some scholars to investigate the perspective that learning academic writing is a process of academic socialization that includes more than just learning the technical aspects of writing. Negotiation of meaning and students’ enculturation into new discourses and discourse practices is the focus of the academic socialization model; therefore, the context is significant for acquiring literacy. Zayed, an Emirati student, emphasized the significance of the context to comprehend vocabulary: “While I am reading, I do not use
dictionary. Since I was child, I used to understand the meaning of the new vocabulary from the context.” Zayed identified movies, with particular contexts, for learning vocabulary: “Watching a movie is easier because we can understand the meaning of some new vocabulary from the body movement.” Zayed added: “I watch movies and I learn the vocabularies while I am watching. I read the subtitles.” Also, Hassan, a Saudi student, uses movies’ contexts to learn English vocabulary: “I watch movies. Every night, I have to watch at least one movie to learn more words.”

3) Major Findings Related to Disciplinary Socialization and Adjustment

Disciplinary socialization is another area important for the current research. International students transition through different socialization processes in U.S. universities, and especially within their academic disciples; these are organizational and disciplinary socialization processes. Van Maanen and Schein (1979) described organizational socialization as “the process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role” (p. 211). Consequently, graduate students acquire skills and knowledge necessary for entrance to, and success in, a professional milieu.

Students matriculate with pre-entry attributes, such as grades from secondary school and TOEFL scores. According to one study, success and retention of international students begins with admitting academically appropriate students and those with appropriate English language skills (Byrd, 1991). Emirati and Saudi students try to meet the TOELF, IELTS, and GRE requirements to gain admission to U.S. universities, but some struggle to meet the required scores. Hassan, a Saudi student, expressed his challenge: “Al hemdellah, there are no challenges until now. The only difficulty I face now is the TOEFL test. It is the only difficulty I face now.
The time left for me is until the end of this year. It is the final. I have to bring the TOEFL score or I have to go back to Saudi Arabia.” Most Emirati and Saudi students attend language preparation programs to prepare for admission requirements. However, the language preparation program did not meet their expectation as Hassan, a Saudi student, commented: “The Intensive English Communication Program at Penn State University does not focus on preparing us for TOEFL or IELTS or GRE. During Levels 4 and 3, they start to prepare the students for the TOEFL. That means they will not teach the student only the TOEFL. But, they teach them how to do in the TOEFL. For example, the teacher explains on the board, he/she will say this point is one of the TOEFL questions. We do practice; the teacher brings something from outside, not from the required curriculum. Here, I see their preparation for the TOEFL is good.”

Continuous orientation sessions are essential to facilitate the students’ socialization in their academic communities (Gardner, 2010). Emirati students’ sponsors realize the significance of the orientations for their students. Hoor, an Emirati student, stated: “We had orientations for six weeks which were langue and cultural preparation. We had courses that discuss America in general such as the culture, policy, etc.” Also, American universities pay attention to the importance of orientations as Hoor experienced at Penn State University: “I had orientations for a week when I came to Penn State. They explain to us how to open a bank account, rent a place, how to use the library, academic integrity, health insurance, etc. Everything was organized. It was helpful for the students.”

Holmes (2005) said that “inadequate language skills have been found to mask other problems stemming from other causes such as lack of familiarity with a new educational and social environment, and with a new culture and its associated cultural norms and behavior” (p. 294). Khalifa, a Saudi student, expressed his shock and his lack of familiarity with the American
educational system: “I was shocked because I did not have any background about the U.S. universities and their teaching methodologies.” Khaled, an Emirati student, spends hours in studying every detail in his textbook because he did not go through the American educational system gain expectations for his studies: “The good thing with American students which I could not figure it out until today is that American students know what the professor wants. They know what is important and what is not important. They know that the professor wants us to focus on this point and they know that the professor does not care about this point. I do not know that so, I focus on everything. The American students spend two to three hours on a task, but I usually spend almost five to six hours on the same task. I tend to focus on all the points because I do not know what exactly is important.”

Teaching in the educational programs of U.S. institutions may focus on skills, the pragmatic application of learning, an expectation perhaps new to the Gulf region students since most studies in their native countries predominantly require memorization (Bourdieu, 1988). Hoor, an Emirati student, memorized direct information to be tested: “My major is biology. In the exam, the teachers’ test questions related to real life, which are practical. Some classes, teachers explain to us the test questions in advance so I understand the questions types of the exam. Other teachers do not tell us the questions types, which makes our tests more difficult. Some teachers give us samples of the test questions to practice, which I like.” Students learn professors’ norms, expectations, and the standards of the discipline and for the academic career (Tierney and Rhoads, 1993). However, Khalifah, a Saudi student, did not expect the different teaching methodology of his teachers in U.S. universities. He did not adjust to the new teaching methodology: “The teachers gave us only the main points and we have to read in details and understand the materials.” Also, Khaled, an Emirati student, expected that his teachers will guide
him in writing his report: “I have to write an individual report in chemistry lab. Teachers do not teach you how to write a report. They give us the topic of the report.”

Support was one of the four issues, which doctoral students addressed in a study of understanding their disciplinary context and cultural impact on their socialization and attrition at one institution (Gardner, 2010). Khalifah, a Saudi student, expressed his teachers’ support: “My teachers were supporting me. They encourage me to be relaxed to speak. They told me the important strategy to learn English is continually practicing.” He expressed his teacher’s understanding of the students’ difficulties: “The teacher was very cooperative and when we have questions, we go to her. The teacher told us that she will help us in our research paper and will give us the main points to focus on.” Hoor, an Emirati female student, also described her teachers’ support: “Some classes, the teachers will be available in the test time so, we can ask him/her and he/she will explain to us. He/she can remind us of what we have taken and in which section, which is better than the computer based test which we cannot contact the teacher or use Google to search for information or translate some words.” Zayed, an Emirati student, expressed his comfort level in discussing his difficulties with his teacher: “If I have questions, I will ask my teacher. Sometimes, to prepare for exams, I answer the exam sample and if I have some mistakes, I show it to my teacher to explain my mistakes.” Supporting the Emirati and Saudi student in their disciplines facilitates their socialization in their academic community. Students, exposed to particular academic skills and expectations, initiate their preparation for intellectual work. Through the socialization process, students attempt to engage the academic community and interact with the professors and students in their disciplines. Students attempt to inculcate the values, expectations, and attitudes of their colleagues and the discipline’s culture by communicating with its members (Corcoran and Clark, 1984; Staton and Darling, 1989; Van Maanen, 1976). In nuclear engineering, group work is expected to begin with individual work, then combine the final product, as Zayed, an Emirati
student, learned: “I prefer to work with American students because they do their work well. We communicate through e-mails and divide the work. Everyone will do his/ her work, which is fair. Some Americans do not want to work, but others want to study and do their work.”

Institutions of higher education have offered a wide variety of academic services for international students and English language learners including formal classroom instruction to support the processes of language acquisition. For instance, Khaled, an Emirati student, took various English preparation classes at Penn State, ESL 15, English 202, which is for Engineering students, and CAS 100 A that focus on speaking and presentation. He is also planning to take CAS 202 C that focuses on writing in his last year.

The Parikh (2008) study found that international students greater engagement with activities positively correlates to GPA, library and computer use, reading unassigned material, hours in academic work, use of scientific methods, and experimentation. For instance, Zayed, an Emirati student, is trying to develop his language by reading unassigned materials. He stated: “My advisor in the UAE usually sends me some articles related to my major, this updates me with the new information in my major and I learn new vocabulary.”

Some second language socialization studies investigated elementary, secondary, and post-secondary students’ socialization processes in different contexts such as Canada. Other studies focused on immigrants’ interactive challenges in elementary, secondary, and post-secondary classrooms in the U.S and Canada (Duff, 2002; Harklau, 2003; Kobayashi, 2003; Norton, 1995, 1997, 2000; Norton and Toohey, 2001; Morita, 2000, 2004; Toohey, 1998). These studies showed the significance of second language speaking and writing strategies, scaffolding, and peer feedback in new academic communities. Khalifah, a Saudi student, seeks his friend’s feedback on his papers: “When I was in my foundation year, I usually seek help from a Kuwaiti master’s student. Once, I had to write a research paper for law class. After I had written the paper, I
asked him about how to rewrite some sentences and correct some grammatical mistakes.” Khaled, an Emirati student, also seek his friend’s assistance in writing his reports: “I asked my friend to explain to me how to write a chemistry lab report because he took the course before.” Sfrad, (1998) indicates that the narratives of second language learners emphasize the significance of participation in new communities and exemplifies the ongoing difficulties these learners face. For instance, Hassan, a Saudi student, expressed his effort to participate even with mistakes: “I do not have a problem in participating. If I make mistakes, I try to repeat and say it again.”

4) Major Findings Related to Gender Issues

The majority of Emirati and Saudi students indicated that gender is not an issue when collaborating with other students. All students are comfortable working with a different gander. However, Emirati female students expressed their uncomfor ted working with male students as Hoor stated; “I try to avoid male students in our discussions in our classes. We have an Emirati association at Penn State University. Female Emirati students do not want to be members because they do not want to mix with the male Emirati students.”

Implications for Emirati and Saudi Students, their Sponsors, U.S. Universities and their Language Preparation Programs Providers

The implications offered in this chapter emerge from, and respond to, the students’ data discussed in Chapter 4. Higher education administrators are constantly seeking ways to boost the retention rates for all students, but especially Emirati and Saudi students who are mostly from minority populations. The assumption is that these implications provide suggestions for U.S.
universities and Emirati and Saudi students’ sponsors to better support Emirati and Saudi students as they navigate college.

The challenges interviewees faced may differ from those of others with similar characteristics, just as the most useful support services may be different. Nevertheless, the results of this study remain useful to university administrators. The findings may influence the daily practice of those professionals who serve these populations. College education administrators and policy makers at government levels have the responsibility for initiating ways and means that help Emirati and Saudi students master skills of academic socialization that they need for success in college.

Institutions for higher learning must establish environments, which allow Emirati and Saudi students to become comfortable and engender a sense of belonging upon arrival at U.S. universities. In addition, an organized, structured session with Emirati and Saudi students should provide information that outlines the specific services available to international students such as writing centers and learning centers, libraries, etc. Emirati and Saudi students should be encouraged to take advantage of success enhancing services.

Emirati and Saudi students should adopt involvement in college exploration and selection processes to become more comfortable with their transitions to college. With this kind of atmosphere, institutions can address particular challenges arising from students’ backgrounds.

Study findings have several implications specifically for Emirati and Saudi students, their sponsors, U.S. universities and their language preparation programs. First, Emirati and Saudi students need more coursework in academic writing to prepare them for their academic writing in their disciplines. Emirati and Saudi students in the language preparation program and U.S. universities should be aware that making mistakes is part of their learning. They should try to
participate in the classroom. Second, Emirati and Saudi Students’ sponsors should prepare their students for the admission requirements before students arrive in the U.S. Sponsors should send their students who have gained admission to start their study. This way, sponsors will not spend money on students who might not go to universities, and reduce the pressure on the students who spend one or two years in the language preparation programs while struggling with admission requirements especially for students who resigned from occupations and left families just to travel to continue their studies in the U.S. Moreover, Emirati and Saudi students’ sponsors should prepare students for American culture and U.S. universities to enhance success academically and socially. Sponsors should prepare students to learn new skills and adjust to the educational system of the American universities, which is different from that in their native countries. In addition, Emirati and Saudi students’ sponsors could offer female students the opportunity for their dependents to accompany by paying living expenses to facilitate settlement in the U.S. Third, the language preparation programs should understand that most Emirati and Saudi students come to the programs mostly for admission requirements’ preparation (e.g., TOELF, IELTS, GRE, etc.) If the language preparation programs do not modify their curricula to meet the needs of the students, many students will leave the programs and students’ absence rates will be higher. Pennsylvania State University needs to have a center for IELTS, TOEFL and GRE tests because it has Intensive English Communication Program, which many students attend annually. The students waste time and effort traveling to other universities in other cities for testing. U.S. universities need to hire more Arab professors and teaching assistants to support the Emirati and Saudi students in their studies because they will understand the language and culture. Also, these Arab teachers will help Emirati and Saudi students attain admission because of the common interest. For instance, in the Applied Linguistic Department, with more
Arab teachers, more Arabs students will be accepted in the program because the teachers will be interested in doing research related to Arabic language. U.S. universities could hire teaching assistants who help students to prepare written papers. Additionally, U.S. universities need to increase the visiting hours of writing centers and design more workshops that teach the students about writing in various genres.

**Future Research**

Future studies should take in consideration study design to broaden the sample size to include a control group, address the limitations of the current methodology, and incorporate implications for Emirati and Saudi students’ sponsors and U.S. universities administrators. In this section the researcher reflects on the methods used to collect information to answer the research questions posed in the study. The qualitative component of the study was especially valuable in adding depth and enabling the research to develop a greater understanding regarding issues related to the Emirati and Saudi students’ transition into the higher education system in the U.S. The interviews enabled the researcher to further clarify the responses from the quantitative component of the study and to more fully understand the complexities of the issues the students encountered and the strategies they used to address and cope with the issues encountered. From that perspective there was a basic form of verification across methodologies and a basic form of triangulation.

Although there were only six (6) in-depth interviews, the researcher did reach a point of saturation. In other words the researcher heard similar content type responses after four in-depth interviews. There is differing opinion regarding how many people represent a fair sample size for qualitative data collection. Morse (1994) suggests a minimum of six whereas DePaulo
(2000) suggests 30 as a starting point. There is no magic number; however, the researcher believes the main perceptions were captured and thus is satisfied that there are no major problems with “discovery error” as described by DePaulo (2000). It is important to mention that it would be worthwhile in future research to conduct multiple interviews (a minimum of two and perhaps ideally three) with each interviewee over an extended period of time. This would enable the researcher to develop a more complete description of the student experiences and to examine the value or success of the coping strategies used by the Emirati and Saudi students. Another reason that guarantees saturation is using more than one method of data collection and using in-depth interviews with the same participant (Lee, Woo and Mackenzie, 2002). In addition, conducting longitudinal case study to follow Emirati and Saudi students when they have arrived U.S. universities for their language preparation program until their graduation will be beneficial for future research.

Regarding the survey instrument, some options of the Likert-scales responses need to be revised. For instance, the question seeking Emirati and Saudi students’ preference for working with native English speakers in doing class presentation or writing project, the options should be revised to be at the same level of comfort. That is, there should be a balance in the number of comfortable or uncomfortable descriptors. Moreover, by removing the “neutral” option from the Likert-scales, respondents would have had to make a judgment instead of selecting the middle ground. Also, one item regarding Emirati and Saudi students’ comfort level with working with different genders was intended; however, the question was worded questioning their comfort level for working with the same gender. This question needs to be changed. Additionally the survey needs to be further validated it for future research.
Study Design

This study paves the way for further research and structural changes to the manner in which institutions of higher education serve this population of students for academic socialization and adjustment to the American culture and U.S. universities. Furthermore, an increased sample size would accommodate a larger number of Emirati and Saudi students. For further research, a broader sample would include a control group of Emirati and Saudi students who have been students at universities in the U.K. That would show any differing perceptions of students’ experiences in comparison to those in U.S. universities. Future studies of college preparation programs could enhance the literature related to students’ academic socialization and adjustment. Furthermore, future studies could consider students from different disciplines to capture challenges related to different areas of study.

A clear need exists for more initiatives designed to assist Emirati and Saudi students. The American nation’s economy is changing and the number of minorities is expanding; an imperative exists for universities and colleges to prepare for diverse student populations (Keller, 2002). Therefore, research needs to consider universities’ and colleges’ initiation of best practices and strategies to begin significant improvements in academic socialization and adjustment of Emirati and Saudi students.

Addressing Limitations of the Current Methodology

The current methodology, although sufficient for collecting and analyzing the data to answer the questions, could gain enrichment from other forms of data analysis.
Two types of data analysis methodologies might produce different results and significances to the sample. For example, a procedure known as the Analysis of Variance or ANOVA tests the hypothesis that the means among two or more groups are equal, under the assumption that the sampled populations are normally distributed. This data analysis procedure could be useful for future academic socialization studies. In addition, future studies can also consider using correlation efficiency as a method for data analysis. Variables arranged in a matrix provide a way of easily comparing correlations. The correlation matrix is basic to many kinds of analysis and contains much useful insight through offering offer the degree and direction (sign) of the correlation between the row and column variables, among other aspects.
References


Appendix A
Date: August 22, 2011
From: Joyel D. Moeller, Compliance Coordinator
To: Ghadah H. Al Morshedi

Subject: Results of Review of Proposal - Expedited (IRB #36503)

Approval Expiration Date: May 3, 2012

“A Comparative Study of Academic Literacy Socialization of Gulf Region Students in U.S. Universities”

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed and approved your proposal for use of human participants in your research. By accepting this decision, you agree to obtain prior approval from the IRB for any changes to your study. Unanticipated participant events that are encountered during the conduct of this research must be reported in a timely fashion.

Attached is/are the dated, IRB-approved informed consent(s) to be used when recruiting participants for this research. Participants must receive a copy of the approved informed consent form to keep for their records.

If signed consent is obtained, the principal investigator is expected to maintain the original signed consent forms along with the IRB research records for this research at least three (3) years after termination of IRB approval. For projects that involve protected health information (PHI) and are regulated by HIPAA, records are to be maintained for six (6) years. The principal investigator must determine and adhere to additional requirements established by the FDA and any outside sponsors.

If this study will extend beyond the above noted approval expiration date, the principal investigator must submit a completed Continuing Progress Report to the Office for Research Protections (ORP) to request renewed approval for this research.
On behalf of the IRB and the University, thank you for your efforts to conduct your research in compliance with the federal regulations that have been established for the protection of human participants.

**Please Note:** The ORP encourages you to subscribe to the ORP listserv for protocol and research-related information. Send a blank email to: L-ORP-Research-L-subscribe-request@lists.psu.edu

JDM/jdm

Attachment

cc: Ladislaus M. Semali

Appendix B
Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research: Interviews
The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: A Comparative Study of Academic Socialization of Gulf Region Students in U.S. Universities

Principal Investigator: Ghadah Al Morshed
Penn State University Park
(626) 283 9318

Advisor: Dr. Ladislaus Semali
307 Keller Building The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, PA 16802
Phone: (814) 865-2246

1. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research is to understand students’ experiences, among those who come from the Gulf-regions and go through academic socialization in U.S. universities and use newly gained knowledge to support their graduate studies. More specifically, the purpose of this study is to understand the ways “newcomers” from Gulf States acquire new sets of textual practices and socialize into their discourse communities or disciplines in the context of higher education.

2. Procedures to be followed: I will be recording your conversation and discussion during the interview. I will audio and video tape the interview so that I can review and listen/watch your discussion more closely as I transcribe it.

3. Duration/Time: The session will take approximately 40 minutes.

4. Discomforts and Risks: There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. Some of the questions are personal and might cause discomfort.

5. Benefits: This study will provide some baseline information to society regarding the literacy socialization of Gulf students into U.S universities. The results should be especially valuable for personnel working in international programs’ offices in U.S institutions.

6. Statement of Confidentiality: Your participation in this research is confidential. The Pennsylvania State University’s Office for Research Protections and Institutional Review Board, and the Office for Human Research Protections in the Department of Health and Human Services may review records related to this project. The data/recordings will be secured in locked container in a private location. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared. I will only refer to the narratives as: Emirati student or Omani student, and will not include any other identifying information when I publish my results.

ORP OFFICE USE ONLY
DO NOT REMOVE OR MODIFY THIS BOX
IRB# 36503 Doc. #1001
The Pennsylvania State University
Institutional Review Board
Office for Research Protections
Approval Date: 08-22-2011 JDM
Expiration Date: 05-03-2012 JDM
No one but myself and my advisor will have access to the data/recordings. The recordings will be destroyed in 2015.

7. **Right to Ask Questions:** Please contact Ghadah Al Morshedi at (626)2839318 or Dr. Ladislaus Semali at (814) 865-2246 with questions, complaints or concerns about this research. You can also call this number if you feel this study has harmed you. If you have any questions, concerns, or problems about your rights as a research participant or would like to offer input, please contact The Pennsylvania State University’s Office for Research Protections (ORP) at (814) 865-1775. The ORP cannot answer questions about research procedures. Questions about research procedures can be answered by the research team.

8. **Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Refusal to take part in or withdraw from this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits you would receive otherwise.

You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to take part in this research study. If you agree to take part in this research study and the information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

________________________________________________________________________  
Participant Signature                         Date

________________________________________________________________________  
Person Obtaining Consent                    Date

---

**Appendix C**

Interview questions
1- Name: 

gender: 

2- Country: 

3- Major: (specify: Undergraduate or Master or Ph.D. Student) 

4- Do you feel that your high school or undergraduate degree in your native country have prepared you adequately to adjust to the American Educational system? (e.g., writing academic papers, reading critically, speaking fluently with professors and classmates, etc.)? Why? 

5- Have you taken any language preparation program? Was it useful? 

6- Do you feel that the English language could be a problem in understanding the content and concepts in your discipline or doing presentation or participation in classroom? How? 

7- Is writing papers difficult for you? Do you start with Arabic in your writing? Do you use dictionaries? Do you visit the writing center or obtain any other assistance with your writing? 

8- Do you feel comfortable working with the different gender or you prefer to work with native English speakers when doing class presentations or writing projects, or prefers working independently? 

9- Do you feel comfortable discussing with your professors your academic difficulties and challenges in your classes? 

10- Do you think senior students from your country should provide you with mentorship? (e.g. course assignments, literature reviews, etc.) 
Please explain why. 

11- In your university, do you have Arabs or Gulf-region professors and do you wish to have them?
Appendix D: Recruitment Letter for Emirati and Saudi Students

Dear (Name of participant),

Hello. I am a Ph.D. candidate in Curriculum and Instruction in the specialty area of Language, Culture, and Society programs with a duel title in the Comparative and International at the Pennsylvania State University. I am writing today to invite you to participate in my doctoral dissertation research concerning the academic literacy socialization process of Gulf-region students in U.S. universities. The main purpose of this study is to explore the social and academic socialization processes of the Gulf-region students as they acculturate into new academic literacy environments. For understanding the experiences of Gulf-region students like yourself in academia and to make your journey more valuable, your perspectives on involvement in various academic literacy activities your classes are highly important for the purpose of my study.

The research methodology that I will employ will be series of interviews, via face-to-face interaction, with video recording. Also, a survey will be sent to you through e-mail. The duration of my data collection is the Fall 2011 semester and with your permission, I am hoping to e-mail you the survey and interview you once. Enclosed please find a more detailed description of my study and an informed consent document.

Gulf-region students in academic discourse in U.S. universities experience a lengthy process for adapting to reading, speaking and writing in a western academic environment and its associated socio-cultural dimensions. The vernacular literacy practices that you bring with you are valuable and important parts of your academic identity. These tensions and adaptation processes during your academic socialization can be rich resources, and these resources can serve you to become creative constructors of knowledge in this new academic community in which you participate. With this study, I would like to explore these issues with you. Not only am I hoping to contribute to the L2 academic literacy field, but I also hope to assist you during your academic program’s experience.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. Should you have further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at gha106@psu.edu by email or 6262839318 by phone.

I am looking forward to working with you, Sincerely, Ghadah Al Morshed
Appendix E

Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research: Survey

The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: A Comparative Study of Academic Socialization of Gulf Region Students in U.S. Universities

Principal Investigator: Ghadah Al Morshedi
Penn State University Park
(626) 283 9318

Advisor: Dr. Ladislaus Semali
307 Keller Building  Penn State University Park
Phone: (814) 865-2246

1. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research is to understand the experiences of students, who come from the Gulf-regions and go through academic socialization in U.S. universities and to use newly gained knowledge to support their graduate studies. More specifically, the purpose of this study is to understand the ways “newcomers” from Gulf States acquire new sets of textual practices and socialize into their discourse communities or disciplines in the context of higher education.

2. Procedures to be followed: A survey will be sent to your e-mail.

3. Duration/Time: The survey will take approximately 10 minutes.

4. Discomforts and Risks: There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. Some of the questions are personal and might cause discomfort.

5. Benefits: This study will provide some baseline information to society regarding the literacy socialization of Gulf-region students into U.S universities. The results should be especially valuable for personnel working in international programs’ offices in U.S institutions.

6. Statement of Confidentiality: Your participation in this research is confidential. Your confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. No guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by third parties. The Pennsylvania State University’s Office for Research Protections and Institutional Review Board, and the Office for Human Research Protections in the Department of Health and Human Services may review records related to this project. The data/recordings will be stored and secured in locked container. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared. I will only refer to the narratives as: Emirati student or Omani student, and will not include any other identifying information when I publish my results. No one but myself and my advisor will have access to the data/recordings. The recordings will be destroyed in 2015.

7. Right to Ask Questions: Please contact Ghadah Al Morshedi at (626)2839318 or Dr. Ladislaus Semali at (814) 865-2246 with questions, complaints or concerns about this research. You can also
call this number if you feel this study has harmed you. If you have any questions, concerns, or problems about your rights as a research participant or would like to offer input, please contact The Pennsylvania State University’s Office for Research Protections (ORP) at (814) 865-1775. The ORP cannot answer questions about research procedures. Questions about research procedures can be answered by the research team.

8. Voluntary Participation: Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Refusal to take part in or withdraw from this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits you would receive otherwise.

You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to take part in this research. If you agree to take part in this research and the information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

Completion and return of the survey is considered your implied consent to participate in the described procedures of this study. Please keep this form for your records.

ORP OFFICE USE ONLY – DO NOT REMOVE OR MODIFY: This informed consent form (Doc.# 1002) was reviewed and approved by The Pennsylvania State University’s Office for Research Protections (IRB# 36503) on 08-22-2011. It will expire on 05-03-2012. (JDM)
Appendix F

Survey questions

Q1. Country

- [ ] Saudi Arabia
- [x] UAE

Q2. Gender

- [ ] Male
- [x] Female

Q3. Number of years in the United States

- [ ] 1-2
- [ ] 2-3
- [ ] 3-4
- [x] 4-5
- [ ] 5-6
- [ ] More than 6 years

Q4. Other languages you speak other than Arabic

- [ ] English
- [ ] Urdu
- [ ] Others

Q5. To what extent do you feel comfortable discussing topics about your region of origin in your classes?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Comfortable</th>
<th>Comfortable</th>
<th>Less Comfortable</th>
<th>Uncomfortable</th>
<th>It does not matter</th>
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<tr>
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<td>[x]</td>
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</table>

Q6. I feel more comfortable working with students from the same region I am from

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<tr>
<th>Very Comfortable</th>
<th>Comfortable</th>
<th>Less comfortable</th>
<th>Uncomfortable</th>
<th>It does not matter</th>
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<tr>
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</table>

Q7. I feel most comfortable working with my same gender.

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<th>Very Comfortable</th>
<th>Comfortable</th>
<th>Less comfortable</th>
<th>Uncomfortable</th>
<th>It does not matter</th>
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Q8. Do you feel comfortable discussing with your professors your academic difficulties or challenges in your classes?

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<th>Very comfortable</th>
<th>Comfortable</th>
<th>Less comfortable</th>
<th>Uncomfortable</th>
<th>It does not matter</th>
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Q9. Do you prefer to work with native English speakers in doing class presentation or writing project?

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<tr>
<th>More preferable</th>
<th>Preferable</th>
<th>Less preferable</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>It does not matter</th>
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<td>[ ]</td>
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</table>

Q10. In your writing, do you start with writing your ideas in Arabic and then translating what you have written to English?
Q11. In class, linguistic deficits prevent me from participating in classroom discussion.

Q12. Do you feel that the native English-speaking students are more competent than you in your classes?

Q13. Where do you put your emphasis in your writing?

Q14. To what extent are the following themes difficult in your writing processes?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Difficult</th>
<th>Difficult</th>
<th>Somewhat Difficult</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Easy</th>
<th>Easy</th>
<th>Very Easy</th>
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<td>Sentence Construction</td>
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</table>
Q15. In class, I am most comfortable doing...

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<th>Activity</th>
<th>Very comfortable</th>
<th>Comfortable</th>
<th>Less comfortable</th>
<th>Uncomfortable</th>
<th>Sometimes Uncomfortable</th>
<th>It does not matter</th>
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<td>Large group discussion</td>
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<td>Small group discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Written assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading assignments</td>
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<td>Presentations</td>
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<td>Working independently</td>
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VITA
Ghadah Al Morshedi

Education

- **Summer 2010 to Fall 2011**
  
  Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania, USA
  Ph.D. Curriculum and Instruction and Comparative & International Education

- **Summer 2010 to Fall 2010**
  
  Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania, USA
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- **Fall 2008 to Spring 2010**
  
  Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania, USA
  M.A. Applied Linguistics

- **Fall 2007 to Spring 2007**
  
  United Arab Emirates University, Al Ain, UAE
  Higher Diploma in Education

- **Fall 2003 to Spring 2007**
  
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- **Certification**
  
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