Exploring Omani ESL Learners' Identity Construction in a Study Abroad Context

Thariya Al Rhyiami

University of Exeter, United Kingdom

ABSTRACT : The aim of this study is to explore ESL Omani learners' identity construction in a Study Abroad [SA] context. Identity in this study is defined as how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future (Norton, 2000). The data collection method is structured interviews which were recorded and transcribed. The study started with interviewing 6 participants, but based on purposeful sampling in qualitative research (Creswell, 2007), two participants were selected because they represent the phenomenon from two opposite perspectives. The findings indicate that language learners' identity is multiple, a site of struggle, and subject to change across time and space. Talking about their identity in the past, both learners agreed that they lacked a strong foundation in English because of the system and teachers back in Oman. Their experience in a SA context has been shaped by their previous expectations, the extent of mutual engagement and developing a 'third space' in the new environment. On the other hand, their perception of themselves affects how they see their future. The study ends with some recommendations to Omani government, host universities and learners themselves.

Keywords: Identity, Study Abroad, ESL, Community of Practice, socialization theory, poststructuralist

1. INTRODUCTION

Every year hundreds of Omani students leave Oman to study abroad (SA) to continue their graduate studies in English speaking countries such as the USA and UK. These students aim to develop their English as a second language (ESL) to gain experience in living and interacting in English speaking countries and to obtain professional skills that will enable them to be competent in a market economy (Jackson, 2008). However, the outcomes of SA may not be as promising as one may assume because of many factors, including how learners may behave in a new culture with its norms and how they conduct themselves in this new environment. Therefore, "Learning of a second language [L2] is not simply a skill that is acquired with hard work and dedication, but a complex social practice that engages the identities of language learners" (Norton, 2000, p. 132). Thus, identity has become a central concept for understanding the process of language learning in the SA context. The idea behind this research originates from my own experience as a postgraduate student in the USA and the UK. The study is based on numerous research on

Study Abroad (SA) students who move across geographical and psychological borders, immersing themselves in new environments. These students find that their sense of identity is destabilized and that they enter a period of struggle (Jackson, 2008; Block, 2007; Norton, 2000, Kinginger, 2004). This is to say, when a person moves to a new place seeking a better quality of life including a better education, "one's identity and sense of self are put on the line" (Block, 2007, p.5). It is also the case that "The ways in which individuals view the world and their perceptions of themselves within the world, particularly within a learning situation, will play a major part in their learning" (Williams & Burden, 1997, p.96 as cited in Hirano, 2009). Thus, this study aims to explore the learning processes of Omani students in a SA context, how they form their identities and how they accept or reject participation in the new context.

Email: tksa201@exeter.ac.uk

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
2.1 L2 learning as a social practice

There has been a shift from looking at L2 learners as individual language producers to looking at them as members of social and historical groups who are always involved in the construction of identities. Communities of Practice (COP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991), language socialization (LS) (Watson-Gegeo, 2004) and poststructuralism (Norton, 2000) underscore how, when we learn a language, we are not just learning the system of the language; rather, we are learning how to adjust to certain social contexts which entails forming our sense of identity (Jackson, 2008). Thus, language learners' identities, like language itself, are both socially and individually constructed. As learners attain an L2, they also develop a new awareness of who and how they are in their social contexts.

Based on COP (Lave & Wenger, 1991), learning involves participation which frames not only what individuals do, but also affects how they view themselves and how they interpret what they do which means that participation in COPs shapes and reshapes humans' identities (Wenger, 1998). COPs might be "an entity as broad as a society or culture, or as narrow as a particular language classroom' (Lave and Wenger 1991, p. 98). Within supportive COPs, learners are often exposed to "mutual engagement with other members, to their actions and their negotiation of enterprise, and to their repertoire in use (Wenger, 1998, p. 100), which leads to full participation in COPs. Nonetheless, according to Jackson (2008, p. 44) "moving towards full membership in a COP not only involves a significant amount of time, effort, and motivation on the part of the newcomer, but the willingness of the hosts (the 'core members') to share their expertise and resources with them."

Although COP has attracted various criticisms including the fact that membership varies from one community to another, the ignorance of discourse, literacy and power (for details see Gee 2004; Jackson, 2008), it still provides a useful framework to investigate how participation in various COPs in the SA context assists or prevents ESL learners from positively developing their identities (Jackson, 2008; Block, 2007).

Within language socialization (LS), use and acquisition that are inseparable occur in the social, cultural and political contexts, which "constrain and shape linguistic forms in various ways, and mark their significance" (Watson-Gegeo 2004, p. 334). This shows "how language forms correspond with the values, beliefs, and practices of a particular group and how novices can come to adopt them in interaction" (Cole & Zuengler, 2003, p. 99). In other words, LS is

"socialization through language and socialization to use language" (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986, p. 2 as cited in Duff, 2007). To explain further, ESL learners in an SA context learn language in various contexts and at the same time they learn to live in a new environment. Through LS, ESL learners (newcomers) gain communicative competence, membership, and legitimacy in their new environment (Duff, 2007) through participating in many communities, which may include host families, classes, neighbourhoods, public transportation and stores, among others. All these participations are expressed through a language; therefore, language is a social system where learners discover how to behave in various contexts which leads to developing new or additional identities.

Within LS, the L2 learner is involved actively in the construction or the resistance of the socialization process (Wang, 2010). Thus, ESL learners are seen as "active and selective agents" (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986 as quoted in Watson-Gegeo & Nielson, 2003, p. 157). Within this view, learners are capable of making choices and have control over their learning process. Accordingly, depending on their agency, L2 learners experience various degrees of access and participation in their new environment. However, despite the ESL agency and desire to socialize, they sometimes fail to gain access and participation due to various reasons, including power relations (Norton, 2000). For example, L2 learners resist or withdraw from socialization if they feel that they have been marginalized in their new environment (Wang, 2010; Duff & Talmy, 2011). Nonetheless, it has been observed that L2 learners who have more socialization skills (e.g. positive attitude, personality) tend to benefit more from the SA context (Alred & Byram, 2002).

In order to understand one's identity, one's investment (Norton, 2000) must be recognized. Investment can be defined as the socially and historically constructed relationships of learners with the L2, which affect their desire to learn and practice it. If learners invest in the target language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will in turn raise the value of their cultural capital (Norton, 2000). According to Norton (2000, p. 11), "A learner has multiple desires mediated by his/her perception of the power relations in context, and his/her investment in learning should be viewed as 'an investment' in a learner's own identity." Talking about the SA context where ESL learners are expected to interact with native speakers, ESL learners who are still learning the language tend to see themselves as less-empowered which may constrain their opportunity to invest in their language learning (Morgan, 1997).

Similarly to COP and LS, poststructuralists view learning an L2 as a social practice that involves

understanding the learners' identities which are not immutably fixed for life, but rather are fragmented and contested in nature (Block, 2007; Joseph, 2004; Norton, 2000; Wagner, 1998). This view implies that people always struggle as they move forward in life because what they face in a new context may disturb the norms or beliefs that they have taken for granted (Block, 2007; Jackson, 2008). The result of the ongoing struggle that people experience in their new social environment is what has come to be known as "a third place" (Hall, 1996) or "a state of in betweenness" (Ting-Toomey, 1999) where the possibility of fractures and contradictions can occur and in which the person negotiates the way the past and present affect and transform each other. Such challenging and negotiating of differences can lead to ambivalence that can be defined as "the uncertainty of feeling a part and feeling apart" (Block, 2007, p. 864), which directly affects L2 learning.

The theoretical framework reviewed in this section implies that language learning is not a matter of internalizing a set of rules, structures and vocabulary. Learning an L2 is situated where the learners struggle to negotiate the language as a system and as a social practice. L2 learning, especially in an SA context, is a complex process that entails learning a new language, adapting to new social/cultural conditions, recognizing power relations, struggling between the past and current, and negotiating the differences where paradox can easily occur (Creese et al., 2006). Consequently, identity has become a core concept in understanding the L2 learning process and there have been many studies that have looked at L2 learning as a social practice where learners are struggling, negotiating and constructing their identities in the SA context inside and outside classroom, as I will detail now.

2.2 Learners' identity in the ESL classroom

Miller (2007) examines how the ESL classroom functions as a place for contesting identities, especially in terms of power relations, by studying interactions in her class for three years. She focuses on three adult immigrants from Laos, Tibet and China, who attended English courses in the USA. She concluded that power and identity are a matter of 'positioning'. Teachers are positioned as an authority inside the classroom and as the class begins, the learners automatically start to position themselves as good or poor language learners. Additionally, ESL learners who are still learning the language tend to see themselves as less-empowered, which constrains their opportunity to learn or invest in the language. To put it in another way, if ESL learners are positioned as disadvantaged, consciously or subconsciously, by others, including teachers or peers, their opportunities for learning and participating in their new environment will be held back (Abdi, 2009

as cited in Duff & Talmy, 2011). Miller (2007) stressed that part of language teaching is giving more attention and effort to empowering learners in order to avoid negative 'positioning' of the self, which might hinder the learning process.

Another study that portrays ESL learners' identities in the ESL classroom is that by Pellegrino-Aveni (2005). She utilized learner diaries to tackle the journey of an American female learner (Rebeccah) who joined an SA programme in Russia. Rebeccah was not used to the directness and openness that were used by Russian instructors. In her diary, Rebeccah described how her instructor's way of dealing with her question about the meaning of one word negatively affected her by saying,

> I didn't understand some words (she had asked us to please say something if we didn't understand). So I asked what the words meant, and she turned to me & said (basically), 'you're a bad student, you finished college already and you should be ashamed for not knowing!' I replied sarcastically and hurtfully in English, 'Thank you.' I really felt like crying! She completely cut me down in front of the class. (p.58)

Accordingly, Rebeccah never felt secure in her Russian class and she developed a negative attitude towards the class which made her criticize that instructor because she was not used to being dealt with in this way while she was in the USA where her teachers rarely overtly criticize or embarrass students. Studies by Miller (2007) and Pellegrino-Aveni (2005), which concentrated on the ESL classroom context, reveal the complexity of the identity formation process in L2 learning and the importance of the teacher's role in shaping and reshaping ESL learners' identities.

2.3 Identity in SA research outside the classroom

The SA context offers ESL learners direct contact with L2 culture and ideal surroundings for LS. However, ESL learners view their experience in the SA context as either positive or negative, depending on how they view themselves and how they are viewed by others. A range of studies has investigated how L2 learners construct their identities in the SA context outside the classroom in order to understand the learning process in depth. One of these studies is Kinginger's longitudinal and in-depth case study (2004), in which she analyses the SA experience of her participant Alice. When Alice first started studying in France, she was optimistic and excited. She began her SA year with high expectations of France to be the place where she could build a new sense of herself. Such high expectations caused her deep frustration especially as she was not accepted by her French colleagues and had difficulties in negotiating the differences between her

university classrooms in France and those in the USA. However, she could only overcome her frustration when she started to maintain informal contacts outside of the university setting, leading to a more stable, informed and balanced perspective toward the French language, culture and her own sense of self.

Another study that considers L2 learners in an SA context is the study of Isabelli-Garcıa (2006) where she analysed diary entries and social network logs for American students studying abroad in Argentina. She concluded that motivation and attitude differed from one learner to another and that they played a crucial role in their being in the host culture. This study shows that learners who experience negative situations while studying abroad often undergo feelings of inferiority, frustration and disappointment. On the other hand, a positive attitude makes learners more motivated in maintaining social interaction with native speakers in the host culture, which leads to better L2 learning.

In an ethnographic study of four female Hong Kong university students who participated in a five week SA programme in England, Jackson (2008) investigated in depth the relationship between language, cultural learning and identity (re)construction. She found that SA not only has an impact on learners' sense of self, but also their perceptions of the L2, culture and the world in general. She also concludes that the SA context is a very complex context where factors such as language learners' responses to the environment, different levels of investment, agency and host receptivity and the distance among cultures play a crucial role in determining how the ESL learners experience identity construction which has a great impact in their L2 learning.

The SA experience can be rich where learners are greatly exposed to the L2, socialize in different COPs, negotiate differences and construct new identities. However, not all L2 learners equally benefit from it because of many factors. These include learners' desire to participate in their new environment, their attitude towards their host culture and their feelings of acceptance or resistance by people surrounding them.

Despite the amount of SA literature, there has been little understanding of what is going on when learners experience L2 learning abroad (Meier & Daniels, 2011). In order to better understand and support ESL learning in an SA context, we need a deeper and more informed insight into learners' sense of themselves (their identity) (Kinginger, 2004). To my knowledge, there has been no study to investigate an account of Omani ESL learners studying abroad with regard to identity-related concerns. Thus, the aim of this study is to explore Omani ESL learners' identity construction in an SA context in order to understand the process of L2 learning.

3. STUDY DESIGN

3.1 Research Questions
This study aims to answer the following principal research question:
How are ESL Omani learners' identities constructed in the UK?
The following subsidiary questions will also be answered:
1. How did Omani ESL learners see themselves before they came to the UK?
2. How do Omani ESL learners see themselves in the UK?
3. How do Omani ESL learners view themselves in the future?

3.2 Research Methodology
This study is a case study which can be defined as "one case or a number of cases [that] will be studied in detail, using whatever methods seem appropriate" (Punch, 1998; p.150). I decided to use a case study because it has "a holistic focus" and aims to "understand the case in depth, and in its natural setting, recognizing its complexity and its context" (Punch, 1998,p, 150). In addition, a case study is concerned with rich description of the events and it provides a chronological narrative of events (Cohen, Manion & Marrison, 2011) which lead to a deep understanding of a phenomenon.

3.3 Research Methods
The interview method was used because it is "one of the most powerful ways for understanding others" and "a good way of accessing peoples' perceptions, meanings, and definitions of situations and constructions of reality" (Punch 1998, p. 175). Specifically, I used the standardized open-ended interview in which "the exact wording and sequence of questions are determined in advance, all the interviewees are asked the same basic questions in the same order" (Cohen, Manion & Marrison, 2011, p.413). It was utilized because of its ability to answer the same questions by all interviewees which increases the comparability of responses. It also reduces interviewer effect and bias and facilitates organization and analysis of the data (Cohen, Manion & Marrison, 2011, p.413). The interview was conducted in Arabic based on their participants' preference.

3.4 Research Participants
The study started by interviewing 6 participants: 3 males and 3 females. All of them were graduate Omani students who have been in the UK for a period that ranged between 2 months and 4 years. They ranged in age from 21 to 36 years old. After I transcribed the individual interview, I found them so rich in detail that

I needed to reduce the number of participants due to the confines of this article. Marshall and Rossman (2006 as cited in Creswell, 2007), stated that sampling can change during the study and the researcher needs to be flexible. Furthermore, in accordance with qualitative research design, the aim of the study is not only to examine a few individuals but also to ascertain what is unique about each individual. According to this criterion and the concept of purposeful sampling in which the researcher selects individuals for the study because they can purposefully inform the understanding of phenomena (Creswell, 2007, p.125), I selected two participants because they represented identity construction from two different perspectives as it will be detailed in the analysis section.

The first participant is Fatma who is 32-year-old and has two daughters who go to a British primary school. When Fatma was in Oman, her daughters attended a private school where English is the Medium of Instruction (MOI). Having gained a BA in Arabic Law in Oman, Fatma now has a highly prestigious job back home. She describes herself as a social and outgoing person. By the time this study was conducted, Fatma had completed 6 months as a student of English in a UK institution where she received instruction to be able to score at least 5.5 on the IELTS exam, so she would be able to join an MA program in Law in a British university. The second participant is Maha who is 28 years old and earned her BA in Accounting in Oman where English is the MOI. She is single and likes travelling and watching movies. She describes herself as an ambitious and easy-going person. At the time when this study was conducted, Maha had been living in the UK for 8 months. She began her studies by taking English courses for two months and then started an MA programme.

3.6 Data Analysis and Representation
I utilized Creswell's model for analyzing data (2007) and started with each **case description** (profile) including information about age, education and personality, among others. I followed that by using **within-case theme analysis** to understand how their identity is constructed over time and space from the participants' views and according to the theoretical framework of this study. Throughout the case analysis, the voices of the participants dominate, so the readers may be able to transfer their stories to their own situation. Then, **through cross-case theme analysis**, I summarized the differences and similarities between the two cases. I believe that following this model captures both the complexity of identity as dynamic and subject to change and the role of COP in facilitating or holding back the potential of L2 learners' identity construction.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Fatma's Identity Construction

4.1.1. Before coming to the UK
A. 1 Lack of English Foundation
Fatma's identity as an L2 learner was shaped by her belief that she lacked a solid foundation in English despite the fact that she started learning English at a young age. She said, "*I started learning English in grade four; studying English was not that good. I felt that the language was in one side and we were on the other side.*" She also believed that it was better to start learning English before grade four. She elaborated: "*If we started when we were in grade one, maybe that [would be] better. Now they are doing that in Oman, so the students spend 12 years studying English, which is good.*" However, according to Al-Issa and Al Blushi (2011), there is little difference between students who start learning English in grade one and those who start learning in grade four. However, English Language Teaching (ELT) in Oman suffers from problems aside from an early or late start in language learning. According to Fatma, another factor was the under-usage of English outside the class: "*We took English for 45 minutes in the class which was not enough to learn the language. Then, when we go outside the class, we talk in Arabic and we do no practise English.*"

A.2 Attitudes toward English
Fatma's attitude toward English in Oman is negative due to her identity as a learner who was unable to understand English. She said, "*When I was at school, I did not like English because I was stupid and I did not understand anything.*" According to Hirano's (2009, p. 33), "Learner's difficulty and identity were deeply intertwined and influenced each other."

Her negative attitude could also be attributed to her "*English teacher [who] was not explaining a lot but who was caring about spelling and she was shouting at us if we made mistakes while we spelled. My start in learning English was not good; I hated it because I hated my teacher who was very strict.*" Al-Issa and Al-Blushi (2011) found that teachers in Oman followed traditional methods by which students are asked to memorize grammatical rules, and the spellings and meanings of words without creating an atmosphere where English is heard and used. Based on my experience as a student in Oman, teachers are authoritative in the classroom who are responsible for transmitting knowledge as accurately as possible. The role of students as dynamic and active constructors of knowledge is completely marginalized (Norton, 2000). Thus, an unequal relationship between student and teacher might affect Fatma's attitude negatively.

A. 3 The Experience that Compelled Her to Learn English

As described above, Fatma has a highly prestigious job back home, and this only adds to her embarrassment about not being able to speak English well. She told me, "*One day we had a training workshop and we had an American and Dutch trainer. I was with my colleague who was under my supervision and she [had] graduated from the university specializing in economics and her English is excellent. The first question asked by the trainers was who speaks English? I was so embarrassed, I understand English but I cannot discuss things in English. I felt so bad although there was a translator who would translate our questions to the trainers. I did not benefit a lot from that workshop because of the language barriers.*"
This experience brought home to Fatma the importance of English as a prime language of communication in her field. She thus decided to take a language course in Oman. This brings to mind the concept of investment (Norton, 2000) which stresses that, if learners invest in the target language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will in turn increase the learner's cultural capital.

B. *Pre-departure Expectations and Anxieties*

Fatma's expectations were shaped by what she heard from others who had been to the UK before. She said, "*Before I came to the UK, everybody told me that I would face problems in language, and I'd need to be patient and try to practise as much as I can. They even advised me to come alone without my family and live with a host family. I decided to bring my family as I am responsible for them, and the most important thing [is] that a person tries his best and puts his aim in front of him always.*" Her main fear was about whether she could improve her language skills or not: "*I was afraid of living this experience and I was not sure if I could master the language in one year.*" She said that everything depends on a person's willingness to achieve his/her aim, but then she asserted that she was not sure of her ability to master the language. This reminds us that identity is dynamic and contradictory (Jackson, 2008; Block, 2007; Norton, 2000, Ting-Toomey, 1999).

C. Coming to the UK
C.1 The Silent Period

Fatma's uncertainty about her language capability compelled her to stay silent: "*For a month, I was not even uttering a single word in English. When we rented a house, bought furniture and found a school for my daughters, I was totally depending on my husband whose English is better than mine.*" This silent period cannot only be interpreted as a sign that L2 learners gather the linguistic knowledge that enables them to speak. Granger (2004) explains that this silence is an aspect of an internal identity struggle as, in a new language, individuals try to come to terms with feelings of loss, anxiety and uncertainty about the future. In Oman, Fatma had been social and outgoing, but after moving into a new environment she seemed to become introverted because her identity was challenged by new ways of living and a new language. This silent period Fatma encountered might also be the result of the destabilization of her identity and her struggle to find balance after crossing a geographical border (Block, 2007).

C.2 Support from Others and Gaining Confidence

Fatma's husband played a major role in supporting her during her period of silence and encouraging her to engage with others. He achieved this by leaving her in a situation in which she was forced to use the language. She said, "*He left me to call the health centre to set an appointment for my daughters, and he also asked me to accompany them alone to the school.*" However, Fatma was very hesitant to speak because "*I really think that my English is not OK; I need time to translate what I want to say. My grammar is not correct, and I don't have [the] vocabulary to say what I want.*" Besides her husband's encouragement, an incident happened to her that helped her gain confidence: "*I was in the bus station and I did not know which bus I was supposed to take to go from the city centre to my daughter's school. I called my husband, and he did not reply. I felt I needed to ask others. With great hesitation, I asked one of the bus drivers and he brought the map and started to explain. I felt so confident that he understood my question and from that day, I started to talk without paying a lot of attention to my grammar. I just need to convey my message.*" Fatma's experience is reminiscent of Wenger's (1998) concept of "mutuality and engagement" in COP, which suggests that newcomersstart to take a more active role in their new environment when the find old comers understanding and supportive.

Another source of encouragement to Fatma was her English institution and how her English class was taught. She held that "*In my institution, we study 6 hours a day. We have different lessons for different skills: writing, speaking, reading and listening. The tutors are friendly and they always put us in groups where we discuss issues and say our opinion. We do not have that in Oman. The teacher in Oman is caring more about finishing the textbook without paying attention to us as students who have opinions and experiences in life.*" In addition, being in a multicultural class helped Fatma gain more confidence in her English. She went on to say," *In my class,*

students are coming from all over the world; they talk different languages, so we have to communicate in English. We talk when we are put in groups. I learn from them some useful vocabulary. During the break, I always chat with my classmates." Talking about Fatma's educational COP (her institution), it is obvious that because Fatma had common endeavours and mutual engagement with the members of this COP (her classmates), she gained full access to this COP, and she participated effectively in it.

It is noteworthy that all these events Fatma had been through raises the issue of 'agency' because she was capable of changing her situation. This is to say, Fatma could shift herself from being silent to being confident and competent enough to use the English language in class and with her classmates. Fatma's feeling of success in using the language was partly achieved through gaining acceptance from her classmates, teachers and people in the community (bus driver). This is in line with Norton's study (2000) about Eva, a young Polish woman, who achieved success in the sense that she was able to gain acceptance from her colleagues and clientele at the restaurant where she worked.

The most important factor that helped Fatma to gain confidence was her score on the IELTS exam. When she arrived in the UK in September, her score was 4, but when she re-took the test in December, she scored 5.5. This new score would allow her to start her MA in Law. Of this she remarked, "The *most important factor that helped be more confident in English is scoring well in IELTS. I was not expecting this score. When I told anybody, they became really surprised that, within two months and a half, I was able to improve my English the way I did*." It is worth mentioning that, although Fatma obtained mutual engagement in the new COP through bus drivers, teachers and classmates, her score on the IELTS was more meaningful to her. There are several explanations for this. Firstly, her investment in joining an MA program (Norton, 2000) was more important to her than being understood in the new environment. Second, she came from a background where examinations are regarded as the most crucial factor enabling a person to boost their future earnings (Assaad & Elbadawy, 2006 as cited in Al-Issa & Al-Blushi, 2011). Third, scoring well on the IELTS test within less than three months gave her a sense of achievement, which can positively affect her L2 identity. She said, "*I think everything depends on the person and what he aims to do. Does he come to the UK for fun or to achieve something? I have classmates who are absent all the time and they create excuses not to come to the class. I can't. I am very committed.*" This reminds us of Norton's statement (2000, p.11) that a learner's "investment in learning

should be viewed as 'an investment in a learner's own identity'."

C.3 Feeling out of Place

Although Fatma is a very social person, she believed that the nature of the British people dissuaded her from practising English. She explained, "*[The] British are not very social, and they do not like to have social relationships. Or maybe they are social with each other but not with foreigners like us.* It can be inferred that Fatma's feelings about being a foreigner (outsider), the power relations (native versus non-native) and the structures within COP (the anti-social nature of the British) limited her participation and exposure to L2 in the social context (Jackson, 2008; Wang, 2010).It seems that access to the L2 in an SA context is not only formed by the learner's desire, but also by others with whom they can interact such as the British people who may reject L2 learners based on their ethnicity or race (Kinginger, 2004). Fatma hoped that she could bring some of her own culture to her new life in the UK. She wanted to maintain a relationship with her neighbours and the other mothers at her daughters' school. She repeated, "*[The] British are not social, my neighbours do not interact with me. Also, when I went to pick up my daughters from the school, I wish that I could introduce myself to the other children's mothers so we can exchange phone numbers and we can communicate. Then, I [would]invite them to my house and they [would] invite me to their houses. We can plan together to do activities with our children. If I were in Oman, such a thing is possible. But here impossible; I go and pick my daughters and even other mothers are not interested in talking to me although they talk with each other because I am a foreigner to them.*" It can be said that Fatma was not engaged with this COP (her children's school) because she was not perceived by the British mothers to be a member who shared common repertoires or values with them. Therefore, she could not achieve participation in this COP. This also brings to mind Meier s' findings (2010) that students in an SA context find it easy to socialise with international peers (Fatma's classmates), but it is more difficult to interact with native speakers (British mothers in Fatma's children's school).

It is noteworthy that what happened to Fatma at her daughters' school made her miss her life back home and miss the social relationships that she had built through her daughters' Omani school. Fatma might have felt that the British mothers discriminated against her, a feeling that Ward (2001, p. 153 as cited in Jackson, 2008) describes as "almost exclusively negative and include[s] increased stress, more identity conflict and greater psychological and sociocultural adjustment problems."

It seems that Fatma internally negotiated the differences between her past and her present, which led her to the state of 'ambivalence' which is "the uncertainty of feeling a part and feeling apart'" (Block, 2007, p.864). She felt a part when she was understood in various COPs which include informal COPs (bus drivers) or educational COPs (teachers and classmates), but she felt apart when she was perceived as a foreigner by mothers at her daughters' school. To understand the challenges that Fatma faced with regard to the concept of agency, it seems that there are limitations to what the L2 learner in the SA context may encounter. Poststructuralists believe that an individual has the ability to control his/her surroundings; however, this must be understood within the bounded structure of society (Bourdieu, 1991 as cited in Jackson, 2008). To explain this further, Fatma's desire to be engaged in the L2 environment was challenged by the nature of the British whom she believed do not like to socialize with foreigners.

D. Future Anticipations

Despite the fact that Fatma sometimes missed her past in Oman, she appreciated her experience in the UK. She gained many advantages that could be useful for her future. The most appealing benefits for her are linguistic gains: "*I don't think my English is perfect, but I think I reach a stage where I can communicate with others; I feel that I understand them and they understand me. My grammar is full of mistakes, and my vocabulary is simple, but I think can communicate easily in English with my daughters' school teachers when I go back to Oman.*" Her future expectations were also influenced by her concern for her daughters when they return to Oman where English is the MOI: "My *daughters benefit a lot from this experience when we go back; their English will help them to understand things easily and be good at school."*

Fatma asserted that this experience helped her become more open to other cultures. She explained, "*Coming to the UK gave me a chance to meet other people and know their cultures. I would not have [had] this chance if I hadn't come to the UK."* It seems that Fatma followed Ting-Toomey's advice (1999) that a person ought to be open to different ways of looking at and experiencing the world, and without this capacity, it will be very difficult to achieve personal positive growth and identity construction.

4.2 Maha's Identity Construction

A. Before-coming to the UK

A.1 Lack of English Foundation

Similar to Fatma, Maha believed that she did not have a good foundation in English because of the way English had been taught in her home nation. She said, "*Learning English back home was a disaster. I don't remember a lot about my elementary schools, but I do remember that I reached grade 11 and I just knew a ,b,c,d (*she meant only letters*)."* Maha criticized the way English was taught back home: "*In Oman, teachers concentrated on teaching English through memorizing grammatical rules and sets of vocabulary."* Her description of how language was taught corresponds with Al-Issa's (2005) observations, which found that teachers in Oman deconstruct the English language and make the students memorize its rules and lexicons, which in turn compels the students to view English as a subject rather than view it as a language.

A.2 Attitude toward English

Unlike Fatma, Maha had enjoyed English ever since she had first started learning it and liked it especially at university level. She elaborated, "*When I was at the university, I was placed at elementary level. The study was easy. I enjoyed it*." Her attitude to English was shaped by her realization that English is the prime language of communication. Maha is fully aware of the "linguistic capital" of English (Bourdieu, 1991 as cited in Jackson, 2008) and says of this, "*English for me is a means to communicate with others and be open to the whole world since it is the world language*." However, of using English as the MOI in the Arab world, Maha said, "*It is unfair to study subjects in English at the university. When I was at the university, we had students who studied in private schools and their English is perfect. Ours was not good. They spent an hour to read a chapter and we spent two or three hours*." Then she asserted, "*Our level at English at the university is a very sensitive issue. We were labelled by our teachers and classmates based on our level at English. Speaking English fluently and accurately made you distinguished among others*." However, she immediately recasts herself and said: "*Having English does not mean that you will have good marks. While I was at the university, we had students whose English was perfect, but they did not do well in the exams and vice versa. Feeling that my English was not good made me study hard*."

When examining how Maha narrates her attitude towards English, the issues of power and agency come to the forefront. The concept of power is extremely visible within teacher-student relations. Teachers have the right to label students as good or not-good, so that not-good students feel marginalized and inferior. Regarding agency, Maha felt that even though she had been positioned as one of the not-good learners of English at the university, she had more control over the situation by spending more time studying and

concluded that being good at language does not correspond to being good at the subject.

Examining Maha's attitude towards English, it is evident that Maha saw herself as being at a disadvantage by not speaking English well. However, on another occasion, she recasts the same experience in a more positive light. In other words, the "events" did not change, but there was a transfer in the way she constructed herself as an English learner. This in line with Bell's (2002) study in which she followed her own path as an adult learner of Chinese, describing the various stages through which she progressed. In one version of her story, she looks at a certain experience from a negative perspective, but in another version, she re-forms the experience so that it is positive. According to Mishler (2008, p.37), "The meaning of events and experience is constantly being reframed within the contexts of our current and ongoing lives."

Maha's attitude was also shaped by her image of herself after she had graduated: "P*eople in Oman will say 'wow' if they know that I am an MA holder from the UK. It is a very good thing, a good reputation*." This aspect of her attitude can be analyzed in the light of 'imagined communities' which was used by Norton (2000) to refer to how L2 learners are inspired to invest or not in their language learning depending on the communities that they imagine themselves belonging to in the present or future. So, it seems that Maha imagined a community (foreign-educated Omanis) to whom she hoped one day to belong, and this prompted her to invest in learning in the UK.

B. Coming to the UK

B.1 Pre-departure Expectations versus Reality

Unlike Fatma, Maha had high expectations of her time in the UK. She was expecting to see a completely different world to the one she was used to in Oman. Rather than being anxious, she was very excited and ready to live the experience to the fullest. Nonetheless, she was shocked when she arrived. She told me "*My expectation of the UK was to be 'wow'; I was very excited to move from a developing country to a developed country.*" Her expectations about life in the UK were ruined when she began experiencing the reality: "*I came here and I saw everything [was] normal; their hospitals, universities, shopping malls and roads are like ours.*" It seems that being in the new environment made Maha feel a sense of appreciation about what her country had accomplished. According to Ting-Toomey (1999), when a person crosses borders, s/he becomes more thoughtful about and appreciative about his/her own country or culture. However, Maha's expectation of seeing a completely different world was unrealistic and this might have contributed to the difficulties she had coping with the

situation in the UK, as we will see in the coming sections. This is in line with Kinginger's study of Alice (2004) who began her SA year with high expectations of France, which caused her deep frustration later.

B.2 Active Period

Unlike Fatma, Maha did not go through a period of silence as she was ready to take part from the moment she arrived to the UK: "*I started to engage with people and make friends from different countries, from Saudi Arabia, from China and from Japan. I enjoy the English course. Their way of teaching English is different than Oman. The tutors are friendly and they depend on group work and they give us different topics to discuss.*" Despite the fact that Maha was trying to engage with other people, she felt that her grasp of English was adequate enough for day-to-day communication but not for in-depth academic discussions. She said, "*I still feel that my English is not perfect. I am unable to go well in long discussions. My English does not help me to convey my idea the way I would like. It helps me in conducting activities in personal life but not to be fully engaged in long discussion or debate. When discussion happens in the classroom, I feel I cannot discuss things, so I remain silent.*"

I asked her the following questions:[1]

Interviewer: When you discuss, do you feel that people do not understand you?

Maha: *No, they understand me.*

Interviewer: So why do you feel that you cannot discuss things in academic settings?

Maha: *I have to pause a lot and explain. I make a lot of efforts in order to recall the suitable words to convey my message accurately. I always have a lot to add to the discussion but my language does not help me.*

It is noticeable that Maha decided not to enter discussions because she felt she lacked the linguistic capabilities. Maha's concern about joining a deep discussion seems to tally with Byram's finding (2003) that L2 learners undergo a great deal of pressure when they function in L2. They often fall silent. This silence might also be attributed to an internal identity struggle and feelings of loss and uncertainty about L2 ability (Granger, 2004). This silence could also be seen as a strategy that L2 learners might employ to save themselves from humiliation and embarrassment (Duff, 2002).

---

[1] Although I utilized standardized open-ended interviews, I found what Maha said a very interesting thing, so I asked her more questions. I did this only once.

B.2 Feeling Discouraged and Losing Confidence

After joining her MA program, Maha began to feel demotivated about continuing her studies for several reasons. Firstly, she was shocked by the amount of self study an MA student has to do. She was not used to this while doing her BA back home: "*Independent study was more than lecturing in the class. I read about 100 chapters in ten weeks and everything was online.*" To borrow from Block (2007), the new environment had upset her taken-for-granted norms or beliefs (lecturing should take place in classes and there should not be any self-study). She began to notice differences between her past (classes back in Oman) and present (classes in the UK). Thus, she struggled by being in a 'state of betweenness' where she had to negotiate the differences between past and present (Ting-Toomey,1999).

The second reason for her discouragement was her tutors. Her tutors believed that "*[Maha and her classmates] liked to be spoon-fed and ... did not like to make an effort which is not true.*" According to Wenger (1998, p.193), "A lack of mutuality in the course of engagement creates relations of marginality that can reach deeply into our identities." Maha also explained, "*Whenever I started any course, the first thing that the lecturer would say was the number of the students who failed in the course in the previous years.*" According to Maha, "*By telling us how many students failed, they meant to scare us and make us feel insecure. The teacher even sometime told us that if we study or not, we will not be able to pass.*" It seems that Maha did not find her teachers to be supportive or inspiring. Instead, they scared her, negatively affecting her L2 identity which hindered her learning (Pellegrino-Aveni, 2005; Murphy, 2008). In short, Maha's dissatisfaction disconnected her from the new environment, including its language (Ting-Toomey, 1999), which resulted in her not investing in her learning.

With regard to the concept of agency, it seems that Maha was not able to alter her situation because of the institutional constraints (depending on self-study). Nonetheless, she did not like to be marginalized, so she tried to take some control over her situation by being critical about her COP (university classes). She said, '*They think that by giving us a lot of self-study, they are raising the quality of their education, but what about the software we used in the class? Most of it is not working. We are taught by international people whose pronunciation is not intelligible. I am not here for just getting my MA, I am here to improve my English as well.*" Also, her ways of questioning the quality of learning at her university can be interpreted as a way to stay strong to her current sense of self (identity).

C. Future Anticipation

Unlike Fatma, Maha's had been overwhelmed with struggles and challenges during her time in the UK. She said, "*It has been a very difficult experience. I am really feeling scared not to succeed. I am afraid of failing. I was looking at myself as an ambitious person who could achieve her aim. Studying here changes everything. Now, I am not a successful person anymore.*" Thus, being in the UK had negatively impacted how Maha viewed herself as an unsuccessful learner, which might be the reason for the difficulties she faced in her studies (Hirano, 2009). Thus, she anticipated that she could not succeed anymore. This anticipation was rooted in her failure to adjust herself to the new COP, especially her educational COP (university). For Van Lier (2008, p. 177), being successful in the new environment "involves adjusting one's sense of self and creating new identities to connect the known to the new."

When I asked Maha about her future as a speaker of English and a graduate of a UK university, she seemed to have no clear vision of her future. She kept stressing the pain she had experienced in the UK. She hated the place and said, "*I will not come to this country again even for tourism.*" It seems that Maha encountered many challenges because of unfamiliar routines and norms. She also felt threatened and insecure in her educational COP that was characterized by not having shared values or common learning endeavours that she was used to back home. In addition, she did not have mutual engagement with her tutors. Thus, she could not fully and effectively participate in this COP. She felt extremely lonely and found no support from her surroundings. She said, "*Nobody cares about you; you are one student among 1000 students.*" Towards the end of the interview, Maha wished that she had not come to the UK. She believed that she could have studied English and completed her MA back home and there had been no need for her to come to the UK. Her experience had been so unpleasant that she even anticipated that English would not retain its status as the global language and would be replaced by another such as Mandarin Chinese.

4.3 Omani ESL learners' Identity Construction in Review

Through the analysis of two Omani ESL learners' experiences in the UK, I discovered how complex their identity constructions are. Talking about their identity in the past, both learners agreed that they lacked a strong foundation in English because of the Omani education system and the teachers they had back home. Their investment in English related to gaining access to symbolic and material resources (Jackson, 2008). In Gardner and Lambert's terms (1972 as cited in Norton, 2006), Fatma and Maha were instrumentally motivated

to learn English. According to Rababah (2003, p. 188), "Attitudinal studies conducted on Arab students, [have] consistently shown that Arab students are instrumentally motivated to learn English and that they are well aware of the utility of knowing English." Thus, a conclusion can be made that Arab students, including Omani students, mainly learn English to enable themselves to achieve their goals.

Regarding their residence in the UK, their identities were shaped by their expectations. Fatma's expectations were centred around the difficulties and obstacles she might encounter, yet Maha's expectations were full of adventure and excitement. In addition, their identities were framed by their adjustment to the new COPs which can be "an entity as broad as a society or culture, or as narrow as a particular language classroom' (Lave & Wenger 1991, p.98). Thus, in Fatma's and Maha's cases, their COPs mainly include wider/informal COPs (such as bus drivers, shops, neighbourhood) and educational COPs (such as university or children's school). While both learners were struggling to cope with unfamiliar norms in these new COPs, they nonetheless approached their struggles in different ways. Fatma succeeded in adjusting herself to the COPs through various channels including realistic expectations, mutual engagements and by being confident and open. In other words, Fatam had more socialization skills which enabled her to gain access and participate in both informal and educational COPs (except her children's school). By contrast, Maha failed to adjust herself in the COPs, especially her university because of unrealistic expectations, the perceived insensitive nature of people surrounding her and her lack of confidence.

Both learners had been through many stages that have proven what (Jackson, 2008; Block, 2007; Norton & Toohey 2001; Norton, 2000; Ting-Toomey, 1999) emphasized, namely that L2 learners' identity is multiple, a site of struggle, and subject to change. When Fatma transferred herself using others' support (her husband, classmates, teachers), she got the opportunity to practise her English. However, there were occasions when she felt out of place in some COPs (in her daughters' school and with her neighbours). On the other hand, Maha started her journey in the UK with an active period during which she enjoyed her English courses and making new friends. When she began her MA programme that involved new teaching methods and little understanding from her tutors, she felt disconnected to the new COPs especially her university. This reminds one of Gee's (2001, p.99) definition of identity as "a certain kind of person or even as several different kinds at once at a given time and place."

With regard to the L2 learners' future prospects, the findings indicate how one's view of oneself can affect how one sees one's potential in the future. Fatma positively saw herself as a legitimate speaker of English who could communicate with other English speakers upon returning to Oman. On the other hand, Maha endured a great deal of self doubt about her ability to succeed which has prevented her from forming a clear view of her future. Her attitude towards English shifted from the language of a dominant world that she needed to involve herself in to a language which would soon be replaced by other, widely-spoken languages. This is in keeping with Isabelli-García's findings (2006) that SA participants who do fail to cope with their new COPs are less likely to achieve personal fulfilment and constructive transmission with regard to identity.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

While some parts of the two Omani ESL learners' stories are specific to them, I believe that other L2 learners can benefit from them since they may encounter similar incidents and challenges. Therefore, this study recommends that L2 learners should undergo a constructive preparation programme that focuses on the challenges they might face in the SA context. They should also learn about strategies they might be able to utilize to overcome such challenges. Such programmes may also illuminate the unrealistic expectations learners may have before they travel abroad. Most importantly, the orientation programmes should not perceive learners as passive. Rather, learners should be critically engaged in the discussion by creating scenarios of these challenges[2]. They should be asked how they would react in situations that lead to constructing a positive identity in learners. The orientation programme should also introduce the nature of the education system in the host country, so students will be cognitively and emotionally prepared to encounter the types of adjustments they need to successfully fulfil the requirements of their study. Being an Omani learner who has studied abroad, the kind of orientation program currently offered by the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) is limited to a few hours of briefing students about travel arrangements, advice for packing and a list of administrators students can contact in case of emergency.

It is naively assumed that L2 learners will manage their lives in the SA context all by themselves. Thus, regular meetings should be organised between Omani ESL learners and representatives from the MOHE at their host universities in order to keep track of the kinds of

---

[2] For details see Jackson's book (2008) where she specified chapter 10 to talk about how to create critical orientation programs for students who will study abroad.

challenges L2 learners might encounter so that ongoing support can be provided to them. Furthermore, universities abroad should provide more support to international students by orienting their teachers to be sensitive to the challenges facing ESL learners. Universities should get rid of practices carried out by some teachers such as underestimating students' abilities and making them feel insecure which in turn leads to the imposition of undesirable identities on L2 learners. Cummins (2000) argues that when students feel supported and understood, their sense of self will be much stronger which positively affects their identity construction.

It is essential that L2 learners open their minds to new ways of being (Baktin, 1984 as cited in Jackson, 2008) that can help them develop their agency and therefore negotiate differences and make the best of their COP. This way they can benefit from their learning opportunities which will transform who they are and what they can do (Wenger, 1998). Learners should be conscious that living in a new environment can be extremely testing and sometimes frustrating. However, they should approach it with a positive attitude which will help them to negotiate differences and engage in identity construction.

References

Alred, G., & Byram, M. (2002). Becoming an intercultural mediator: A longitudinal study of residence abroad. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *23*, 339–352.

Al-Issa, A. (2005). The place of the English language culture in the Omani ELT system – An ideological perspective. *Language, Culture & Curriculum, 18* (4), 258-270.

Al-Issa, A., & Al-Blushi, A. (2011). English language teaching reform in Sultanate of Oman: The case of theory and practice disparity. *Springer Science and Business Media, 11*, 141-176.

Anderson, K. T. (2009). Applying positioning theory to the analysis of classroom interactions: Mediating micro-identities, macro-kinds, and ideologies of knowing *Linguistics and Education: An International Research Journal, 20* (4), 291-310.

Bell, J.S.(2002). Narrative inquiry: More than just telling stories. *TESOL Quarterly*, *36*, 207-213.

Block, D. (2007). The rise of identity in SLA research, post Firth and Wagner (1997). *Modern Language Journal, 91*(5), 863-876.

Block, D. (2007). *Second language identities*. London: Continuum.

Byram, M. (2003). On being 'bicultural' and 'intercultural'. In G. Alredm, M. Byram, & M.Fleming (Eds.), *Intercultural experience and education* (pp. 50-66). Clevedon: Mutilingual Matters.

Cohen, L. Manion, L., &Morrison, K. (2011). *Research methods in education* (7th ed.). London: Routledge Falmer.

Creese, A., Bhatt, A., Bhojani, N., & Martin, P. (2006). Multicultural, heritage and learner identities in complementary schools. *Language and Education, 20* (1), 23-43.

Cummins, J. (2000). Language, power and pedagogy: Bilingual children in the crossfire.

Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.

Creswell, J. (2007). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches (2nd ed.). London: SAGE Publications.

Duff, P.A (2002). The discursive co-construction of knowledge m identity and differences: An ethnography of communication in the high mainstream. *Applied linguistics, 23* (3), 289-322.

Duff, P. (2007). Second language socialization as sociocultural theory: Insights and issues. *Language Teaching*, *40*, 309–319.

Duff, P., & Talmy, S. (2011. Language socialization approaches to second language acquisition: Social, cultural, and linguisti development in additional languages. In D. Atkinson (Ed.), *Alternativ approaches to second language acquisition* (pp. 95-116). New York: Rutledge.

Granger, C. A. (2004). *Silence in second language learning : A psychoanalytic reading*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters

Gee, J. P. (2001). Identity as an analytic lens for research in education. In W.C. Secada (Ed.), *Review of research in education* (pp. 99–125). Washington DC: American Education Research Association.

Hirano, E. (2009). Learning difficulty and learner identity: A symbiotic relationship. *ELT Journal, 63*(1), 33-41

Isabelli-Garcia, C. (2003). Development of oral communication skills abroad. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad, 9*, 149-173

Jackson, J. (2008). *Language, identity and study abroad: Sociocultural perspectives.* London: Equinox.

Joseph, J. E. (2004). *Language and identity: National, ethnic, religious*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kinginger, C. (2004). Alice doesn't live here anymore: Foreign language learning and identity reconstruction. In A. Pavlenko & A. Blackledge (Eds.), *Negotiating identities in multilingual contexts* (pp. 219-242). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Maftoon, P., Sarem, S., & Hamidi, H. (2012). A closer look at different aspects of language teaching/learning and learner identity. *Theory and practice in language studies*, *2*(6), 1160-1167.

Meier, G., & Daniels, H. (2011). 'Just not being able to make friends': Social interaction during the year abroad in modern foreign language degrees. *Research Papers in Education* 28 (2), 212-238.

Mishler, E. (2008). Narrative and identity. In A.de Fina, D. Schiffrin, & M. Bamberg (Eds.) *Discourse and identity* (pp. 1076–1092). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Murphy, P. (2008). Gender and subject cultures in practice. In P. Murphy & K. Hall (Eds.), *Learning and practice: Agency and identities* (pp. 161-172). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd. Norton, B. (1997). Language, identity, and the ownership of English. *TESOL Quarterly, 31* (3), 409-429.

Norton, B. (2000). *Identity and language learning: Gender, ethnicity and educational change.* Harlow, England: Pearson Education.

Norton, B. (2006). Identity: Second language. *Encyclopaedia of Language and Linguistics, 5*, 502-508.

Norton, B., & Toohey, K. (2001). Changing perspectives on good language learners. *TESOL Quarterly, 35*(2), 307–322.

Pavlenko, A., & Blackledge, A. (Eds.). (2004). *Negotiation of identities in multilingual contexts*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.

Piller, I. (2002). Passing for a native speaker: Identity and success in second language learning. *Journal of Sociolinguistics, 6*(2), 179-206.

Pellegrino, V. A. (2005). *Study abroad and second language use: Constructing the self.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Polanyi, L. (1995) Language learning and living abroad: Stories from the field. In B. Freed (Ed.), Second language acquisition in a study abroad context (pp.271-291).Amsterdam/ Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Punch, K.F. (1998) Introduction to social research: Quantitative and qualitative approaches. London: Sage.

Rababah, G. (2003). Communication problems facing Arab learners of English. Journal of language and learning, 3(1), 180-197

Ting-Tommeym S. (1999) Communicating across cultures. New York: Guliford Press.

Van Lier, L. (2008). Agency in the classroom. In J. Lantolf & M. Poehner (Eds.), Sociocultural theory and the teaching of second languages (pp. 163-186). London: Equinox Publishers.

Wang, C .(2010). Toward a second language socialization perspective: Issues in study abroad research. Foreign Language Annals, 43 (1), 50-63.

Watson-Gegeo, K. A. (2004). Mind, language, and epistemology: Toward a language socialization paradigm for SLA. Modern Language Journal, 88, 331–350.

Wenger, E. (1998). Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Young, R. F., & Miller, E. R. (2004). Learning as changing participation: Discourse roles in ESL writing conferences. Modern Language Journal, 88(iv), 519-535.

Zuengler, J., & Cole, K. (2005). Language socialization and second language learning. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning (pp. 301–316). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.