



Graduate School of Education

Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use, Intercultural Communicative Competence, and Frequent Intercultural Encounters through Study Abroad? An Examination of Omani Arab Students' Intercultural Perceptions and Lived Experiences Abroad

Submitted by Ahmed bin Salim bin Abdulla Al-Abri to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education in November 2021

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Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ahmed", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Abstract

This explanatory quasi-experimental sequential mixed-methods research examined the impact of study abroad in the UK, the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand on Omani students' Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use (SEIELU), and Intercultural Interaction Frequency (IIF). Meaningful intercultural engagements were considered the key to further development of the intercultural competencies under study (Meier & Daniels, 2013; Schartner & Young, 2020), approached through a newly developed model, Developmental Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (DMICC), and subsequently new measurement scales used as pre- and post-tests: a 58-item multidimensional ICC scale, a 14-item unidimensional SEIELU scale and a 3-item IIF scale. The quantitative (foundation) inquiry was followed up by a qualitative inquiry through the use of semi-structured interviews and a survey open-ended question for an in-depth exploration of the key quantitative findings.

The quantitative study sample included a total of 343 Omani study-abroad and stay-in-Oman students, aged 17-52 years, and the qualitative sample included 11 semi-structured interview participants (10 UK & 1 New Zealand-based) and 15 UK-based open-ended question respondents.

Contrary to previous research (Al-Makhmari & Amzat, 2012) and prevailing belief, the quantitative inquiry revealed that the one-year abroad, no matter the country of stay, gender, type of stay abroad (alone or with one's own Omani family), and with previous intercultural experiences or not, did not yield any significant changes in the respondents' ICC, SEIELU, and IIF levels. The educational level and multilingualism also did not seem to play any considerable roles in this regard. A period of more than six years of stay abroad was a requirement for the participants to experience an advancement in these respective aspects.

Both the quantitative and qualitative findings showed that the participants had limited frequency, depth, and breadth in interactions with the host locals due, according to the qualitative findings, to cultural, linguistic, personality-related and cognitive reasons as most frequently expressed causes, as well as educational, family, communication skills-related, and emotional reasons. The qualitative results also showed that the experience was also more triggered by instrumental and less self-determined goals.

Consequently, the participants' intercultural learning from study abroad was more limited to knowledge of the host culture's tangible elements, education system, and correction of some stereotypes. English learning was also more restricted to the acquisition of vocabulary, language expressions, grammar, word pronunciation, understanding locals' English accents, accented English, and reading and writing skill development. Speaking was the least practised language skill. Enjoyment of being abroad and with other Omani and Arab students, travelling, and feelings of independence and self-reliance were their other benefits of studying abroad. Academically, they could

develop research competence and field knowledge. Despite the limited learning benefits, students evaluated study abroad highly.

Higher levels of SEIELU were found achievable through deeper intercultural interactions whose fulfilment was attainable through the development of ICC, primarily through the enhancement of more positive attitudes towards cultural differences in the first place, and knowledge and awareness of the host culture than the mere frequency of intercultural interactions, negative intercultural emotion control, and critical thinking and communication skills.

Dedication

All my praise and gratitude be to You Allah Almighty, my source of knowledge, patience and strength throughout this research journey.

I then dedicate this research project to my deceased parents whose prays and encouragements always echoed in my ears to continue the path to the end with dedication and courage.

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Abbreviations

IIF-Intercultural Interaction Frequency

IIFS-Intercultural Interaction Frequency Scale

SEIELU- Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use

SEIELUS- Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use Scale

ICC-Intercultural Communicative Competence

ICCS- Intercultural Communicative Competence Scale

DMICC- Developmental Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence

IB- Intercultural Behaviours

PCA- Principal Component Analysis

Glossary

ICC is the ability to interact with individuals and groups from other cultures by appropriately and effectively adapting intercultural attitudes, negative emotions, communication and critical thinking skills, intercultural cognition and behaviours to the cultural differences encountered in the shared environment.

Mature ICC is the translation of the potential intercultural communicative competence into behaviours that lead to intercultural engagements (interaction depth), as well as flexibility towards different cultural groups and adaptability to various intercultural contexts (interaction breadth).

Intercultural Behaviours refer to individuals' inter-cultural group flexibility, intercultural context adaptability, and intercultural interaction depth.

Study abroad programme is referred to as an accredited educational programme abroad, which students join to receive an academic degree in their majors.

Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use refers to self-reported performance and confidence in using English and its complications in encounters and settings shared with people from other cultures.

Intercultural interaction frequency refers to students' frequent interactions with people from other cultures inside and outside the university context.

Intercultural adaptation is a complex, dynamic process of gradual change to fit to the host cultural environment.

Intercultural adjustment refers to the emotional and psychological experience accompanying the attempts at intercultural adaptation.

Cultural sensitivity refers to one's awareness of the impact of cultural differences and other possible factors on intercultural interactions.

Cross-cultural sensitivity reflects one's ability to sense and read the cultural dimension in cross-cultural contexts and situations as well as of that behind behaviours, and subsequently reacts to them suitably by neutralizing any culturally predetermined prejudices and interpretations.

The one-year abroad refers to the total combination of the two six-month periods investigated by each of the pre and post-tests applied in this research.

General intercultural development refers to the development of both intercultural communicative competence and self-efficacy in intercultural English language use.

Culture refers to the system of teachings, values and norms shared among a group of people, and has an influence on their perception, understanding and interpretation of how the world works in a certain context and at a certain point in time. While it has a subjective face representing the intangible and less visible elements (e.g. norms, values, etc.), it has an objective face representing the tangible, visible elements (e.g. clothes, food, etc.). It is transferable, adaptable and learnable.

Cultural diversity refers to the existence of cultural differences within the one country's political boundaries and subsequently it is difficult to refer to a country by one culture. This is useful for the study of intercultural differences and interactions within a country.

National culture refers to the prevailing cultural orientation (tendency) in a country, which makes it easier to refer to countries by their cultural orientations. This helps the study of intercultural interactions and comparisons across countries and regions.

Intercultural communication studies concern the interactions among individuals from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds in a shared setting, and how this interaction influences the individuals from both cultures.

Cross-cultural communication studies concern the comparison of the similarities and differences of cultures in particular concepts or patterns. The compared cultures may not necessarily be in interaction at the time of study.

Stereotypes are negative or positive judgements and overgeneralisations made about individuals based on any observable or believed group membership. They often do not have a solid basis of truth.

Ethnocentrism is one's view of own culture as the superior and benchmark to other cultures for the negative judgement of distinct cultures.

Intercultural prejudice is the set of affective reactions we have toward people as a function of their category memberships (Schneider, 2005, p. 27).

Intercultural discrimination is the behavioural tendency or the unjustified use of category information to make judgments about other people (Schneider, 2005, p. 29).

Collectivism is a cultural orientation in which interdependence among its individuals and groups is more emphasised over its members' independence.

Individualism is a cultural orientation in which individuals' independence is more emphasised over the achievement of the group's goals and needs.

Uncertainty avoidance is a cultural preference and orientation in dealing with unknown and ambiguous situations.

Tolerance for uncertainty refers to the attitudes about and level of comfort in uncertain situations.

Individuals with a low uncertainty tolerance are those who tend to avoid the contexts where they feel uncertain about.

Individuals with a high uncertainty tolerance are those who maintain patience in uncertain situation to wait for further information to become available or take the initiative to seek out information by themselves.

Intercultural learning refers to the counterparts' learning of one another's culture and of their own culture as well, and its impact on their perceptions and behaviours with others.

Chapter One: Introduction

Globalisation manifests through economic, political, cultural, and social interconnectedness (Ali, 2014b; Jackson, 2008) and, alongside technological advances in communication, has significantly enhanced global communications (Candel-Mora, 2015) by reducing isolation to a greater extent than ever before (Candel-Mora, 2015; Kim, 1999); nations cannot survive without one another (Strauss, 2004). Indeed, globalisation has become an inescapable reality (Biraimah & Jotia, 2012) that determines the skills and qualities required for the global job market (Brummer, 2013). Hence, nations must find ways to accept this fact and adapt to the interconnectedness among nations in order to reap its benefits.

Realising this, Oman took a significant and practical step towards embracing globalisation and openness by, for example, joining the World Trade Organisation (Anderson et al., 2006), aiming to generate higher levels of prosperity and growth, though with some precautions, bearing in mind the conservative culture rooted in Islamic teachings and values (Al-Harhi, 2002; Mahammadbakhsh et al., 2012) and awareness of the possible negative impacts of globalisation on individuals, societies, and national and cultural identities (Kaushal & Kwantes, 2006; Mahammadbakhsh et al., 2012). However, the interdependent relations between countries rarely leave cultures totally homogeneous (Rudd & Lawson, 2007b).

The existence of expatriates in almost all sectors constitutes another side of globalisation in Oman and its interconnectedness with the outside world (Brummer, 2013). Indeed, Oman realises that globalisation requires building national capabilities through the reform of its educational system, believing that education yields a more prosperous future (Al-Harhi, 2002).

Although cultural differences and experiences make nations need each other (Strauss, 2004), the “shrinking of the world” increases the potential for conflicts and misunderstandings in global interactions (Kaushal & Kwantes, 2006). Dealing positively with cultural and ethnic differences is essential for nations to keep pace with globalisation through the development of young generations with the intercultural communicative competence (ICC) to facilitate the exchange of knowledge between nations (Kim, 1999). This era creates a huge demand for attitudes and competencies that facilitate communication through the development of English language competence, intercultural communicative competence, and openness to learning and autonomy, in addition to technology-related skills (Brummer, 2013).

Several governments have realised that through intercultural immersions (studying in a different culture for the purpose of learning), international students may develop interculturally, personally, intellectually, linguistically, and professionally, and this enhances their self-management in a multicultural world (Kim, 1999; Kuchinke, Ardichvili, & Lokkesmoe, 2014; Volet & Ang, 2012).

They acquire skills and knowledge from the developed countries they visit to meet home country requirements for growth and prosperity (Yi, 2007).

Realising the importance of study abroad, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said ordered the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation (previously called the Ministry of Higher Education) to increase the number of external scholarships to 1,500 alongside the annual 200 grants for postgraduates (Ministry of Higher Education, 2011b). In total, 1,440 students obtained external scholarships in the academic year 2011/2012 alone, constituting 5.15% of the total of internal and external scholarships given by the Omani government to 27, 951 students in the same academic year - an increase of 523% compared to 2010/2011. The study-abroad scholarships issued to Omani citizens continued to increase from 1,395 in 2012 to 1,417 in 2013 (Ministry of Higher Education, 2012, 2013). According to Table 5 in Appendix 4, the total number of external scholarships alone was 38, 405 in the academic year 2019/2020 with the foreign, non-Arab country scholarships constituting 84% of all the external scholarships.

The government's aim behind these increasing numbers of external scholarships “is to produce graduates who have not only technical competence and knowledge in core disciplines, but also generic skills sought by employers, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, team working and communication skills [in general]” (Ministry of Higher Education, 2011a). The qualities sought by employers may include the ability to interact with and work in teams of people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and to adapt to various cultural contexts, performing effectively and appropriately in a foreign language, and respecting others (Gardner, Steglitz, & Gross, 2009; Miladinovic, 2014a).

Oman is “culturally and educationally dependent on North America (USA and Canada), Britain and Australia ... for its progress and development” (Al-Issa, 2006, p. 194). Omani students have been sent to English-speaking destinations because English is now the main language of global communication, an “official corporate language” (Pikhart, 2014a, p. 954). Indeed, most information online today is communicated in English (Pikhart, 2014a). Therefore, according to the study-abroad country popularity, the US was the most popular country for hosting Omani students abroad with 21.26%, followed by the UK (14.20%), Australia (6.47%), New Zealand (1.74%) and, lastly, Canada (0.92%) (see Table 5 in Appendix 4). Sending Omani students to the countries mentioned above should help them develop linguistically and interculturally (Al-Issa, 2006).

Study abroad is “a global phenomenon” (Paige & Vande Berg, 2012, p. 31); however, “greater numbers of international students or a higher global institutional ranking do not necessarily reflect a higher degree of beneficial intercultural interaction or education” (Young, Handford, & Schartner, 2017, p. 189). From here, to be effective in the global context, programmes must be critically assessed for their potential to deliver intended national outcomes and the benefits students obtain from them,

rather than simply assuming their worth because of the money, time, and effort invested in these programmes (Biraimah & Jotia, 2012). The assessment of teaching and learning outcomes in educational programmes is essential for improving those outcomes (Sercu, 2004) and for increasing a return on investment of money, time, and effort (Sutton & Rubin, 2004). This is true when understanding that reaping the intended benefits is accompanied by myriad challenges that can play major roles in shaping students' experiences, and attendant benefits while abroad (Chen, 1999; Hammer, 2012a; Hammer, 2012b; Pitts, 2009).

As such, success is dependent on how students are able to overcome challenges while engaging with different cultures (Chen, 1999; Hammer, 2012a; Hammer, 2012b; Pitts, 2009). The outcomes gained can vary among international students due to their own roles in the experience abroad. Participants' "willingness to interact within a new culture, to learn from mistakes, and engage with those from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds are some of the variables...that shape [the] sojourn outcomes" (Jackson & Macmillan, 2010, p. 7). Although there are factors that intervene in the success of study abroad, international students remain important agents in managing the challenges and determining the success of intercultural experiences.

Therefore, the evaluative focus of international education should be directed towards the assessment of the quality of experiences abroad rather than merely counting the number of students joining these programmes. Although an increase in student numbers is a goal for international institutions, ensuring the quality of experiences abroad must also receive attention (Engle & Engle, 2003), especially linguistic and intercultural development.

After the introduction above, which constitutes chapter one of this thesis, this study sheds light on my research area by firstly explaining the Omani government's goals and reasons for sending Omani students abroad and then those of Omani students. The explanation of students' motivation to study abroad helps us understand the possible impact on their intercultural experience abroad. The study then highlights the possible cultural, linguistic, educational, emotional, and attitudinal challenges that Omani students may encounter while abroad and subsequently the development of their intercultural interaction frequency (IIF), intercultural communicative competence (ICC), and self-efficacy in intercultural English language use (SEIELU). This is done by reviewing relevant studies from the field and then comparing their results with those this research has revealed about the Omani students. The chapter ends with an explanation of the issues surrounding intercultural communicative competence with regard to its components, definition, assessment, and so on.

The third chapter explains my research methodology, including a discussion of the strengths and drawbacks of each of the quantitative and qualitative research paradigms, the study sample, and the research methods before it ends with a clarification of the ethical issues accompanying the execution of this research project. Chapter four clarifies the steps I followed in the construction and

development of my research methods especially with regard to my use of statistical analyses in this developmental mission. Chapter five uncovers the statistical results and findings regarding the impact of study abroad as a host context and then as an amount of time on Omani students' ICC, SEIELU and IIF, as well as the findings regarding the role of stay type (with/out one's own Omani family), gender, previous intercultural experiences, multilingualism, and educational level in the development of the aspects under study. It also reveals the participants' self-ranked reasons to their limited intercultural interactions, as well as the contribution of ICC and IIF levels to the development of SEIELU. Chapter six follows up the analysis of the survey data with a set of qualitative questions for an in-depth exploration of the key quantitative findings. Both sets of findings are integrated in chapter seven, followed by research contributions, limitation, recommendations, and finally conclusion.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This section discusses the Omani government's and students' motives and concerns for (higher) education in general, and study abroad in particular. However, due to the limited research conducted in Oman, this section relies on international research, especially for understanding students' motives for studying abroad. Students' motivation for learning determines their behaviours in fulfilling their goals and intentions (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2014). The review of the available literature yields a general understanding of Omani students' motives and requirements for study abroad and for education in general.

2.1 Omani Government's Demand for Higher Education

Understanding growth in both the population and school graduates, the workforce structure in Oman and the current Omani educational system's failures are important to understanding the Omani government's concerns for higher education.

2.1.1 Growth Rate in the Population and School Graduates

Growing numbers of Omani students graduating from high schools, and achieving bachelor's degrees, as well as increasing numbers seeking MA and PhD degrees, in addition to an increasing population in Oman, have generated an increasing demand for, and pressure within, higher education. The demand is not only observed for the unemployed but also for those in employment. However, the state cannot accommodate these numbers in higher education due to the shortage of institutions. Furthermore, females produce higher grades upon graduation compared to males (Alyahmadi, 2006), and increasing numbers of females are to be accommodated.

2.1.2 Lack of a Qualified National Workforce

Oman suffers from shortages of specialized national workforces in different fields, including technology, science, and higher education, which are considered among the main contributors to economic success (Al-Issa, 2006). Indeed, Oman is largely dependent on foreign workforces in almost all sectors. According to official statistics provided by National Centre for Statistics and Information (December 2015), Oman's population in November 2015 was 4, 301,825, with expatriates representing 44.7% of the total population. The majority of expatriates come from South-East Asia (India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Indonesia, Philippines, Sri-Lanka and Nepal), securing jobs in the government and private sectors (61, 403 and 1, 361, 266 respectively), excluding the 260, 083 expatriates working in the family sector. Omani nationals constituted 55.3% of population, with only 208, 057 Omanis working in the private sector. The massive dependence on foreign nationals relates to the skills they offer, which are seemingly less offered by Omanis (Brummer, 2013), and their numbers are increasing, according to Alyahmadi (2006) and the official statistics for the Sultanate (National Centre for Statistics and Information, December 2015).

Although Omani nationals are seen as hardworking, they lack the skills and experience required in the labour market as well as the necessary cultural knowledge. Moreover, graduates lack not only work experience and communication skills but also adaptability (Alyahmadi, 2006).

Thus, Omani citizens encounter difficulties in finding private sector employment, and the majority in this sector are in positions that require neither higher education nor specialist training. Omani graduates mostly work in the public sector, particularly in administrative positions not requiring the skills or work experience of the private sector. In contrast, expatriates, in addition to receiving lower salaries, offer experience and a good work ethic (e.g., loyalty and commitment), and so occupy most technical and professional jobs in Oman (Alyahmadi, 2006).

For Omani citizens to shape the development of Oman, developing interpersonal and life skills, as well as transferable knowledge is essential (Al Ghafri, 2002; Brummer, 2013). The Omani government believes dependence on expatriates can be reduced through producing a competent and qualified national work force to support all sectors, and this is important to protect against expatriates leaving for opportunities elsewhere (Alyahmadi, 2006).

Knowledge constitutes the core of today's economies; dependence on low and unskilled labour is fading, and such labour is being replaced with skilled workers providing technical skills and problem-solving, communication, and adaptability, as well as self-management and teamwork, in addition to embodying creativity, responsibility, and positive attitudes and behaviours (Al Barwani, 2002).

2.1.3 The Failure of the Higher Education System in Oman

Alyahmadi (2006) explored the challenges facing the Omani higher education system through documentary analysis and interviews with fifty senior influential stakeholders in Omani higher education, HRD organisations, industry, and society. The results indicated a gap between the outcomes of the educational system in Oman (school and higher education) and market demands for knowledge and practical skills in the national workforce. This failure is attributed to a lack of vision, poor planning, low levels of funding, and a lack of comprehensive evaluation and assessment plans in higher education institutions, as well as their outcomes. Moreover, the supervision of higher education institutions is limited because of higher education authorities' insufficient expertise and poor administrative competence. Hence, national graduates lack the required skills and knowledge, and Oman relies on expatriates (Alyahmadi, 2006).

Al Barwani (2002) stated that although the Arabian Gulf countries (including Oman) have increased spending on education, they are still dependent on foreign labour. These countries struggle with graduate employability and learning environments that do not promote the use of initiative and creativity, raising questions about the quality of an education where more emphasis is placed on theoretical learning than on vocational skills. Similarly, Brummer (2013) carried out mixed-methods

research to investigate the educational occupational expectations of Omani students at Oman's Ibri College of Technology, part of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, as well as the intentions of their English lecturers and their views of the curriculum. The lecturers stressed that "tertiary education should focus on developing the students' English abilities, interpersonal skills, work ethic and global awareness during their preparations to transition to work and help widen perspectives" (Brummer, 2013, p. 112). It was generally agreed that curriculum reform at the college was needed due to its failure to meet students' occupational needs. Lecturers also noted that "students should gain life skills, basic human values, an understanding of cultural differences, responsibility, respect for authority and property, time management, love for autonomous learning, proper study skills, vocabulary specific to their specialisation, and effective communication skills", though none of these were mentioned by students (ibid., p. 112).

The students' failure to mention these traits indicates their ignorance of the competencies required in the marketplace. In addition, the lecturers suggested that exposure to English should be increased. One noted that "English proficiency would improve if students perceived language acquisition as a hobby rather than as a duty" (ibid., p. 118). The study revealed that cultural differences do not bother students greatly. However, their lack of academic focus, motivation, and time management frustrates lecturers (Brummer, 2013). Moreover, although some Omani students may perform well and realise that English proficiency and other skills are advantageous, they lack any vision regarding future occupations and the requirements of certain jobs.

2.1.4 Response to the Failure in the Higher Education System

According to Alyahmadi's (2006) study, most interviewees suggested that collaboration with international institutions is essential for building nationals' knowledge, abilities, skills, and expertise, as well as for reducing Oman's dependence on expatriates and combatting the deficiencies of competent nationals in sectors such as medicine, law, accounting, and IT. The government, recognising the importance of human resources in developing the country in its 2010 vision for the economy, has emphasised the sustainable development of the workforce through reforming education to meet market needs (Al Barwani, 2002). However, this has been largely unsuccessful (Alyahmadi, 2006; National Centre for Statistics and Information, December 2015), as indicated by expatriate numbers.

2.2 Study abroad vs Classroom Learning

Although developing students' intercultural and linguistic competencies through the traditional language classroom and the internet and through reading books and watching movies is attainable, it is limited, and "nothing packs as big a punch as direct encounter, indeed confrontation, with the world's innumerable realities and sometimes subtle variations" (Sommer, Spring 2000, p. 63). Learning beyond the confines of the classroom is the key element that makes study abroad distinct

due to the abundance of learning opportunities that are unattainable through traditional learning (Doerr, 2014; Gardner et al., 2009; Muskin, 2000).

Given the impact of study abroad on maximizing learners' linguistic and cultural gains, Omani students have been sent abroad to harvest these gains through mixing and interacting with English native speakers in real life situations (Al-Makhmari & Amzat, 2012). Vande Berg, Paige, and Lou (2012) believed that students learn effectively when they come into direct contact with those who are superior to them in real life contexts, and the students' motivation to learn from the difference "will supplement what they learn at home" (p. 16).

In general, despite the significance of intercultural education, achieving higher levels of intercultural communicative and linguistic competence is more likely to be very limited in the classroom setting (Collentine, 2009). Classroom learning is good mainly for equipping learners with the basic intercultural knowledge and thus may constitute the first step towards experiential learning (Callen & Lee, 2009).

Reid (2015) commented on the limitations of classroom learning by stating that it is true that the "[t]raditional classrooms provide systematic presentation and acquisition of knowledge and skills under the guidance of a teacher, but offer very little chance to develop skills for interaction in real world scenarios" (ibid., p. 939). Similarly, Perry and Southwell (2011) reported that "while education in its various forms may effectively develop some aspects of intercultural competence such as cultural knowledge, there is little or no evidence that it develops other aspects of intercultural competence, particularly those that are more difficult to test" (ibid., p. 460). Sercu (2004, p. 75) added that restricting the teaching of intercultural competence and foreign languages in the confines of the classroom "will probably lead to teaching that promotes the acquisition of cultural knowledge only, and neglects the other dimensions of intercultural competence".

The interactions with the native speakers of the target language outside the confines of the classroom in particular are considered to be the major benefit of the study-abroad experience. These interactions become especially distinctive from those available during study at home "when such opportunities are significantly less abundant" (Dewey et al., 2013, p. 277). In this regard, Firmin et al. (2013) added that the importance of study abroad is seen in its potential enhancement of learning through experience, which is limited or impossible to attain through the traditional, didactic instruction.

Yashima (2010) investigated the effects of international volunteer work experiences on intercultural competence by comparing 286 Japanese university students who joined the international volunteer projects with 116 who did not. The results showed that in most aspects of intercultural competence studied, including openness/ethnorelativism, international concern, interpersonal communication skills, and self-efficacy, the participants of the project (due to intercultural contact

experience) achieved significantly higher levels than non-participants, and those with previous intercultural experience achieved higher levels than those without. The study results also revealed that although those who decided to participate had a high level of intercultural competence before they participated in the project, the volunteer work experience further developed this competency. The combination of openness and ethnorelativism led to a higher level of satisfaction, while English competence, interpersonal communication skills, and self-efficacy resulted in a stronger sense of contribution to the volunteer projects.

In general, the amount of exposure to L2 determines the amount of development in proficiency, attitudes, and communication behaviours, to name just a few. Therefore, the study-abroad experience has an advantage over the content-based L2 instruction in its provision of this substantial exposure to L2; otherwise, stay-in-Oman students, through classroom instruction designed for this purpose, can exhibit developmental profiles similar to those studying abroad (Yashima & Zenuk-Nishide, 2008).

Due to the impact of study abroad on maximizing learners' linguistic and cultural gains, Omani students have therefore been sent abroad in increasing numbers to harvest these gains through their mixing and interacting with English native speakers in real life situations (Al-Makhmari & Amzat, 2012).

However, Jackson (2008) argued that "administrators are often preoccupied with increasing the numbers of exchange students, largely ignoring [or at least unaware of the] barriers that may hinder the learning process" (p. 357). Research has shown that it may be inadequate to just send students abroad and expect them to develop interculturally and linguistically beyond the levels developed at home, as several international students do not make the most of the study-abroad experience. Thus, the experience can add little or even nothing to international students' intercultural communicative competence. When the choice is left to students, there will be some who do not learn effectively, especially in the absence of interventions (Deardorff, 2009b; Jackson, 2015; Kuchinke et al., 2014; Paige & Vande Berg, 2012; Pedersen, 2010; Vande Berg, Connor-Linton, & Paige, 2009; Vande Berg et al., 2012).

2.3 The Impact of Study Abroad

The Omani government has increased the number of internal and study-abroad scholarships in particular as explained in the introduction chapter above. Such an increase suggests a strong belief among Omani officials in the effectiveness of study abroad not only in equipping the Omani nationals with specialist knowledge but also in improving their market skills, and intercultural and linguistic competencies. This is what supports this assumption as shown below.

2.3.1 Al-Makhmari and Azmat's (2012) Research

Locally, using a Likert-scale survey with open-ended questions, Al-Makhmari and Amzat (2012) examined the perceptions of twenty Omani parents and twenty female Omani students who

went to Australia for short courses (21-23 years old), as well as twenty female staff workers at Sultan Qaboos University about study abroad. The findings indicated that the Omani female students were excited to study abroad and did not face difficulties in terms of social life and language barriers in the host country other than homesickness, cultural shock, food, host families, and transportation. Indeed, study abroad was perceived to be beneficial. The majority of parents considered the cost of studying abroad an important factor in allowing or preventing their daughters from studying abroad, while this factor was less important to their daughters. Moreover, parents determined their choice of the host country based on its religion, while it was the least important factor to their daughters. Parents also did not welcome the idea of their daughters travelling alone without a relative companion before being convinced by their daughters to allow them to do so.

2.3.2 Concerns regarding Al-Makhmari and Azmat's (2012) Research Findings

However, several concerns have been raised regarding the research conducted by Al-Makhmari and Amzat (2012).

Firstly, their research survey included general statements, such as “A study-abroad experience is beneficial to Omani women” (Al-Makhmari & Amzat, 2012, p. 91). The researchers investigated the study-abroad experience as a general phenomenon without specifying clear aspects of the investigation. Due to the statement's generality, the adjective “beneficial” can mean different things to both the researcher and the respondents. The generality of the statement may open the door wider for how and what aspects of the experience have exactly been beneficial to them. The nature of these benefits was not discussed. As a consequence of this statement's generality, it is no surprise that “all girls agreed that the study-abroad experience is beneficial to Omani women” (ibid., p. 92).

The lack of specificity in the research, as represented by the survey statement mentioned above, meant students described the study-abroad experience as beneficial or transformative by referring to what they viewed as beneficial to them personally and then generalizing their view to their entire experiences (Vande Berg et al., 2012). Gemignani (2009) came to the same conclusion by stating that learners tend to describe their entire study abroad experiences as unique based on the learners' incorporation of their unique events and perspectives into their lives, and thus a single aspect of the study abroad experience or a single perspective perceived by students as unique or transformational may be relied on to shape or describe the entire experience.

The general unfocused open-ended questions tend to reveal experiences that “are grounded in hypersensory memories-not developmental recollections” (p. 128) and most of the told experiences are driven by emotions; this is why students “express strong certainty about and enthusiasm for their study abroad experience” (Hammer, 2012b, p. 128).

The effectiveness of an assessment is determined by the clarity and specificity of the definition of intercultural learning adopted in the investigation of intercultural experiences, followed by eliciting

examples in order to come up with strong interpretations and an in-depth understanding of what the students learn abroad. Due to the lack of this specificity and of clear aspects for investigation, the positive responses can indicate differences and subsequently lead to interpretations at any level, as the general subjective measures cannot lead to an in-depth understanding of what the students actually learn abroad. Therefore, it is important for researchers to specify the aspects and dimensions of learning in order to trace and determine the reality and nature of students' intercultural learning (Bennett, 2009).

Besides the specificity required in research investigations, the assessment should trace the students' development in the specified aspects, using a pre-test and post-test research design, for example, to determine how much the students have learnt from the experience; otherwise, researchers are not in a position to conclude that students have benefited from studying abroad and whether, ultimately, study abroad has had a profound impact on their development (Vande Berg et al., 2012).

Furthermore, Al-Makhmari and Amzat (2012) reported that all the girls in the sample wanted to gain a general life experience, become more experienced in dealing with people, and experience new cultures and new ways of living, with 45% of them wanting to improve their English language proficiency. I assume this to be true with most, if not all, Omani students studying abroad and those wishing to study abroad. However, a gap between intentions and perceptions, and practice is possible. Spending time in the host country may not necessarily guarantee the achievement of their goals (Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004).

Vande Berg et al. (2012) stated that there is a common belief that students gain a lot of knowledge and skills while abroad, while at the same time, there is "a growing perception that students are all too often failing to engage with, and learn effectively in, the host culture" (p. 6). As a result, one must be cautious about "[the] traditional reports that study abroad transforms student lives and develop critical knowledge and skills" (p. 7).

Similarly, Gardner et al. (2009) reported that students do not seem to gain the maximum benefits from the study abroad experience due to their lack of knowledge and awareness about how to make the study abroad experience more purposeful for more effective professional, personal and learning development.

Bond et al. (2009) conducted a study to investigate the experience of Canadian post-secondary students' access and success with study abroad programmes, using a web-based survey, a public opinion poll, a web-based employer survey, and individual interviews to collect data from nearly 2,500 people including the students, faculty, and professional staff of eight colleges and universities, employers, and the general public across Canada. The results showed that although 50% of the employers preferred employing study-abroad students to those without this experience based on their belief that the students will have acquired the knowledge and skills they are looking for, 40% of the

employers were cautious about this, questioning what students learn when studying abroad. All employers, according to Gardner et al. (2009), agree that skills rather than the experience itself is what they look for with regard to employing and hiring students, for example.

The positive stories the study-abroad students share about their experiences abroad create perceptions and expectations among various people and officials that students really benefit significantly from study abroad. Such blind expectations and perceptions are more likely to make students, consciously or unconsciously, report their personal positive experiences and avoid reporting the negative ones to satisfy the expectations of parents, the public, and experts that they have learned a lot (Vande Berg et al., 2012). Vande Berg et al. (2012) referred to this influence as a “social desirability bias” (p. 23). Unfortunately, the more students view the experience positively, the more the public and officials embrace these perceptions and expectations (ibid., 2012).

However, the general reports and statements by the public and the students should not be taken as a blind guarantee to come up with generalizable conclusions. Al-Makhmari and Amzat (2012), for example, reported that female students experienced no difficulties in their social life abroad while, at the same time, they experienced homesickness and cultural shock, and faced problems with food, host families, and transportation. Research has shown that international students feel homesick when they are unable to live in harmony with the host culture or interact with the local people and so experience self-expression and psychological relief (Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune, 2011). Consequently, they start feeling lonely and then homesick, and some students may think of returning home. Based on Buckingham et al. (2000), such psychological problems can be reduced through the expressive relationships the individuals build in the host culture.

Furthermore, based on my experience as an Omani student sent to study abroad, I conclude that Omani students have been sent abroad without going through any intercultural preparation programs to increase, for example, their knowledge and awareness of the host culture abroad. This is more likely to raise the challenges they would encounter while abroad and perhaps their intercultural interactions and subsequently their development of intercultural communicative competence and self-efficacy in intercultural English language use.

The longer students stay abroad, the larger the volume of benefits and the greater their magnitude especially when the experience is well-structured and well-managed. On the other hand, the short stays (e.g., 3-6 weeks and less than a year) can have more of an impact on students’ linguistic and intercultural development when appropriately designed and planned compared to long unstructured stays. In other words, although the length of stay abroad (and its design and structure) is of significance in students’ intercultural development, the intercultural experience outcomes become more evident when students interact actively and effectively with the experience instead of just leaving the achievement of outcomes to time. The more active individuals are in their stays

abroad, the more gains they achieve in even shorter periods of time. Therefore, students vary in their intercultural learning in accordance with the level of exploitation of the experience and the time and investment spent in making various efforts during their stay abroad (Behrnd & Porzelt, 2012; Czerwionka, Artamonova, & Barbosa, 2015; Dunkley, 2009; Dwyer, 2004; Gitimu, 2010; Hutchins, 1996; Ingraham & Peterson, 2004; Jackson, 2009; Kaypak & Ortaçtepe, 2014; Kehl & Morris, 2008; Llanes & Muñoz, 2009; Sasaki, 2011).

Intercultural interventions, including study-abroad preparation programmes, are meant to increase study-abroad benefits. However, in the absence of interventions and intercultural interactions for international students abroad, stay-in-Oman students may develop better intercultural competencies than those abroad if they undergo appropriate cultural and linguistic instruction at home (Biraimah & Jotia, 2012; Jackson, 2015). Thus, study-abroad experiences accompanied by intercultural interventions are more effective than those without these interventions (Bennett, 2009).

On the other hand, the lack of such interventions does not mean that the students would not develop interculturally at all, provided that the international students maintain positive intercultural qualities such as a positive, approachable, open-minded, tolerant, and curious personality, and that they take ownership of their study abroad (Kuchinke et al., 2014; Paige & Vande Berg, 2012; Vande Berg et al., 2012).

For example, Jackson (2008) carried out an ethnographic case study with 14 full-time advanced Chinese foreign language students who took part in a five-week sojourn, using the theoretical framework of the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), along with the Intercultural Development Inventory which was administered to the participants before and after their stay in England. The study showed that although none of the participants had ever taken a course in intercultural communication, anti-racist education, or multiculturalism prior to joining their study-abroad programme, their use of English had largely been restricted to the academic setting in Hong Kong, most had experienced a very limited exposure to informal, social English before travelling to England, and few had any personal relationships across cultures, nonetheless, the students achieved a more advanced level of proficiency in English. According to the researcher, a complex and sophisticated intercultural experience leads to a better development in one's intercultural communications. Moreover, the more sustained intercultural contacts resulted in a higher level of socio-pragmatic awareness and the students picked up more colloquial expressions in English.

The comments raised above are not meant to blindly conclude that students do not learn anything at all while abroad. They do, in fact, learn, but to varying degrees (Vande Berg et al., 2012; Wang, 2014). Nor should it be taken to mean that the study-abroad experience would not add anything at all to international students' language competence, for example (Collentine, 2009). However, an investigation of what is "added" is necessary to determine the impact of study abroad on students'

language competence. It is important to avoid falling into the trap of “leaping from the fact that certain students learn a lot to the untenable conclusion that most if not all students therefore learn a lot” (Vande Berg et al., 2012, p. 24). Thus, Vande Berg et al. (2012) added, “We...need to pay much more attention both to the ways we are framing the concept of ‘student learning’ and the sorts of evidence we are relying on before we conclude that students, in general, are ‘learning well abroad’” (p. 24).

Although some people still believe that study-abroad students expand their cultural growth more than those at home due the intercultural exposure they experience while abroad (Bennett, 2009), such growth and effective learning is possible only when students “move beyond their comfort zone and explore cultures and peoples who differ significantly from themselves and their personal experiences” (Douglas & Jones-Ridders, 2001, p. 64). This is attainable when students build authentic relationships with those from different cultures (Deardorff, 2009b). Through these dedicated intercultural interactions, students tend to restore their comfort zone (Cushner, 2005) and achieve greater language and intercultural gains than their peers staying in the home country and studying the target language; otherwise, there is a possibility that there would be no differences between students abroad and at home (Cohen & Shively, 2007; Collentine, 2009).

This gives rise the following questions: “What is it that the rapidly growing number of ...[Omani] students abroad are in fact typically learning through the experience[?]” (Vande Berg et al., 2012, p. 7), and what is the cause? Is it the intercultural context or the students’ incompetence in making use of the available intercultural contexts for their linguistic and intercultural development by turning these contexts into opportunities for development?

2.4 Factors Motivating International Students to Study Abroad

From the sections above, we came to realize the importance of higher education to the Omani government and subsequently the increasing numbers of Omani students sent abroad. Hence, it is important to know the Omani students’ motivation for higher education. Before that, this part will clarify the definition of motivation, its importance for intercultural interactions and for subsequently harvesting study-abroad benefits, as well as identifying the factors influencing the motivation to interact with other cultures and international students’ motivation to study abroad.

Motivation is the drive that pushes individuals to do or approach something in a certain way. While individuals can be internally motivated to gain self-satisfaction as a rewarding result of their actions, they can also be externally motivated to gain satisfaction for others or avoid a punishment or an unpleasant reaction (Schmitz, 2012). While it has a positive side (willingness to communicate), it also has a negative side, which is communication apprehension (Morreale, 2007).

Research has shown that individuals’ motivation to participate in study-abroad programs increases as undergoing the experience is perceived as important and as generating a greater volume of personal, linguistic, academic, professional, financial, and career benefits to them. The likelihood

of engaging in such a task decreases as the task is perceived as providing little or no benefits of interest or generating more costs than benefits (Hackney, Boggs, & Borozan, 2012; Kaypak & Ortaçtepe, 2014; Presley, Damron-Martinez, & Zhang, 2010; Relyea, Cocchiara, & Studdard, 2008; Zhuang, King, & Carnes, 2015).

Willingness to study abroad also increases as individuals have positive previous personal international experience and fewer committed personal relationships as well as having higher levels of self-efficacy in communication, geographical proximity, and the urban nature of the location, and whether travelling alone or in company (Hackney et al., 2012). Individuals with less ethnocentrism, intercultural communication apprehension, and prejudice, and with greater language interest were more likely to have positive expectations of study abroad and subsequently to take the decision to undergo the experience; in contrast, language competence and intolerance of ambiguity may not be accurate predictors of study abroad expectations (Kim & Goldstein, 2005). The desire to experience something different was among the motivating factors for students' participation in study-abroad programmes (Zhai, 2000). On the other hand, students may have less motivation to study abroad when they experience, for example, financial barriers and education system incompatibility (Huják, 2015).

Significant people around the students were also found to play a role in forming these intentions. Students perceive study abroad as more valuable and appealing if significant people around them share the same belief, especially when financial support is offered to them (Zhuang et al., 2015). Having family or friends with positive international experiences as well as being of a younger age were also found to increase individuals' willingness and feelings of enthusiasm to study abroad (Hackney et al., 2012; Hammer, 2012a; Hammer, 2012b; Pope et al., 2014). In addition, students become more willing to take part in such an experience if they perceived more control over the experience through the availability of the necessary support that facilitates the accomplishment of the study-abroad experience (Zhuang et al., 2015).

Although several factors intervene in students' intentions to study abroad, the decision to study abroad is largely determined by the volume of values and benefits the students perceive they will gain from the experience compared to the costs (Zhuang et al., 2015).

However, while students may also study abroad for cultural goals, such as improving their English language skills and building intercultural relationships, these goals may not be easily attainable by just being abroad, especially in the absence of support and individuals' active roles in their learning and experiences. Achieving the cultural goals is challenging. However, Milstein (2005) reported positive correlations between individuals' self-reported challenge of their sojourn and the reported perceived change in self-efficacy, and between the self-reported success of the sojourn and the perceived communication self-efficacy scores. The more respondents rated their overseas

experience as challenging, the more they reported a perceived increase in communication self-efficacy.

After all, although students set several goals for study abroad, they tend to be more concerned with achieving the goals that are more important to them and accordingly tend to develop more in the variables associated with these goals (Cheng, 2014; Huják, 2015; Sasaki, 2011; Schweisfurth & Gu, 2009).

2.5 Omani Students' Motivation to Study Abroad

My review of the existing literature did not encounter any research explaining the Omani students' motivations to study abroad. Thus, I extrapolated from Omani students' motivation for higher education at the local educational institutions to help understand their motivations to study abroad.

Omani students largely approach education, including higher education and training, instrumentally. They perceive education as beneficial as long as it achieves their instrumental goals, such as getting jobs with suitable salaries or financial returns including promotions rather than gaining education and skills on their own or being interested in cultural life and intellectual benefits. It is observed to become less beneficial by the attainment of these instrumental ends (Alyahmadi, 2006; Brummer, 2013).

Due to financial and social circumstances, Omani families may also pressure their children to join higher education not only to improve their incomes and subsequently reduce the financial burden from them but also to generate social standing, as higher education qualifications are considered prestigious. To achieve such a purpose, Omani students largely prefer joining higher education institutes that carry the name 'university' over other institutes, giving less concern to technical education and vocational training institutions (Alyahmadi, 2006). Brummer (2013) added that besides being expected to support their families financially and socially, students themselves were expected to build their own independent personal lives. Therefore, the students strongly believed that their college studies would support their efforts in achieving these goals. Indeed, 75.2% of the students aspired to become managers due to the respect they would receive and their wish to help people to become better workers.

The instrumental approach of higher education has extended to include English language learning. Similar to other Arab students, Omani students seek opportunities for English language learning for more instrumental reasons than integrative ones (Al-Issa, 2014; Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2014; Al-Tamimi & Shuib, 2009; Fahmy & Bilton, 2010).

This instrumental approach to education and to English language learning in particular may be rooted in a belief that proficiency in English does not directly affect their everyday social life (Fahmy & Bilton, 2010), which may demotivate them in learning. Moreover, Brummer (2013) demonstrated

that almost 80% of his interviewed students preferred working in Oman or the Arabian Gulf while nearly 20% aimed to work in the West for a while. According to Al-Issa (2014), with students' current instrumental view of English as an example, Omanisation is more likely to face serious challenges in its advancement.

In summary, Omani nationals' demand for higher education is based on both economic and social goals, as, in general, they believe that attaining a higher education qualification is strongly linked with higher incomes and promotions, and social positions. Hence, other activities that have less potential for achieving these ends may be perceived as less beneficial and less important. However, according to Alyahmadi (2006), it is wrong to perceive higher education merely as a means to increase income. While wanting to improve one's income is natural, the emphasis on improving incomes through higher education raises concerns about how these nationals are really prepared in terms of professionalism, skills, and competencies to play a real part in Oman's development. The pursuit of education should not be at the expense of people's intellectual development and the state's development. The development of nations implies the development of new skills, knowledge and competencies, and learners are no longer expected to just obtain information; they are also expected to go further into building knowledge through their interactions with the outside world by studying abroad, for example (McLoughlin, 2014).

As explained above, Omani peers and family members strongly intervene in students' decision to join higher education, and students are expected to comply with the pressure from family members. This intervention is more likely to play a role in encouraging students to study abroad for obtaining further economic, professional, career, and social benefits beyond those that can be obtained at home. Hence, study abroad, especially in the UK and the US, for example, is highly appreciated among the Omani public and officials. However, such a family intervention is more likely to have a negative effect on students' cultural adaptation in the host cultural environment especially when their goals and motivation to study abroad (e.g., living up to others' expectations) are less self-determined. These students are more likely to have a tendency to be less intrinsically motivated to study abroad (Chirkov et al., 2007; Chirkov et al., 2008). Therefore, adaptation stress is more likely to occur, as students are more burdened with the expectations of their home country, family, and friends who have faith in them, and the state that has sponsored them (Chen, 1999; Pitts, 2009). According to Hadis (2005), the higher individuals' independence in making their own decisions to study abroad, the more open-mindedness and global mindedness they develop, as well as their intercultural adaptation and adjustment. Similarly, (Schartner & Young, 2020) showed that besides good knowledge of the host country, cultural empathy, and social initiative, autonomy in the decision to study abroad contributed significantly not only to students' sociocultural adaptation but also to their academic and psychological adaptation.

Furthermore, based on Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide, and Shimizu (2004), Omani students' instrumental motivation behind education and language learning explained above are more likely to extend to include study abroad as a general experience and to include intercultural interactions while abroad as well. The type of motivation to study abroad (instrumental or integrative) determines individuals' engagement with the different aspects of study-abroad and, subsequently, the kind and magnitude of learning outcomes from studying abroad. Research has shown that individuals may study abroad for different instrumental and integrative goals. However, unlike instrumental motives, the integrative motives to study abroad are the ones that are found to boost students' development in language and intercultural competences (Apple & Aliponga, 2018; Badstübner & Ecke, 2009).

For further confirmation, Hernández (2010) examined the role of integrative and instrumental motivations and interaction with the L2 culture in shaping students' speaking performance. The results showed that the study-abroad participants studied Spanish as a second language for both integrative reasons (an interest in speaking L2 with native speakers, using L2 for future travel) and instrumental reasons as well (enhance future career opportunities, competitive edge in a global job market). However, the simultaneous multiple regression analysis identified integrative motivation as a significant predictor of student interaction with the L2 and a positive relationship between students' integrative motivation and their interaction with the L2 culture. The study-abroad students with higher integrative motivation had more contact with the Spanish language outside of class in all four skills than did the students with lower integrative motivation during the one semester study-abroad programme. The students who reported having the most contact with the L2 culture developed their speaking abilities more than did the students who had less.

Intercultural communication is unlikely to occur if individuals are not intrinsically motivated to interact with those from other cultures. Although external motivation helps develop intercultural communication competence, albeit in a limited way, the lack of intrinsic motivation may lead to incompetent communication, as individuals may communicate cross-culturally to achieve solely contemporary goals (like shopping), to simply 'survive', or to gain an external reward, which, once achieved, result in the intercultural relationship being abandoned.

In general, the magnitude and volume of individuals' benefits from intercultural interactions while abroad increases in relation with the level of their ICC, which correlates positively with several factors, among which is the motivation to communicate with culturally distinct individuals (Morreale, 2007; Neuliep, 2012; Spitzberg, 2000).

Research has shown that the increase in individuals' willingness to communicate (WTC) leads to an increase in the frequency and amount of time spent in interactions with English native speakers both inside and outside the classroom. This correspondingly tends to improve their speaking abilities, for example. The improved speaking abilities in turn lead to an increase in WTC,

and in the frequency and amount of L2 communication, which increases the individuals' self-confidence in these interactions as well as their satisfaction with the sojourn experience and with friendships with their hosts during the sojourn (Kang, 2014; Yashima et al., 2004). Based on Yashima et al. (2004), students with higher self-confidence in communication in an L2 and a greater interest in international affairs, occupations, and activities tend to be more willing to communicate in the L2 and voluntarily engage in communication more frequently.

The corrective feedback that individuals receive in their interactions with the native English speakers and their integration of that feedback into their knowledge tend to improve their ICC and subsequently their WTC (Fernández-García & Martínez-Arbelaiz, 2014; Kang, 2014; Schmitz, 2012). However, the feedback and evaluations received from other people may exert a negative impact on individuals when they go in the opposite direction to individuals' self-expectations (Pikhart, 2014b).

As previously explained, motivation increases in accordance with individuals' perception of the importance of undergoing the task of communication and subsequently its development in relation to the relative cost/benefit ratio of the course of action. It also increases with the higher levels of the individuals' confidence in the social context and their self-perception of their ability to perform and engage in the action (Spitzberg, 2000).

Interactions are initiated in response to the corresponding individuals' WTC. This WTC and the subsequent engagement in actual interactions is influenced by contextual factors, such as group size, interlocutor familiarity, interlocutor participation, interest and familiarity with topics under discussion, self-confidence in spoken language and relative task, medium of communication, and cultural background (Cao & Philp, 2006).

Cultural differences were also found to lead to differences in individuals' WTC. When in an intercultural context, individuals from collectivist national cultures tended to show less WTC with individuals from individualist national cultures due to communication apprehension, which was observed to have a negative impact on their communication and language competence development. Self-perceived communication competence was the most significant variable predicting WTC in both Chinese and American individuals. However, the longer time these individuals are immersed in a foreign country, the more willing they are to communicate with its residents (Lu & Hsu, 2008).

Despite its importance, motivation on its own is insufficient to trigger linguistic and intercultural competence improvements. Contact with people from other cultures is also needed (Hernández, 2010; Rudd & Lawson, 2007b; Schmitz, 2012). Moreover, along with motivation, competent communication also requires individuals to develop knowledge of the situation and the communication process, and the necessary skills to carry out communication (Spitzberg, 2000). In addition, knowledge of self and others and tolerance of uncertainty, in conjunction with motivation,

are considered essential components for intercultural interactions to take place, and these components interact relationally (Rudd & Lawson, 2007b).

Active intercultural experiences require the development not only of motivation as well as of self and other knowledge and awareness but also of more intercultural mindfulness and cognitive flexibility, accompanied by determination and commitment to these experiences. People understand themselves and others better by stepping out of their comfort zones through dedicated interactions and encountering new experiences along with reflecting on communication encounters for the purpose of identifying the barriers to intercultural communication and its effectiveness and appropriateness, and adapting the acquired knowledge to interacting with new experiences in what is known as cognitive flexibility (Schmitz, 2012).

Individuals can appear competent in communication by developing vertically in one or two aspects (e.g., motivation, situational and processual knowledge and skills) of communicative competence; however, higher levels of competence and maturity in communication also require developing horizontally across all aspects (Spitzberg, 2000).

Despite its significance, study abroad alone may have only a limited impact on students' development; however, setting goals (especially those that are challenging), and dedicating time and effort to achieving the intended goals is more likely to maximize the impact of study abroad on students' development (Badstübner & Ecke, 2009; Kitsantas, 2004; Yang, Webster, & Prosser, 2011). It should be noted, though, that the type of motivation (instrumental or integrative) determines the type of learning outcomes of study abroad.

Competent intercultural communicators set cultural goals for learning, whose achievement may require challenging one's own beliefs and values. Individuals' intercultural awareness should enable them to anticipate what others are thinking and thus adjust their behaviours to meet goals and contextual requirements. This means that individuals should emphasize meeting not only their own needs but also those of their counterparts (Yoshida, Yashiro, & Suzuki, 2013).

As authentic face-to-face interactions provide opportunities for learning, they can also be opportunities for relation destruction. Rudd and Lawson (2007b) stated that "without knowledge (e.g., linguistic, ontological, cultural, negotiation), skill (e.g., appropriate and effective strategy selection, empathic listening), or motivation (e.g., uncertainty, communication apprehension), communication competency is not likely to be achieved" (Rudd & Lawson, 2007b, p. 171) and also commented that "these three general factors are interrelated [so] that a deficiency in one impacts at least one of the other components. The deficiency reduces the likelihood of achieving a high level of ICC" (Rudd & Lawson, 2007b, pp. 171-172).

2.6 Expectations as Motives to Study Abroad

While some students may report having various goals for deciding to study abroad, some of these goals are based on expectations, which are among the range of factors that encourage students to study abroad. For example, they expect that by being abroad, they will experience integration into the host environment and have social interactions with other students and host locals and thus will have opportunities to improve their English (Hammad, 2016). Some students may also consider that study abroad will be the same as study at home or even easier, and thus, they expect to achieve the same academic performance they are used to achieving at home (Pitts, 2009).

However, such expectations may be confronted by a contradictory reality due to unexpected challenges (Hammad, 2016; Pitts, 2009). For example, Gu, Schweisfurth, and Day (2010) reported that in their research, more than 80% of respondents to the first survey reported being confident about using English both inside and outside the classroom, but the feeling of embarrassment at not being able to answer questions in class was the most unexpected concern (7% before arrival in the UK vs 44% by the time of the first survey). Similarly, only 18% of the participants reported having worries about speaking in class discussions before arrival, but this increased to 36% after arrival. The same applied to establishing relationships with lecturers (3% before departure vs 23% after arrival) and understanding their expectations (10% pre-departure vs 27% after arrival).

A fifteen-month ethnographic study conducted by Pitts (2009) among US students in France also showed that the American students expected “to develop a French social network, to continue a long distance relationship with French friends once they returned to the States, and to always have a friend of the family to return to in Paris” (*ibid.*, p. 454). However, in contrast to their expectations, they were confronted with challenges in forming social ties with people in France. While the American students preferred socializing in large groups, their French colleagues preferred socializing within smaller and more intimate groups, and cross-sex friendships were less common than in America.

Such an experience could lead to stress and anxiety, and feelings of disappointment, as the experience did not meet their expectations, as determined by the size of the gap between these expectations and reality. Such a gap is likely to have a negative impact on students’ adjustment to the new environment (Hammad, 2016; Pitts, 2009). According to research, the less knowledgeable individuals are of the experience, the higher and more unrealistic are their expectations and subsequently the less comfortable, secure, and confident they feel in living in their new cultural experience (Al-Harathi, 2005; Brosan, Reynolds, & Moore, 2008; Chen, 1999; Hammad, 2016; Kruger & Dunning, 2009; Lockley & Yoshida, 2016; Pitts, 2009).

Pitts (2009) discovered that the host university, co-students, friends/family at home, the host family, and the home university are major sources of these expectations. However, according to *ibid.*,

expectation gaps tend to decrease over time through the provision of advice, introductory talk, information sharing, humour, storytelling, gossip, complaining, and supportive talk. Everyday talk with co-nationals helped international students refine and create new expectations for study abroad and, thus, experience better adjustment to the host culture, including its educational system. However, according to Pedersen et al. (2011), spending more time with co-nationals may not enhance any further adjustment to the new culture. In fact, spending more time with co-nationals may lead to less satisfying and less culturally engaging experiences, which is a negative effect of travelling in large groups of co-nationals.

To extend the argument above, the lack of knowledge and experience not only makes individuals form unrealistic expectations prior to their departure abroad, but it also gives them an unrealistic sense of their abilities and weaknesses, and subsequently, an overestimation of their abilities and an underestimation of the effort required for undertaking the experience. Once these abilities are ‘challenged’ by being put to the test during the new experience, individuals tend to form more realistic estimations of their abilities. Consequently, their performance scores tend to decline compared to those recorded prior to the experience (Lockley & Yoshida, 2016; Savicki et al., 2004).

However, undergoing the new experience on its own may not necessarily make individuals have a better sense of their abilities and of the culturally distinct people around them, especially, for example, when these individuals’ interactions with people from other cultures are shallow or unchallenged. Therefore, even when undergoing the experience, less experienced and less skilled individuals tend to overestimate their competencies in the researched field (inflated responses), though they are observed to be less competent when evaluated by researchers and experts (Brosan et al., 2008; Kruger & Dunning, 2009). Bennett (2009) used the example of driving a car to explain the individuals’ overestimation of their abilities, where “nearly everyone thinks they’re great at it, no matter what the outside observation might be!” (ibid., p. S7).

Besides the unchallenged experiences, individuals’ current experience of positive intercultural interactions can make them overconfident and lead them to overestimate their intercultural competences (Abbe, Geller, & Everett, 2010).

The argument above forms another reason that undermines the findings revealed by Al-Makhmari and Amzat (2012) since their research did not provide a clear picture of Omani female students’ intercultural interactions while abroad and, subsequently, the benefits they gained from these interactions. The finding that “all girls agreed that study abroad experience is beneficial to Omani women” (ibid., p. 92) could be based on students’ overestimation of their abilities and a lack of any sense of the different aspects of study abroad and, consequently, its various benefits.

2.7 Omani Students' Language Abilities in Communication

This section discusses the importance of language abilities and intercultural awareness in intercultural communications before exploring the research investigating the Omani learners' communicative abilities and the possible challenges they might encounter in intercultural situations abroad.

To begin with, a study conducted by Al-Bulushi and Al-Issa (2012) at Sultan Qaboos University in Oman investigated the language learning strategies used by EFL Omani students out of class and showed that most of the strategies used by Omani students are receptive and passive in nature, involving more listening and reading than speaking and writing. This was attributed to a lack of authentic face-to-face communication outside the classroom, which "require[s the students] to draw on their receptive and productive knowledge of the target language, take initiatives, and use more than one skill at the same time to receive and send messages" (p. 286) - such abilities characterize the competent language user. The researchers also discovered that the cultural contact strategy had the lowest mean among the participants. According to Al-Bulushi and Al-Issa (2012), although Omani students use English with their friends and English language teachers, the most significant aspect is how frequently and communicatively English is used by the learners. However, in reality, English is used only occasionally by students because it is perceived as a foreign language, as also noted by Al-Mahrooqi (2012).

Due to the Omani students' limited contact with native English speakers in Oman, Fahmy and Bilton (2010) discovered that students lacked confidence in their English oral communicative abilities.

Moreover, Al-Harathi (2005) conducted phenomenological research with six purposefully sampled Arab Gulf graduate students, including two females, taking online courses for degree programmes in the US, which revealed that the participants also faced linguistic difficulties in terms of the reading and writing skills that were required for taking online courses. Even 'receptive' skills presented a challenge to some students.

In addition, Al-Mahrooqi (2012) investigated how English communication skills are taught in Omani schools and higher education institutions from a student perspective, using written protocols to explore their lack of communicative ability in English. The sample included 58 second to fifth year respondents from different majors at Sultan Qaboos University. There were 27 females and 31 males, aged 19 to 23. In the sample, 25 participants were English majors, and the rest studied their majors in English. Non-English majors went through a year of foundation English and studied two to three English for specific purposes courses in their first and second year. The study revealed that all participants agreed on the importance of English communication skills in Oman, as English is required for success in education and employment (instrumental motivation). To students, being

able to communicate in English reflects their linguistic competence, equips them with confidence, earns them respect, and saves them from being misunderstood or even being considered rude or impolite when they fall back on their first language and translate Arabic expressions which are appropriate in their native culture but unacceptable in English. However, according to Al-Mahrooqi (2012), there are no courses devoted to teaching communication skills and pragmatics. Hence, most students in the study felt that their communication skills were poor. Students on the verge of graduation expressed this with regret and sorrow.

The grammar-based instruction is viewed as learning about the target language as opposed to learning to communicate in that language (Blake et al., 2000). Graduates of educational systems that place more emphasis on accuracy over fluency tend to suffer from poor performance in English language especially in intercultural communication situations (Kaypak & Ortaçtepe, 2014; Zhou & Griffiths, 2011). Similarly, improving communication requires not only better speaking abilities but also better listening and observation of cultural differences, and requires that situations be approached with no pre-judgements (Fantini & Tirmizi, 2007).

In the Omani educational system, the focus in language learning on language content rather than practice, and on receptive skills rather than productive ones may lead to cognitive, affective, socio-cultural, and meta-cognitive issues with students' learning of the language and its intensive use in real life contexts (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). For example, according to Jin and Cortazzi (2006), the graduates of this culture of practice are more likely to lack confidence in their language use and, subsequently, may encounter difficulties in speaking the language spontaneously in group work and discussions without sufficient preparation time. This finding could apply to intercultural contexts where preparation time is almost non-existent and quick exchanges are required. Jin and Cortazzi (2006) explained that "[w]ithout preparation [the learners] risk errors and fear of making mistakes is compounded by fear of losing face" (p.19), and learners may thus decide to withdraw or avoid such interactions. All the factors above can limit learning outcomes in the counterpart educational systems.

2.8 Linguistic Challenges

This section explains the positive correlation between the English language abilities and intercultural interactions, reliance on standardized language tests in determining language and intercultural communication capabilities, the relationship between language and culture, and finally the status and importance of culture teaching in English language teaching programmes in Oman.

2.8.1 English Language Competence and Intercultural Communication

For a better intercultural experience abroad, Omani students' maintenance of a high level of competence in the target language is a prerequisite not only for success in everyday life and academic studies in the host country but also for success in intercultural communications and

adjustment in intercultural environments (Fantini & Tirmizi, 2007; Froese, Peltokorpi, & Ko, 2012; Lebcir, Wells, & Bond, 2008; Pikhart, 2014b; Sutin, 2011; Zhang & Mi, 2010).

For example, Young et al. (2013) revealed that the academic success for international students abroad was strongly associated with language proficiency in English as well as high cultural empathy, open-mindedness, social initiative, and high levels of contact with non-co-national international students. International students' overall satisfaction with life in their sojourn was associated with language proficiency, emotional stability, and degree of contact with host nationals.

Teng (2005) also demonstrated that there is a positive relationship between confidence in communication and students' self-perceived English proficiency, confidence in communication and the acquisition of cross cultural communication skills, and confidence in communication and the development of a sense of community. According to Yang, Noels, and Saumure (2006), this happens because using the English language with confidence in carrying out everyday tasks reduces the number of sociocultural difficulties and subsequently improves the individual's psychological adjustment to the new culture. Such confidence is subsequently found to increase the individual's ICC (Chen, 1999; Sutin, 2011).

While confidence in carrying out intercultural tasks is important to ensure intercultural interactions take place, these interactions in return feed this confidence. Cubillos and Ilvento (2012) revealed that participation in a study abroad programme, regardless of its length or destination, had a significant positive impact on students' self-efficacy perceptions in all foreign language skills (especially listening, and speaking); however, the extent of self-efficacy gains was found to have an association with the amount and quality of interaction. Informal and unstructured intercultural interactions (accidental interactions) did improve the students' self-efficacy perceptions; however, for more improvement, students should be encouraged to engage in more regular, purposeful, and structured intercultural interactions, according to Cubillos and Ilvento (2012).

The confidence in English communication increases interactions with the host individuals and subsequently with the host culture. These interactions in turn help students gain more comfort and confidence in English communication in informal situations, and subsequently, they experience less psychological stress and better psychological adjustment (Jackson, 2009; Kashima & Loh, 2006; Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006).

On the other hand, its limitation is governed by the restricted scope of intercultural communication and adaptation to the host culture, and this accordingly increases the challenges, perceptions of threat, and psychological stress and can possibly cause social anxiety (Ali, 2014a; Butts, 2007; Matsumoto, Leroux, & Yoo, 2005; White, 2014). The psychological stress was in turn found to correlate negatively with end-of-course grade point average (Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006).

Although social anxiety is found to decrease as individuals increase their interactions with native speakers and other individuals who are not from their home countries (White, 2014), such an opportunity for language practice may be less attainable while abroad. This is because the negative attitudes toward international students may be salient in intercultural contexts where language and cultural differences (e.g., accented speech, cultural differences in non-verbal communication styles, and cultural variations in values, norms, and customs) can greatly impair communication between ethnolinguistic outgroups and are thus more likely to underlie prejudice and unrest toward foreign students (Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006; Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002).

Such negative reactions from the host locals about the differences in the language performance and cultures of international students may make international students continue to feel insecure and anxious, which may ultimately lead to socio-cultural isolation and perhaps depression. Not only this, but also such an experience “[may] have a strong and long-lasting impact on the person’s self-concept and other related cognitive, emotive, and behavioural aspects during adjustment to the unfamiliar host culture” (Chen, 1999, p. 51). According to Spencer-Rodgers and McGovern (2002), international students in their study tended to have better exposure to the English language and host culture, and subsequently, constructed intercultural understanding, as host students tended to build an intercultural understanding through their social contact with the international community.

In short, the increase in international students’ confidence in using the English language helps them settle interculturally, academically, socially, and psychologically.

2.8.2 Standardized English Tests and Intercultural Success

However, since there are no other equivalent methods to ensure the language proficiency requirements for programme admission abroad are met, international students are recommended to take an international standardized English language proficiency test, such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOFEL) (Cheng & Erben, 2012; Lebcir et al., 2008).

If we approach the international students’ performance in English as indicated solely by the scores produced by these tests, then the Omani students’ performance in the English language is reasonable, as obtaining admission to universities in the UK, the US, and Australia requires Omani students to obtain a minimum score of 6 in IELTS, and many Omani students currently studying abroad have already achieved higher than this score and, accordingly, might be expected to face fewer problems with intercultural communication and adjustment. However, research has shown that these tests should not be consistently relied upon not only as a dependable indicator of students’ competence in English language and intercultural communication in the real world but also as a

reliable predictor of academic performance (Apple & Aliponga, 2018; Brown, 2008; Chen, 1999; Cheng & Erben, 2012; Pitts, 2009; Sawir et al., 2012; Sutin, 2011; Volet & Ang, 2012).

According to Pitts (2009), although some students achieved advanced levels in language tests, they tended to face linguistic difficulties in their non-language classes and intercultural communication in general. Though some other students also entered their course with a minimum level of IELTS 6, the majority felt disadvantaged by low self-confidence in their English inside and outside the classroom and suffered feelings of anxiety, shame, and inferiority. Students reacted to this stress by retreating to co-national groups and speaking their native language, thus impeding their progression in L2 (Brown, 2008). Also, fears of negative evaluation and communication apprehension may continue to prevail among international students in intercultural encounters (Cheng & Erben, 2012).

2.8.3 Language and Culture

Above, the importance of high levels of English competence in intercultural interactions and how these interactions in return help improve this competence have been discussed.

However, language and culture are two interrelated and indispensable factors that facilitate intercultural communication. Language verbally and non-verbally operates through culture. While speaking and understanding a common language is essential for successful intercultural communication, a meaning expressed in a culture may not necessarily be interpreted and perceived similarly in other cultures (Ali, 2014a; Davids, 2013; Keles, 2013; Porto, 2013; Sharifian, 2010). For example, people from different cultures have different verbal and non-verbal communication behaviours. The different non-verbal communication behaviours, for example, can convey an array of different meanings and representations and subsequently different perceptions and interpretations of these different communication behaviours, which may create intercultural misunderstandings due to the lack of knowledge and awareness of these different communication styles (Al-Khateeb, 2009; Feghali, 1997; Keles, 2013; Lingley, 2006; Manusov & Milstein, 2005; Nazarenko, 2015; Singh & Rampersad, 2010; Zaharna, 1995). For an example of differences in non-verbal communication, while eye contact is considered important in communication in North America and is seen as a “sign of honesty” (Ali, 2014a, p. 76), it is avoided and considered rude among Korean people. Japanese people, on the other hand, prefer looking at the neck, instead of the eye, to show respect. In Muslim societies, avoiding eye contact, particularly between men and women, is most often believed to be concerned with honour and decency (Ali, 2014a). Therefore, the lack of eye contact may be associated with the weak development of intercultural competence (Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005).

Although teachers give more attention to and focus on the verbal aspects when teaching a foreign language, most of the meaning conveyed in interaction contexts comes from non-verbal

behaviours that do not have an explicit set of rules to follow as in the verbal communication and thus tend to cause most of the intercultural misunderstandings and conflicts. Moreover, people tend to rely heavily on non-verbal behaviours to interpret the received meaning, especially when the verbal and non-verbal behaviours tend to contradict each other (Matsumoto & Takeuchi, 1998; Nazarenko, 2015; Schmitz, 2012).

From above, although there is a positive association between intercultural communication and foreign language learning, language alone may not lead to success in intercultural communications, and subsequently, the development of ICC is not dependent solely on language proficiency although low levels of language proficiency can limit its development and, subsequently, the learning potential of intercultural exchanges (Candel-Mora, 2015; Martin, 2013; Rudd & Lawson, 2007b).

Malaklolunthu and Selan (2011) found that the challenges that international students face in intercultural communication and adjustment are not caused merely by language problems but more by academic, religious, personal, and social factors. In addition, some students may have an advanced level of proficiency in the host language, and yet possess an ethnocentric orientation and may thus feel uncomfortable with the host culture (Jackson, 2008, 2009). Therefore, “the developmental sequence of intercultural competence does not necessarily parallel linguistic competence” (Jackson, 2008, p. 356). However, intercultural communications become more limited when individuals experience limitations in both their linguistic and intercultural communicative competences (Liu, 2007; Zhou & Griffiths, 2011).

2.8.4 The Status of Culture Teaching in Foreign Language Programmes in Oman

Due to the impact of culture on language and intercultural communications, besides building their linguistic competence, individuals should also develop their intercultural competence in order to develop better means of intercultural adaptation and communication and subsequently greater study abroad gains (Al-Siyabi, 2012; Gillet, 1997; Gu et al., 2010; Matsumoto & Juang, 2004; Singh & Rampersad, 2010; Vande Berg et al., 2012). Therefore, besides teaching the foreign language, teachers are also expected to teach communication across cultures and develop ICC in other ways (Borghetti, 2013; Byram, Holmes, & Savvides, 2013; Sercu, 2006). However, the Omani learning context indicates a lack of intercultural awareness for both teachers and students and subsequently less awareness of the importance of integrating culture teaching in the traditional foreign language teaching.

To begin with, Al-Siyabi (2012) conducted a study at Sultan Qaboos University in Oman to investigate Omani EFL students' attitudes and behaviours regarding these cultural aspects: assertiveness, greetings, perception of time, politeness, oral traditions, face saving strategies, and rapport versus grades. In total, 23 male and female EFL teachers, from the UK, the US, Canada, India, Sri Lanka, and Arab countries, excluding Oman, responded to an open-ended email

questionnaire. The study found that most participants viewed the Omani students' greeting as unique, and teachers who were unaware of this practice considered it a sign of disrespect. Similarly, the teachers varied in the way they viewed Omani students' perception of time. While some cultures are more rigid with time, others show more tolerance. In general, most participants viewed the students as "laid back" (p. 83), as they do not consider arriving late to class a big problem, something which was considered unacceptable for some teachers. In addition, the students were found to be unaware of the appropriate language forms for expressing politeness, unintentionally sounding rude as a result. Students expressed annoyance when receiving low grades (Al-Siyabi, 2012). Furthermore, according to the study, students' irritation regarding unexpectedly poor grades may be perceived as an aggressive and disruptive behaviour to teachers from different educational and cultural environments (Brummer, 2013). Although many students believe that lecturers do care about their academic progress, they "may misinterpret the meaning of 'care' as 'give marks' solely to enable them to pass, and advance to the next level" (Brummer, 2013, p. 102).

Al-Siyabi (2012) concluded the investigation by stating that "it seems that integrating culture into the language syllabus [in Oman] still suffers and is still superficial" (p.89). The same conclusion was reached by Al-Issa (2005), who concluded that the presence of culture in English language teaching in Oman is missing, at least at the implementation level, which, according to Al-Issa (2005), has led to a failure in students' linguistic development. Even when culture teaching is there, the largest concern is given to language teaching, though practice is also largely missing.

Omani students' actual interactions with culturally different individuals are believed to play a role in raising their cultural awareness and their communicative competence (Al-Issa, 2005; Al-Siyabi, 2012). However, the absence of basic culture teaching in the English teaching syllabus in Oman could hinder students' communications and engagements with people in the host cultures. Consequently, this may negatively affect the development of self-efficacy in using English in authentic face-to-face intercultural communications and of intercultural communicative competence. Collentine (2009) reported that "the learners' predisposed cognitive abilities determine how much one can produce (and how fast) as a result of SA [Study Abroad]" (p.223).

2.8.5 The Importance of Culture Teaching in Foreign Language Programmes

As explained previously, language does not comprise just syntax and lexicon. Culture is also embedded in language. Therefore, culture not only has an impact on the functions, pragmatics, and lexicons of a language (Matsumoto et al., 2005) but also influences people's interpretation and perception of meaning and, thus, their intercultural communication (Genç & Bada, 2005; Matsumoto et al., 2005). Culture creates expectations about the communication process and abilities, and, subsequently, value judgements and emotional reactions that may appear as

ethnocentrism or stereotyping in intercultural communication contexts (Matsumoto & Takeuchi, 1998).

Therefore, teaching a language without cultural awareness can lead to failures in intercultural communications, such as misunderstandings, communication breakdowns, or intercultural conflicts (Genç & Bada, 2005; Hamilton & Woodward-Kron, 2010; Matsumoto & Juang, 2004; Singh & Rampersad, 2010). These conflicts may represent “[an] experience of emotional frustration on mismatched expectations between people’s values, norms, goals, scarce resources or outcomes during an intercultural exchange” (Davids, 2013, p. vi). Students experiencing these difficulties and frustrations may end up surrendering to intercultural isolation (Vande Berg et al., 2012). This holds particularly true because language barriers and cultural differences may be major sources of challenge in the intercultural experiences of many international students (Jung, Hecht, & Wadsworth, 2007).

Hence, culture teaching should be integrated as part of the foreign language teaching. The exclusion of culture from the teaching of language makes language teaching dry and deficient, and does not effectively serve the development of students’ ICC (Hamilton & Woodward-Kron, 2010; Mason, 2011). According to Reid (2015), acquiring and developing an ICC is not an easy task; however, the fundamental components that teachers should be aware of when intending to do so are the following:

[s]ocio-cultural knowledge (everyday living, living conditions, interpersonal relations, history, values, beliefs, taboos, social conventions, ritual behaviour), sociolinguistic competences (greetings, addressing, dialect, accent, register, positive and negative politeness, idioms, etc.), pragmatic competences (advising, persuading, urging, socialising, interaction patterns) and non-verbal communication (body language, gestures, eye contact, proxemics, etc.). (Reid, 2015, p. 940)

In the end, increasing students’ intercultural awareness and understanding is essential not only in building effective intercultural communications but also because knowing about the host culture enhances and encourages the learning of the target language through its impact on the development of positive attitudes toward the host culture. Positive attitudes and curiosity regarding intercultural learning should improve ICC and professionalism (Genç & Bada, 2005; Shaftel, Shaftel, & Ahluwalia, 2007). In addition, learning a foreign language and intercultural communication are interdependent, as each facilitates and improves the other (Candel-Mora, 2015). Finally, while basic intercultural learning can take place in the classroom, it is also attainable through experiential learning through real life intercultural interactions (Callen & Lee, 2009). Teaching culture in class should not be restricted only to teaching content and context, as engaging students in deep reflections on these contexts and content can, to a certain extent, compensate for the absence of

experiential learning, and hence should be indispensable to L2 and culture learning (Shin, Eslami, & Chen, 2011).

In sum, the educational system in Oman does not seem to equip learners with the basic competencies that qualify them for intercultural communications, as it results in teaching dry language content and providing fewer opportunities for practice. Teaching basic elements of communication in addition to the foreign language would enable Omani students to build upon these elements when studying abroad.

2.9 Educational Challenges

This section explains the differences between individualist and collectivist cultures in education and, subsequently, the possible consequences of studying abroad in an individualist educational system for international students coming from collectivist national cultures, particularly from the Middle East.

2.9.1 The Collectivist Culture of Education

The education system in the collectivist culture is more teacher-centred (Al-Sadi, 2012; Derderian-Aghajanian & Wang, 2012; Jin & Cortazzi, 2006; Kelly, 2009). Hence, the focus is on teaching methods rather than on learning methods, including self-learning (Al-Sadi, 2012).

In this education system, teachers and textbooks are largely considered the major sources of learning. Hence, teachers in this educational culture are expected to be good role models with expert knowledge and skills, who have an answer to their students' questions. Their students, in turn, are expected to follow and learn under their clear guidance and care. Therefore, learning dependence is more prevalent than learning independence; students are passive in determining their learning pathways (Al-Saadi, 2011; Jin & Cortazzi, 2006; Zhou et al., 2008). The teacher is thus viewed as "a model of authoritative learning" (p. 10) and often "as an authoritative parent to whom respect and obedience are due" (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006, p. 12). Respect not only for teachers but also for textbooks "often predominate[s] over the asking of questions and posing of doubts" (ibid., p. 19).

Students' maintenance of distance from teachers and listening without questioning or criticizing is considered a sign of learning and respect (Zhou et al., 2008). Not meeting such expectations may be interpreted by teachers "as disloyalty or reluctance to learn" (Zhou et al., 2008, p. 22) or as disrespect (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). As a result, keeping to the learning pathways determined by teachers is preferred to save space. Since learning is determined by teachers, participating in peer discussions may be perceived by these students as less beneficial to their learning (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). Due to the huge emphasis on teachers and textbooks for learning, some students of this education system may view intercultural interactions as less important in their learning and competence development, and in goal attainment.

Moreover, “[c]ertificates are valued over competence” (Brummer, 2013, p. 22). Indeed, the level of learning and competence in this education system is perceived more through grades. Therefore, students tend to chase grades and even avoid intellectual tasks at expense of their learning. Such a learning goal reduces their interest in the subject they are studying, diminishing creativity, their willingness to explore ideas, and subsequently, the development of deep thinking and qualifications for the real world. The system promotes passing tests for grade achievement and competition rather than learning (Kohn, 2011).

Nonetheless, while grades on their own are not an issue, they are more dependent on knowledge testing. The system largely emphasizes theoretical learning through modelling, mimicking, and the memorization and recall of knowledge while it gives less concern to practice and higher levels of thinking that include the understanding and application of knowledge, which require critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, such as analysing and reasoning a problem (Al-Sadi, 2012; Al Barwani, 2002; Brummer, 2013; Derderian-Aghajanian & Wang, 2012; Jin & Cortazzi, 2006; Kelly, 2009; Kohn, 2011; Walker, 2004). Hence, it is not surprising that a large number of students “believe that learning English is largely a matter of learning new words” (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006, p. 11), and subsequently, many students dedicate their time to revising and reciting long lists of new vocabulary and even exemplary textbook paragraphs due to the preoccupation with passing exams with high grades and ultimately securing employment (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). See also section 2.5: Omani Students’ Motivation to Study Abroad.

2.9.2 The Individualist Culture of Education

In comparison, knowledge in individualist education is gained through active learning, which implies active participation in discussions, criticality, independent interpretation, reflective thinking, practice, and deep understanding of the matter under study (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). Therefore, the focus of education is on the learning process, not just the product (course credits) (Al-Harthi, 2005).

The distance between learners and their teachers is also narrower than in collectivist educational contexts. Teachers in individualist learning contexts are more facilitators and organizers of learning by helping students develop creativity and independence. Critical thinking, independent learning, open-mindedness, and challenging the existing norms and notions are valued. Students are thus encouraged and expected to participate in critical dialogues and discussions rather than just listening to teachers (Zhou et al., 2008). The learning system places more value on the development of competence than merely attaining certificates. Consequently, the students feel more “secure about future and comfortable with risk and change” (Brummer, 2013, p. 22).

2.9.3 The Consequences of Learning in an Incompatible Educational System

As seen above, the individualist and collectivist educational environments largely promote different learning and teaching styles and tend to produce different outcomes and competencies. They also tend to produce different expectations between teachers and their students, and problems may thus be encountered in the learning context. Collectivist learners' survival in the individualist education system requires the use of skills that may not be widely promoted in the Middle Eastern education system (Brummer, 2013; Derderian-Aghajanian & Wang, 2012; Jin & Cortazzi, 2006; Kelly, 2009; Zhou et al., 2008).

Therefore, besides the cultural stressors, collectivist students are more likely to experience serious academic challenges and subsequently notice an influence on their academic performances when studying in a counterpart educational system, especially upon arrival (Ying, 2005). Some of these challenges, as revealed by Lebcir et al. (2008), were found to stem from the differences in teaching styles (e.g., level of detail given in lectures, speed of lectures, academic internet sources), English language and communication, and assessment methods (e.g., group or individual assessment, and the qualitative/quantitative content of assessment). Lebcir et al. (2008) added that the students' basic English language skills made them heavily reliant on the lecturers' ability to structure the lecture material and explain it in great detail. However, the new international students' communication with more experienced students gives them confidence, which may, in turn, improve their academic performance.

These academic challenges may extend to include the student-supervisor relationships. For example, Adrian-Taylor, Noels, and Tischler (2007) showed that 22% of international students (N=55) coming from different countries, specializations, and learning levels and 34% of the faculty supervisors (N=53) have experienced student-supervisor conflicts that are attributed to supervisors' lack of openness, time, and feedback; unclear expectations of students' and supervisors' responsibilities as reported by the students; and poor English language and research skills, as reported by the supervisors. The faculty supervisors reported that the international students cannot write, understand, and speak English adequately; lack adequate research skills; and are too dependent on the supervisor.

International students' inability to adjust to the new education system may lead to frustration and confusion, which may make them unable to live in harmony with the system's requirements (Chen, 1999), especially when the academic adjustments may sometimes be the most serious adjustment problems international students experience (Malaklolu & Selan, 2011; Ying, 2005).

Therefore, academic and non-academic staff members at host universities should be equipped with enough intercultural knowledge and awareness of international students' learning and cultural backgrounds to avoid such conflicts and to build an effective intercultural learning environment.

Preparing international students for learning adjustment should include making them aware that any difficulties are “normal and part of the adjustment process and thus raising their confidence and comfort” (Malaklolu & Selan, 2011, p. 837).

After all, the large gap in the learning requirements and outcome expectations of counterpart education systems, in addition to students’ over-sensitivity to academic performance, can potentially threaten the stability of Omani students’ academic, psychological, and social life and lead to an increase in the anxiety and stress experienced in this regard. Regaining psychological stability and adapting academic performance is not an easy task, as more time and effort would need to be employed in this regard, and this may be accompanied by some additional psychological problems. To meet the new learning requirements and expectations as well as to save face with regard to obtaining higher marks, some students may sacrifice socio-cultural interactions especially when perceiving a negative impact on their academic performance (Chen, 1999; Derderian-Aghajanian & Wang, 2012; Jin & Cortazzi, 2006; Kelly, 2009), perhaps at the expense of intercultural competence development and self-efficacy in intercultural English language use. Therefore, academically, as reported by Fritz, Chin, and DeMarinis (2008), international students may not differ in their reported GPAs.

2.10 Socio-Cultural Challenges

In a previous section in this thesis, I explained the impact of individualist and collectivist cultures on their adopters’ learning and their perception of learning sources. This section sheds light on some other cultural differences between collectivist and individualist cultures in the levels of individuals’ dependence and independence of their cultural groups, uncertainty and ambiguity avoidance, and their impact on communication within and outside the inner-group circle. It also explains cultural shock and its relation with intercultural interactions.

2.10.1 Dependence vs Independence

Collectivistic societies emphasize promoting loyalty to the group while the group, in turn, cares for the well-being of the individual. This leads to emotional dependence on groups and organizations and less personal privacy; group decisions and goals are superior to those of individuals, resulting in interdependence among its individuals, an understanding of personal identity as knowing one’s place within the group, and concern about the needs and interests of others (Darwish & Huber, 2003; Hua, 2019; Mujtaba, Khanfar, & Khanfar, 2010).

The protection of group identity and unity is of greater concern to people from this cultural orientation (Cushner, 2005), which is maintained by committing to the common values, principles, and regulations shared by the group members. As with all peoples, the Middle Eastern people and Muslims have their own traditions and customs. Such customs may emerge as barriers to successful intercultural communications. For example, female students are generally not allowed to go out

without a male relative or to mix with men, and men are not encouraged to mix with women who are not relatives without restrictions to prevent any direct mixing between the genders. Such behaviours may cause unrest among people from other cultures. However, any violation of these values and rules is disliked and so is confronted.

Although the group's provision of emotional and social support to its individuals has a positive impact on their level of satisfaction with and adjustment to their life especially at the beginning of the new intercultural experience (Ikeguchi, 2007), the individuals' over-dependence on the group for emotional and social support and the fear of their group's negative reactions to such violations are more likely to make them retain their relationships within their groups for positive reputation maintenance at the expense of their own individual relationships with individuals from outside the group (Kabasakal & Bodur, 2002; Lu & Hsu, 2008; Mujtaba, Khanfar, & Khanfar, 2010; Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002).

The phenomenological study by Al-Harthi (2005) showed that Arab and Omani women are constantly concerned for society's perception of their families, family names, and honour and, subsequently, the feelings of shame may appear as an obstacle to their participation in and interaction with the other culture. Subsequently, this may affect their intercultural learning, especially in the presence of men from their own culture. According to Feghali (1997), Arab females, for example, are expected to comply with their societies' norms and values and the perception of family honour to not dishonour their families. Therefore, according to Kabasakal and Bodur (2002), and Schweisfurth and Gu (2009), engaging in intercultural interactions and subsequently intercultural learning and self-development may require challenging their own culture's existing perceptions and group pressures.

Due to individuals' over-dependence on the group, the perception of the superiority of group decisions to those of individuals, the expectation of loyalty from individuals to their groups and families, and the reduced personal privacy, peers and family tend to have a huge involvement in and exert pressure on individuals' actions and when forming their learning motivations and pathways. Individuals may comply with these pressures to satisfy group members (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2014; Brummer, 2013).

On the other hand, regardless of the group's impact on its individual members, collectivist individuals find themselves more satisfied and more comfortable interacting with individuals sharing the same culture and identity, and subsequently, within their groups for shared trust; therefore, in-group relationships carry a profound significance, and the individuals feel committed to their groups. Building personal relationships and dealing with those who are culturally different involves spending a lot of time to gain trust, which may require the involvement of individuals from their group for negotiation and satisfaction before any further step can be taken to form

relationships outside the cultural group (Kabasakal & Bodur, 2002; Mujtaba, Khanfar, & Khanfar, 2010). Therefore, Chapdelaine and Alexitch (2004) showed that besides the effect of the cultural gap on intercultural interaction and the subsequent psychological status of individuals, as the size of co-national group increases, the degree of its individuals' interaction with host locals decreases to facilitate easier interaction with co-nationals.

Such a preference of interactions within the inner circle at the expense of intercultural interactions and experiential learning is also a result of ethnocentrism (the perception of one's culture as the benchmark and superior to other culture). Ethnocentric individuals tend to perceive cultural difference as a threat to their cultural identity. Thus, when these people find themselves living in another culture as a non-dominant group among a dominant group, they may stick together for solidarity and defence against the cultural differences (Arasaratnam & Banerjee, 2011; Bennett, 2004; Davids, 2013; Evanoff, 2006; Hammer, 2012a; Zhang, 2014).

Individualistic cultures, on the other hand, promote personal independence over group dependence, and thus, the personal goals and interests are prioritized over those of the group. They also emphasize the individual's and his/her immediate family's self-interest (underlining individual rights, not responsibilities), privacy, personal autonomy, self-realization, individual initiative, independence, individual decision making, understanding of personal identity as the sum of attributes of the individual, and reduced concern about the needs and interests of others (Darwish & Huber, 2003; Hua, 2019). Cushner (2005) added that people from this culture "pay more attention to what an individual does rather than who that person is" (p. 13).

2.10.2 Uncertainty and Ambiguity Avoidance

People from individualist and collectivist cultures also approach uncertainty and ambiguity differently.

People from collectivist national cultures, including Omani and other Arab students, tend to approach ambiguous and uncertain (unknown) situations with extreme avoidance, as they are concerned about performing less competently in such situations due to the feelings of threat and anxiety caused by these situations and individuals' inability to predict others' behaviours and actions due to the lack of the necessary intercultural knowledge. Subsequently, they demonstrate less confidence and motivation to interact with the unknown. They thus prefer interacting within their co-national groups to avoid further anxiety and stress. On the other hand, people from individualist cultures are characterized by a higher tolerance of uncertainty and by a better performance in uncertain and ambiguous situations, as they tend to maintain patience and thus wait for further information to become available, or they take the initiative to seek out information by themselves. Therefore, collectivist individuals' acquisition of new knowledge and awareness of self and others while abroad may not be possible without developing some tolerance of uncertainty and

ambiguity (higher levels of comfort in uncertain situations) (Al-Harhi, 2005; Cushner, 2005; Gemignani, 2009; Guirdham & Guirdham, 2017; Hua, 2019; Hullett & Witte, 2001; Matsumoto et al., 2005; Rudd & Lawson, 2007b; Schmitz, 2012; Worchel, 2005).

From the above, since intercultural interactions are accompanied by uncertainty and ambiguity, and collectivist individuals are characterised by high levels of uncertainty and ambiguity intolerance, they are more likely to avoid such situations at the expense of intercultural and linguistic development.

Uncertainty avoidance orientation can be also noticed in the collectivist educational contexts where learning is largely determined by teachers or at least occurs under their supervision in order to avoid uncertainty (Brummer, 2013). On the other hand, the intrinsically motivated individuals tend to develop a higher tolerance for uncertainty, as they are driven by their curiosity to gain a rewarding outcome of the experience (Schmitz, 2012).

According to Matsumoto et al. (2005), higher levels of uncertainty avoidance are also associated with lower levels in emotion regulation and thus less constructive intercultural learning, and people of this orientation tend to rely more on pre-existing knowledge (ethnocentrism and stereotypes) and vice versa. Furthermore, Neuliep (2012) and Froese et al. (2012) showed that the higher the levels of intercultural communication anxiety and ethnocentrism within the individuals, the more these individuals avoid interacting with people from other cultures, and subsequently, the more difficult their uncertainty reduction becomes and the less satisfying their intercultural communications and experiences turn out to be. According to Neuliep (2012), the level of individuals' communication satisfaction is an indicator of the extent to which these individuals' communicative abilities have been effective in their intercultural encounters.

After all, the larger the gap of cultural and national differences, the more difficult it becomes for individuals to show positive attitudes and form friendships with the host locals, and thus, they have the least positive experiences (Froese et al., 2012; Gareis, 2012). These differences also tend to determine the type of interactions among individuals. People from the same status group and with a similar cultural background or with a smaller cultural distance tend to form ties that are more expressive in nature when seeking friendship and social support, for example; On the other hand, they tend to form instrumental ties with those who are different with regard to these background characteristics. Behaviours such as seeking individuals of the same culture, status, or national background for developing expressive ties while relying on instrumental ties with those who are different is an indication of some degree of ethnocentrism and isolation between cultural groups (Manev & Stevenson, 2001).

People's extreme ethnocentric views can lead to cultural confrontations, increase the rejection of the other culture, and prevent the self from learning from the culturally and linguistically different Other (Genç & Bada, 2005).

Moreover, as the larger the gap of cultural differences becomes, the lower the levels of trust, commitment, cooperation, and information sharing become, subsequently, there are fewer opportunities for intercultural interactions and the development of intercultural communicative competence and self-efficacy in intercultural English language use (Mehta et al., 2006; Nes, Solberg, & Silkoset, 2007; Pikhart, 2014b; Spitzberg, 2000; Toh & Srinivas, 2012).

2.10.3 Cultural Shock

International students may also experience a number of socio-cultural challenges, among which are culture shock, discrimination, and prejudice. This section thus examines the impact of culture shock on intercultural adjustment and interactions.

Culture shock is the negative feeling that results from individuals' experience of the gap in cultural differences, which in turn, may also cause serious concerns to individuals even prior to their departure to the host country, and also the possible mismatch between their overenthusiasm for and high expectations of the new intercultural experience and the shocking reality. The degree of this shock varies in relation to the size of the cultural gap and according to the individuals' intercultural communication skills, and their awareness of and familiarity with the cultural differences that may include differences in lifestyle, food, dress, climate, social roles, and rules of values and behaviours (Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004; Gu et al., 2010; Heyward, 2002; Pitts, 2009; UK Council for International Student Affairs, 2013; Zhou et al., 2008).

Although some feelings of excitement related to the new life abroad may be present at the initial stage of the experience, this stage was observed to be overwhelmingly affected by negative symptoms (e.g., anxiety, depression, loneliness, insomnia, stress, lack of confidence, and homesickness) associated with culture shock (Brown & Holloway, 2008; Hua, 2019).

Experiencing stress while abroad is both common and natural, as students are removed from their usual social support systems and thus attempt to adapt to their new cultural environment to regain mental health, according to Hunley (2010). However, higher degrees of culture shock are more likely to increase the socio-cultural, academic, and health problems encountered by individuals abroad and, accordingly, reduce the degree of intercultural adjustment and adaptation to the host culture and so affect intercultural interactions. Engaging in higher degrees of interaction with the host helps lower the degree of culture shock (Beiser, Puente-Duran, & Hou, 2015; Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004; Hua, 2019; Hunley, 2010; Jung et al., 2007; Lee, Koeske, & Sales, 2004; Redmond, 2000; Thomson, Rosenthal, & Russell, 2006; UK Council for International Student Affairs, 2013; Zhou et al., 2008).

Moreover, the appropriate social support from experts, especially at the beginning of the intercultural experience due to the intense stress, can help turn the experience of culture shock into an experience of intercultural learning and personal growth (Brown & Holloway, 2008; Heyward, 2002). This is, according to Lee et al. (2004), because the students who received a higher level of social support tended to experience lower levels of stress in their adaptation to the host culture compared to students with a low level of social support. Without support, time may bring with it increased rather than decreased mental health risks (Beiser et al., 2015).

On the other hand, although support is important to help friends and colleagues from the same cultural background cope with the new stressful environment, especially at the beginning of the intercultural experience, such support should not always be relied upon and favoured over experts' support, if the new sojourners are to be helped in further adapting and adjusting to the new culture, as their friends and colleagues may also be unsuccessful in their adaptation to the new culture and thus cannot provide any further supportive advice and assistance to the new sojourners for better and further adaptation (Spitzberg, 2000). Moreover, "Friendships and teamwork with domestic peers is problematic as the latter are not always responsive" (Andrade, 2006, p. 143).

Regarding stress, using a sample of 334 international students in Turkey from 55 different countries, Cetinkaya-Yildiz, Cakir, and Kondakci (2011) revealed that higher levels of integration to the new social life, length of stay, L2 proficiency, and subsequently, life satisfaction, correlated negatively with the psychological distress levels of international students.

2.11 Intercultural Cognition

This part explains the role of intercultural knowledge and awareness as well as the impact of stereotypes on intercultural interactions and vice versa, the relation of intercultural knowledge and awareness with prejudice and discrimination, and ultimately, the development of intercultural and linguistic competences.

2.11.1 Stereotypes and Intercultural Interactions

Stereotypes are overgeneralized beliefs, categorisations, and images held ignorantly by individuals or even created deliberately through opposing media about other cultural and ethnic groups as a whole, without individuals being aware of the cultural diversity within these groups. Stereotypes indicate a lack of personal and cultural experience, and poor intercultural knowledge and awareness. Past experiences with some individuals from other cultures can be a source of these stereotypes (Al-Rawi, 2015; Hua, 2019; Schmitz, 2012; Schneider, 2005; Zikargae, 2013).

People from different cultures recognize each other based on the mental images, categories, and representations stored in their minds, and by comparing the observed difference with their own set of standards, norms, and values to determine whether the observed behaviour, practices, and values are normal to them or are completely different from their standards before finding a way to deal with the

difference (Fedor, 2014). An individual's standards as represented by their values, norms, and beliefs build a "common understanding about who are we and who are they" (Fedor, 2014, p. 324). Therefore, cultures tend to separate people into in-groups and out-groups depending on their impacts on individuals' perception of conflicts and threats and the way they respond to them (Worchel, 2005). Given the lack of intercultural knowledge, regarding the perception of the traits of the counterpart common group, the individual is more likely to retrieve previously formed cultural overgeneralisations and activate stereotypical judgements (Malaklolunthu & Selan, 2011).

Stereotypes are often problematic when exaggerated or even oversimplified (Keles, 2013), and they are often negative (Fedor, 2014), as they push people to focus on the negative side of a cultural group and then perhaps trace evidence to confirm them (Hua, 2019). On the other hand, although some individuals may be aware of the negative intercultural generalisations (stereotypes) and thus try to control behaviours associated with these stereotypes, these stereotypes may continue to appear in intercultural contexts, especially when intercultural interactions produce evidence for individuals to rely on in their legitimisation of the generalisation in some way (Tusting, Crawshaw, & Callen, 2002).

Stereotypes (beliefs) are also problematic because they enhance affective attitudes and reactions, known as prejudice, and people may be treated based on their cultural differences. Prejudice, in turn, leads to behavioural tendencies which are referred to as discrimination (Schmitz, 2012; Schneider, 2005). The host locals' attitudes to international individuals and how much these attitudes are perceived negatively by the international individuals can influence intercultural interactions (Jung et al., 2007).

Therefore, stereotypes have a profoundly negative impact on intercultural communications. People may share a common spoken language (e.g., English) for communication and understanding; however, the negative stereotypes each holds of the other may hinder their intercultural communications (Ali, 2014b).

Stereotypes are more likely to prevail where there is little or no contact between the counterpart individuals (Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002), with the racial and ethnic stereotypes having emerged as the most dominant and harmful in intercultural contexts (Lebedko, 2014). However, stereotypes and intergroup prejudice can be reconstructed and corrected over time through learning and raising individuals' intercultural awareness as well as through direct face-to-face intercultural interactions when these interactions are approached with open-mindedness and self-awareness (Ali, 2014b; Fedor, 2014; Hua, 2019; Lebedko, 2014; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Schmitz, 2012), and stereotypes are viewed "as tentative hypotheses, open to verification" (Bennett & Bennett, 2001, p. 11).

To realise the importance of authentic intercultural interactions in correcting stereotypes, Koermer (2013) carried out research to provide Westerners with more accurate descriptions of Arabs

by examining social and communication interactions within Omani families. The researcher commented on his stay with the Omani families by stating, “my experiences with [the] Omani families were completely antithetical to those portrayed in the American media...as terrorists...I found them to be among the most approachable and hospitable people I had ever met” (Koermer, 2013, p. 196). I believe that the traits of approachability and hospitality (Koermer, 2013) as well as tolerance of otherness and foreign behaviours (Neal, 2010) that Omani people maintain help foreign people adapt quickly to the Omani Islamic culture; however, such a truth may be missed in the presence of stereotypes.

In the example given above, the Omani individuals constituted the dominant group when in Oman; however, the story is likely to be different when Omani and Arab individuals become a minority group abroad.

The ethnic, cultural, and religious differences may make Arab individuals, especially Muslim women, who frequently have a headscarf covering their hair, look different; subsequently, they are more identifiable and vulnerable to harassment, discrimination, and racism (Al-Harhi, 2005; Mahmud & Swami, 2010).

Saroglou et al. (2009) revealed that anti-veil attitudes and negative perceptions of the Islamic veil in Belgium were due to subtle ethnic and anti-religious prejudice, anti-Arab Western ethnocentrism, emphasis on power and security, and literal anti-religious thinking, which is opposite to spirituality. Spencer-Rodgers and McGovern (2002) also discovered that international students’ intercultural communication emotions (negative emotions such as feeling awkward, anxious, suspicious, and hostile, and positive emotions, such as feeling admiration, respect, happy, and confident) were strongly and uniquely related to prejudice toward those who are culturally different. The intergroup prejudice was modified by social contact with the international community.

While the negative attitudes towards and perceptions of the Islamic veil as well as Islamophobia in general and its creation of anti-Muslim feelings were attributed to some host people’s low openness to Muslims (Elchardus & Spruyt, 2014; Saroglou et al., 2009), being aware of the negative representations of Muslims as terrorists, especially after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and subsequently the practices of Islamophobia, racial, religious, and cultural discrimination and prejudice have largely affected Omani students and other Muslims’ engagement in public and private spheres; however, this has occurred to varying degrees in different countries and social contexts, as some people in the West have been sympathetic towards Muslims (Al-Harhi, 2005; Howard, Idriss, & Amenat, 2006; Kunst et al., 2012; Lane-Toomey & Lane, 2013; Mahmud & Swami, 2010). Muslims were more vulnerable to widespread unwelcoming orientations and prejudice compared to other cultural groups due to the large gap caused by cultural differences in the first place and then the

negative role played by international media and events in this regard (Safdar et al., 2008; Strabac & Listhaug, 2008).

People in general favour those who share similar cultural and personal qualities as well as a common language, history, and religion (Schmitz, 2012; Worchel, 2005) and resist change beyond their cultural values, beliefs, and practices, especially the long-held ones (Cushner, 2005). Due to the incomprehension of the confronted cultural norms and values, an inability to adapt to them, negative ethnocentricity, and ethno-cultural discrimination and prejudice, some students would prefer networking within their own cultural groups or with individuals from the next closest culture in the absence of peers from the same cultural background due to a desire for security, a shared cultural identity, emotional support and, consequently, easier communication (Chen, 1999; Derderian-Aghajanian & Wang, 2012; Fedor, 2014; Myles & Cheng, 2003; Pitts, 2009; Shaftel et al., 2007; Volet & Ang, 2012).

Competent communicators, though from different cultures, tend to develop a shared identity and have common interests that enable them to overcome the cultural challenges (Lebedko, 2014). Just being surrounded by those who are alike or similar due to a fear of the unknown and to have easier communication and learning provides comfort at the expense of intercultural growth and authentic adaptation to the host culture (Myles & Cheng, 2003; Taylor, 2006). Jackson (2009) believed that it is only “as one’s experience of cultural difference becomes more complex and sophisticated, one’s competence in intercultural relations increases” (p. S59).

2.11.2 Intercultural Knowledge and Awareness

Intercultural competence and the subsequent intercultural adaptation are more likely to increase as individuals increase their knowledge and awareness of cultural differences, and more importantly, of the counterpart culture’s subjective (unconscious) elements rather than just its objective (conscious) ones (Bennett, 2009; Cushner, 2005). Individuals tend to be more motivated to communicate, as they also develop more knowledge of the situation and of the communication process, and they develop the skills to carry out the task of communication as well as the knowledge-acquisition strategies, such as observing others, asking questions, exchanging information, deliberately violating some local customs for the purpose of value assessment of different actions in some social contexts (posturing), and engaging double agents as informants in certain problematic situations (Neuliep, 2012; Spitzberg, 2000).

Individuals’ cognitive competence should go beyond just knowing and should progress to building awareness not only of the counterpart cultural dimensions but also of one’s own culture and its impact on behaviour (Kim, 1999; Paternotte et al., 2015). This is because most of our thinking process is “‘other-focused’ meaning that the culture of the other person or group is what stands out more in our perception” (p. 117) compared to our own (Schmitz, 2012). The deeper the awareness

individuals develop of their and other cultures and subsequently of the resultant behaviours, the more the individual becomes able to communicate in intercultural contexts (Causin & Ayoun, 2011; Kim, 1999; King & Baxter Magolda, 2005; Paternotte et al., 2015).

The level of awareness rather than just knowledge reflects one's understanding of the deeper functioning of culture whose level and achievement can be traced through the changes in one's behaviours, attitudes, and openness to other cultures (Dictionary of Cross-Cultural Terminology/Inter-Cultural Terminology, n.d.; King & Magolda, 2005). Therefore, intercultural awareness is more than just gaining the cross-cultural/intercultural knowledge that reflects the "surface level familiarisation with cultural characteristics, values, beliefs and behaviours", though intercultural knowledge constitutes the foundation of intercultural awareness and is thus essential for building ICC (Dictionary of Cross-Cultural Terminology/Inter-Cultural Terminology, n.d.).

Individuals with higher levels of intercultural awareness are more likely to experience more efficient and more effective adjustment to the host culture and thus less stress and so will be more effective at work and in intercultural communications. The lower the level of intercultural knowledge, awareness, and experience, the more people tend to resist change and undergo less experiential learning and intercultural communicative development (Cushner, 2005; Pikhart, 2014a).

Individuals are more likely to develop higher levels of adaptive cognitive competence as they become involved in various intercultural contexts while suspending all pre-determined stereotypical knowledge, ethnocentrism, racism, and discrimination (Butts, 2007; Du Toit, 2004; Pikhart, 2014a, 2014b; Reid, 2015)

In the absence of intercultural awareness and knowledge, individuals tend to see cultural differences through the prism of their own culture (ethnocentrism) (Zaharna, 1995, p. 242) and so rely on their knowledge of stereotypes (Dong, Day, & Collaço, 2008). Hence, the holders of this ethnocentric perspective and stereotypes keep a distance from other cultures and show less interest in knowing about different cultural practices (Abbe et al., 2010; Hammer, 2012b; Zhang, 2014). Ethnocentrism and stereotypes, again, can be reduced through authentic interactions with the counterpart individuals (Dong et al., 2008).

The intercultural misunderstandings and conflicts resulting from intercultural stereotypes and, most importantly, from the lack of cognitive competence and competent behaviours (Davids, 2013; Martincová & Lukešová, 2015) reflect "a clash of ignorance rather than a clash of civilisations" (Eid & Karim, 2014, p. 91).

Lack of cultural knowledge is considered a major contributor to misunderstandings/miscommunications, and thus acquiring/improving cultural knowledge is essential for enhancing understanding and harmony and for reducing miscommunications in intercultural environments (Davids, 2013). To develop knowledge about other cultures and their

individuals' communication behaviours, it is essential to develop and maintain tolerance of, interest in, and empathy towards different cultures, and to avoid stereotypes and bias (Nazarenko, 2015).

Although knowledge of other cultures is important to avoid problems, it is insufficient on its own. This is because as some people from different cultures know about or notice cultural differences, they may keep apart, which could lead to intercultural conflicts (Cushner, 2005; Rudd & Lawson, 2007b; Vande Berg et al., 2012). Therefore, when people see cultural differences, they need to approach them positively with tolerance and appreciation, though it is not always an easy task, and individuals should have the ability to use and adapt the acquired knowledge in different intercultural communications. Moreover, cognition should help develop motivation, curiosity, and positive attitudes to the host culture, and subsequently, authentic effective and appropriate intercultural communications (Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005; Baten, Dugar, & Van-Maele, 2011; Cushner, 2005; Evanoff, 2006; Martincová & Lukešová, 2015; Ólafsson, 2009; Schmitz, 2012).

It is worth mentioning that the recognition and acceptance of cultural differences neither means an adoption of the difference and sacrifice of ones' cultural values and norms for the sake of Other (Hamilton & Woodward-Kron, 2010), nor does it require people "to arrive at universal ways of thinking or behaving but rather to arrive at a measure of agreement that enables people to successfully interact with each other across cultural boundaries and to solve problems of mutual concern" (Evanoff, 2006, p. 429) with higher feelings of safety and security (Abbe et al., 2010, p. 32; Worchel, 2005).

2.12 Control and Regulation of Intercultural Negative Emotions

As already mentioned, Muslims are more vulnerable to intercultural conflicts and hostility than are other cultural groups due to the negative stereotypes prevailing in the West. Even when individuals never or rarely experience incidences of racism and hostility, watching this happen to individuals from the same or a similar cultural and ethnic background may be perceived as a threat to these individuals, too. This may lead to these individuals staying abroad in isolation from intercultural interactions. It is not an easy task to forget the experience of unpleasant situations or observations of individuals attacking members from one's own culture.

Therefore, individuals' emotion regulation is important to stop the overgeneralisation of these negative images and incidences to all people in that host culture in order to enhance their intercultural learning in a more constructive way, as it ensures our worldviews are updated constantly. Such a regulation of negative emotions helps individuals engage in critical thinking about the cultural differences. Thus, individuals tend to realise that cultural misunderstandings and conflicts are more cultural than personal, and cultures are the motivation behind such behaviours. Furthermore, they become aware of the negative role played by stereotypes and ethnocentrism in intercultural interactions (Matsumoto et al., 2005).

To demonstrate further the importance of negative emotion regulation, according to Baten et al. (2011), while active listening, for example, is an essential skill in order to be able to understand, interpret, and evaluate what is heard, it becomes less effective when one is unable to suspend judgement and to manage emotions.

Therefore, individuals with a high intercultural competence are found to maintain stress management and emotion regulation especially when encountering unpleasant situations and stressors that may hinder the individuals' adjustment to the host culture (Yoshida et al., 2013). On the other hand, emotionally unstable individuals tend to show more negative emotional reactions to stressful settings and subsequently to intercultural learning (Van Oudenhoven & Van der Zee, 2002).

Nonetheless, although emotion regulation to control negative emotions is important to achieve a better adjustment, it is inadequate on its own because, as emotions get regulated, individuals' engagement in intercultural learning with open-mindedness and a suspension of stereotypes is important for further and more constructive intercultural understanding, learning, and adjustment to take place (Abbe et al., 2010; Matsumoto et al., 2001; Matsumoto et al., 2003).

2.13 Intercultural Personality Qualities

In the previous sections, I have discussed several qualities that individuals should maintain to appear competent in intercultural communications. These qualities included intercultural knowledge and an awareness of cultural differences, verbal and non-verbal abilities, tolerance of ambiguity, integrative motivation, and setting goals, etc. The number of these qualities and related factors explains how difficult it is to be cross-culturally competent. This section focuses on the personality-related qualities that individuals should maintain in order to succeed in intercultural experiences and learning abroad.

Individuals tend to have a more positive intercultural experience in accordance with the developed personality trait along with the development of linguistic and communication skills and comfort in using the host language (Yang et al., 2006). Others, even when the opportunity of interaction is readily available, are unable to make use of it, as in the case of international students staying with host families abroad (Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart, 2002).

Succeeding in intercultural situations requires individuals to have enough curiosity to make immense efforts and to allocate time for discovering the Other (Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005; Martinová & Lukešová, 2015). Quiet international students, on the other hand, tend to have less of a chance of engaging in intercultural communications and, thus, in improving their ICC, which may leave them living in isolation from the host culture (Sutin, 2011). They should have open-mindedness, flexibility in thought and tactics, and an extrovert sociable personality to relate to different cultural groups in order to have the capacity to accommodate a variety of different perspectives and subsequently better adjust to people abroad. This is achievable, as individuals maintain a high level

of ambiguity tolerance, respect, and enjoyment of cultural differences as well as discarding any previously held prejudices, and negative judgements and assumptions that mostly have no grain of truth (Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005; Caligiuri, 2000; Causin & Ayoun, 2011; Martincová & Lukešová, 2015; Ying & Han, 2006; Yoshida et al., 2013).

Being open-minded, empathizing with the feelings, thoughts, and behaviours of culturally different people; and taking the initiative for intercultural interactions all have a positive impact on the emotional stability and thus the health of the sojourners as well as their intercultural interactions (Van Oudenhoven & Van der Zee, 2002).

Finally, to build intercultural competence, individuals should also maintain curiosity, flexibility, open-mindedness, stress management/emotional stability, social initiative, patience, and humour. Host locals react positively to newcomers when they realise that these individuals have knowledge about their countries and show respect for and interest in their way of life (Ólafsson, 2009). Yoshida et al. (2013) described the inter-culturally competent communicator as “some[one] who has...mental strength, takes the initiative and is able to ... anticipate other’s needs while expressing their opinions in a clear, logical manner, and has good listening skills” (p. 84).

2.14 Assessment of Intercultural Communicative Competence

This section gives an overview of some popular research instruments that have occupied a considerable space in the current literature to build a general understanding of the most relevant and important points regarding their contents and qualities in assessing intercultural communicative competence (ICC). It also explains how the overlap and different approaches and research fields of ICC have had an impact on its assessment and the construction of research tools.

To begin with, although cultural differences and subjective social judgments may lead to different detailed interpretations and perceptions of what constitutes ‘competent’ communication at the context level (Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005; Rudd & Lawson, 2007a; Schmitz, 2012; Zaharna, 1995), there is a universal acknowledgement that ICC is the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with individuals who are culturally and linguistically different, with effectiveness in communication referring to the ability to achieve the set goals of communication, and appropriateness, on the other hand, meaning to meet the expectations, values, rules, and norms of the host people in the communication context (Arasaratnam, 2009; Bennett & Bennett, 2001; Fantini & Tirmizi, 2006; Hammer, 2015; Matsumoto & Takeuchi, 1998; Morreale, 2007; Perry & Southwell, 2011; Rudd & Lawson, 2007a; Sinicrope, Norris, & Watanabe, 2007; Spitzberg, 2000).

Despite this universal agreement on the definition above, the term ‘intercultural communicative competence’, which is also referred to as ‘intercultural competence’, has been used interchangeably with ‘cross-cultural adaptation’, ‘intercultural sensitivity’, ‘transcultural communication’, ‘cross cultural competence’ and many other terms, due to the conceptual overlap underlying this competence

(Dictionary of Cross-Cultural Terminology/Inter-Cultural Terminology, n.d.; Fantini & Tirmizi, 2006; Koester & Lustig, 2015; Sinicrope et al., 2007).

Moreover, the assessment of this competence has been affected by the varying understanding of this competence, and subsequently, by the inclusion and unequal focus on the dimensions comprising this competence, its various indicators of development as well as different domains and fields of study and the various purposes of research and needs of organizations, institutions, and industries, which may produce varying research results (Abbe et al., 2010; Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005; Bennett & Bennett, 2001; Daerdorff, 2004; Davids, 2013; Deardorff, 2009b, 2011; Fantini & Tirmizi, 2006, 2007; Garrett-Rucks, 2012; Hammer, 2015; Matsumoto et al., 2001; Matsumoto et al., 2005; Mittal, 2012; Neculăesei, 2016; Perry & Southwell, 2011; Schnabel et al., 2015).

Regarding the impact of the different purposes set for the ICC assessment operations, the instruments that are constructed for empirical research, for example, may not be equally appropriate for teachers engaged in intercultural education. Hence, a single instrument may not fit all purposes (Perry & Southwell, 2011).

Schirmer et al.'s (2005) comparison of 15 communication competence assessment tools confirmed that the evaluated instruments vary considerably in their content, psychometric properties, and usability, and no instrument received high ratings in all of the assessment categories.

Matveev and Yamazaki Merz (2014) reviewed a total of ten ICC tools (Intercultural Development Inventory, the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) and the Arasaratnam's Intercultural Communication Competence Instrument (ICCI), the Intercultural Adjustment Potential Scale (ICAPS), the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI), the Culture Shock Inventory (CSI), the Intercultural Sensitivity Inventory (ICSI), the Intercultural Competence Profiler (ICP), the Intercultural Readiness Check (IRC), and the Intercultural Competence Questionnaire (ICQ)), which also confirmed that the above instruments have assessed the intercultural competence in various ways to meet researchers' different target disciplines and to suit their contexts. The reviewed tools also do not take into consideration all the competence's dimensions (e.g., cognition, affection, and behaviours) when assessing the competence, placing more emphasis on some over others.

With regard to its composition, the Mobile Students' Intercultural Competence Scale (MSICS), constructed by Aba (2015), refers to it as a composition of three dimensions (intercultural attitudes, knowledge and skills) with six competence headings (Readiness, Openness, Solution-oriented Attitude, Behavioural Flexibility, Interaction Confidence, and Intercultural Awareness), with these competencies having subdivisions (i.e., knowledge discovery; willingness to learn, explore and participate; welcoming strangers; respect for cultural differences; learning the language of the host culture; personal autonomy; and cultural awareness). Alternatively, it is just viewed as

unidimensional, thus indicating its development through the assessment of one of its composites (Davids, 2013; Schnabel et al., 2015).

On the other hand, it is also viewed as a five-dimensional construct composed of awareness, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and proficiency in the target language, with the development of awareness leading to the development of higher levels of knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes, and in turn, it is enhanced by their development (Fantini, 2005; Fantini & Tirmizi, 2007; Fantini, 2000). Deardorff (2006) also viewed it as a competence of five dimensions with sub-dimensions; however, the process of its development begins with the development of positive attitudes leading to the development of intercultural knowledge.

This means that besides model construction for different project purposes, unequal weight given to the intercultural competence components, different assessment criteria, and evidence and interpretations of development (Baten et al., 2011), the different models, such as Deardorff's (2006) Process Model of Intercultural Competence and Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, to name but a few, reflect different developmental orientations in terms of developmental sequences, chronological progression, the phases experienced by the immersed individuals, and psychological adjustments (Fantini, 2000). Some proposed models have not even been tested or validated empirically (Deardorff, 2006; Judit, 2013).

Furthermore, although intercultural competence may include, for example, four general dimensions (knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviours), some differences do exist in the ICC assessment, due to the different ways models approach the development of this competence and the conceptions of its composite parts (Perry & Southwell, 2011). Based on my review of the literature, for example, Judit (2013) referred to motivation and attitudes as constituents of the affective dimension, along with anger, anxiety, and willingness to communicate. On the other hand, the Process Model of Intercultural Competence of Deardorff (2006) refers to attitudes, including motivation, as a dimension on its own, while anger and anxiety, though indirectly, are viewed as constituents of the affective dimension (internal outcomes).

From the above, the varied emphases on the constituents of intercultural competence, as revealed by Matveev and Yamazaki Merz (2014), have led to the emergence of different definitions of and approaches to ICC across a range of disciplines and contexts. This is a point that was also raised by Kim (2012), who found there was disagreement among researchers on the essential constituents that form ICC. Even when applying the same components of the competence, such as attitudes, knowledge, and skills, the theoretical frameworks tend to be different (Havril, 2015).

From my literature review and the explanation above, the assessment of ICC has varied due to the reliance on different indicators of its development. Among these indicators may be the psychological adjustment status of individuals (as indicated by their Emotion Regulation, Critical

Thinking, Openness, and Flexibility) as in the ICAPS (Matsumoto et al., 2005) or attitudes to cultural differences as in the IDI, for example.

Therefore, the use of the term ‘intercultural communicative competence’ does not necessarily mean that researchers are referring to the same thing, as they could be referring to different things, though they may be related.

Matveev and Yamazaki Merz (2014) suggested that the ICC assessment tool should be constructed by the inclusion of three dimensions along with their subsets to enable the measurement of this competence across different disciplines and contexts. The cognitive dimension should include the following sub-dimensions: critical thinking, flexibility/open-mindedness, culture-specific knowledge, personal autonomy, attitudes, and motivation. The affective dimension, on the other hand, is suggested to include the subsets of emotion regulation and control, and cultural empathy. Lastly, social initiative, experience, communication, and leadership should be included when assessing the behavioural part of this competence.

Fantini and Tirmizi (2007) added that this competence comprises four inter-related dimensions, which are knowledge, attitude, skills, and awareness, and thus it is a complex combination of abilities. To explain this interrelation among the ICC components, Savicki et al. (2004) stated that our prior knowledge of individuals’ level of potential in intercultural adjustment helps us predict their actual adjustment.

From the explanation above, the measurement of this competence without the inclusion of all or most of its dimensions and subsets produces a deficient understanding of the intercultural communication and adaptation dynamics, especially when it is realised that these dimensions are inter-related and thus influence the development of each other and so affect the total developed competence; however, contextual factors (e.g., the specific setting of the encounter, the social status of the interlocutor and the native language) also exert an influence on its development (Fantini, 2000, 2005; Judit, 2013; Neculăesei, 2016).

Haslberger's (2005) study “has demonstrated that a two-dimensional measurement of adaptation outcomes [for example] is more sensitive and thus superior to the one dimensional measurement” (Haslberger, 2005, p. 101). According to Deardorff (2006), the assessment of intercultural communicative competence based on one component becomes less reliable in meeting the complexity of this competence development and subsequently in ensuring its development. To Fantini (2000), the inclusion of more details, domains, and dimensions of the intercultural competence provides more understanding of it and helps investigate the weaknesses and hence the design of remedial plans for its improvement and enhancement. In brief, the detailed instruments are more diagnostic and indicative of the development of ICC and the barriers to that development. Such an assessment provides us with more reliable indicators not only about the individuals’ development

and achievement in intercultural competence development but also for achieving the programme goals and aims (Fantini, 2000).

Not only is ICC approached differently in terms of its components but also there are varied and contradictory perspectives on how to approach its assessment methodologically (Gitimu, 2010). Meeting the complexity of intercultural competence assessment requires also using multiple mixed methods, such as judgement by self and others, observation, and interviews (Deardorff, 2006).

Furthermore, based on my literature review, and as supported by Fantini and Tirmizi (2006), Fantini and Tirmizi (2007), and Kim (2012), some ICC assessment instruments are mono-culturally biased, as they often approach this competence from a Western perspective; thus, they are value-laden and so are considered ethnocentric. Havril (2015, p. 559), for example, stated that “most ICC studies, theories and models heavily reflect a Western perspective and an Anglo-Saxon orientation”. Based on my literature review, ethnocentrism is also found in some research instruments used in the field of intercultural communication. Matsumoto et al. (2001), for example, used sexual orientations as an indicator of individuals’ intercultural adjustment. In my experience, such orientations will definitely be responded to negatively by Muslims, who may thus be considered as developing less competent intercultural communicative behaviours in the host cultural environment.

In addition to the aforementioned arguments, some of the existing instruments, such as the IDI, ICAPS, and the Global Competence Aptitude Assessment (GCAA), despite having varied advantages, are commercial, and thus, their use requires funding. This is significant, especially when targeting a large study sample, or when receiving sufficient funding is not possible, as in my case.

To sum up, this section has provided us with a general understanding of the complexity of the intercultural communication competence and has explored some of the popular research instruments and approaches to its assessment. The section has shown that intercultural competence is a complex of inter-related dimensions and abilities. Though including all these dimensions, subsets, and skills in one research instrument make it lengthy and may thus increase instrument response fatigue, such an approach provides a better understanding of this competence and its development and thus the instrument becomes more diagnostic and indicative of the development of this competence.

2.15 Summary

From the above, intercultural communication is a complex task due to the wide range of personal, cognitive, affective, skill, cultural self and other awareness, linguistic, and attitudinal requirements to meet the complexity of intercultural contexts and so achieve success in the development of intercultural interaction frequency, intercultural communicative competence, and self-efficacy in intercultural English language use while abroad as well as the need to meet the Omani government’s goals of the study abroad program.

Making use of study abroad in native English language-speaking countries where opportunities for development are more abundant than those at home is conditioned by having to overcome the various challenges accompanying the intercultural experience abroad (Worchel, 2005). This is possible when Omani students have the linguistic and intercultural competencies to undergo such a complex task. However, the research reviewed in this chapter indicates that the Omani students in theory are linguistically, culturally, cognitively, educationally, and perhaps, personally and emotionally less qualified and competent than what may be thought of at employing the study-abroad experience for developing the competencies under investigation in my current research (Al-Makhmari & Azmat, 2012). To this should be added the larger gap of cultural differences between the students' Islamic national culture (compared to other non-Islamic collectivist national cultures) and the host countries' individualist national cultures. In theory, this means that the intercultural experience abroad would be even harder for Omani students than for those students from other non-Islamic collectivist national cultures.

So, what is the perceived benefit of Omani students studying abroad (Al-Makhmari & Amzat, 2012), and why is the Omani government behind increasing the numbers of Omani students sent abroad other than the acquisition of specialist knowledge?

With regard to the assessment of intercultural communicative competence, although there is a universal agreement with regard to its general definition, there is no consistency around its details.

2.16 Operational Definitions

Fantini and Tirmizi (2006, p. 11) stated that research instruments “are only as good as the concepts they attempt to measure”. The current research variables of interest are operationally defined as follows:

1. Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is the ability to interact with individuals and groups from other different cultures in English language by appropriately and effectively adapting intercultural attitudes, negative emotions, communication and critical thinking skills, intercultural cognition, and behaviours to cultural differences encountered in an intercultural environment, as measured by the Intercultural Communicative Competence Scale (ICCS).
2. Mature ICC refers to the translation of the potential ICC into behaviours that lead to initiatives to facilitate intercultural interactions, intercultural engagements (interaction depth), and flexibility towards different cultural groups and increase adaptability to various intercultural contexts (interaction breadth). It is measured by the behavioural part of the ICCS.

3. Study abroad refers to an accredited educational programme outside Oman, which students join to receive an academic degree in their majors.
4. The study-abroad students are those who joined this programme, while stay-in-Oman students are those individuals who had met the preliminary requirements of study-abroad scholarships and had competed for their attainment with those who are currently studying abroad, but failed due to the intense competition.
5. Students' self-efficacy in intercultural English language use (SEIELU) refers to their self-reported performance and confidence in using English and its complications in encounters and settings shared with people from other cultures, as measured by the Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use Scale (SEIELUS).
6. Intercultural interaction frequency(IIF) refers to students' frequent interactions with people from other cultures inside and outside the university context, as measured by the Intercultural Interaction Frequency Scale (IIFS).
7. The one-year abroad refers to the total combination of the two six-month periods investigated by each of the pre- and post-tests applied in this research.
8. General intercultural development refers to the development of both ICC and SEIELU.

2.17 Statement of the Problem

The institutions abroad presumably receive the professional, financial, academic, and research benefits of the rising numbers of international students joining them, but in return, what quality of student does the sending country obtain other than them having acquired specialist knowledge?

What is special about study abroad is its provision of the context to practise English among native speakers and other people speaking the language both inside and outside the university campuses. In this way, study abroad adds an extra dimension and value to classroom education and education in the home country. It is thus more likely that the individuals who study abroad will become more interculturally, linguistically, and globally competent than those individuals staying in Oman.

However, if students immersed in study abroad are unable to take advantage of this opportunity, then what makes the study abroad different from the study in Oman other than the attainment of the intended specialist core knowledge? This study is intended to investigate this question particularly in relation to the impact of study abroad on the development of Omani students' ICC, SEIELU and IIF, compared to those staying in Oman.

There is a large probability that the development of ICC and intercultural education in general is not given enough focus in Oman, which may indicate less awareness of the importance of this competence in the current climate.

Firstly, based on my experience as an international student abroad, Omani study-abroad students are less prepared for the experience in terms of, for example, raising their intercultural knowledge and awareness. Secondly, based on my review of the existing literature, this topic is rarely tackled in Oman. Thirdly, the Omani individuals' and the economic and social establishments' less direct exposure to international markets and intercultural communities may contribute to the lack of research regarding the development of intercultural competencies (Brummer, 2013), especially since "Oman's market is small and limited" (p. 267), due to the low growth rate of the national economy, and thus it is largely occupied by the oil industry and small businesses, which constitute almost 80% of the private sector (Alyahmadi, 2006).

Besides the points raised above and in previous sections, particularly in the section tackling research by Al-Makhmari and Amzat (2012), my research will fill a gap in the literature due to the absence of research in the Arab world, particularly in the Sultanate of Oman, that assesses the impact of study abroad on Omani students, despite the increasing numbers of the Omani students studying abroad.

Besides acquiring knowledge in core disciplines, Omani students are sent abroad to develop the skills that are sought by employers, such as problem solving, team work, and communication skills in general (Ministry of Higher Education, 2011a), but as Milhauser and Rahschulte, (2010, p. 78) stated, "There is a growing body of research indicating a gap between the global industry demand for skills and the higher education system's ability to supply that demand". The question that is posed here is 'Have the Omani students studying abroad developed these skills?', especially as there is a common belief in Omani society that students who have studied abroad are better educated and are thus advantaged over those whose development was restricted to their local education.

Al-Sibani (2011) recommended the conduct of my intended research investigation following her identification of the research gap in the Omani context, particularly in relation to studying the correlation between English use and intercultural communicative competence, though without referring to the impact of study abroad on the raised aspects.

The literature review indicates that this kind of research is heavily dominated by the US (Bennett, Volet, & Fozdar, 2013; Biraimah & Jotia, 2012; Douglas & Jones-Rikkens, 2001; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1966; Gullekson et al., 2011), followed by the UK (Coleman & Parker, 2001; Meier, 2010a; Rees & Klapper, 2007), and Australia as well, as stated by Bond et al. (2009).

Although this kind of research has been conducted in Asia, the obtained results may not necessarily represent the international students coming from the Middle East and Arab world in

general, as some cultural heterogeneity may occur across the different collectivist national cultures. This applies to the individualist national cultures. Thus, studying in the UK, the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand may have a varying impact on international students' intercultural experiences and subsequently their intercultural, personal, linguistic, educational, and professional development (Allik & McCrae, 2004; Bond et al., 2009; Brown, 2009a; Firmin et al., 2013; Li & Gasser, 2005; Matsumoto & Juang, 2004).

Spencer-Rodgers and McGovern (2002) assumed that replicating a study with different cultural and linguistic groups should help in generalizing and comparing the recent research results to other cultural and linguistic groups and contexts. More importantly, although Omani Arab students are commonly believed to become more competent in intercultural communications by simply studying abroad, given the lack of the intervention and preparation programmes that facilitate intercultural communications, relatively little research has been conducted to explore these benefits or the nature of this impact. Thus, there is limited evidence, other than that provided by Al-Makhmari and Amzat (2012) and Al-Harathi (2005), for example, about the Omani students' gains from this experience, excluding the core knowledge obtained in their majors. Moreover, this belief, which I myself had held before departing to study abroad, was contradicted by my on-site closer observations of Omani students' intercultural experiences abroad.

Finally, although research points to cognition, affect, and behaviours as essential dimensions of intercultural communicative competence and thus taking them into consideration when measuring this competence is essential, several researchers have applied varying degrees of focus on these dimensions and sometimes with no focus on others. Even those who have tended to include these dimensions in the assessment have done so with varied focus on their different subsets, especially when these dimensions and their subsets are interrelated and so affect the development of each other. Such approaches do not help create a comprehensive understanding of the development of ICC, and thus assessment becomes less diagnostic of the barriers individuals encounter in their intercultural development and learning. Consequently, such research does not take account of the complexity of intercultural competence development. My research aims to overcome this issue by developing a more sophisticated model of ICC development to provide more reliable evidence of its development.

2.18 Significance of the Study

The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation in Oman, previously named the Ministry of Higher Education, has been sending many Omani students to study abroad with the aim of developing the students' communicative competencies along with the acquisition of specialist knowledge.

My research provides employers, the Omani government, parents, and faculties in Oman with a clearer picture of the impact of study abroad on Omani students, particularly on their intercultural

development (ICC, SEIELU and IIF) and, subsequently, on their professional and personal development. It will also provide evidence of the extent to which students' intercultural competencies have been developed due to study abroad compared with those of students staying at home, Oman. The assessment of the impact of study abroad will reveal the additional benefit of study abroad and will assess whether the study-abroad programme has met the intended goals.

Based on this assessment, suggestions and recommendations will be provided for further improvement of the national study-abroad program.

2.19 Purpose of the Study

My current research was carried out to assess the impact of the study-abroad experience on ICC, SEIELU and IIF of Omani students studying abroad while taking into consideration the impact of the large cultural gap between their Islamic collectivist national culture and the host individualist national cultures on their intercultural interactions and, ultimately, the development of competencies under study. Comparisons with those students who stayed in Oman were carried out to find out whether the study-abroad experience would have any additional evident value over the development of these intercultural competencies in general.

This study also examined whether the host countries of the UK, the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand as well as other independent factors, such as previous experiences abroad, gender, education level, and living alone or with their own families, would lead to different outcomes in the variables of interest.

By doing so, the study provided a research-based answer about the accuracy of the common belief held by the Omani public, sponsors, and officials about the effectiveness of study abroad in developing Omani students' linguistic and intercultural competencies beyond those achieved in Oman.

It also studied the level of contribution provided by the ICC and its composing elements, and IIF in the development of students' SEIELU.

Finally, based on my literature review, although there may be external challenges to Omani students' development in the dependent variables of interest, their roles (active or passive) also had a major impact on determining the direction and magnitude of this development while abroad. Therefore, the study offered an in-depth understanding of the students' lived intercultural experiences abroad and how they benefit from them.

2.20 Research Questions

My research investigation was designed to answer to the following questions:

1. What impact does study abroad in native English-speaking countries (the UK, US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) have on Omani students' ICC, SEIELU and IIF?
2. What roles do multilingualism and educational level play in the levels of ICC, IIF, and SEIELU?
3. To what extent do ICC (and its attitudes to cultural differences, emotion regulation, skills, intercultural cognition, and intercultural behaviours) and IIF contribute to the development of SEIELU?
4. What were the possible reasons, according to Omani students, why the quantitative results showed no study-abroad effect except after a period of more than six years of stay abroad?
5. What were the Omani students' reported motives for studying abroad particularly in the UK?
6. What benefits did the Omani students report having gained from studying abroad?
7. What were the Omani students' perceptions of the study-abroad experience in general and its outcomes in particular?

Chapter Three: Research Philosophy, Methodology and Methods

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the philosophical assumptions of the current project to help develop a research design that helps answer my research questions. This explanation includes highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of each of positivist and interpretivist research approaches before clarifying the mixed-methods methodology adopted in this research and the significance of between- and within-group comparisons in achieving the project's goal. The chapter then moves on to explain my proposed Developmental Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (DMICC) and then briefly describes its resultant Intercultural Communicative Competence Scale (ICCS), the Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use Scale (SEIELUS), and the Intercultural Interaction Frequency Scale (IIFS). The explanation of the qualitative methods will follow. The construction details of the quantitative scales in particular will be provided in Chapter Four: Scale Construction and Improvement.

The current chapter then explains the analysis and collection of quantitative and qualitative data. After that, it highlights the challenges encountered and the solutions applied during online quantitative data collection and sample representativeness. Then, it clarifies the study samples for the quantitative and qualitative inquiries before ending with an explanation of the research ethics associated with conducting my current research.

3.2 Research Philosophical Assumptions

3.2.1 Introduction

Researchers approach the social world differently based on the beliefs they implicitly or explicitly express about it. The differing beliefs subsequently lead to the emergence of various research practices, policies, and decisions (Grix, 2018; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Scotland, 2012). These sets of beliefs are governed under general philosophical umbrellas, called paradigms, which, according to Weaver and Olson (2006, p. 460), “regulate inquiry within a discipline by providing lenses, frames and processes through which investigation is accomplished”. An excellent analysis of any study and a full grasp of its contribution to disciplinary knowledge requires an understanding of its theoretical and philosophical assumptions (ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods) underpinning its conduct (Weaver & Olson, 2006) as done below.

3.2.2 Positivists' and Interpretivists' Ontology and Epistemology

Research ontology concerns the nature of reality that an inquirer investigates (Crotty, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Epistemology, on the other hand, is concerned about the nature of the relationship between the knower and that which is to be known (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) and,

subsequently, the nature of knowledge produced through this relationship (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Crotty, 1998).

Positivists adopt a realist ontology and an objectivist epistemology. They express a belief in the existence of one single social reality that exists independently of the researcher and the researched individuals' consciousness, and it is also context-independent. It is thus considered value-free. It is also believed to be absolute, as it is driven by universal rules and mechanisms. Accordingly, it is objectively predictable, observable, generalizable, and discoverable through quantitative measurement. This, it is believed, is attainable by constructing scientifically (statistically) valid and reliable quantitative instruments that include descriptive and factual statements, as well as testing hypotheses and answering absolute questions that are formulated around actions. Knowledge is obtained through experimentation and correlation, controlling variables, and controlling and comparing randomly sampled and assigned groups of individuals. The positivist methodology through this testing is meant to neutrally explain possible causal relationships between constituents. The replication of tests is allowed and is supposed to lead to the revelation of the same results for the formulation and verification of theories (knowledge) (Cohen et al., 2007; Garrick, 1999; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Laverty, 2003; Scotland, 2012; Sikes, Lawson, & Parker, 2007).

Interpretivists, on the other hand, express a relativist ontology in which reality is subjective. They believe that "social reality is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty, 2009, p. 42). Since reality is individually and contextually constructed, there are multiple realities across social contexts, actors, and time. Different actors associate different meanings even with the same social phenomenon. These multiple realities are subjective, as they represent the individuals' own views and perceptions of this world. Researchers' knowledge of people's subjective social realities is limited to their understanding of the meanings people associate with their social behaviours and lived experiences. This understanding is an outcome of the researcher's close interactions and longer stay with the individuals in the social contexts (subjectivist epistemology) (Crotty, 1998; Laverty, 2003; Robson, 2002; Rolfe, 2006; Scotland, 2012). From the above, the interpretivist methodology is aimed at understanding a phenomenon from an individual's perspective and at investigating interaction among individuals as well as the historical and cultural contexts which people inhabit. Therefore, multiple realities are accepted (Scotland, 2012).

3.2.3 My Research Philosophical Position

Above all, I believe that despite the significance of learning experiences in Oman and guided learning within the confines of classrooms abroad and locally, the frequent meaningful engagements with locals abroad and with the native English language speakers here constitute the added value of

study abroad in developing higher levels of intercultural communicative competence and self-efficacy in intercultural English language use (and subsequently higher levels of interpersonal and professional development) beyond those levels developed in the home country and within the classroom. According to research, the deeper the involvement and engagement with the locals abroad becomes, the more profound developmental gains are achieved in return, in even shorter periods of time (Gemignani, 2009; Gu & Maley, 2008; Tang & Choi, 2004).

However, accomplishing this intercultural mission is not easy due to its complexity. I understand that intercultural learning abroad is influenced by a wide range of universal factors already recorded in the literature. These factors may include the individuals' personality characteristics, English language capabilities, attitudes to cultural differences, emotional reactions to unpleasant intercultural incidences (including intercultural discrimination, racism, and prejudice), communication skills, intercultural cognition and awareness (including stereotypes), and the appropriateness and effectiveness of intercultural communication behaviours. The intercultural gap size, study and family commitments, the inner-group's possible negative reactions to stepping beyond its circle, and intercultural interventions, I believe, also intervene in shaping the experience and extent of intercultural competence development in return. Maximizing the learning gains of study abroad requires effective and appropriate behavioural, psychological, attitudinal, educational, interpersonal, and cognitive adjustments and so on across the different intercultural contexts.

On the other hand, the immersed students are considered important agents who are crucial elements of the study abroad experience. They make decisions and judgments about what happens around them to meet their study-abroad and social goals and their life concerns in general. They subsequently determine the level of their success while abroad. Therefore, while intercultural learning is static, as it is universally influenced by external factors (Heine & Buchtel, 2009), it is also intentional, processual, and contextual (Zhou et al., 2008).

Intercultural learning is context-dependent, as it is affected by the interaction context, the interacting counterparts, and the channel used. I understand that while the appropriateness and effectiveness (meaningfulness) of intercultural interactions are the ultimate means to achieve the broad intended intercultural goals of studying abroad, the appropriateness and effectiveness of communication behaviours are also socially judged and contextually agreed by negotiating the means leading to their achievement. The various contexts share commonalities, among which is the effectiveness and appropriateness of communication behaviours. While these commonalities serve the contextual communication details in building the desired intercultural interactions, the contextual communication details in return serve to achieve the universal agreement of the importance of the appropriateness and effectiveness of interactions as the ultimate means to achieve the intended goals of study abroad.

Besides the importance of being present in the study-abroad context, the meaningful engagement and subsequently intercultural competence development is processual. While the study-abroad and intercultural interactions in particular are accompanied by a broad range of challenges and these challenges seem to exacerbate the problems inherent in attaining the maximum benefits from the experience, the intercultural learning process takes place by the student primarily undergoing and managing these stressors and challenges, adapting and adjusting to the host culture, and creating and negotiating the means to achieve meaningful interactions instead of just laying the blame elsewhere and waiting for others to solve the encountered problems.

From the above, while learning is processual, undergoing this process is also intentional, and thus intercultural competence development is not an automatic gain of simply studying abroad. The intentions, goals, and decisions the immersed students make with regard to the experience determine how they navigate through the experience and its challenges, and consequently, the volume and nature of the intercultural learning they gain in return. Students decide whether to play as active meaning negotiators or to be beneficiaries or victims of the unproductive intercultural contexts of the host country. Accordingly, the outcomes of the sojourn, I believe, vary among individuals in accordance with the different intercultural efforts, roles, and decisions they take in coping with challenges of being abroad. Therefore, gaining an in-depth understanding of the complexity of the experience, knowing how and why students interact with the host locals while abroad, and identifying what meanings they associate with these experiences requires an engagement with these individuals to hear their intercultural stories and views.

It is worth noting that there is a big debate about the existence of different national cultures (state-nation uniformities) and their relationship with differences in and predictions of behaviours and perceptions across the distinct national cultures, and the perception of cultural variations within the one single state at the individual level (cultural diversity). This debate is actually an extension of the paradigm wars regarding the perception of cultural differences at the state and individual levels, and subsequently, their categorisation, measurement, and understanding. Therefore, the study of cultures is concerned with whether to study the national cultures from outside at the macro level (big culture-positivist view) or from inside at the micro level (small cultures-interpretivist view) (Hofstede, 2002; Holliday, 1999; Magala, 2009; McSweeney, 2002a, McSweeney, 2002b, McSweeney, 2009; McSweeney, 2013; McSweeney, 2016; McSweeney, Brown, & Iliopoulou, 2016; Szkudlarek, 2009; Williamson, 2002).

Due to intercultural interactions, it is possible to find people adopting characteristics from other cultural orientations (Collier, 2011); however, people in a state still maintain a general cultural tendency at the national level (Darwish & Huber, 2003; Kim, 2012; Koermer, 2013; Neal, 2010; Peterson, 2004). However, for me, in order to be able to assess the impact of studying abroad in the

target countries, it was important to approach the counterpart cultures from outside at the macro level as national cultures; this involved exploring general individualist and collectivist tendencies (state-nation uniformities) and triggering predictable differences in behaviours and then in intercultural interactions and learning. Hence, these two state-nation cultural orientations (commonalities) are considered universal. Therefore, they, along with individuals' age, level of education, country of stay, and other variables under study, are considered relatively and sufficiently static, stable, and distinct and thus are held to be independent (isolatable) factors affecting the dependent variables of IIF, ICC, and SEIELU in a quantitatively observable, linear cause-effect explanatory way (Schartner & Young, 2020).

3.3 Strengths and Weaknesses of Positivist and Interpretivist Research

The existing literature reveals a contradiction between some objective and subjective research studies with regard to the impact of studying abroad on international students' intercultural development.

The quantitative objective results most often tend to demonstrate no or at least only a limited impact of study abroad on international students, indicating that the experience abroad lacks effectiveness in achieving its intended outcomes and expectations (objective evidence). The qualitative subjective inquiries, on the contrary, most often tend to show a completely positive picture of the impact of studying abroad (subjective evidence) (Biraimah & Jotia, 2012; Ingraham & Peterson, 2004; Kuchinke et al., 2014; Martin, Schnickel, & Maruyama, 2010; Zhai, 2000).

The next paragraphs explain that each quantitative and interpretive inquiry has its unique strengths and limitations at the same time. This raises the question of whether there should be sole reliance on qualitative or quantitative results in determining the impact of study abroad on international students.

Root and Ngampornchai (2013) stated that the self-report pre- and post-test design is widely used in research; however, the sole dependence on this design without being used in combination with qualitative research is "insufficient to assess intercultural competence" (p. 515). Norris and Gillespie (2009) added that there is also increasing concern about the validity and reliability of self-reported data.

Though caution should be taken with pre-and-post tests in assessing the impact of study abroad on individuals, as claimed by Norris and Gillespie (2009), one should also be cautious about students' overly positive subjective reports that may be triggered by socially desirable answers and expectations. The persistent positive stories about study abroad may also be exaggerated due to students' lack of experience of intercultural contexts abroad and hence a poor self-understanding of competences in these contexts. Caution must also be applied to general statements based on limited examples of development and a small number of interviewed individuals whose individual

intercultural development cannot be generalized to other contexts. These individuals may be special cases of development influenced by certain incidences and features of the immersion abroad.

Vande Berg et al. (2012) and Gemignani (2009) found that study-abroad students may tend to overgeneralize any positive incidents experienced to the entire experience, which may create the impression for officials and researchers that study abroad has a ‘profound’ impact on students. The sole reliance on just a few subjective examples obtained from students about their development abroad is inadequate to conclude that study abroad has profoundly affected this development. The provision of various examples and comparing these subjective reports with what is really observed by researchers is important in determining the authenticity and transferability of these reports or comparing them with the quantitative results to obtain in-depth understanding of the experience abroad. For more information, please see section 2.3.2: Concerns regarding Al-Makhmari and Azmat’s (2012) Research Findings.

This bias in favour of subjective inquiries may also indicate that some students and perhaps staff may exaggerate in their reports of development and change due to studying abroad, as the objective inquiries most often tend to reveal that studying abroad has had no ‘significant’, or at least only a limited, impact on students’ development. Subjective reports coming from some staff should be considered critically because, for example, staff reports of their own failure or that of their institution’s programs in developing their international students’ intercultural learning may put their reputation and that of their institution at risk. This, in turn, may have a negative impact on the number of future student admissions at the institution.

From the discussion above, subjective experiences and reports must be explored in depth by asking students to provide examples and evidence regarding development and change, and of how they have overcome possible challenges abroad before drawing any general subjective research conclusions.

Additionally, the contradiction between the quantitative and qualitative results could also be due to the limited content of quantitative questionnaires, which, in turn, limits the scope of any measurement. In other words, the entire experience could be restricted by limited questionnaire content. Such measurements may be less inclusive of the different contexts and dimensions of the intercultural experience. However, the implementation of such an approach could be useful in focusing the assessment on certain aspects of the experience and asking whether the experience has objectively achieved officials’ and institutions’ intended outcomes with regard to these aspects. Setting guidelines and indicators to compare students’ performance may be beneficial in determining the level and nature of students’ intercultural development in terms of intended programs and individuals’ goals.

The variations in the quantitative results in particular could also be due to the various research instruments used in this assessment, as these instruments (e.g., questionnaires) tend to vary in their content, and subsequently, in their focus and scope of measurement and methodology also (see 2.14: Assessment of Intercultural Communicative Competence).

Although the qualitative inquiry lacks the ability to generate predictable and generalizable research findings due to purposeful sampling, the limited number of participants, and the absence of random sampling, it has the advantage of providing in-depth description, accurate interpretation, and rich understanding of the social phenomena involved by working with the researched individuals (Donati, 2002; Garrick, 1999; Laverty, 2003; Lichtman, 2013; Lindsey, 2005; Long et al., 2000; Paige & Vande Berg, 2012).

On the contrary, the positivist research philosophy is rejected due to its oversimplification of social life as a cause-effect relationship between variables and its neglect of the individual's role in this social life, as it approaches the individual's consciousness as an entity independent of the social life (Scotland, 2012). However, the generalizability of the quantitative findings, due to the application of random sampling and the study samples larger than in qualitative research, facilitates comparison across different studies in the field (Paige & Vande Berg, 2012) and provides a general idea about the prevalence of the research problem and the traits studied in participants. Moreover, the statistical analysis of the quantitative data through the application of pre- and post-test designs is more sensitive to the changes that students may undergo while abroad compared to those staying in the home country, and subsequently, in determining the effectiveness of study abroad in achieving the intended program outcomes.

Being encouraged by the strengths that each of the positivist and interpretivist paradigms offers, mixing the quantitative and qualitative methods in one research project complements the inquiry performed by the other, informs different research questions, and yields robust data and research conclusions, as it helps mitigate their weaknesses (Cameron, 2009). This paradigm marriage not only strengthens the outcomes of this study but also makes it more appealing to different audiences, researchers, and officials who are more convinced by either the quantitative findings of the study and/or participants' views of the lived experience. The triangulation of data using various quantitative and qualitative methods provides more valid conclusions. The inclusion of close on-site intercultural observations (formal or informal) is important to compare between what is really observed by researchers in their lived intercultural contexts and the findings obtained from objective and subjective inquiries, especially when self-reported quantitative questionnaires and semi-structured interviews tend to generate indirect research evidence. This type of observations presumably helps eliminate the intervention of social desirability in individuals' subjective reports of their intercultural

experiences, as these observations tend to draw direct evidence from the interaction contexts of the students' intercultural interactions abroad.

Finally, based on my intercultural (subjective) experience as an international student immersed in life abroad, the impact of studying abroad is always present from the first day of arrival, and is distinctly unlike studying in the home country. Instead of investigating whether the impact exists or not, research should be directed towards the investigation of the volume and nature of change triggered by the study-abroad experience. It should ask whether this change renders the study-abroad students' performance in the variables under study distinguishable from those staying in the home country in order to conclude whether the experience is influential or not.

3.4 Mixed-Methods Methodology

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 108), methodology is a mechanism through which researchers know what is believed to be known to them. Crotty (1998, p. 3) also defined methodology as "a strategy or a plan of action that stands behind the choice and use of particular methods in order to achieve the intended desires". Therefore, "It is concerned with why, what, from where, when and how data is collected and analysed" (Scotland, 2012, p. 9). Methods, on the other hand, function as specific procedures and techniques utilised for data collection and analysis (Crotty, 1998).

My research would ideally be based on a mixed-methods methodology for the reasons mentioned in the above section and after first briefly clarifying the definition of mixed-methods research. Creswell et al. (2011) defined mixed methods research as:

a research approach or methodology [employed to study] research questions that call for real-life contextual understandings, multi-level perspectives, and cultural influences [by] employing rigorous quantitative research assessing the magnitude and frequency of constructs and rigorous qualitative research exploring the meaning and understanding of constructs [by] intentionally integrating or combining [quantitative and qualitative] methods to draw on the strength of each. (p. 4)

Mixed-methods research is built upon the assumption that neither a quantitative nor a qualitative approach on its own is sufficient to provide a more complete understanding of the problem under study due to the complexity of the study phenomenon and the research limitations of both the positivist and interpretivist paradigms (Bryman, 2007; Creswell et al., 2011; Root & Ngampornchai, 2013; Shaftel et al., 2007). These two paradigms, on the other hand, each have their own strengths, and thus the employment of these strengths in one study will "improve the quality and scientific power of data" (Creswell et al., 2011, p. 2) and strengthen the evidence obtained from the research (Meier, 2010).

The power of quantitative research lies in its ability "to test theories or hypotheses, gather descriptive information, or examine relationships among variables ...[that] yield numeric data that can be analysed statistically" (Creswell et al., 2011, p. 4). Ibid. stated that:

[q]uantitative data have the potential to provide measurable evidence, to help establish (probable) cause and effect, to yield efficient data collection procedures, to create the possibility of replication and generalisation to a population, to facilitate the comparison of groups, and to provide insight into a breadth of experiences. (pp. 4-5)

The strength of qualitative research, on the other hand, is noticed in its potential to “help researchers understand processes, especially those that emerge over time,... with its focus on the contexts and meaning of human lives and experiences [through] the voices of participants” (ibid., 4). Therefore, the in-depth study of these experiences leads to the emergence of new perspectives on the topic at hand, which may not be attainable or which might be missed by the quantitative research at the time of its conduct (Bennett et al., 2013).

According to Halualani (2008), the qualitative inquiry helps “uncover how culturally different persons define, experience, and interpret intercultural contact in context of their lives” (p. 15). So, through semi-structured interviews, for example, the participants can help the researcher understand their intercultural experiences by providing her/him with details “about how and why [they] engage (or do not) in intercultural contact and the kind of perceptions and evaluations they take from these moments” (p. 15). In the case of my study, the qualitative inquiry helped generate an in-depth understanding of the key quantitative findings.

Sole reliance on quantitative measures is insufficient in the assessment of ICC (Wang & Kulich, 2015). Abbe et al. (2010) stated that self-report instruments may not be valid for the assessment of some aspects of intercultural competence. For instance, while quantitative measurements are good at assessing the effectiveness of intercultural competence and the study-abroad experience through the assessment of plan and goal achievement, they “almost never provide adequate assessments of the ...appropriateness...dimension of ICC, as this is a shared judgement that others make of an individual, who may be completely unaware of the prevailing expectations that inhere in a specific intercultural interaction” (Koester & Lustig, 2015, p. 20). As will be noticed in Chapter 5: Quantitative Research Results and Findings, despite their significance in my study, the quantitative tools yielded limited understandings of the study-abroad experience.

Although ICC, as an example, may be viewed as a socially constructed competence and is thus socially judged through the evaluation of behavioural appropriateness (the compliance with the norms, values, and expectancies of the relationship) and effectiveness (the achievement of valued goals or rewards in relation to costs and alternatives) and may vary across contexts and time, based on the literature I discussed in section 2.14: Assessment of Intercultural Communicative Competence, being supported by Spitzberg (2000), I conclude that it is ultimately made up of general universal characteristics, attitudes, behaviours, and skills.

I also believe that while the behavioural appropriateness and effectiveness may be viewed as socially constructed and judged, the level of individuals' engagements in intercultural interactions, flexibility towards different cultural groups, and adaptability to various intercultural contexts and social initiatives can be indicative of how appropriate and effective students' intercultural behaviours are in the host intercultural environment. Thus, students' behavioural appropriateness and effectiveness can be tracked quantitatively across participant groups or qualitatively for the contextual understanding of certain features.

Although people from different cultures share universal behaviours, strategies, skills, and goals (the fulfilment of appropriate and effective intercultural behaviours), people may differ in the details of how these behaviours and strategies are employed and, perhaps, the contextual meanings associated with these behaviours across different cultures and contexts.

In the end, I believe that people work to arrive at a universal agreement about, for example, appropriate and effective communications. People agree that communication should be appropriate and effective (a universal agreement), but how such an end is achieved requires a negotiation of what constitutes appropriate and effective behaviours across different socio-cultural contexts (a contextual agreement). For example, Nureddeen (2008) found that there is a universality of apology strategies; however, the individuals' selection of apology strategies in her study reinforces the culture-specific aspect of language use. Similarly, Shively (2015) revealed that although listener responses are universal, "Their form, frequency, and placement vary cross-culturally" (p. 86). Therefore, a complete understanding of the experience requires being universal in the use of quantitative instruments and contextual through the use of qualitative methods within the same research.

In addition, since individuals may be influenced by the expectations of their families, friends, and governments, participants may produce socially desirable responses while trying to produce the answers that make them appear inter-culturally and linguistically competent, for example, and thus, this leads the instrument to produce a self-assessment bias. Lack of honesty when responding to instrument items puts research validity at risk (Kealey, 2015). Therefore, a mix of quantitative and qualitative measures is more effective in carrying out this assessment (Wang & Kulich, 2015), as the combination of quantitative and qualitative inquiries generates "a more complete account of the benefits" (p. 363) students may obtain abroad (Llanes & Muñoz, 2009). The mixed-methods design is the means through which the weaknesses in each paradigm are overcome. Such a combination helps triangulate data and thus increases the trustworthiness of the research outcomes, especially when considering the complexity of the intercultural experience and behaviours (Brummer, 2013).

3.4.1 A Comparative Pre-Post Test Sequential Explanatory Mixed-Methods Design

To achieve the aim of this research project, a comparative sequential explanatory mixed-methods design was developed. In this, the pre- and post-test administration within the research groups and between-group statistical comparisons were initially executed, with the former used to determine the effectiveness of study abroad in achieving the intended goals and with the latter used to determine the causality of the observed changes as explained in detail below.

The pre- and post-tests measure a student's state for a particular variable at a particular time, but the detailed understanding of what, how, and why students have moved or reached a further state (the post-test result) is not explained by the tests, as this involves a developmental process which was explored by the qualitative inquiry through semi-structured interviews. Therefore, the qualitative inquiry will follow the quantitative inquiry to provide an in-depth understanding of the key quantitative findings. The quantitative and qualitative findings will be integrated in Chapter Seven: Discussion and Conclusion.

3.4.1.1 Within-Group Comparisons

This study applies within-group comparisons by the administration of pre- and post tests of ICC, SEIELU, and IIF within the experimental and control research groups with a gap of six months to quantitatively measure the possible changes in these variables in both groups, and thus it determines the effectiveness of study abroad in achieving the observed changes. Each test aims to record the possible changes under investigation in the preceding six months of its administration to accordingly cover a period of one year.

3.4.1.2 Between-Group Comparisons

Applying a pre-post-test design within the experimental group without the assignment of a control group raises several probabilities regarding the possible changes in the students' post-test performance. The observed change experienced by study-abroad students may not necessarily be due to them studying abroad (Cohen et al., 2007; Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). This is because other factors may intervene in explaining the observed change. For example, besides the nature of quasi-experiments and the absence of individual randomisation, the change may be caused by the students' high expectations or the promotions of study abroad or, perhaps, are due to an instrumentation fault which leads study-abroad students to adapt their responses to meet the high expectations linked with studying abroad. It could also be because of a measurement error when, for example, the pre-survey focuses on measuring expectations while, in contrast, the post-survey focuses on outcomes (Ingraham & Peterson, 2004).

Moreover, the absence of a control group means that additional interventions may also interfere in explaining any observed changes (Cohen et al., 2007; Llanes & Muñoz, 2009; Shadish et al., 2002); such might be the events the individuals experience in between the two tests, the participants'

biological and psychological maturation, or the effect of the pre-test itself, as taking the same (or similar) test more than once may lead to better performance in its next administration (Campbell, Stanley, & Gage, 1963), although determining the superiority of the measured performance actually depends on the type of test being used and whether or not the research instrument is measuring perceptions, feelings, or something else. The observed change may also be attributed to the context being studied (Shadish et al., 2002).

With regard to the intervention of the research method itself in triggering possible changes in measured performances, one of the participants in my pilot study reported to me informally that the survey provided her with the opportunity to reflect on her own intercultural experience abroad; my survey had enabled her to identify weaknesses in her intercultural communications. As such, the respondents may develop some intercultural competence due to self-reflection provided by the survey but not necessarily due to the study-abroad experience itself. This also applies to semi-structured interviews. Khalil, for example, commented:

After finishing or almost being done with the whole experience, it's great to reflect. And by the way, even when you asked me, I was just reflecting on things throughout the conversation itself. Believe me, after this interview, my awareness of my experience got much better. The picture is much clearer. I started to draw lines between the different matters we have discussed throughout this interview. So, having the right platform, having the opportunity even to talk about it, is really important”.

Such issues may threaten both the internal and external validity of the research study (Campbell et al., 1963, p. 9). Therefore, “The claim that study abroad contributes to intercultural learning, and particularly the claim that certain conditions are more or less influential, begs more experimental methodology” (Bennett, 2009, p. S6). Without a control group, the research project cannot measure and determine the causality of change but rather correlation only (Anderson et al., 2006; Norris & Gillespie, 2009; Paik et al., 2015). Therefore, for the current project to provide greater assurance that it was the study abroad, not other factors, that caused the observed changes, a control group was formed.

However, the absence of random assignment of individuals to the research groups is more likely to make the experimental and control groups “probabilistically [not] similar to each other on average” (Shadish et al., 2002, p. 13). This again increases the probability that the observed change may not necessarily be attributed to study abroad, especially as individual randomisation was not achievable in this study. (Anderson et al., 2006, p. 468) believed that “securing a truly parallel group of students would not be a simple task”; however, “the researcher is advised to use ... samples that are as alike as possible” Kerlinger (as cited in Cohen et al., 2007, p. 283) to minimize the differences between the research groups (Shadish et al., 2002). Although, due to the absence of true experimentation, the “control group cannot eliminate all of the extraneous influences [, it] can help to mitigate some

additional sources of error and allow for comparisons between the students studying abroad and those remaining at [home...]" (Gullekson et al., 2011, p. 94). Therefore, the control group is of importance, as it stands as "a reference point for interpretation" (Gullekson et al., 2011, p. 103).

3.4.2 Summary

In summary, to achieve the aim of this research, the pre- and post-tests were applied within the experimental group to evaluate the effectiveness of the study-abroad experience in enhancing the individuals' development in the three variables of interest compared to that of the home context. The parallel comparisons between the experimental and control groups were undertaken due to the causality association of the possible observed change in the total scores, or, in other words, to check whether the study-abroad experience could add any statistically significant additional impact to the variables of study to that of the stay-in-Oman context (Anderson et al., 2006; Bennett, 2009; Gullekson et al., 2011; Norris & Gillespie, 2009; Paik et al., 2015). This design is considered a quasi-experimental design, as the study was conducted in a natural setting and not under laboratory conditions, and thus, full control over the variables and individuals in this experimentation was difficult (Shadish et al., 2002).

3.5 Online Research Methods

This section of the methodology chapter explains the quantitative methods for data collection. These methods in order are the Intercultural Communicative Competence Scale (ICCS), the Self-efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use Scale (SEIELUS) and, finally, the Intercultural Interaction Frequency Scale (IIFS). A detailed explanation of the construction and validation of the three scales is presented separately in Chapter Four: Scale Construction and Improvement. This section will finally provide an explanation of the qualitative data collection methods, which are the semi-structured interviews and the open-ended question in the quantitative survey.

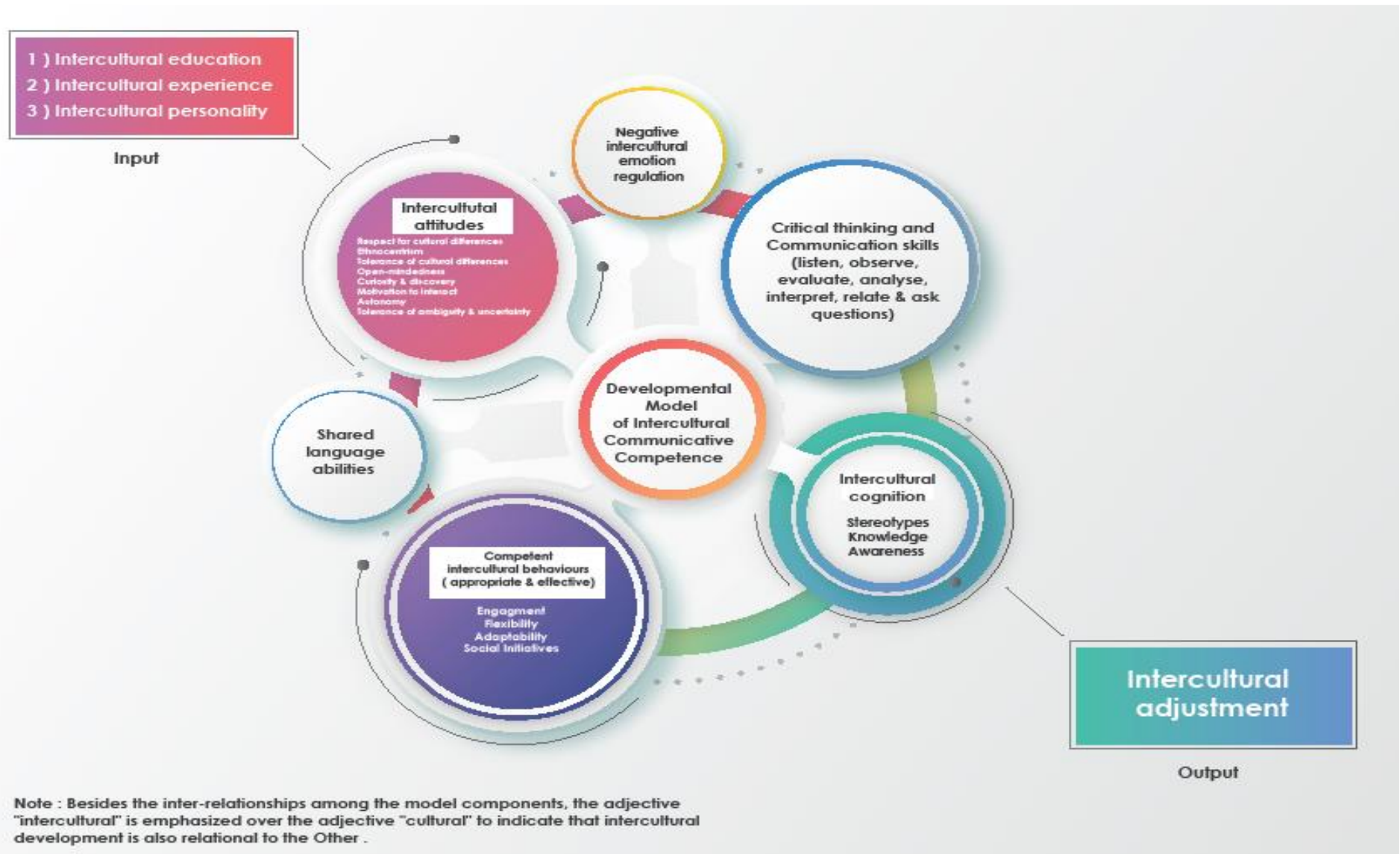
3.5.1 Quantitative Methods

Understanding the ICCS requires firstly an explanation of my current project's Developmental Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (DMICC) before presenting the SEIELUS and IIFS respectively.

3.5.1.1 Current Project's Developmental Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (DMICC)

The current research project's proposed DMICC (Figure 1 below) is based on Deardorff's (2006) Process Model of Intercultural Competence but with some modifications/extensions as will be explained below.

Figure 1: Developmental Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (DMICC)



As illustrated in Figure 1 above, my model approaches intercultural education (including self-reflections and intercultural preparation programs), intercultural experiences, and intercultural personality as three primary sources of ICC development.

To begin with, intercultural education tends to emphasize the development of intercultural cognition as the primary gateway to the development of intercultural competence, which should lead to positive changes in intercultural attitudes and behaviours (Deardorff, 2011; Mittal, 2012), and hence result in sociocultural adaptation as well as academic and psychological adaptation (Schartner & Young, 2020).

However, despite the significance of intercultural education, the sole reliance on it restricts the development of ICC to intercultural knowledge (Callen & Lee, 2009; Collentine, 2009). However, the literature, supported by my personal sponsored immersion abroad, does not mention that the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation in Oman has self-identifying programs dedicated to preparing the Omani students for their intercultural experience abroad.

In any case, achieving a higher level of competence requires going beyond the classroom education to explore meaningful engagements with intercultural experiences (Doerr, 2014; Gardner et al., 2009; Sommer, 2000). However, these intercultural experiences become interculturally less influential when individuals do not maintain an extrovert intercultural personality that can approach the cultural differences embedded in intercultural experiences with positive intercultural attitudes represented by respect for cultural differences, ethnorelativism, the tolerance of the differences, open-mindedness, curiosity and discovery, motivation to communicate in the presence of cultural differences, and learning autonomy.

Therefore, along with Aba (2015), in the absence of intercultural preparation programs in Oman, Omani students can still develop the current competencies under study through study abroad, provided they can develop an extrovert personality with positive attitudes towards cultural differences. As such, the Process Model of Intercultural Competence designed by Deardorff (2006) was drawn upon for my ICCS for its emphasis on positive attitudes as a basis for developing intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006). Below is an overview of Deardorff's (2006) model.

The Process Model of Intercultural Competence designed by Deardorff (2006) includes five components for the development of ICC. The development process starts with building positive attitudes to cultural differences (respecting cultural differences, openness while withholding judgement, and curiosity and discovery by tolerating ambiguity and uncertainty) and then skills (to listen, observe, and evaluate as well as to analyse, interpret, and relate) which (skills) are defined by Spitzberg (2000) as repeatable actions or a sequence of actions, oriented towards the achievement of a goal. Skills should then lead to the development of intercultural knowledge/awareness (cultural self-awareness, deep cultural knowledge, and sociolinguistic awareness), before experiencing positive

internal outcomes (adaptability, flexibility, empathy and ethno-relativism) and, ultimately, external outcomes (effective and appropriate communication behaviours).

The model above was sponsored with further amendments to better meet the complexity of ICC development.

Linguistic competence in the target language was integrated into my model as an important prerequisite for intercultural communication (Pikhart, 2014b); it determines success in intercultural communications (Fantini & Tirmizi, 2007) and helps academic adaptation as well (Schartner & Young, 2020). Linguistic ability correlates positively with the development of ICC (Sutin, 2011). However, the maintenance of language capabilities does not necessarily ensure communication with culturally distinct people and the development of intercultural competence, especially when the individuals have negative attitudes to the encountered cultural differences and their adopters (Jackson, 2009). Thus, maintaining linguistic capabilities and positive intercultural attitudes at the same time is important in order to move forward towards the development of this competence.

Along with the positive attitudes, the immersed individuals should have control over their negative intercultural emotions (another component integrated into my proposed model) in order to interact with those who are culturally different and are thought to be the cause of their negative emotions. The regulation of negative emotions should allow the individuals to be neutral in intercultural judgements and constructive in intercultural understandings in order to think critically of cultural differences, including theirs, and their impact on behaviours as well as to listen and relate to others.

The individuals need also to have the necessary skills to listen, observe, evaluate, analyse, reflect, interpret, relate, and ask questions in order to build intercultural cognition and awareness, and to correct their stereotypes while having first to control negative intercultural emotions. Although the regulation of negative emotions is significant, on its own it is inadequate for developing higher intercultural competence. As individuals regulate their negative emotions, they should engage with the Other (Matsumoto et al., 2001; Matsumoto et al., 2003) with critical thinking and communication skills. Engaging these skills in practice may constitute the first practical step of interaction with the host culture and its people.

The language abilities, positive intercultural attitudes, control and regulation of negative intercultural emotions, critical thinking and communication skills, and intercultural cognition/awareness should ultimately lead to social initiatives, engagement with the counterpart individuals, flexibility towards different cultural groups, and adaptability to various intercultural contexts. The more individuals show intercultural initiative by being engaging, flexible, and adaptable, the more their behaviours presumably become indicative of effective and appropriate behaviours in intercultural contexts (competent intercultural behaviours).

The intercultural psychological adjustment should be an indicator of the immersed individuals' competence in intercultural behaviours. The competent intercultural behaviours should, in turn, enhance the development of higher levels of L2 capabilities, positive intercultural attitudes, control over negative emotions, critical thinking and communication skills, and intercultural cognition and awareness.

It is worth mentioning here that contrary to Schartner and Young (2020), intercultural adaptation in my study is referred to as a process, while intercultural adjustment is the emotional and psychological result of adaptation (Gill, 2007; Hua, 2019; Matsumoto et al., 2005; Redmond, 2000; Zhou et al., 2008).

Moreover, although the language abilities constitute one of the main components of ICC, it is assessed in my research as a discrete variable to meet my research purpose of studying the impact of study abroad on both ICC and SEIELU, and then to examine the contribution of ICC and its role as a component in the development of SEIELU.

Along with the model designed by Deardorff (2006), this model does not claim a pure linear process in the development of ICC. In fact, an inter-relational influence is assumed to prevail among the model's components. Therefore, ICC can potentially be developed, for example, by developing one or two of its six components. However, this development is assumed to be limited. Higher levels of development maturity need to be developed horizontally across all the six levels and vertically in magnitude (Rudd & Lawson, 2007b; Spitzberg, 2000). In other words, developing higher levels of behavioural effectiveness and appropriateness in intercultural communication requires completing the entire developmental process, and then the behaviours in turn should develop higher levels of linguistic competence and positive attitudes and so on (Deardorff, 2006).

The adjective 'intercultural' is emphasized over the adjective 'cultural' to indicate that along with Holmes and O'Neill (2012), intercultural development is relational to the Other. For example, the international individual may feel comfortable interacting within their inner groups (intracultural adjustment) but not necessarily with the culturally distinct individual (lack of intercultural adjustment). Individuals may feel confidence using the English language with those who are culturally similar to them, but not necessarily with the host locals who have the dominant power and confidence in the use of L2. Therefore, the intercultural change has to be Other-relational.

My proposed DMICC comprises six main dimensions: L2 capabilities, intercultural attitudes (respect for cultural differences, ethnocentrism, tolerance of cultural differences, open-mindedness, curiosity and discovery, motivation to communicate, autonomy, and tolerance of ambiguity and uncertainty), control and regulation of negative intercultural emotions, critical thinking and communication skills (e.g., the ability to listen, observe, evaluate, analyse, interpret, relate, reflect, and ask questions), intercultural cognition (stereotypes, awareness and knowledge), and competent

intercultural behaviours (social initiatives, engagements, adaptability, and flexibility). The sources of ICC development are an intercultural education, experiences, and an interactive personality. The ultimate indicator of development is intercultural psychological adjustment.

3.5.1.2 Intercultural Communicative Competence Scale (ICCS)

My ICCS was built based on my proposed DMICC. After excluding the SEIELU as a discrete variable of study, the ICCS contained 96 assessment items based on the other five main dimensions along with their subsets.

The attitudinal dimension was measured by assessing the learners' respect for (items 1-4) and tolerance of cultural differences (items 8-10) and ambiguity (items 33-36), ethnocentrism (items 5-7), open-mindedness (items 11-14), curiosity and discovery (items 15-19), motivation (items 20-28), and autonomy (items 29-32).

In order for learners in an intercultural context to develop the necessary awareness and knowledge about self and people from other cultures, it was necessary for them to have the ability to regulate and control their negative emotions (items 1-7, Emotion Regulation section) to subsequently maintain critical thinking and communication skills (items 1-20, Critical Thinking and Communication Skills section).

The intercultural cognition was measured by assessing the learners' intercultural awareness of the influence of cultures on individuals' behaviours (items 1-6, Intercultural Cognition section) and knowledge of surface level aspects of cultures (items 12-16, Intercultural Cognition section) and to what extent stereotypes prevail and so influence their minds (items 7-11, Intercultural Cognition section). Such intercultural cognition, depending on the amount, accuracy, and type of knowledge and awareness developed by students, along with other proposed intercultural dimensions, should help learners develop appropriate and effective (competent) communication behaviours in intercultural environments and settings. The competence of intercultural behaviours was assessed by measuring social initiatives (items 1-3), adaptability (items 4-7), flexibility (items 8-13), and social engagement (items 14-17), as represented in the Behaviours section. According to Kinginger and Belz (2005), exposure to a variety of socio-cultural contexts (breadth in interactions) is significant for the development of ICC. Therefore, the IIFS and ICCS represented by the behavioural part assessed interactions in various intercultural contexts.

To make sure that the more necessary and expressive items were included in the original survey (see Appendix 1), several items were borrowed from various research resources. For example, items 3 and 4 in the Intercultural Attitudes section as well as item no. 9 in the Critical Thinking and Communication Skills section of the survey were adapted from Chen and Starosta's (2000) Intercultural Sensitivity Scale, while items 5-7 were directly taken from Neuliep's (2002) Generalized Ethnocentrism Scale.

Items 12 (assessing open-mindedness), 1-3 (assessing emotion regulation), 8 (assessing critical thinking and communication skills), and 1-3 (measuring students' social initiative) as well were slightly adapted from Van der Zee et al.'s (2013) short form of the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire by, for example, adding the pronoun "I" to the original statement and changing the verb tense.

Item no. 11 'measuring open-mindedness' was copied from Mittal's (2012) Cross-Cultural Orientation Inventory, and item no. 12 'measuring intercultural knowledge' was adapted from the same inventory by adding "traditions, norms, customs" as well as the phrase "much about" to the original statement.

Item no. 13 (assessing open-mindedness) and item no. 13 (assessing flexibility in intercultural settings) were taken from Mason's (1995) Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Questionnaire, while item no. 15 (for checking the students' curiosity and discovery) was copied from Lastrapes and Negishi (2012, p. 40).

Most of the items measuring motivation (items 21-26) were taken directly from a questionnaire designed by Arasaratnam and Banerjee (2011, p. 229). Moreover, I copied items no. 28 (measuring motivation), and 5-6 (assessing adaptability in intercultural settings) and adapted item 4 (emotion regulation) and item 14 (critical thinking and communication skills) from Aba's (2015) Mobile Students' Intercultural Competence Scale.

Regarding items 9, 10, 11, and 12, some were copied and some were adapted from Van Oudenhoven and Van der Zee (2002, p. 684) and Olson and Kroeger's (2001) Global Competency and Intercultural Sensitivity Scale, and from Gobbo et al. (2000) and Arasaratnam's (2009) Intercultural Communication Competence instrument respectively.

Items no. 1 and 2, which are for measuring critical thinking and communication skills, were slightly adapted from Matsumoto and Takeuchi (1998) and Fantini and Tirmizi (2007, p. 20) respectively.

Items 4 and 5 in the Critical Thinking and Communication Skills section and item no. 8, 'measuring flexibility in intercultural settings', were borrowed and slightly adapted from Schnabel and Kelava (2013, pp. 37-38). I also copied items no. 15 and 20 in the Critical Thinking and Communication Skills section and items 15-16, 'measuring intercultural knowledge', and I also slightly adapted item no. 7, 'measuring adaptability', all from Ang et al.'s (2007) Cultural Intelligence Scale.

Items no. 3 and 13 as well as 8 and 14 were respectively adapted from Zhou and Griffiths (2011) and Fantini (2005). Finally, item no. 4, 'measuring adaptability' was constructed by merging statements from Schnabel and Kelava (2013, p. 37) and Arasaratnam's (2009) Intercultural Communication Competence instrument.

3.5.1.3 Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use Scale (SEIELUS)

The current project's SEIELUS was constructed by borrowing and adapting items from various resources to ensure the coverage of the necessary aspects and settings required to determine the level of students' competence in English language use in intercultural contexts beyond the confines of the classroom.

To begin with, the initial scale in Appendix 1 included 27 items. Items 1-3 were directly borrowed from Kaypak and Ortaçtepe's (2014, p. 365) Language Learner Belief Questionnaire (LLBQ) with some adaptation done to items no. 2 and 3. I devised statement no. 3 by adapting statements from both Kaypak and Ortaçtepe's (2014, p. 365) LLBQ and Ghasemboland's (2014) adapted version of the Teachers' Reported English Language Proficiency instrument.

The statements no. (4-9) were also borrowed from Ghasemboland's (2014) adapted version of the instrument the Teachers' Reported English Language Proficiency with some adaptation done to statements no. 4-6. Statements no. 10, 11-16, 17, and 20 were respectively borrowed and adapted from Caligiuri (2000), Zhou and Griffiths (2011, p. 116), Liu (2007), and Judit (2013, p. 264). Items no. 21-23 were copied from McCroskey's (2015, p. 40) Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24).

3.5.1.4 Intercultural Interaction Frequency Scale (IIFS)

The three-item IIFS was developed to measure the frequency of students' intercultural interactions in academic and non-academic settings. Questions 10-12 in the demographic information section were borrowed from Spencer-Rodgers and McGovern (2002, p. 620). Instead of rating the questions on a nine-point scale as done by Spencer-Rodgers and McGovern (2002), they were rated on a five-point scale (never, seldom, occasionally, often, all the time) used by Bückler, Furrer, and Lin (2015, p. 12) with the addition of the frequency word "never".

3.5.2 Summary

The inclusion of all these dimensions, especially in the ICCS, along with their various subsets makes the assessment survey lengthy; however, this was assumed necessary in order to meet the diagnostic assessment purposes of the current research study and maximize its ability to deal with social complexity and thus construct a more reliable indicator of development of the latent traits among the assessed individuals. According to Van der Zee et al. (2013), long versions of questionnaires are more suitable for diagnostic purposes, and thus, caution must be used when short versions are employed for meeting these purposes.

However, all the original survey items, presented in Appendix 1, received further development as will be seen in Chapter Four: Scale Construction and Improvement. The most reliable and valid statements were selected, while others were removed from the survey after the application of Cronbach's alpha test and Principal Component Analysis (PCA).

3.5.3 Qualitative Methods

Two methods were used for qualitative data collection: semi-structured interviews and an open-ended survey question.

3.5.3.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

To obtain an in-depth understanding of the participants' lived intercultural experiences abroad and subsequently of the key quantitative findings, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Compared to structured and unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews "have a more informal, conversational character, being shaped partly by the interviewer's pre-existing topic guide and partly by concerns that are emergent in the interview" (Bloor & Wood, 2006, p. 104). They have the advantage of asking follow-on questions to deepen the understanding of a point raised by the participants.

Although the participants were offered two ways of participating (Ms Teams/Zoom Meeting or email interview), other options were offered later on to meet their different preferences and circumstances. For example, one female preferred an email interview due to work commitments and due to its provision of time adequacy and flexibility in location when answering questions before following up the answers with other questions. For this reason, email interview responses, according to research, tend to be more focused and reflected on before they are sent. Email interviewing also has several other advantages. These include but are not limited to the fact that it is cost- and time-effective, as it eliminates the time and expense of calling, travelling, and transcribing as well as eliminating interviewer/interviewee effect, which is more associated with telephone and face-to-face interviews. In brief, research has revealed that email interviews are effective and efficient methods for gathering credible and trustworthy qualitative data, similar to face-to-face and telephone qualitative interviews. Their advantages outweigh their disadvantages, and many of the challenges are found easy to overcome (Beck, 2005; McCoyd & Kerson, 2006; Meho, 2006).

To continue, five interviewees opted for Ms Teams/Zoom meetings, while three others preferred phone interviews due to the low internet connectivity in their living areas. Two female (friend) interviewees preferred a group interview, which is "a question-and-answer session between the interviewer and interviewees [... for collecting] data from more than one person at the same time thereby saving time and money" (p. 99) with the interest in interviewees' views as individuals (Bloor & Wood, 2006). For more details about these interviewees (N=11), please see Appendix 4, Table 4.

3.5.3.2 Open-Ended Survey Question

The quantitative survey included an open-ended question where the respondents were asked to mention any other unlisted barriers that challenged their intercultural interactions while abroad before

their inclusion in the provided list and then to rank them in an ascending order according to their impact on their interactions.

3.5.4 Summary

Nine interviews were carried out online to comply with Covid-19 health restrictions and home quarantine guidelines issued at that time in Oman and other countries worldwide. However, the group interview was done in a face-to-face mode upon the request of the interviewees with all the health precautions and instructions being followed, including the maintenance of at least a two-metre distance between each individual in this interview and the compliance with other health restrictions and guidelines, and the obtainment of their institution's permission in this regard.

3.6 Data Analysis

This part explains the types of analysis used for analysing the collected quantitative and qualitative data in order to answer the intended research questions.

3.6.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Statistical tests are helpful with hypothesis testing. They can estimate whether there is a statistically significant difference between my two comparison groups of Omani study-abroad and stay-in-Oman students for each of the variables (SEIELU, ICC and IIF), before determining the impact of study abroad. They can also be used to determine the relationship between the variables under study (Bevans, 2021; Brace, Snelgar & Kemp, 2016; Field, 2013; Pallant, 2016).

To begin with, descriptive statistics (e.g., mean, median, standard deviation, and normality and so on) were applied to the data to describe frequency of cases, the commonality of barriers between participants, and the shape of data distribution to determine whether to use parametric or non-parametric tests to answer the research questions by relying on Kolmogorove-Smirnov, as more than 50 participants took part in the current study. The parametric tests were used to test the research hypotheses, as the assumption of data normality was not violated (Llanes & Muñoz, 2009; Pallant, 2016). The descriptive statistics generated an idea of the participants' developmental levels in ICC, SEIELU and IIF, and subsequently, the possible issues encountered by participants in their intercultural development (Fantini & Tirmizi, 2007). The median was also used to turn the average means (interval data) into ordinal variables to ascertain the research groups' development level in target intercultural competencies. The average means that were equal to or below the median were considered limited, and those above the median were considered competent.

The nominal variables (e.g., location of stay, gender) and the ordinal variables (e.g., age, educational level, number of spoken foreign languages, length of stay abroad) functioned as

independent variables. The scaled variables of ICC, SEIELU, and IIF constituted the dependent variables.

Inferential statistics shed light on the nature of the relationship between the variables of interest at the 0.05 level to ensure that the “results would occur by chance less than 5% of the time” (Norris & Gillespie, 2009, p. 385), or, in other words, to offer a confidence level of 95% (Llanes & Muñoz, 2009).

The dependent sample-t test was applied to SPSS data file 2 to examine whether there would be a significant change in the experimental and control groups’ average means of ICC, SEIELU, and IIF from the pre-test to the post-test and so to determine whether the study-abroad and stay in the home country (Oman) contexts led to variations in intercultural competence development.

Furthermore, the independent samples t-test was used for performance comparison in the pre- and post-tests between the independent experimental and control groups and dichotomous independent variables, such as gender, and having previous study-abroad experiences (yes vs no) in the target dependent variables (Fantini & Tirmizi, 2007; Pallant, 2016). It was used to check whether the comparison groups were similar to each other in intercultural performance at the start of the research and after one year abroad. There should be no significant differences between the comparison groups at the beginning of the research process due to more accurate robust results.

The one-way ANOVA was also employed to test the relationship between the independent variables with more than two levels, and the dependent variables. These independent variables included the location of stay (Oman, the UK, the US and Canada, and Australia and New Zealand), and length of stay abroad (less than one year, 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, more than six years).

A multiple linear regression analysis was also utilised to check the unique contribution of IIF and ICC (and its components) in the prediction of SEIELU. The analysis checked the level of variance in the dependent variable caused by the prediction model of the independent variables as a whole (Llanes & Muñoz, 2009; Pallant, 2016) and the association of each independent variable in the prediction model with the dependent variable by revealing their individual differential weightings and whether these weightings are significant in the prediction of the dependent variable or not (Pallant, 2016).

Factor analysis (principal component, principal axis factor, and maximum likelihood factor analyses) was applied to measure the fit of the ICC’s subscales into their general dimensions, and the general dimensions into my proposed structural model of ICC development as well as to test and improve the internal validity of the construct by separately measuring the unidimensionality and

convergent validity of each dimension in the research instrument (Arasaratnam, 2009; Brace, Snelgar, & Kemp, 2016; Judit, 2013; Mittal, 2012).

3.6.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

As previously mentioned, my qualitative data were collected through Ms Teams/Zoom, phone, face-to-face, and email interviews, as well as from an open-ended survey question.

All the face-to-face, synchronous and telephone interviews were recorded. The English interview audio recordings were then transcribed into written texts using Otter software before proceeding with the intended thematic analysis. This platform transcribes live either by uploading the audio file, playing the audio file, or synchronizing it with other recording platforms such as Zoom. After the software has captured the interview and recognized the different speakers, the transcription starts while identifying the different speakers in the transcripts. It can be used for academic and research purposes including taking notes and transcribing research interviews and lectures. Users have control over who can access the live transcripts. A number of organizations and universities benefit from having Otter software (<https://otter.ai>).

Despite the use of software, I checked the produced transcripts back against the original recordings for accuracy. Although the transcripts were produced, getting a better understanding of the interviewees' lived experiences in general or even some particular points sometimes required me to listen to these recordings repeatedly while following them in the transcripts.

I used thematic analysis as a method to analyse my interview transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). According to Maguire and Delahunt (2017), thematic analysis "is the process of identifying patterns or themes within [the] qualitative data...that are important or interesting ...[in order] to say something about an issue" (p. 3352-3353). The analytical process in this study was guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework: (1) familiarising self with data through initially transcribing interviews (using Otter software here) and then actively rereading the data meanwhile noting down initial ideas, (2) generating initial codes by organizing the important and interesting data in a systematic and meaningful way, (3) searching for themes by sorting the different codes into potential themes and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes, (4) reviewing and mapping themes to check their coherence and distinctiveness from each other, (5) defining and naming themes to identify and clarify their essence, and (6) writing up the report in relation to the qualitative inquiry purpose. The following of the steps above was not done in a linear way but was more recursive, as I needed to move back and forth between these steps with flexibility to meet the data complexity (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

The thematic process in this study was approached with deductive (also called top-down and theoretical) reasoning rather than the inductive (bottom-up) approach, as the analysis was driven by the concern of addressing specific research questions to shed light on the quantitative finding that suggested that there was no statistically significant impact of study abroad on ICC, SEIELU, and IIF levels. This process was also guided by my theoretical/conceptual framework of the DMICC. So, the process tried to fit the coded data into a pre-existing framework (see Figure 1 above). It was also guided by the literature as, for example, the goals that individuals set for the experience determine the nature of their intercultural interactions and subsequently the learning returns (Badstübner & Ecke, 2009; Kitsantas, 2004; Milstein, 2005; Yang et al., 2011). After all, although the main themes (main dimensions of DMICC, see Figure 1) were pre-fixed, their corresponding subthemes and codes were openly and flexibly developed and modified, as I expected them to provide insights into what appears to be the lack of any study-abroad effect.

The thematic analysis in this study was carried out manually on Microsoft Word and then electronically using different, but consistent, highlighters to relate to the different codes (see Appendix 20, Figure 1) before fitting them into subthemes (where necessary) and finally the main themes. While data analysis software programmes (e.g. NVivo, Atlas, and others) can speed up and simplify the analytical process, they are not essential (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Whether to carry out the qualitative data analysis manually or electronically is a choice “dependent on the size of the project, the funds and time available, and the inclination and expertise of the researcher” (Basit, 2003, p. 143). In addition, the process of coding texts is “an intellectual exercise” (p. 152). As the qualitative data analysis packages “do not do the analysis for the researcher, the user must still create the categories, do the segmenting and coding, and decide what to retrieve and collate (p. 145). Finally, whether data are analysed manually or by a computer package, the ultimate aim of any qualitative inquiry is to provide an in-depth understanding of the social situation or phenomenon under study (Basit, 2003).

3.7 Online Research Data Collection

This section explains the procedures undertaken in collecting data for both the quantitative and qualitative inquiries as detailed below. Both types of data were collected online (except the group and telephone interviews).

3.7.1 Quantitative Data Collection

This part will explain the importance of the online surveys, the Qualtrics survey in particular, in my online data collection. It will then highlight the encountered challenges to a controlled

administration of my online survey, the proposed alternative for the survey administration and its disadvantages, and finally, the proposed solution.

3.7.1.1 The Use of Qualtrics survey

It was decided to use an internet survey (Qualtrics survey) for collecting quantitative data in the two stages of the quantitative inquiry rather than the traditional pen-and-paper method. This was for a number of reasons.

The first and most important aim was to get access to Omani students studying abroad in the different target countries, and those staying at home in different regions of Oman. In addition, the internet survey has emerged as one of the more popular means of collecting data online due to its efficiency in terms of time and cost, the reduction in the administrative and data analysis efforts, and the reduction in mistakes resulting from the manual entry of data from the pen-and-paper surveys into the SPSS sheet (Cobanoglu & Cobanoglu, 2003; Denscombe, 2006; Dolnicar, Laesser, & Matus, 2009; Hardre, Crowson, & Xie, 2012; Sax, Gilmartin, & Bryant, 2003; Shin, Johnson, & Rao, 2012). This method was also considered a good choice, as access to the internet has noticeably been increasing due to the wider spread of technology and smart devices (International Telecommunication Union, 2014; Kemp, 2015).

Moreover, according to research, individuals at a younger age and a higher educational and knowledge level and those who are viewpoint-oriented were noticed to be the most active internet users. They were more likely to be attracted to answer the online survey than other groups of individuals (Baker, Curtice, & Sparrow, 2003; Bandilla, Bosnjak, & Altdorfer, 2003; Barentsz et al., 2014; Dolnicar et al., 2009; Duffy et al., 2005; Sax et al., 2008; Van den Berg et al., 2011). From my pilot studies, the current participants were 17-45 years old. This was another good reason to distribute the survey online.

In contrast to the traditional pen-and-paper survey, the online survey was also noticed to record higher responses, response variability and completion rates, and longer answers and more detailed information to open-ended questions, for example (Lonsdale, Hodge, & Rose, 2006; Rada & Domínguez-Álvarez, 2014). Similar to the paper surveys, internet surveys have tended to show a high reliability (Basnov et al., 2009; Hardré, Crowson, & Xie, 2010; Lonsdale et al., 2006; Ritter et al., 2004).

The online data collection, on the other hand, raises concerns about the representativeness of the study sample; however, it was possible to overcome this issue by firstly feeding the Qualtrics survey system with the target individuals' email address. This allows control over the survey distribution and subsequently more assurance about the representativeness of the study sample. The sample representativeness also becomes more assured because the email addresses enable the survey

to generate individual closed access survey links emailed directly to the target individuals' email addresses, which can limit the possible participation of individuals not belonging to the target study population. This procedure also helps increase the survey response and completion rate. This is because the Qualtrics survey system can track the participants' completion of the survey without violating their identity anonymity and privacy (Hardre et al., 2012; Tingling, Parent, & Wade, 2003) and then sends automatic reminders or thank-you emails to the target participants based on their completion of the survey. Research shows that sending regular reminders to the respondents increases their response and survey completion rates (Dillman, 2011; Kongsved et al., 2007; Shin et al., 2012) while keeping the researcher and any possible bias away from the research context (Tingling et al., 2003). Kongsved et al. (2007), for example, noticed that the response rate to the internet survey before sending the reminder was 17.9%, though it reached 73.2% in the paper survey. However, after sending the reminder, the response percentage jumped to 64.2% in the online survey with an even better completion rate (97.8%) than in the paper version (63.4% only). Research adds that sending reminders to the participants with information about the intended research and time of the survey receipt and closure increases the participation rate (Smyth et al., 2009; Umbach, 2004).

The individual links generated by the Qualtrics survey can also be activated to be valid for one time use; they can be flexible regarding the survey being completed at different times within the specified period of data collection, and they expire upon the completion of the survey, provided that the participants do not delete the survey-installed cookies from their devices. According to De Leeuw, Hox, and Boeve (2016), giving the participants the freedom to complete the survey at their convenience within a specified time frame, followed by polite reminders and probes from the researcher evidently decreases the amount of data loss to a minimum and increases the reliability of the research instrument as well. This response and completion flexibility within the specified time frame of data collection in the absence of the researcher, especially when studying sensitive issues and topics, increases the participants' comfort and subsequently prevents them from giving socially expected answers, which has a more positive impact on the quality of the response, compared to the face-to-face administration (Duffy et al., 2005; Evans & Mathur, 2005; Hardre et al., 2012; Rada & Domínguez-Álvarez, 2014; Shin et al., 2012).

To avoid any chance of missing an item by mistake, the Qualtrics survey has the option of reminding the respondents of their unanswered items before proceeding to the next section. This option is unavailable in the traditional pen-and-paper surveys (Evans & Mathur, 2005). The respondent decides whether to respond to their unanswered items or to continue with the survey without answering them. The respondents can actually be forced to respond to the unanswered items; however, Sax et al. (2003) showed that the online participants' response to the online survey at their convenience without the use of the 'forced answer' option improved the quality of the data collected

from online participants in terms of answer length, information precision and variability, and survey completion rate. I only used the ‘forced answer’ option in my Qualtrics survey with the first filtration question where the untargeted respondents’ participation should be suspended. For the online invitation, reminder, and thank-you messages, please see Appendix 3.

3.7.1.2 Challenges to a Controlled Administration of the Online Survey

Based on Smyth et al. (2009), the Omani offices and departments’ facilitation of the survey distribution would make the research look more official and important, and the students would thus be more encouraged to complete the survey. However, deriving maximum exploitation of the advantages provided by the Qualtrics survey and then gaining access to the target study population as planned was limited due to the refusal and lack of interest of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation in Oman and its cultural attachés in the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand in particular in the provision of the emails, even though they had been provided with the necessary research documents obtained from the University of Exeter and had also been offered the opportunity to play a role as main administrators along with me in the survey distribution and monitor. However, while the majority of the governmental departments refused cooperation, the two others (the Cultural Attaché of Oman in London and the cultural office of Oman in Australia) varied in their facilitation of the current research, with the former offering the most cooperation.

3.7.1.3 An Open-Access Link as an Alternative for Online Survey Administration

As is clear from the above, to make my research possible, the initially intended distribution of closed access individual links to the survey was replaced by the distribution of an open access link. Due to the large size of the contact detail file and time needed in its preparation, the Cultural Attaché of Oman in London suggested distributing the invitation message along with the open access survey link to the email addresses of Omani students in the UK (N=2400) by itself.

The cultural office of Oman in Australia directed me to contact the presidents of the Omani student associations in order to distribute the survey link among the Omani students in Australia and New Zealand. While the presidents of the Omani Student Association in New Zealand confirmed the receipt and distribution of my invitation message inclusive of the open access survey link, the presidents of the Omani student association in Australia did not reply to my email, although a supervisor from the Omani cultural office in Australia informed them of the need to do so. The Ministry and most of its cultural attachés abroad refused to cooperate in sending the alternative open-access link to the target study population of the Omani individuals abroad and in Oman.

With this in mind, and since the WhatsApp messenger is widely used among the Omani students, the open-access survey link was also distributed through a number of WhatsApp groups formed with some Omani students studying abroad and those staying in Oman for quick distribution of the survey among the students, especially those staying in Oman, and because some individuals,

based on my online pilot study, did not seem to check their emails regularly. The survey was open for one month. The recipients of the invitation message were asked to circulate the survey link among other groups of Omani individuals at home and abroad for a quick distribution. It was assumed that based on this request, nearly every study-abroad student would invite at least one stay-in-Oman colleague to be in the control group. My control over the survey distribution was limited, as the larger part of the distribution was in the hands of the participants and of the Omani Cultural Attaché in London.

The survey was distributed in the second academic semester to allow the first-year students to be exposed to the experience and to limit the students' overestimation of their competencies and make sure their answers were not influenced by their lack of sufficient exposure to the new intercultural experience abroad (Brosan et al., 2008; Kruger & Dunning, 2009; Savicki et al., 2004).

3.7.1.4 Disadvantages of an Open-Access Survey

The distribution of the open-access survey was more likely to make my study sample vulnerable to the violation of its representativeness, particularly the control group. This violation was more likely to occur when draws for a number of £35 and £50 Amazon vouchers in the pre- and post-test surveys respectively were allocated. These draws were meant to increase the participation and survey completion rates, especially based on the realisation that long versions of research instruments are time consuming and this increases fatigue during the assessment process (Schnabel et al., 2015). To increase response rates, the students were assured that a third party would handle the prize draws and their distribution (Cobanoglu & Cobanoglu, 2003). It was felt that due to the open-access survey and prize draws, some untargeted individuals might be attracted to take part in my research perhaps due to interest in the research topic and/or entry into the monetary prize draw upon their completion of the survey.

3.7.1.5 Proposed Solution to Overcome Sample Unrepresentativeness

To limit the participation of untargeted individuals, I added a fifth option in the section of location of current place of study (or stay) while modifying the fourth option as follows:

Oman (I competed for study-abroad scholarships but wasn't successful.)

Oman (I didn't compete for any study-abroad scholarships.)

If the last option was selected, the individuals were not able to progress to the rest of the survey, and a message would then show up to inform them that they were not among the individuals and groups the researcher was looking for. They were asked instead to circulate the invitation message among their friends and colleagues both locally and abroad. After that, they were automatically directed away from the survey. Some untargeted individuals may have thought of retaking the survey; however, I assumed this was not very likely to happen, as the survey completion took 15-20 minutes.

3.7.2 Qualitative Data Collection

At the end of the post-test survey, the respondents were asked to express their agreement or disagreement with taking part in the follow-up semi-structured interviews to learn more about their lived intercultural experiences abroad. Those who expressed agreement were asked to provide their first names and/or family names along with their email addresses, so I could contact them later about the interview arrangements. Sending private emails using the names of the recipients makes them feel important and thus decreases any possible withdrawals from the interviews at the time of the interview arrangements. The potential interviewees were informed that there was no guarantee that all of them would be interviewed if their numbers exceeded the required number.

However, due to the large time gap (nearly one year) between the completion of the quantitative data analysis and the start of the interviews, those who had showed interest in taking part in the interviews were asked again to confirm their agreement or disagreement with doing so by responding to a consent form that was emailed to them and by providing their email addresses again for confirmation and to arrange for the interviews. Due to the outbreak of Covid-19 worldwide, the interviews were conducted online. The interviewees were provided with options to indicate their preferences for the interview conduct: single, group, no preference, and synchronous (Ms Teams/Zoom meetings) vs asynchronous (email exchanges) online interviews. The interviewees' other suggested modes for the interviews were accepted when they did not violate the health restrictions and contact regulations with regard to the control of the pandemic.

The qualitative questions that appear in the semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix 18) were asked to explore the reasons why Omani students in my study could not develop measurable advancements in their ICC, SEIELU and IIF beyond the levels of those staying in Oman. Answering this question involved asking questions about the reasons that motivated these students to study abroad in general and in their countries of study abroad in particular in the first place. As explained in section 2.4: Factors Motivating International Students to Study Abroad, the nature of goals and reasons (integrative vs instrumental) that motivate students to study abroad could have an influence on Omani students' interactions with the host locals when abroad and, subsequently, their development of the intercultural and linguistic competencies under study.

Therefore, it was also necessary to explore the nature of Omani students' intercultural interactions abroad (interaction goal, frequency, and challenges) and how they perceived them and why? The quantitative findings revealed that the Omani students' intercultural interactions lacked frequency, breadth and depth, but I had limited insights into these aspects, such as the amount of time they dedicated to their experienced interactions, their interaction contexts and people they interacted with; how and why?

Finally, for further understanding of the study-abroad experience impact, the learning outcomes of students' intercultural experiences were explored especially with regard to intercultural competence development, along with their satisfaction of these experiences to understand their adjustment to the host culture and its people abroad.

3.8 Study Samples

This part explains the steps undertaken for sampling the target Omani individuals for both the quantitative (pre-post-tests) and qualitative inquiries.

3.8.1 Quantitative Inquiry Sample

The quantitative inquiry, the first towards data analysis, comprised pre- and post-test stages. Accordingly, this part will explain the sampling process undertaken for both stages.

The target individuals here were sampled to form two research groups: experimental and control groups. The experimental group consisted of Omani study-abroad students, who were defined as those Omani students who were practically and temporarily relocated in a different country (the UK, the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) and away from the home country (Oman) for the purpose of study and the obtainment of an academic degree. The control group, on the other hand, consisted of Omani students staying in Oman who had met the academic and English language standards and requirements of Oman's Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation and thus officially competed in parallel with those students in the experimental group for the study-abroad scholarships, but they had not won any due to the intense competition. This condition of forming the control group was more likely to minimise the differences between the two research groups, especially in the absence of a possibility for true randomisation. By this, the two groups were assumed to be similar to each other and were thus valid for experimentation (Anderson et al., 2006; L. Cohen et al., 2007; Goldstein & Kim, 2006; Llanes & Muñoz, 2009; Shadish et al., 2002). The study tried to include as many target individuals as possible in both research groups to increase the generalizability of the findings and the validity of the research conclusions in the first place, and then to make regional and cultural comparisons possible (Anderson et al., 2006; Chen, Mallinckrodt, & Mobley, 2002; Gullekson et al., 2011; Hendrickson et al., 2011; Kaushal & Kwantes, 2006; Lindsey, 2005). Since my data collection was intended to be done online, a large sample was more likely to limit the problems associated with online data collection, such as the non-response issue.

According to some staff at the Cultural Attachés of Oman in London and Australia, the number of Omani students in the UK, and Australia and New Zealand at the time the first stage of survey was distributed was around 2,400 and 840 respectively. However, Oman's Ministry of Higher Education,

Research and Innovation, and the Cultural Division of Oman in the US refused to supply numbers for Omani students staying in Oman and those studying in the US and Canada.

3.8.1.1 Pre-Test Sample

Table 1: Overview of the Number of Respondents to the Pre- and Post-Tests

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test	581	1	1	581	1.00	.000
Valid N (listwise)	581					
Post-test	117	2	2	234	2.00	.000
Valid N (listwise)	117					

In total, 581 participants responded to the online pre-test survey (Table 1 above); however, only 250 respondents completed it in full and were thus considered valid for inclusion in the statistical study (Table 2 below). The rest of the cases contained a lot of systematically rather than randomly missing data.

Table 2: Overview of Valid Cases for Study in the Pre- and Post-Tests

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	pre-test	250	72.9	72.9	72.9
	post-test	93	27.1	27.1	100.0
	Total	343	100.0	100.0	

Moreover, 47 cases (8.1%) had not competed for study-abroad scholarships; this meant they could not be considered part of the control group and were thus discarded (see Appendix 4, Table 1). In addition, the seen-but-unanswered items, as indicated by the value of -99 appearing in the SPSS sheet generated by the Qualtrics survey, indicated that a number of participants in my research were more interested in entering the prize draw and were skipping the survey items in order to fill in the prize draw entry form at the end of the survey. These cases were deleted from the SPSS file before proceeding to the data analysis.

As seen in Appendix 4, Table 2, the 250 pre-test takers were distributed as follows: 231 experimental group respondents (92.4%) vs 19 control group respondents (7.6%); 109 males (43.6%) vs 141 females (56.4%); 47 diploma (19%), 93 bachelor's (37%), 70 master's (28%) and 40 PhD (16%) holders. They were also distributed according to the country of stay as follows: the UK (n=191), the US (n=8), Australia and New Zealand (n=32), and lastly, Oman (n=19).

3.8.1.2 Post-Test Sample

Pairing the pre- and post-test total scores and subsequently the calculation of the difference between the scores to determine the volume of change due to study abroad required having the same

respondents complete the pre-test survey and the post-test survey with a gap of six months in between to limit any possible intervention of the participants' remembrance of their responses in the pre-test survey and the self-reflection opportunity provided by my assessment survey in their responses to the post-test survey. To achieve this, the willing respondents who had completed the survey in the first stage were asked to provide their email addresses at the end of the survey so they could be uploaded later into the Qualtrics survey system to ultimately prevent those who had not participated in the pre-test survey from taking part in the post-test survey. I used the provided email addresses to email the post-test survey directly to these individuals' email addresses along with the use of completion reminder and thank-you emails to increase their response and survey completion rate.

From Table 3 below, 136 out of 250 pre-test-takers showed a willingness to take part in the post-test. However, only 127 participants provided their email address to allow me to email the post-test survey to them, and only 93 participants responded to the post-test survey in the open period of one month.

Table 3: Overview of the Numbers of Pre-Test Takers Willing to Take the Post-Test Survey

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes, I want to take part in the follow up survey	136	54.4	54.4	54.4
No, I do NOT want to take part in the follow up survey	114	45.6	45.6	100.0
Total	250	100.0	100.0	

As presented in Appendix 4, Table 3, the 93 post-test takers were distributed as follows: 86 experimental group respondents (92.5%) vs 7 control group respondents (7.5%); 32 males (34.4%) vs 61 females (65.6%); 19 diploma (20%), 27 bachelor's (29%), 27 master's (29%), and 20 PhD (22%) degree holders. They were also distributed based on country of stay as follows: the UK (n=73), North America (n=1), Australia and New Zealand (n=12) and Oman (n=7).

3.8.2 Qualitative Inquiry Sample

44 out of the 93 post-test respondents showed an interest in taking part in the semi-structured interviews. Due to the large time gap between the completion of the quantitative data analysis and the start of the interviews, the 44 respondents were asked to re-confirm their agreement or disagreement with taking part in online interviews.

After the invitation had remained open for three weeks and reminders had been sent, 14 participants responded to the email, but only 11 confirmed their willingness to take part in the semi-structured interviews. They were distributed as follows: 10 UK- and 1 New Zealand-based (Ruba); 5 PhD, 3 master's and 3 bachelor's degree holders; and 6 males and 5 females. Some of them stayed abroad alone (n=7), while others were with their families (n=4). Eight of the 11 interviewees were

still studying abroad at the time of the interview, while the other three had already finished studying abroad. The interviewees showed variations in their development in ICC, IIF, and SEIELU from the pre-test to the post-test as shown in Appendix 4, Table 4. These developmental variations were assumed to reflect variations in the lived experiences abroad and the learning returns and thus would help enrich an in-depth understanding of the study-abroad experience in general.

3.8.3 Reasons to Limited Participation in the Current Project

A number of reasons made it difficult to obtain a larger study sample. First, the lack of interest and cooperation from most of the target official departments under the umbrella of Oman's Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation at home and abroad led to only a limited number of participants in the current project. Due to the appreciated cooperation of Oman's Cultural Attaché in London regarding the survey distribution, the Omani students in the UK constituted the largest percentages of participation throughout the project stages, while these percentages were lowest among those studying in North America despite the fact that North America hosts the largest numbers of Omani students studying abroad according to the annual reports of Oman's Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (also see Appendix 4, Table 5). The percentages of those studying in Australia and New Zealand, and those staying at home came next.

The limited participation could also be due to a technical fault with the survey link. Three students contacted me via the contact details provided in the invitation message to inform me that there was a problem with the survey link emailed to them by Oman's Cultural Attaché in London. The problem was solved by re-emailing the invitation message to them again. This technical problem may also have been encountered by some other students, but it was not reported. The bounce of some of my Qualtrics emails sent to the 50 Omani students in the online pilot study of the Qualtrics survey and the regular reminders sent by the cultural attaché to Omani students abroad indicated that several Omani students seemed not to have updated their contact details and thus several email addresses were invalid.

Furthermore, based on my online pilot study and interactions with some colleagues, some students tended not to check their emails regularly. The study-abroad students were expected to circulate the survey among their colleagues in Oman. However, their irregular check of their emails meant a more limited number of target participants in Oman. The number of those in Oman was also limited, as some students abroad completed the survey without forwarding it to their colleagues staying in Oman.

In addition, some study-abroad colleagues found the survey and research topic sensitive, especially where the study-abroad individuals' performances in the variables under study were compared with the stay-in-Oman ones. The target students I met pointed out that this was more likely to demotivate several students from participating in the research, as it may change the common beliefs held about students joining the study-abroad experience and about the experience itself, especially when the learning expectations of study abroad are not met. This sensitivity explains why some respondents went through some parts of the survey without responding to them, as indicated by the systematically seen-but-unanswered Qualtrics survey items with the value of -99. If these items had not been seen by the individuals, they would have been left blank. This means that the interviews not only helped deepen understanding regarding the research questions, but also with regard to the reasons behind missing data in the survey.

Besides the sensitivity of the research topic, some stay-in-Oman students were also still competing for study-abroad scholarships, and they were thus afraid that the research results may have a negative impact on their possibility of obtaining a study-abroad grant although they had been informed in the research information sheet that the study had nothing to do with scholarships and/or their relations with the authorities who would fund their studies. One of the participating colleagues mentioned that some students believed in a conspiracy, so they were not easily convinced that the research results would not have an impact on the granting of scholarships. Thus, the interviews unearthed unexpected suspicions that one would not have known about doing a survey only.

Due to the sensitivity of the survey items and the intended comparison between the experimental and control groups, I planned at the beginning of the recent research to send two separate survey links to those abroad and at home to limit any chance of the experimental and control groups using each other as a reference when completing the instruments, thus resulting in social desirability in the research responses. However, this procedure was not executed due to time and effort restrictions in designing two surveys, a lack of email addresses, and more importantly, the required mention of this comparison in the research ethics form to proceed with the attainment of the necessary data collection approvals.

The anonymous survey link and assurance of participants' anonymity and privacy in research participation and the confidentiality of their responses was also assumed to limit the

emergence of socially desirable answers and increase the participation in online research and presumably the honesty in their answers to survey items (Sax et al., 2003).

Finally, the numbers of respondents from the target countries varied largely. The respondents to the survey could have been more interested in the current research topic and self-initiative compared to the non-respondents. This may have led to bias in the current research results; however, the statistical analysis of homogeneity, normality, linearity, outliers and so on all indicated that there was no bias in the recent research results as seen in Chapter 5: Quantitative Research Results and Findings.

3.9 Research Ethics

Educational research requires the practice of ethics throughout the process with a balance between the research demands and subjects' rights (Carr, 2007; Cohen et al., 2007). This section focuses on reporting the research ethics concerning how the current study was conducted.

To begin with, there were no special ethical guidelines to follow for carrying out the current research in Oman. My research study did not take place in the contexts of specific local and international institutions or departments where there would be a need to seek their approval for data collection or to abide by their ethical guidelines of research. My target study population represented the Omani individuals locally and abroad in their wider contexts of study (countries of study), not in their specific host institutions of study. Moreover, the project did not discuss sensitive topics (e.g., sexual activity or drug use) other than finding out the effectiveness of the study-abroad experience on Omani students' ICC, SEIELU and IIF, and how/why the students had developed these aspects to a lesser or greater extent while abroad and how they had benefited from the experience in this regard.

However, my research documents, such as the research information sheet and data collection approvals (see Appendix 5) obtained from the University of Exeter, were only needed to request Oman's Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation and its target cultural attachés abroad to provide me with a list of email addresses of the target Omani students abroad and locally as well as their numbers so I could check the representativeness of the current respondent sample to its study population. However, as previously mentioned, no assistance was received in this regard except from Oman's Cultural Attaché in London.

The WhatsApp and email invitations along with the attached project information sheet informed the Omani recipients locally and abroad about the researcher; the nature, the purpose,

and the three stages of the current project; the draw for Amazon vouchers upon their completion of the pre- and post-test surveys; the deadline for survey completion; the protection of their identity; and anonymity and data confidentiality.

The participants were informed that their participation in all stages of the research (pre- and post-test surveys and semi-structured interviews) was entirely voluntary and they could withdraw from the research at any time. The brief summary of the project and research information sheet were also translated into the Arabic language for more assurance of the participants' understanding of the study nature and purpose.

For comfort enhancement, the respondents who agreed to take part in the follow-up-interviews were asked to select their preference for the online semi-structured interviews (synchronous or asynchronous). The asynchronous interview option via email and audio conferencing was assumed to help the Omani interviewees, especially the female ones, feel more comfortable with taking part in the interviews, as it would help overcome the cultural barrier associated with face-to-face interactions between males and females in Oman.

To protect the participants' anonymity, the participants in all stages of the research were not asked to provide information or clues related to their workplaces, professions, university of study and so on. The introductory parts of the conducted interviews were not recorded, and the question-and-answer session was recorded only after the interviewee's permission in this regard had been obtained. Anonymity was also ensured by the use of pseudonyms when referring to the interviewees. The participants were made aware of the complaint procedures by being provided with my contact details and those of the College of Social Sciences and International Studies at the University of Exeter, UK.

Reasons were always given when the participants were asked to provide their email addresses at the end of the two quantitative inquiry stages, which were to bypass the research participation of the untargeted Omani individuals and arrange for the interviews. With regard to the prize draw, the participants were asked to indicate their wish to enter the prize draw by providing their email addresses; subsequently, a fair random selection was made of the winners. The participants were informed that the won vouchers would be emailed to the winners within one to two weeks after the survey had closed.

For data confidentiality and security, I had access only to the Qualtrics data file and to the recorded interview sessions and their transcribed scripts. The interview audio file did not

include any details that would reveal the interviewees' identities. The SPSS and interview data were analysed using my personal laptop and computer. Thus, since there was no direct contact between the participants and me as the researcher; consequently, there was complete anonymity, according to Khalil, an Omani UK-based interviewee in my research, "Surveys...might be a safe environment for students who are reluctant to share their true experiences of being abroad".

3.10 Chapter Summary

After all, this chapter has given an explanation of the philosophical assumptions of the current research, the applied methodology, a general discussion of the used quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection and their initial construct, the steps followed in quantitative and qualitative data collection, data analyses, study samples, and finally the research ethics. Chapter 4 next focuses on explaining in detail the construction of the research methods and the quantitative scales in particular, as they constituted the backbone of the current research project.

Chapter Four: Scale Construction and Improvement

The methodology chapter above gave a general construct of the nature of the current research Intercultural Communicative Competence Scale (ICCS), Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use Scale (SEIELUS), and Intercultural Interaction Frequency Scale (IIFS). This explanation was at the level of inclusion and the borrowing of survey items. This chapter begins by giving a brief discussion about the rigour and trustworthiness of the qualitative data. The remainder of the chapter highlights the main changes made to the aforementioned quantitative scales after the inclusion of their items. Improvement of the scales' validity here includes the back-to-back translation of the distributed survey, traditional and online pilot studies, and then a detailed explanation of the main changes made to the survey construction, which included shortening the survey length and its items and excluding frequency adverbs, unnecessary words, double-barrelled words, intensity words, inclusive/exclusive words, leading questions and instructions, and abstract words. The scale improvement also included simplification of the vocabulary, and statement rewording and reversing.

After that, the chapter will clarify the use of statistical analyses (reliability and factor analysis tests) in improving the internal validity of the scales before the application of the inferential statistics for answering the intended research questions. This step was carried out after collecting the actual data, as securing an adequate individual sample in the pilot studies was not possible. A large pilot study is significant in order to obtain more reliable statistical readings to help make the right decisions in relation to further scale improvement as well as quality data and research conclusions.

4.1 Rigour and Trustworthiness in the Collected Qualitative Data

Guba (as cited in Shenton, 2004, p. 63) proposed four criteria that should be considered by qualitative researchers in pursuit of a trustworthy and rigorous inquiry. These criteria are credibility (internal validity), transferability of findings (external validity/generalisability), dependability (reliability), and lastly, confirmability (objectivity).

For credibility, based on O'Connor and Gibson (2003) and Shenton (2004), my quantitative and qualitative findings have obviously validated each other due to triangulation from different methods around the same topic (group and individual semi-structured interviews over phone and online, an open-ended survey question, and an online self-report survey). Both my quantitative and qualitative findings confirmed each other with regard to the Omani students' achieved levels of development in English language capabilities, attitudes towards cultural differences, regulation of intercultural negative

emotions, communication skills, intercultural cognition, intercultural behaviours, and so on. They both also confirmed the volume and nature of the impact of study abroad on intercultural competence development.

Qualitative findings were validated by triangulation from different sources (different informants), who provided different perspectives on the topics under study. The informants (N=11) came from different parts of the UK (n=10) with one interviewee studying in New Zealand (site triangulation), and they also performed variously in the IIF, ICC, and SEIELU measured domains. These different perspectives and experiences informed the topic under study and were verified against each other to provide a valid rich explanation of the quantitative findings. My thematic analysis was validated by triangulation from different researchers. My initial thematic analysis was checked by a researcher from Kuwait, who had good experience in thematic analysis. Accordingly, some themes were changed. For example, I thematised the Omani students' motives for studying abroad as instrumental and integrative. The other independent researcher was able to see more than these two themes. I was more influenced by my intensive reading of the literature in intercultural communication (researcher's self-reflexivity on subjectivity). After comparing my thematic analysis of some passages with that of the other researcher, some sub-themes and codes were re-categorized. Therefore, the data concerning these motives were later analysed as themes appearing in the summary table of my thematic analysis. Moreover, after a discussion with my supervisor, another theme "experience practicality as a motive to study abroad" was added (external validation of thematic analysis).

I was also able to insert more child nodes into the node list as I identified additional categories during the process of coding individual interviews. This clearly illustrated that coding involved not just premeditation but reflexive and reflective activity (Basit, 2003, p. 149).

4.2 Quantitative Data and Scale Validation

This section explains the procedures followed to improve the validity and reliability of the current research scales and highlights the aspects that received further improvement.

4.2.1 Back-to-Back Translation of Research Survey

The English version of my research survey along with the research information sheet were translated into the Arabic language by me after the survey content had been proved valid by the external examiners. This was to create consistency among the participants in their understanding of the survey

items and research nature, and thus eliminate any possible linguistic misunderstandings and ambiguity in the survey items.

For more assurance of this consistency, I translated the Arabic version back into English after some time to ultimately compare the recently translated English version with its original English one. The comparison process double-checked the accuracy of the questionnaire content (Fantini & Tirmizi, 2007) and ultimately whether the Arabic version of the survey was consistent with the original English survey in its content and its understanding. The original English and the Arabic translated versions were found to match each other, and the understanding of their items was consistent (for the final English and Arabic versions of the survey, please see Appendices 6 & 7).

4.2.2 Traditional and Online Pilot-Studies

The research survey was then piloted in a pen-and-paper mode in English and Arabic. Four Omani UK-based participants at the University of Exeter (three males and one female) were asked to complete the paper survey at the same time in a reserved room. This was to check the clarity of the survey's items and instructions, the consistency in the participants' understanding, the time needed for its full completion, and the general impression about the survey by hearing directly from the respondents (Meier, 2010) before any further amendments to the survey were carried out.

In the traditional pilot study, the 135-item survey was reported to be too long (see Appendix 1). Some statements in the survey were originally repeated in different ways to increase assurance of the existence or absence of the measured trait among the participants. They were thus considered important. However, although the four participants completed the survey, two of them were actually reluctant regarding the survey completion. Therefore, for the sake of increasing the survey completion and its item response rates, a total of six items were removed from the ICCS and SEIELUS (three items from each) and the length of almost all survey items and texts was shortened.

The shortened survey was then piloted online among 69 Omani study-abroad and stay-in-Oman participants after the receipt of a list of 50 UK-based Omani students' email addresses had been received from the Oman Cultural Attaché in London. The additional email addresses (n=19) were for personally known Omani individuals studying in the UK and others staying in Oman who had competed for study-abroad scholarships. The obtained lists were then uploaded into the Qualtrics survey system. The online piloting was meant to check the functionality of the survey online and the suitability of the online data collection mode in my study population (Couper, 2000). This check included sending emails with

information about my research study, time of survey receipt and closure, and reminder and thank-you emails, and subsequently, their impact on the survey response and completion rates. Besides seeking more feedback from the online respondents, the pilot study was also run to solve any emerging technical faults reported about the survey.

The results of my online pilot study are as follows. One email bounced and only 20 students responded to the survey; 16 out of the 20 students completed the survey. The completion rate in the other four survey responses did not exceed 20% of the survey, despite the fact that the students had been assured entry to a draw for a number of £25 Amazon vouchers on their completion of the survey. It was noticed that the majority of the respondents with personal email addresses checked their emails only irregularly, while the respondents who were contacted through their academic and professional emails responded to the survey. The next section highlights the main changes done to the survey construction after the traditional and online pilot studies had been completed.

4.3 Main Changes to the Survey Construction

This section explains the main changes made to the quantitative survey to raise the quality of its content and reduce its length in order to increase its response rate and completion rate. The main modifications made to the survey included the simplification of vocabulary and reduction in the number and length of survey items and texts as well as the deletion of unnecessary words, frequency adverbs, some auxiliary leading verbs, and double-barrelled words and phrases, besides rewriting and reversing some statements and the addition of some motivating elements (for a summary table of detailed modifications made to the survey over its stages of improvements, please see Appendix 8).

4.3.1 Shortening the Survey and its Items

To begin with, some participants who took part in my pilot study found the survey introduction lengthy and time consuming. This could possibly increase the response fatigue even before moving to the next sections of the survey and so could reduce the item response and survey completion rates. Hence, the survey introduction content was reduced and its paragraphs were made as short as possible while highlighting the details that were thought to be more motivating and important to the participants. These details included the nature of the study, its aims, possible contributions from participation in the study, data confidentiality, and identity anonymity. The sections were organized under bold headings for their quick location in the summary. The highlighted details also included the information about the entry to the two prize draws upon their completion of the survey in each data collection stage with emphasis on the increase in the monetary value of the prizes from £25 in the online pilot study to £35 and £50 upon

completion of the pre-test and post-test surveys, respectively. This was done to motivate the participants to take part in the three stages of the project as well as to increase the survey-completion and item-response rates. Although the survey introduction was summarised, it contained a hyperlink to a full downloadable research information sheet in both Arabic and English if further research details were needed.

Besides the survey introduction being shortened, the survey items were reduced in number from 137 items in the original survey (see Appendix 1) to 96 items in the final draft of the survey (see Appendix 6) with a total deletion of 41 items from the original survey. In addition to the decrease in the number of survey items, other items were reduced in length without changing the core meaning of their content. For example, the questions “How long have you been staying in your recent country of study so far?” and “How many languages do you speak besides Arabic?” were shortened into phrases “Length of your stay in the current country so far” and “Number of languages spoken besides Arabic”, followed by the answer options.

The significant improvement carried out in the demographic section was with the following three frequency questions along with their scale (almost never, seldom, sometimes, very often, and regularly):

1. How often have you talked to and engaged in informal conversations with people from other cultures in the last six months?
2. How often have you studied or done other class work with individuals from other cultures in the last six months?
3. How often have you done things socially with individuals from other cultures in the last six months? (This includes things like sharing meals, going to movies and parties, playing sports, etc.).

As can be seen in the three questions above, the questions shared many words. Since the three questions asked about the same thing, which is the frequency of actions, it was decided to merge the three questions into one main question with three actions to respond to in a table with a quantified scale, see Table 4 next.

Table 4: Intercultural Interaction Frequency Scale

Thinking about the last six months, for how many times did you do the following with people from other cultures each week?

	never	less than once per week	once a week	two to six times a week	every day or more often
engaging in informal conversations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
studying or doing other class work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
socializing (this includes things like sharing meals, going to movies and parties, playing sports, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

These questions not only were clipped into one main question, but their content quality was also improved. For example, the questions with the phrases “how many” and “how often” were considered leading questions, as the question wording with these question phrases implies that the researcher already expects the respondents to do the investigated actions, while some of the respondents may not do them. Consequently, the leading questions can possibly make respondents provide an answer that may be assumed to be socially desirable, which may not reflect the truth of their action in reality, and may thus increase the risk of prestige bias (General Medical Council, 2017).

Besides the leading ‘wh’ phrases contained in these questions, the scale used to investigate the three actions included frequency adverbs. The frequency adverbs (e.g., never, almost never, seldom, sometimes, very often, regularly, always, etc.) are ambiguous in meaning and thus do not have specific meanings in order for the participants to generate a consistent understanding of their meanings and thus a consistent response to the scale. Therefore, they may be interpreted differently by the respondents. To solve the scale ambiguity, the frequency adverb scale was quantified as shown in Table 4 above (General Medical Council, 2017).

Although the phrase “in the last six months” was not included in the question in the original survey, it was added later on to specify the period targeted by the researcher, which is the time spent abroad at the time of the survey administration, instead of leaving the time period open. So, after stage two of data collection had been completed, the researcher would have investigated the frequency of the assessed actions over a course of one year.

The action frequency question in Table 4 was added in the survey to further investigate the respondents' agreement or disagreement with the statements measuring the "engagement" behaviours by investigating the frequency of these behaviours in intercultural contexts and their impact on participants' SEIELU and ICC levels.

The other survey statements were also reduced in length. For example, the original statement "It is better for people to interact within their cultural groups to avoid conflicts caused by cultural differences" was shortened to "I mostly interact within my cultural group". For another example, the original statement "I mostly associate with people from my own culture because I find it easier than trying to figure out the right way of interacting with someone from a different culture" was shortened to "I try to figure out the right way of communicating with individuals from a different culture", especially as the first part of the original statement was already covered in another statement in the survey: "I mostly interact within my cultural group".

It is worth mentioning here that the demographic and general questions section was initially placed at the end of the survey to limit any possible intervention of social desirability in respondents' answers (Bücker et al., 2015). However, this section was later moved to the beginning of the survey to increase the survey completion rate, as its questions constituted about 9.5% of the survey items, and it took almost one minute or even less to complete it after some statements had been shortened or deleted, and the frequency questions were combined into one question.

To continue limiting the risk of respondents giving socially desirable answers after this section had been moved to the beginning of the survey, the participants were reminded in the survey introduction that the survey was not a test, so there were no correct or incorrect answers as long as their answers indicated and expressed what they did or felt in their real life experience and that their participation had nothing to do with their scholarships. The anonymity of the survey link sent to students was expected to increase the item response and survey completion rates as well as their response honesty. The respondents were reminded that the study ran behind an understanding of communication behaviours and their impact on the respondents' intercultural development and that the scores were only diagnostic of these communication behaviours (Morreale, 2007).

4.3.2 Exclusion of Frequency Adverbs

Due to the ambiguity of the frequency adverbs (e.g., often, always, usually, most often, rarely, sometimes, etc.), individuals may perceive time differently, and thus their estimates of English language use, for example, can possibly have limitations (Badstübner & Ecke, 2009; General Medical Council, 2017). Therefore, they were excluded from the survey statements measuring the participants' SEIELU and ICC. These adverbs were also deleted from the measurement statements so they did not conflict with the agreement/disagreement scale in the survey. These statements were there in the survey to measure the participants' level of agreement or disagreement with a certain behaviour or idea and were not meant to measure the frequency of the assessed actions or ideas (General Medical Council, 2017).

4.3.3 Exclusion of Unnecessary and Double-Barrelled Words

The unnecessary and double-barrelled words and phrases were also deleted from the survey statements although some of the unnecessary words were there in the original statements to clarify the meaning of a preceding word as clarified in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Exclusion of unnecessary and double-barrelled words

No.	Original Statement	Comment	Shortened Statement	Final statement
1	Cultures (values, customs, norms, traditions, perspectives and behaviours) different from my own are worth respecting and appreciating.	Unnecessary words	Cultures different from my own are worth respecting and appreciating .	Cultures different from my own are worth appreciating.

Besides deleting the unnecessary words from the statements in Table 5 above, the two statements received a further improvement by deleting the double-barrelled words in bold. The survey statements and questions should not investigate more than one variable or aspect at a time (General Medical Council, 2017). Based on my experience with the current survey construction, the double-barrelled statements may increase the cognitive fatigue, as some respondents may spend more time in thinking of an answer to the statement, especially when agreeing with one part of the statement and disagreeing with its other part. According to General Medical Council (2017), double-barrelled statements and questions may ultimately add ambiguity in data analysis.

To also reduce the response fatigue and frustration among the participants, at least psychologically, the items in every section were numbered by restarting with number one, instead of numbering the items in the same order throughout the questionnaire sections (Judith, 2013). Finally, the survey items were randomized within their sections (general dimensions) every time the survey was taken. The automatic randomization and shuffling of questions within the survey was assumed to help limit the emergence of socially desirable responses and any possible influence of respondents on each other's answers. This also helped "increase our ability to control for bias and error" (Tingling et al., 2003, p. 226).

4.3.4 Exclusion of Intensity Words and Inclusive/Exclusive Words

The intensity words (e.g., less, much, quite, fairly, very, etc.) were also excluded, as the respondents' level of agreement or disagreement can possibly imply the intensity of the investigated actions. The absolute (inclusive and exclusive) words (e.g., never, always, all, every, everybody, nobody, etc.) were excluded, as they were less likely to capture agreement or disagreement from the respondents (depending on the question wording) and thus may reduce the variance in the collected data (General Medical Council, 2017).

4.3.5 Exclusion of Leading Questions and Instructions

Besides the leading nature of "how many" and "how often" phrases (see 4.3.1: Shortening the Survey and its Items), it was also discovered that the instructions provided to students could be leading, as they may imply that the respondents agree with the survey statements, which may not be true with all the participants, and thus, this could reduce variance in the collected data. This sort of instructions and questions could also be leading, as they may represent the researcher, as he/she already expects the respondents to agree with the statements (but not to disagree with them), and thus he/she is only investigating the respondents' level of agreement with these statements. The leading instructions may make the respondents answer these statements in a way that would meet the researcher's expectations or even with total disagreement with the researcher to indicate that the researcher is wrong in his/her perception of the respondents' behaviours and beliefs. To avoid this problem, the instructions were balanced by rewording them (General Medical Council, 2017) as in the following example: "I'd like now to know to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements based on your real life experience with people from other cultures".

In addition to the previous changes, the auxiliary verb "can" was also deleted from the following original statement examples: "I can confidently argue in English for a position on a controversial topic among people from different cultures" and "I can write official letters that convey my message accurately

with relatively few grammatical errors”. The auxiliary verb “can” could be leading, as it talks about an ability to do something (General Medical Council, 2017). Hence, it was thought that it would be less likely that the participants would disagree with ability statements. Moreover, this auxiliary verb was also assumed to not necessarily reflect an action or an ability performance in the present time but perhaps in the future.

Furthermore, the word “would” in the original statement “I would seek out friendships with people from different cultures in order to learn about their cultures” was deleted, as this word here may reflect a future intention and not necessarily a currently performed action. Therefore, this statement was rewritten as “I excitedly seek out friendships with people from different cultures.”

4.3.6 Simplification of Vocabulary and Exclusion of Abstract Words

Abstract words do not have tangible meanings and thus are open to interpretation, as participants may interpret them differently from the researcher or even among themselves. Therefore, it was decided to eliminate the use of these words in the survey or even to delete the statements that contained them as happened with the statement “I am open-minded to people with different cultures” with the abstract word “open-minded” used to increase the semantic consistency of the vocabulary used in the survey among the respondents and thus avoid any ambiguity in interpreting “open-mindedness”.

Some vocabulary was simplified to also facilitate the respondents’ understanding of the statements from the first reading, which was more likely to help them complete the survey with ease (General Medical Council, 2017). For example, the word “virtuous” in the statement “I see people who are similar to me as virtuous” was replaced with the word “exemplary” in the final statement.

4.3.7 Statement Rewording and Reversing

When I went through the survey statements in all sections, I found that several sections in the survey looked biased, as several statements in each section took a negative tendency. The existence of several negatively worded statements in the same order within the same section was assumed to create a negative indication or impression among the participants that the researcher already believes they have negative attitudes and impressions about people from other cultures for example. They may thus tend to disagree with these statements as a response to the researcher that his belief in this regard is inaccurate. Therefore, the statements were balanced, as the balanced existence of the negatively reworded statements along with the positive ones is important to reduce both the automatic responding to the questionnaire items (Judith, 2013) and response bias (Matsumoto et al., 2001).

To balance the statements within each section, some statements were either positively or negatively reversed. For example, the original statement “I often judge people from other cultures negatively because of cultural differences” was positively reworded to “I look positively at people with distinct cultures”. The statement “I do not feel comfortable with people whose behaviours and reactions are unfamiliar to me” was also positively reworded to “I feel comfortable with people whose behaviours are unfamiliar to me”.

4.3.8 Other Improvements

I included thank-you statements at the end of every section to motivate the respondents to complete the next part of the survey after having provided them with the necessary instructions. According to Smyth et al. (2009), the survey inclusion of explanation and motivation texts as well as visual designs with emphasis on the importance of sampled participants’ responses to the survey may reduce the response time and increase the response and completion rates as well as the response length.

Instead of providing the participants with age categories to select the group they belong to, they were asked to type their age in digits in the provided space, as the range of their ages was not well-known to me. Later on, the provided ages were recoded into ordinal independent categories for analysis.

Based on Cao and Philp (2006), to increase the assessment consistency between the items of SEIELUS and those of ICCS, the items added to both scales were made specific to the investigation of general intercultural settings where oral communication is more important. Therefore, the statements that assessed other language abilities such as L2 writing as in the statement “I can write official letters that convey my message accurately with relatively few grammatical errors” were excluded from the final draft of the survey.

4.4 Conclusion

Finally, all the changes highlighted above reduced the time needed for completing the survey from 30-35 minutes in the original survey to 15-20 minutes in the final survey. Some respondents reported that they completed the formally distributed survey in even less than 15 minutes.

It was decided to effect a further removal of items from the survey after the application of reliability and factor analysis tests. The run of these tests on the data collected in the online pilot study was found not to be beneficial due to the limited number of participants (N=16) who completed the survey in full. Securing a larger respondent sample was found to be impossible, especially as I did not have access to the lists of target students’ email addresses. Therefore, it was decided to make use of these tests to further

improve the survey after the actual data collection. The next section will explain the statistical steps taken to increase the internal consistency and validity of these scales after the actual data collection.

4.5 Statistical Validation of Current Research Scales

This part sheds the light on checking the unidimensionality of SEIELUS as well as the multidimensionality of ICCS for the sake of maximizing their content validity before assessing their reliability and the normality of data distribution. The assessment of the ICCS's multidimensionality was also carried out to check the fit of the dimensions and their subsets within the current study's proposed developmental model of this competence. However, due to the existence of some low alpha coefficients in some subscales of the ICCS, this section begins with an explanation of Cronbach's alpha and the factors affecting its strength, and a discussion of whether scale reliability is the ultimate goal of scale construction or not.

4.5.1 Scale Reliability Vs Scale Validity

The measurement of the internal consistency of items within a scale is the most commonly used method for checking the reliability of research scales. The level of reliability is determined by the strength of Cronbach's alpha, with a higher alpha coefficient indicating a higher level of reliability (Brace et al., 2016; Goforth, 2015; Pallant, 2016; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). However, the cut-off criteria of Cronbach's alpha coefficients for determining a good or acceptable reliability for a scale are arbitrary and are not standardized. Hence, what constitutes a sufficient reliability is judgemental and dependent on the measurement situation (Eisinga, Grotenhuis, & Pelzer, 2013; Goforth, 2015; Lance, Butts, & Michels, 2006).

In order to determine the priority in scale construction (reliability or validity?), it is important firstly to highlight the factors that affect the value of Cronbach's alpha.

A number of factors tend to have an effect on the value of Cronbach's alpha. These factors include the strength of inter-item correlations, the number of items in the scale, scale dimensionality, sample size, and random measurement errors (Gliem & Gliem, 2003; Goforth, 2015; Pallant, 2016; Serbetar & Sedlar, 2016; Shevlin et al., 2000; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

With regard to the number of scale items, the fewer items there are in a scale, the lower the alpha coefficient is likely to become regardless of the scale dimensionality, that is, whether it is homogeneous or heterogeneous (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Thus, it is quite common to obtain low Cronbach values (e.g., .5) from scales with fewer than ten items (Pallant, 2016) or even "the value of .45 for a 6-item

subscale if the inter-item correlations are constant” (Serbetar & Sedlar, 2016, p. 192). Low alpha values can indicate an insufficient number of items in the scale. However, raising the alpha coefficient is possible through increasing the number of items testing the same construct in the scale (Goforth, 2015; Serbetar & Sedlar, 2016; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Since the value of alpha is affected by the length of the scale, “A high coefficient alpha does not always mean a high degree of internal consistency” (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011, p. 53). In fact, a high alpha value (e.g., .9 and above) can indicate multidimensionality within the scale, so it is worth checking for this possible multidimensionality. Measuring the internal consistency of the whole questionnaire with all its constructs at once, while ignoring its multidimensionality, definitely increases the number of items in the reliability analysis and thus tends to increase the alpha value. This represents a deviation from scale unidimensionality. In a multidimensional questionnaire, measuring the internal consistency of each of its subscales is advised though this can produce lower alpha values (Serbetar & Sedlar, 2016; Shevlin et al., 2000).

Hinkin (1995) stated that a scale can be highly reliable, “yet [it] may in fact lack content validity due to multidimensionality or inappropriate representation of the construct under examination” (p. 979). Therefore, although achieving acceptable reliability within a scale is necessary, this on its own does not guarantee scale unidimensionality (scale content validity), and accordingly, it should not be the ultimate goal of scale construction. Rather, maximizing the validity of scale content by building unidimensionality within the scale or subscale should be prioritised, so a single scale/subscale measures one construct (Briggs & Cheek, 1986; Clark & Watson, 1995; Gliem & Gliem, 2003; Hinkin, 1995; Serbetar & Sedlar, 2016; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Therefore, the content validity of my current scales and subscales was assessed before their reliability was checked.

Due to low Cronbach’s alpha values in some subscales in my ICCS and prioritising the improvement of scale content validity over reliability, instead of just checking the Cronbach’s alpha, it is advised to check and report the mean inter-item correlations (corrected item-total correlations). Items are more likely to achieve an optimal level of homogeneity within a scale in the inter-item correlation range of .2 to .4 (Briggs & Cheek, 1986) or .15 to .50 (Clark & Watson, 1995, p. 316). However, homogeneity within the current measurement scales and subscales was fulfilled within the item-total correlation value range of .09 and .19. For example, the item Emot2 achieved a substantial loading of .39 in the measurement of the emotion regulation subscale unidimensionality (Table 20 in Appendix 9) with an item-total correlation value of .09 (Appendix 9, Table 21). The other example is that items Critic2 and

Comu14 achieved a loading of .33 and .44 in the measurement of the critical thinking and intercultural communication skills respectively (Appendix 9, Table 22 & 24) with an item-total correlation value of .19 (Appendix 9, Table 23 & 25).

The next sections will explain the achievement of validity and reliability within the current research scales: SEIELUS and ICCS. Before giving this explanation, it is worth mentioning that some items in both data collection instruments were recoded to avoid negative wording. The recoded items in the original ICCS were Ethn7, Intol8, Open13, Mot20, Mot26, Auto30, Ambig33, Emot1, Emot3, Emot7, Critic2, Critic5, Comu15, Aware5, Stereo6, Stereo7, Stereo9, Adapt7, and Flex11. The recoded items in the original SEIELUS were Lang1, Lang11, Lang12, Lang13, Lang16, Lang17, Lang20, Lang21 and Lang24 (see Appendix 2). For the full names of the aforementioned codes, please see Appendix 9, Table 1.

4.5.2 Unidimensionality and Reliability of the SEIELUS

To check the unidimensionality of my SEIELUS, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was applied with an extraction of one factor since the scale was constructed to measure one single construct, followed by checking the internal consistency of the obtained unidimensional scale (Brace et al., 2016; Gliem & Gliem, 2003).

4.5.2.1 Unidimensionality of SEIELUS

Table 6 below presents the PCA results for checking the unidimensionality of the 16 item SEIELUS with the scale items sorted by loading size.

Table 6: Results of Principal Component Analysis for Checking the Unidimensionality of SEIELUS

Item no.	Item Code	Item	Component 1
1	Lang13	I speak English slowly and repeat what I say.	.732
2	Lang12	I cannot find the proper words in English to express what I mean.	.725
3	Lang10	I easily cope with lengthy detailed discussions in English in intercultural encounters.	.697
4	Lang20	My thoughts become jumbled when giving a speech in English in public.	.697
5	Lang24	My capabilities in the English language do not meet the linguistic demands of conversations in English.	.685
6	Lang21	While giving a speech in English, I get so nervous that I forget facts I really know.	.647

7	Lang6	I comfortably argue in English for a position on a controversial topic in intercultural encounters.	.641
8	Lang19	I am ordinarily relaxed when talking in English to people of different cultures.	.638
9	Lang1	I feel worried about making mistakes when speaking in English to people from other cultures.	.618
10	Lang15	People understand me very well when I speak in English.	.594
11	Lang17	I find myself stuck in my conversation in English with people from other cultures.	.547
12	Lang11	I have to hammer out the words I will say to not violate the taboos when communicating in English.	.452
13	Lang4	I effortlessly understand English speakers who are speaking to me as quickly as they would do to each other.	.367
14	Lang23	I find it fun to speak in English.	.291
15	Lang14	I think in English when communicating with English speakers.	.256
16	Lang16	I feel more confident in discussing familiar topics in English than the unfamiliar detailed ones.	.239

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 1 components extracted.

Brace et al. (2016) used the value of .4 as a base measurement of scale unidimensionality. However, although a loading of .4 is considered substantial, setting the value to .3 is considered sensible (Field, 2013) to avoid further exclusion of items from current scales and to be consistent with the cut-off of .3 used in the exploratory factor analyses for the ICC subscales.

As seen in Table 6 above, the loadings of the last three items in the scale were less than .3; therefore, these items needed to be rewritten or discarded (Brace et al., 2016). I discarded these three items (Lang14, 16 and 23). Since there was a discard of items from the scale, the factor analysis was run again with the rest of the items remaining in the scale (Brace et al., 2016). The scale was found to be unidimensional at .3 (see Appendix 9, Table 2).

4.5.2.2 Reliability of SEIELUS

The reliability test was then run on the remaining 13 items as shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Reliability Statistics for the Unidimensional SEIELUS in Pre-and-Post Tests

Test Stage	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Number of Items	No. of Valid Cases
Pre-test	.866	.869	13	250
Post-test	.852	.859	13	93
Combined	.863	.867	13	343

The Cronbach's alpha values in the pre- and post-tests ($\alpha = .87$ and $.85$ respectively) show that the 13-item unidimensional SEIELUS maintained a good internal consistency and a consistency over time as well.

4.5.3 Multi-Dimensionality of ICCS and Reliability of its Subscales

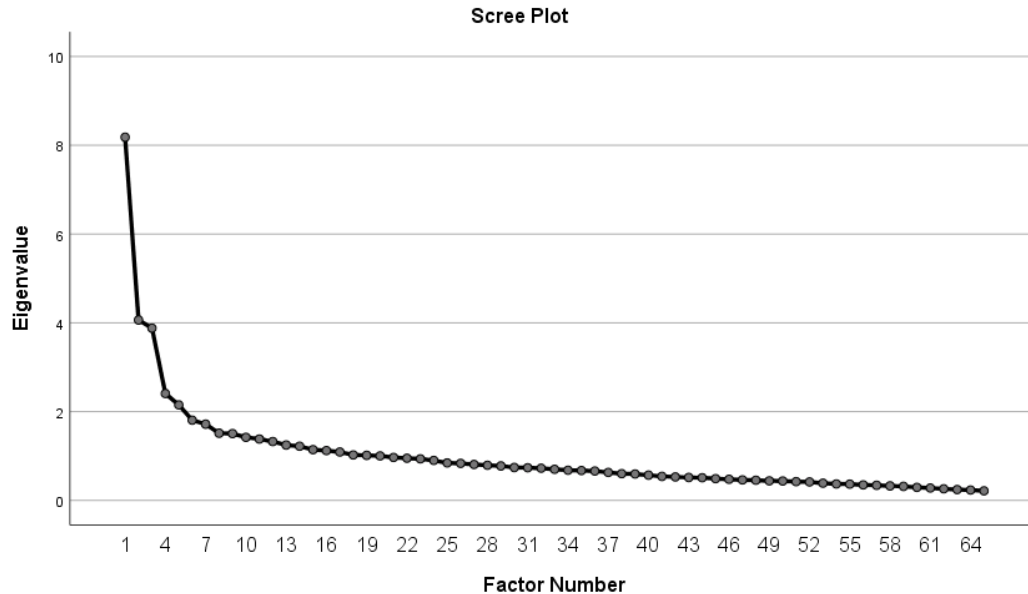
In this research, ICC comprises and is assessed through dimensions and subsets in a model. The exploratory factor analysis was run to check the multi-dimensionality and the fit of my proposed dimensions within the model and the subsets within their dimensions. After that, the reliability of every subscale was checked.

4.5.3.1 Multi-Dimensionality of ICCS

PCA, principal axis factor, and maximum likelihood factor analyses were conducted on the 70 items of the ICC scale with orthogonal rotation (varimax). All factor analyses yielded the same results. Only the results of the maximum likelihood factor analysis are reported here, as it was assumed that "participants are randomly selected and that the variables measured constitute the population of variables in which we're interested" to generalize the results from the study sample to the study population (Field, 2013, p. 674). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, $KMO = .79$ ('middling' according to Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999), and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett 1954) reached statistical significance, thus supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix; see Appendix 9, Table 3.

An initial analysis was run to see the number of factors with eigenvalues above 1. The results showed that 20 factors obtained an eigenvalue above 1; see Appendix 9, Table 4. For a more accurate number of factors to be retained, the scree plot in Figure 2 below was examined.

Figure 2: Scree Plot of Intercultural Communicative Competence



The above scree plot was ambiguous and showed inflexions that would justify retaining either three or five factors. I decided to retain five factors, as the current ICCS was based on five dimensions. For greater confidence, a Monte Carlo PCA for Parallel Analysis was used. By comparing the first five factors' eigenvalues as obtained from IBM SPSS with the corresponding results randomly generated by parallel analysis, the five factors were retained, as their eigenvalues were higher than their corresponding values obtained from the parallel analysis (Pallant, 2016). The five factors together explained 31.82 % of variance; see tables 5 and 6 in Appendix 9.

Table 7 in Appendix 9 shows the factor loadings after rotation. The items that cluster around the same factor suggest that factor 1 represents intercultural engagement, factor 2 represents intercultural respect, factor 3 represents intercultural flexibility, factor 4 represents intercultural skills, and factor 5 represents intercultural open-mindedness.

The aforementioned factor analyses summarized the ICC as comprising 5 dimensions with no subsets, which made the scale far less diagnostic of individuals' intercultural competencies than my original scale, which included 5 dimensions with a total of 17 subsets. The inclusion of all proposed dimensions with their subsets in the scale produces a better measurement of ICC instead of inferring the competence from a few items, subsets, and dimensions. The more items in the scale, the more the scale ensures the existence of a certain latent trait with individuals (Meier, 2010). I also assumed that the more items in a scale, the more variation is likely to appear among the research groups and, subsequently, the

more likely it is that the scale can discriminate between research groups. Therefore, I kept to my original ICCS with some improvements to raise its content validity instead of the model produced above. This is more likely to reflect the complexity of intercultural contexts and interactions and produce a more accurate indicator of ICC development.

4.5.4 Multidimensionality and Reliability of Attitude, Cognition, and Behaviour Subscales

After the pilot study, some dimensions in the original ICCS included several subsets with three items due to the reduction of items in the scale before its distribution to increase the item response and scale completion rates. The subsets with fewer than five items in each could threaten the validity of their measures and the representation of the constructs under examination (Clark & Watson, 1995; Hinkin, 1995). Therefore, the PCA was run to check the dimensionality of the subscales and then to regroup their items under fewer factors but with an increased number of items under each to ultimately increase the validity of these subscales (e.g., the general dimensions of intercultural attitudes, intercultural cognition, and intercultural behaviours). The results of these analyses are as follows:

The PCA was conducted separately on the 26 items of intercultural attitudes, the 10 items of intercultural cognition, and the 15 items of intercultural behaviours with orthogonal rotation (varimax). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analyses, $KMO = .75, .66,$ and $.86$ respectively ('middling', 'mediocre', and 'meritorious' respectively, according to Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999), and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett 1954) reached statistical significance, thus supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. An initial analysis was run to obtain eigenvalues above 1 for each factor in the data related to the aforementioned dimensions. In each analysis, three factors had eigenvalues over Kaiser's criterion of 1, and these in combination explained 35.31%, 52.04%, and 50.15% of the variance respectively. Each of the three scree plots showed an inflexion that justified retaining the three factors.

Tables 11, 15, and 19 in Appendix 9 show the factor loadings for the dimensions after rotation. The items that cluster around the same factor suggest that in the subscale of intercultural attitudes, factor 1 represents tolerance of ambiguity and uncertainty (9 items), factor 2 represents intercultural respect (8 items), and factor 3 represents intolerance of cultural differences (4 items). Concerning the subscale of intercultural cognition, the items that cluster around the same factor suggest that factor 1 represents intercultural knowledge (4 items), factor 2 represents intercultural stereotypes (3 items), and factor 3 represents intercultural awareness (3 items). For the subscale of the intercultural behaviours, the items that cluster around the same factor suggest that factor 1 represents intercultural engagement (6 items),

factor 2 represents intercultural flexibility (6 items), and factor 3 represents intercultural adaptability (3 items). For all corresponding statistical tables along with their figures for the three subscales in order, please see Appendix 9, Tables 9-19.

4.5.5 Unidimensionality and Reliability of Emotion Regulation and Skill Subscales

The PCA was also run with the subscales of emotion regulation as a discrete dimension with no subsets, and with the subscale of critical thinking and communication skills, as each of its two subsets (critical thinking and communication skills) already has more than five items in each. This is to maximize their unidimensionality.

4.5.5.1 Emotion Regulation Subscale

As can be seen in Table 20 in Appendix 9, the loading of the item (Emot4) is less than .3; therefore, it was discarded from the subscale (Brace et al., 2016). The internal consistency of the four remaining items was then checked to be ($\alpha = .33$) (Appendix 9, Table 21).

4.5.5.2 Critical Thinking and Communication Skill Subscales

From Table 22 in Appendix 9, the seven items of the critical thinking subscale all achieved loadings above .3; therefore, no items were discarded. The seven items achieved a reliability of .53 (Appendix 9, Table 23).

With regard to the communication skill subscale, the results showed that the item Comu15 as shown in Table 24 of Appendix 9 achieved a loading of less than .3 and was thus discarded (Brace et al., 2016). The six items retained in the subscale achieved a Cronbach's alpha of .46 (Appendix 9, Table 25).

4.5.6 Summary

The principal component analysis and reliability tests helped shorten the two scales of SEIELU and ICC to ultimately have 14 and 58 items in each, respectively. This procedure not only shortened the scales, but also, and most importantly, their content validity was further improved. The procedures undertaken in this chapter are also assumed to improve the validity of the obtained research findings released in the quantitative findings chapter. After all, in the aforementioned procedures for scales' internal validity improvement, the data distribution of these two scales was then checked as explained in the next section.

4.6 Normality of Data Distribution

The distribution of the research data represented by the 14 and 58 items in SEIELUS and ICCS respectively was checked to decide whether to use parametric or non-parametric tests in testing the research hypotheses formulated around the target research questions, and whether the obtained results would be statistically generalizable to the study population or not.

Table 8: Test of Normality-SEIELU and ICC Data

Scale	Test Stage	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
SEIELU	Pre-test	.067	250	.008	.983	250	.005
	Post-test	.093	93	.048	.972	93	.046
ICC	Pre-test	.055	247	.071	.992	247	.215
	Post-test	.046	93	.200*	.987	93	.519

The results presented in Table 8 above show that the data collected by ICCS in both the pre- and post-tests were normally distributed ($p > .05$). On the other hand, the results suggest that the data collected by SEIELUS in both the pre- and post-tests violated the normality assumption ($p = .008$ & $.048$ respectively), $p < .05$. Such a violation commonly occurs with large samples ($N = 250$ & 93); see Table 8 above. In this case, it is advised to check normality by visually examining the distribution shape (histogram), the z-scores of skewness and kurtosis, and the P-P or Q-Q plots (Field, 2013; Pallant, 2016).

The shapes of data distribution in both the pre- and post-SEIELU tests show a normal distribution of data as illustrated by Figure 3 and Figure 4 below.

Figure 3: Histogram of SEIELU Data Distribution (Pre-Test)

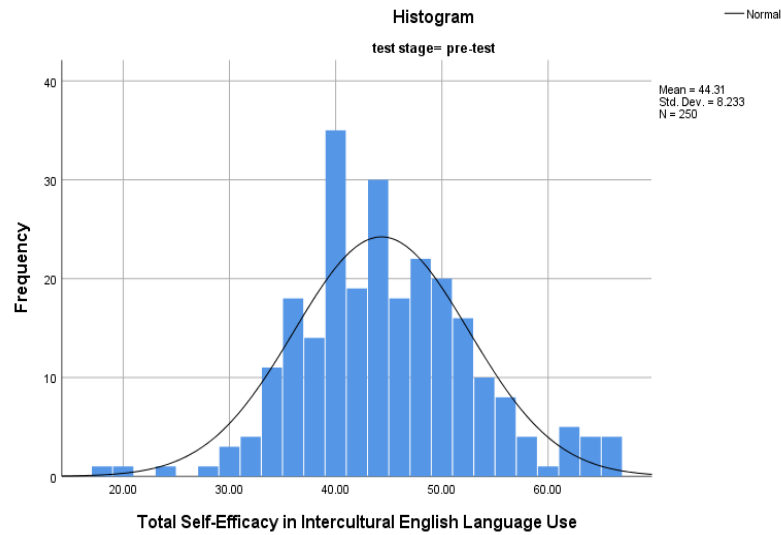
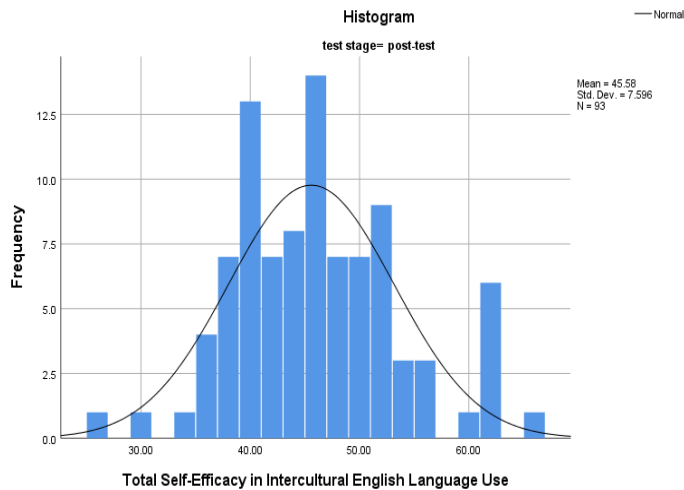


Figure 4: Histogram of SEIELU Data Distribution (Post-Test)



From Tables 1 and 2 in Appendix 10, the z-scores of skewness and kurtosis of self-efficacy data distribution are 1.42 and 1.37 respectively in the pre-test and 1.66 and .43 respectively in the post-test (within ± 1.96). The aforementioned z-scores of skewness and kurtosis also suggest no violation of normality in this data set.

The normal Q-Q plots of both pre- and post-tests show a reasonably straight diagonal line, which again suggests a normal distribution of data in both pre-tests of the scales (see Figures 1 & 2 in Appendix 10).

In summary, the histograms, the z-scores of skewness and kurtosis, and the normal Q-Q plots all indicate a normal distribution of the data in both the pre- and post-tests of SEIELU. Due to meeting the normality assumption in all pre- and post-tests, parametric tests were utilized for testing the research hypotheses formed around the target research questions.

Chapter 5 next presents the quantitative results and findings obtained from testing the research hypotheses. This is followed by chapter 6, which will present the qualitative findings obtained from the semi-structured interviews. The integration of both types of findings will be given in the discussion chapter (chapter 7) where the qualitative findings will be used to explain the key quantitative findings.

Chapter 5: Quantitative Research Results and Findings

An Examination of the Impact of Study-Abroad, and the Contribution of Study Factors to Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use Development

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the aspects of improvement in the current research scales. This chapter presents the results and findings obtained from the quantitative inquiry which constitutes the foundation of this project. The findings obtained from the qualitative inquiry will be followed up in chapter 6 to provide an explanation of the quantitative findings presented in this chapter. As mentioned previously, the two types of findings will be integrated in the discussion chapter (chapter 7). The quantitative inquiry here seeks answers to the following research questions in order:

1. What impact does study abroad in native English-speaking countries (the UK, the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) have on Omani students' ICC, SEIELU, and IIF?
2. What role do multilingualism and educational level play in the levels of ICC, SEIELU, and IIF?
3. To what extent do ICC (and its attitudes to cultural differences, emotion regulation, skills, intercultural cognition, and intercultural behaviours) and IIF contribute to the development of SEIELU?

The impact of study abroad was initially examined as an impact of a host context characterised by a culturally more individualist tendency on students coming from a country (Oman) known to have a collectivist uniformity. Some statistical comparisons within the experimental group were carried out to confirm the nature of this impact. It was then checked if studying in the UK, the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (characterised by a more individualist tendency) would trigger varying effects on Omani students' ICC, SEIELU, and IIF levels. After that, the impact of study abroad was examined with regard to the amount of time spent abroad.

Before the analysis, it is worth mentioning that the data collection survey was used as a pre- and post-test at two different times. Merging the pre- and post-test SPSS files into one file while keeping recognition of the data collected in each of the test stages required adding a new variable with two independent levels (test: 1- pre-test, 2-post-test) in both SPSS files before merging them.

Based on Grande (2014) and Sweetser (2016), since the combined SPSS file represents the test stage as a single variable with two independent levels (test: pre-test or post-test) rather than as two discrete variables (e.g., pre-test total SEIELU as one discrete variable and post-test total SEIELU as another discrete variable), the independent samples t-test was used, instead of the paired samples t-test,

to check the difference in the measures within each of the control and experimental groups from the pre-test to the post-test, besides its use for comparing the research groups in the pre- and post-tests (file 1) (N=343).

For result confirmation, the paired samples t-test was also applied after the total scores; every participant in the post-test was paired with their corresponding scores in the pre-test, using the email addresses provided in both test stages (file 2) (N=93).

It might be argued that the use of the paired samples t-test with file 2 was adequate to observe changes in the variables under study; however, a large sample is of significance for convincing officials of the obtained findings. Thus, file 1 was also used.

Finally, as will be seen in the descriptive tables in the coming sections, the research groups of comparison were unequal in size, which may be thought to bias the results produced by the tests. However, as will be seen in the next sections, the comparison test tables and tests of homogeneity all showed that the variances in the different comparison groups were homogeneous. Thus, the test statistics and their results were unbiased by the unequal sizes of the research groups (Field, 2013).

5.2 Impact of Study Abroad as a Context

It was hypothesized that there were no significant differences between stay-in-Oman (control group) and study-abroad (experimental group) participants in ICC, SEIELU, and IIF levels after one year abroad. Within-group and between-group statistical comparisons were carried out, with the former to observe changes in the levels of the variables under study (effectiveness) and with the latter to assess the causality association of the change, given that the experimental and control groups should depart from the same starting point.

5.2.1 Pre-Test Between-Group Comparisons

Table 9: Group Statistics for the Experimental and Control Groups in the Pre-Test (File 1)

	group type: experimental or control	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total SEIELU	experimental group	231	44.4286	8.41287	.55353
	control group	19	42.8947	5.57668	1.27938
Total ICC	experimental group	231	226.7619	19.14543	1.25968
	control group	19	226.2632	20.58274	4.72200
Total IIF	experimental group	231	10.7186	2.71766	.17881
	control group	19	9.4737	2.38906	.54809

Table 10: Independent Samples T-test for the Experimental and Control Groups in the Pre-Test (File 1)

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Total	Equal variances assumed	2.985	.085	.780	248	.436	1.53383	1.96658	-2.33949	5.40716
	SEIELU			1.100	25.300	.282	1.53383	1.39399	-1.33541	4.40308
Total ICC	Equal variances assumed	.165	.685	.109	248	.914	.49875	4.59509	-8.55162	9.54912
	Equal variances not assumed			.102	20.645	.920	.49875	4.88714	-9.67527	10.67276
Total IIF	Equal variances assumed	.394	.531	1.935	248	.054	1.24493	.64324	-.02198	2.51184
	Equal variances not assumed			2.159	22.016	.042	1.24493	.57652	.04936	2.44050

The results presented in Table 9 and Table 10 above showed that there were no statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups in the pre-test SEIELU, ICC, and IIF levels, $p > .05$.

The independent samples t-test applied to file 2 in the pre-test (Appendix 11, Tables 1 & 2) also revealed no statistically significant differences in the IIF mean scores between the experimental group ($M = 10.31$, $SD = 3.08$) and the control group ($M = 9.14$, $SD = 3.08$), $t(91) = .97$, $p = .33$. However, there were statistically significant differences in the SEIELU mean scores between the experimental group ($M = 45.28$, $SD = 8.54$) and the control group ($M = 52.14$, $SD = 5.87$), $t(91) = -2.08$, $p = .04$ (eta squared = .04 small) as well as in the ICC mean scores between the experimental group ($M = 227.26$, $SD = 19.24$) and the control group ($M = 245.57$, $SD = 15.58$), $t(91) = -2.45$, $p = .02$ (eta squared = .06 moderate), with both in favour of the control group. Due to the absence of statistical significance as well as the small and moderate differences in significance, the two groups were considered largely similar to each other at the beginning of the current study.

5.2.2 Post-Test Between-Group Comparisons

Table 11: Group Statistics for the Experimental and Control Groups in the Post-Test (File 1)

		group type: experimental or control	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total SEIELU	experimental group		80	45.2500	7.70418	.86135
	control group		13	47.6154	6.81345	1.88971
Total ICC	experimental group		80	226.6125	17.10022	1.91186
	control group		13	228.6154	12.69211	3.52016
Total IIF	experimental group		80	10.1250	2.64515	.29574
	control group		13	10.6923	3.52100	.97655

Table 12: Independent Samples Test for the Experimental and Control Groups in the Post-Test (File 1)

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Total SEIELU	Equal variances assumed	.150	.699	-	91	.300	-2.36538	2.27050	-6.87545	2.14468
	Equal variances not assumed			1.042	17.390	.270	-2.36538	2.07676	-6.73949	2.00872
Total ICC	Equal variances assumed	.482	.489	-.404	91	.687	-2.00288	4.95986	-11.85505	7.84928
	Equal variances not assumed			1.139	19.861	.623	-2.00288	4.00584	-10.36266	6.35690
Total IIF	Equal variances assumed	2.296	.133	-.683	91	.496	-.56731	.83028	-2.21655	1.08194
	Equal variances not assumed			1.139	14.284	.587	-.56731	1.02035	-2.75166	1.61705

The independent samples t-test results, presented in Table 11 and Table 12 above and Tables 1 and 2 in Appendix 11, all showed that there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups in all the three variables under study in the post-test.

5.2.3 Within-Group Comparisons - Experimental Group

Table 13: Group Statistics for the Experimental Group Between the Pre-and-Post Tests (File 1)

	test stage	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total SEIELU	pre-test	231	44.4286	8.41287	.55353
	post-test	80	45.2500	7.70418	.86135
Total ICC	pre-test	231	226.7619	19.14543	1.25968
	post-test	80	226.6125	17.10022	1.91186
Total IIF	pre-test	231	10.7186	2.71766	.17881
	post-test	80	10.1250	2.64515	.29574

Table 14: Independent Samples T-Test For the Experimental Group Between the Pre-and-Post Tests (File 1)

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower		Upper
Total SEIELU	Equal variances assumed	1.214	.271	-.769	309	.443	-.82143	1.06862	-2.92412	1.28127
	Equal variances not assumed			-.802	148.994	.424	-.82143	1.02388	-2.84462	1.20176
Total ICC	Equal variances assumed	1.102	.295	.062	309	.951	.14940	2.41861	-4.60963	4.90844
	Equal variances not assumed			.065	152.600	.948	.14940	2.28954	-4.37389	4.67270
Total IIF	Equal variances assumed	.118	.731	1.695	309	.091	.59361	.35017	-.09541	1.28264
	Equal variances not assumed			1.718	140.852	.088	.59361	.34559	-.08960	1.27683

As shown in Table 13 and Table 14 above, as well as in Tables 3 and 4 in Appendix 11, both the independent samples t-test and paired samples t-test applied to both files 1 and 2 revealed no statistically

significant changes in the experimental group's total mean scores in the three measured variables from the pre-test to the post-test.

5.2.4 Within-Group Comparisons - Control Group

Table 15: Group Statistics for the Control Group Between the Pre- and-Post Tests (File 1)

	test stage	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total SEIELU	pre-test	19	42.8947	5.57668	1.27938
	post-test	13	47.6154	6.81345	1.88971
Total ICC	pre-test	19	226.2632	20.58274	4.72200
	post-test	13	228.6154	12.69211	3.52016
Total IIF	pre-test	19	9.4737	2.38906	.54809
	post-test	13	10.6923	3.52100	.97655

Table 16: Independent Samples T-Test for the Control Group Between the Pre-and-Post Tests (File 1)

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper	
Total SEIELU	Equal variances assumed	.412	.526	- 2.149	30	.040	-4.72065	2.19617	-9.20583	-.23546
	Equal variances not assumed			- 2.069	22.386	.050	-4.72065	2.28206	-9.44863	.00733
Total ICC	Equal variances assumed	1.793	.191	-.366	30	.717	-2.35223	6.42490	-15.47363	10.76918
	Equal variances not assumed			-.399	29.773	.692	-2.35223	5.88972	-14.38449	9.68004
Total IIF	Equal variances assumed	2.535	.122	- 1.169	30	.251	-1.21862	1.04217	-3.34703	.90978
	Equal variances not assumed			- 1.088	19.463	.290	-1.21862	1.11984	-3.55871	1.12147

The independent samples t-test applied to the SPSS data file 1, as presented in Table 15 and Table 16 above, showed that the control group, on the other hand, experienced a statistically significant moderate increase in the SEIELU mean scores from the pre-test ($M = 42.89$, $SD = 5.57$) to the post-test ($M = 47.62$, $SD = 6.81$), $t(30) = -2.14$, $p = .04$ (eta squared = .13), based on Pallant (2016). However, there were no statistically significant increases in the control group's ICC mean scores from the pre-test ($M = 226.26$, $SD = 20.58$) to the post-test ($M = 228.62$, $SD = 12.69$), $t(30) = -.37$, $p = .72$ as well as in the IIF mean scores from the pre-test ($M = 9.47$, $SD = 2.39$) to the post-test ($M = 10.69$, $SD = 3.52$), $t(30) = -1.17$, $p = .25$.

The paired samples t-test results, shown in Tables 5 and 6 in Appendix 11, uncovered no statistically significant changes in the control group's mean scores of the three measures under study from the pre-test to the post-test.

5.2.5 Summary of the Impact of One Year Abroad in an Individualist Context

Both of the independent and paired samples t-tests conducted within the experimental group confirmed that the one year abroad in a context with an individualist tendency did not yield any significant changes in the Omani participants' SEIELU, ICC, and IIF levels. The study-abroad participants' performance in the three measures was similar to that of stay-in-Oman participants, and remained similar even after one year abroad.

Additional between- and within-group comparisons were carried out within the experimental group, as will be seen in the next three coming sections, to check if the current one year abroad had a varying impact on the subgroups making up the experimental group. These subgroups were male vs female, staying abroad alone or with own family members, and having previous study-abroad experiences or not, using the independent samples t-test.

These additional comparisons (Appendix 14, Tables 7-30) confirmed the absence of a statistically significant impact of one year abroad on the Omani participants' development in SEIELU, ICC, and IIF. The corresponding groups of comparison were similar to one another in the pre-test and evidently remained similar to each other in the post-test, even after having gone through the current one-year intercultural experience abroad as indicated by the within-group comparisons. Thus, all the statistical results unanimously failed to reject the null hypothesis proposed for testing the impact of study abroad on the participants' SEIELU, ICC, and IIF levels.

5.3 Impact of One Year Abroad on Individuals Staying Abroad Alone or with Their Families

The impact of participants' types of one year stay abroad (alone or with their families) on the variables of study was examined by carrying out some between- and within-group comparisons using the independent samples t-test.

5.3.1 Pre-Test Between-Group Comparisons

As shown in Tables 7 and 8 in Appendix 11, there were no statistically significant differences between the participants staying abroad with their families and those without their families in the pre-test ICC, SEIELU and intercultural behaviour (IB) mean scores ($p > .05$). Although there was a statistically significant difference in the IIF mean scores in favour of those staying abroad alone, the difference was very small ($\eta^2 = .02$). The two groups were thus considered largely similar to one another in the variables.

5.3.2 Post-Test Between-Group Comparisons

From Tables 9 and 10 in Appendix 11, the post-test results showed that there were no statistically significant differences in the SEIELU and IIF and IB mean scores between the participants staying abroad alone and those staying abroad with their families, $p > .05$. There was only a statistically significant difference in the ICC mean scores between the participants staying abroad alone ($M = 229.76$, $SD = 15.82$) and those staying abroad with their families ($M = 219.68$, $SD = 18.07$), $t(78) = 2.53$, $p = .014$ ($\eta^2 = .07$ moderate) in favour of those staying abroad alone.

Although the participants staying abroad on their own significantly surpassed the participants staying abroad with their families in the general ICC measure and tended to interact slightly more frequently in intercultural contexts (though statistically insignificant), there was no statistically significant difference in the IB mean scores between the participants staying abroad alone without their families ($M = 50.91$, $SD = 7.63$) and those staying abroad with their families ($M = 51.00$, $SD = 7.78$), $t(78) = -.05$, $p = .96$. Both groups lacked competent intercultural behaviours that would lead to depth and breadth in interactions through intercultural engagements, flexibility towards different cultural groups, and adaptability to various intercultural contexts. Therefore, there was no statistically significant difference in the SEIELU mean scores between the two groups.

5.3.3 Within-Group Comparisons

From Tables 11-14 in Appendix 11, the participants staying abroad alone and those who stayed abroad with their Omani families did not experience any statistically significant changes in the mean scores of all variables of SEIELU, ICC, IIF and IB from the pre-test to the post-test, $p > .05$.

5.3.4 Summary of the Impact of One Year Abroad on Participants Staying Abroad Alone and Those with Their families

This part examined whether the Omani students' stay abroad with their families added a burden to their intercultural and linguistic development or not, compared to those staying abroad on their own.

Although the participants staying abroad alone without their families tended to interact slightly more during their stay abroad, their frequent intercultural interactions, similar to those of the participants staying abroad with their families, lacked depth and breadth (interaction quality) due to limited intercultural engagements, flexibility towards different cultural groups, and adaptability to intercultural contexts. As a consequence, both groups of participants staying abroad, whether alone or with their families, performed similarly in SEIELU. The one year abroad did not have any impact on the intercultural development of both groups of participants; both groups of participants remained similar to one another in SEIELU, IIF, and IB. The results suggest that individuals may appear competent in intercultural contexts even though they are not if the diagnostic of their intercultural behaviours is ignored.

5.4 Impact of One Year Abroad on Male and Female Study-Abroad Participants

The impact of one year abroad on Omani male and female participants was also checked, using the independent samples t-test, to provide a more solid conclusion about the impact of this experience on Omani students.

5.4.1 Pre-Test Between-Group Comparisons

As reported in Tables 15 and 16 in Appendix 11, although there was a statistically significant difference in the SEIELU mean scores between female participants ($M=45.43$, $SD= 8.81$) and male participants ($M=43.09$, $SD= 7.69$), $t(229)= -2.11$, $p = .03$, the difference was very small ($\eta^2 = .01$). On the other hand, there were no statistically significant differences in the ICC and IIF mean scores between the two groups. It was thus concluded that the two groups of female and male participants were similar to one another in intercultural development at the beginning of the current study.

5.4.2 Post-Test Between-Group Comparisons

The post-test comparisons showed no statistically significant differences in the three study measures between the male and female participants; see Table 17 and 18 (ibid.).

5.4.3 Within-Group Comparisons

As shown in Appendix 11, Tables 19-22, there were no statistically significant differences in male and female participants' SEIELU, ICC and IIF mean scores between the pre- and post-tests, $p >.05$.

5.4.4 Summary of the Impact of One Year Abroad on Male and Female Participants

This part checked the impact of one year abroad on the Omani female and male participants. The one year abroad did not have any statistically significant impact on the intercultural competence development of both groups of male and female participants particularly in SEIELU, ICC, and IIF.

5.5 Impact of Current One Year Abroad on Participants with and without Previous Study-Abroad Experiences

This part examined whether the previous study-abroad experiences along with the current one year abroad had an impact on the participants' ICC, SEIELU, and IIF.

5.5.1 Pre-Test Between-Group Comparisons

From Tables 23 and 24 in Appendix 11, the pre-test between-group comparisons showed that although there was a statistically significant difference in the SEIELU mean scores between the current study-abroad participants with previous study-abroad experiences ($M=46.46$, $SD= 7.68$) and those without previous study-abroad experiences ($M=43.17$, $SD= 8.31$), $t(248)=-3.07$, $p = .002$, the difference was very small ($\eta^2 = .03$). On the other hand, there were no statistically significant differences in the ICC and IIF mean scores between the two groups. From here, it was concluded that the two groups tended to perform similarly in the relevant measures at the beginning of this study.

5.5.2 Post-Test Between-Group Comparisons

Again, although there was a statistically significant difference in the SEIELU mean scores between the current study-abroad participants with previous study-abroad experiences in non-Arab countries ($M= 47.76$, $SD = 7.66$) and those who had not been through similar intercultural experiences in the past ($M = 44.14$, $SD = 7.27$), $t(91)= - 2.29$, $p = .02$, the difference was very small ($\eta^2 = .05$). On the other hand, there were no statistically significant differences in the ICC and IIF mean scores between the two groups. Thus, it was concluded that the two groups tended to perform similarly in intercultural encounters and remained similar even after one year abroad; see Tables 25 and 26 in Appendix 11.

5.5.3 Within-Group Comparisons

As reported in Tables 27-30 of Appendix 11, there were no statistically significant differences within the group of recent study-abroad participants with no previous study-abroad experiences in non-Arab countries and those with previous study-abroad experiences in the SEIELU, ICC, and IIF mean scores between the pre- and post-tests.

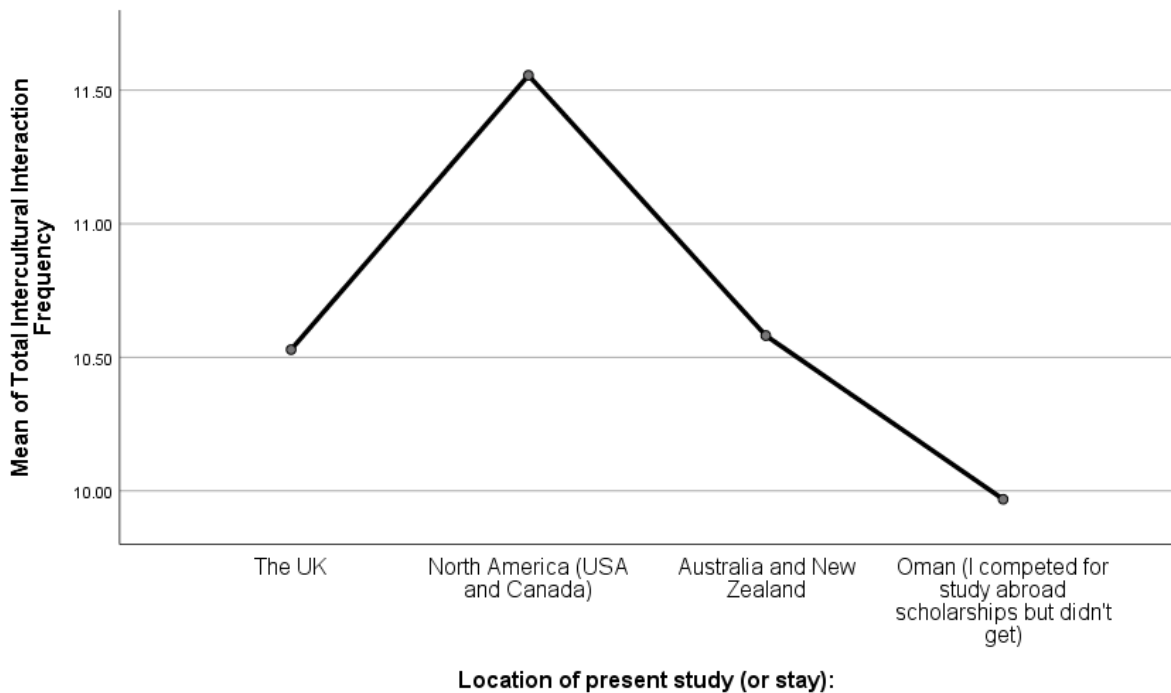
5.5.4 Summary of the Impact of the Current One Year Abroad on Participants with and without Previous Study-Abroad Experiences

The recent one year abroad did not trigger any statistically significant effect on the ICC, SEIELU, and IIF of both groups of recent study-abroad participants with and without previous study-abroad experiences in non-Arab countries. The performance of both groups remained constant over the recent one year abroad.

5.6 Impact of Studying Abroad in Different Individualist Countries

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to explore the impact of the target countries of stay (the UK, North America, Australia and New Zealand, and Oman) on the variables under study. The results showed that the groups of participants staying in Oman, the UK, North America, and New Zealand and Australia did not differ significantly from one another in the SEIELU mean scores: $F(3, 339) = 1.11, p = .34$, ICC mean scores: $F(3, 339) = 1.34, p = .26$, and IIF mean scores: $F(3, 339) = .87, p = .46$.

Figure 5: The Impact of Location on Omani Participants' IIF Level



Despite not reaching statistical significance, Figure 5 above illustrates that the participants staying in North America recorded the highest frequency of intercultural interactions. Although the one-way ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference in intercultural behaviour (IB) scores (represented by intercultural engagements, flexibility towards other cultural groups, and adaptability to intercultural contexts): $F(3, 339) = 2.72, p = .04$, the post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test showed no

statistically significant differences between all five groups of comparison in the IB mean scores (statistical tables in Appendix 12). This suggests that although the participants studying in North America had the highest IIF scores, they were not different from other groups of Omani students in other target countries with regard to the quality and breadth of their interactions. They thus performed similarly in SEIELU and ICC.

5.7 Impact of Length of Stay Abroad

From the previous sections, one year abroad was apparently insufficient for the participants' further development in the variable under study. Therefore, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to explore the impact of the varying lengths of stay abroad on the three variables (see tables in Appendix 13). The participants were divided into five groups according to their length of stay abroad in the target foreign countries (Group 1: less than a year; Group 2: 1-2 years; Group 3: 3-4 years; Group 4: 5-6 years; Group 5: more than 6 years). Although there was a statistically significant difference at $p < .05$ in the SEIELU mean scores for the five groups: $F(4, 306) = 4.09, p = .003$, the difference was small ($\eta^2 = .05$).

The post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test for the ICC scores indicated that Group 5 ($M = 51.77, SD = 10.40$) only differed significantly in the SEIELU mean scores from Group 1 ($M = 42.91, SD = 8.21$) and Group 2 ($M = 44.13, SD = 7.84$), but did not differ significantly from Group 4 ($M = 45.60, SD = 6.55$) and Group 3 ($M = 45.58, SD = 8.08$). The rest of the groups did not differ significantly from one another.

On the other hand, there were no statistically significant differences at $p < .05$ in the ICC mean scores: $F(4, 306) = .44, p = .78$ and IIF mean scores: $F(4, 306) = 1.97, p = .09$ for the five groups. Regardless of the ICC and IIF mean scores not reaching statistical significance, the figures below illustrate that Group 5 obtained the highest mean scores not only in SEIELU but also in ICC and IIF.

Figure 6: The Impact of Varying Lengths of Stay Abroad on ICC Level

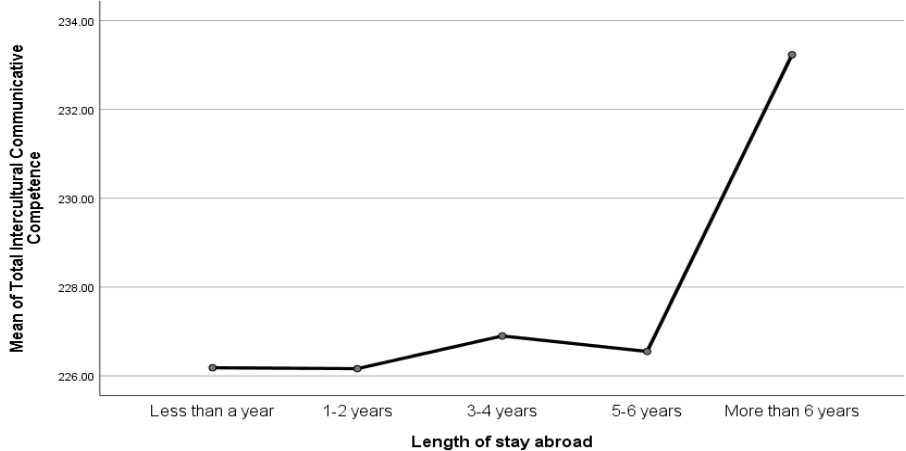


Figure 7: The Impact of Varying Lengths of Stay Abroad on SEIELU Level

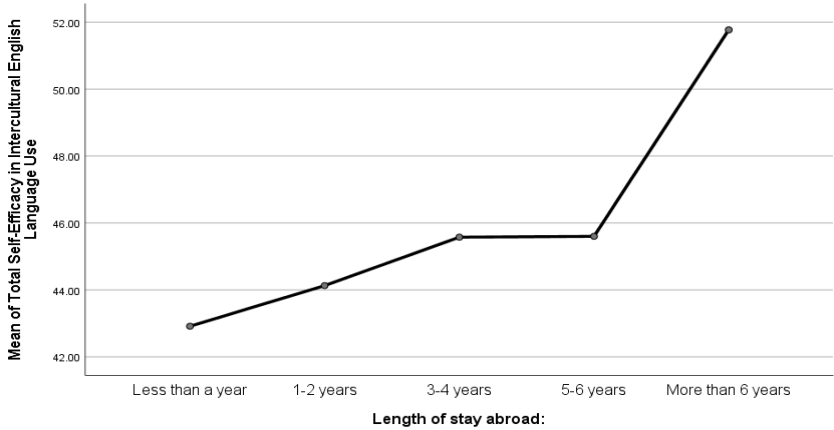
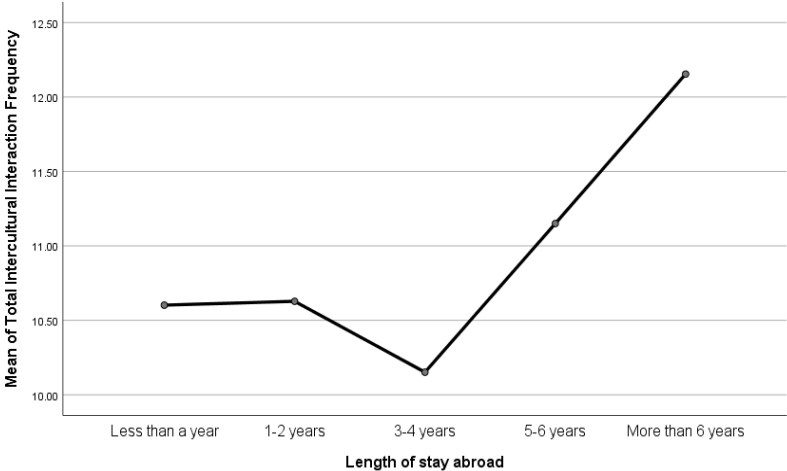


Figure 8: The Impact of Varying Lengths of Stay Abroad on IIF Level



To conclude, the study-abroad participants' development in SEIELU, IIF and ICC was slow during their stay abroad. They needed more than six years of stay abroad before they experienced a noticeable change in the variables under study.

5.8 Impact of Multilingualism

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to explore the role of multilingualism in participants' SEIELU, ICC, and IIF development.

The participants were initially divided into four groups according to the number of foreign languages they speak besides Arabic. However, Group 4 contained only two cases. To obtain more than two cases in each group and thus offer a better comparison between the research groups, Groups 4 and 3 were recoded into one group to ultimately have three groups for comparison (Group 1: one language; Group 2: two languages; Group 3: three languages and above).

There were no statistically significant differences in the ICC mean scores: $F(2, 340) = 1.69$, $p = .19$ and IIF mean scores: $F(2, 340) = 1.48$, $p = .23$, for the three groups.

On the other hand, there was a statistically significant difference in IB mean scores: $F(2, 340) = 3.18$, $p = .04$, though the actual difference between the groups was very small (eta squared = .01). The post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for Group 2 ($M = 52.86$, $SD = 7.05$) differed significantly from Group 1 ($M = 50.67$, $SD = 7.61$). Group 3 ($M = 52.25$, $SD = 6.43$) did not differ significantly from any group.

Furthermore, there was a statistically significant difference in the SEIELU mean scores for the three groups: $F(2,340) = 3.49$, $p = .03$, though the actual difference between the groups was very small (eta squared = .02). The post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for Group 3 ($M = 48.85$, $SD = 8.56$) differed significantly from Group 1 ($M = 44.07$, $SD = 7.81$) only. Group 2 (45.12 , $SD = 8.35$) did not differ significantly from any other group.

Figure 9: The Impact of the Number of Spoken Languages on IIF Level

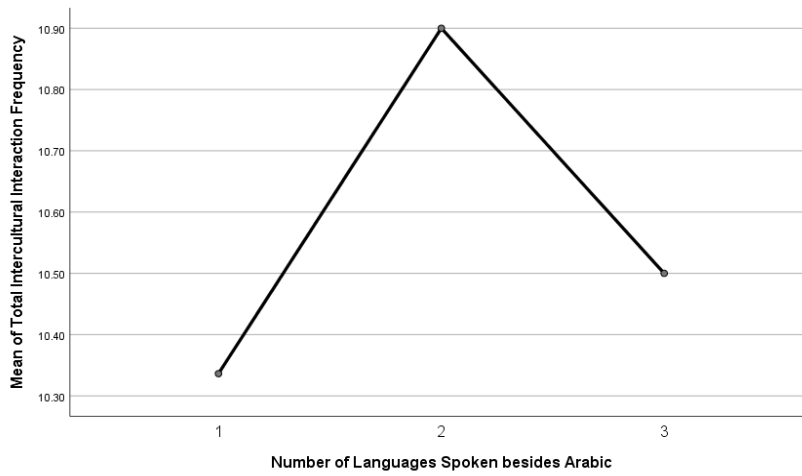


Figure 10: The Impact of the Number of Spoken Languages on ICC Level

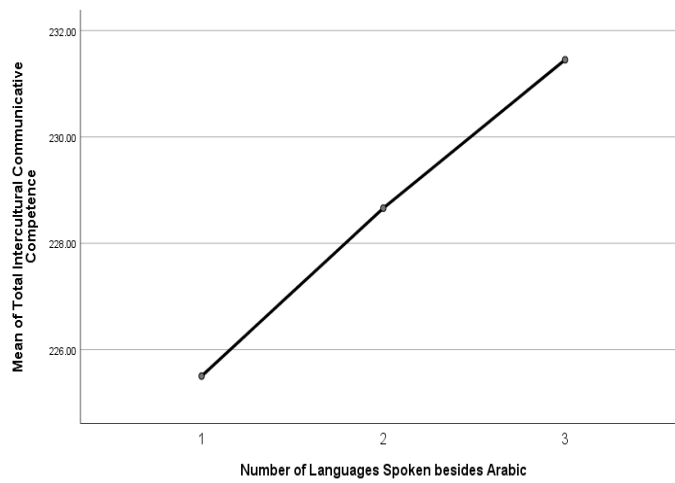


Figure 11: The Impact of the Number of Spoken Languages on IB Level

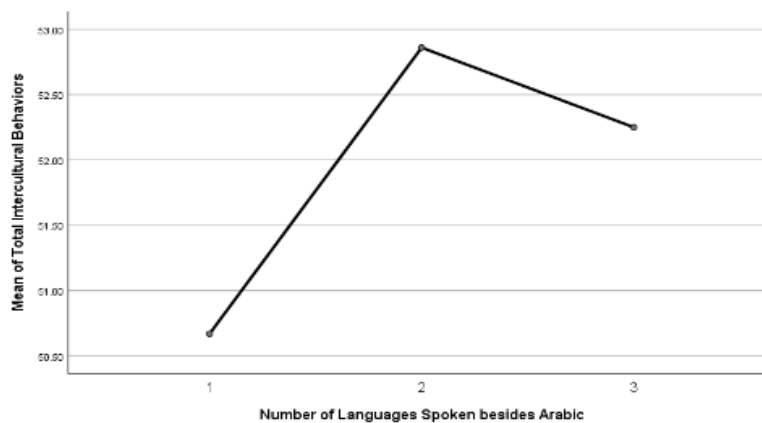
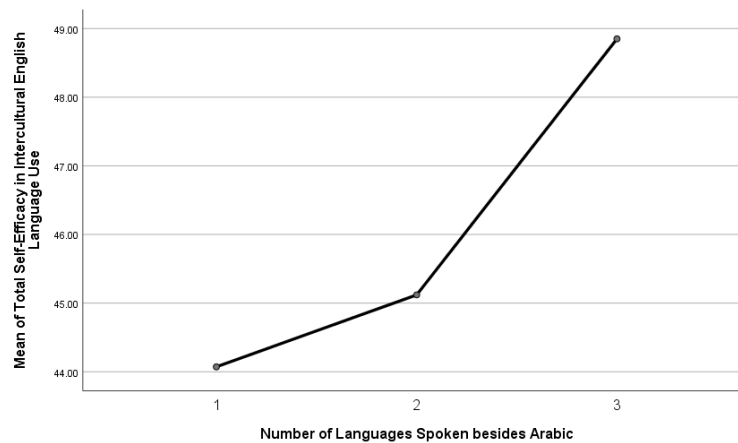


Figure 12: The Impact of the Number of Spoken Languages on SEIELU Level



From Figure 9-12 above, although Group 3 (speaking three languages and more) tended to have the lowest frequency of intercultural interactions, compared to other groups, they tended to have the highest levels of SEIELU and ICC. This is because their interactions, though low in frequency, had breadth and, more importantly, depth (interaction quality) for their maintenance of more intercultural engagements, flexibility towards different cultural groups, and adaptability to intercultural encounters. On the other hand, the fewer the number of spoken languages is, the lower the levels of IIF, ICC, IB, and SEIELU become.

To conclude, depending on the absence of statistical significance in ICC and IIF, and the tiny significant difference in IB and SEIELU, multilingualism tended to play a limited role in intercultural competence development.

5.9 Impact of Educational Level

A one-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of educational level on the SEIELU, ICC, and IIF mean scores. The participants were divided into four groups according to their educational level (Group 1: diploma; Group 2: bachelor; Group 3: master; Group 4: PhD). There was a statistically significant difference at the $p < .05$ in the SEIELU mean scores: $F(3, 339) = 4.56, p = .004$, though the difference was very small (eta squared= .03).

The post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean scores for Group 2 ($M = 45.86, SD = 8.15$) and Group 4 ($M=45.93, SD= 7.55$) were significantly different from Group 1 ($M = 41.65, SD = 7.45$) only. Group 3 ($M = 44.26, SD = 8.25$) did not differ significantly from any other group.

On the other hand, there were no statistically significant differences in the ICC mean scores: $F(3, 339) = .170, p = .92$, IB mean scores: $F(3, 339) = .38, p = .77$, and IIF mean scores: $F(3, 339) = .82, p = .49$ for the four groups (for the statistical tables, see Appendix 15).

Figure 13: The Impact of Educational Level on SEIELU Level

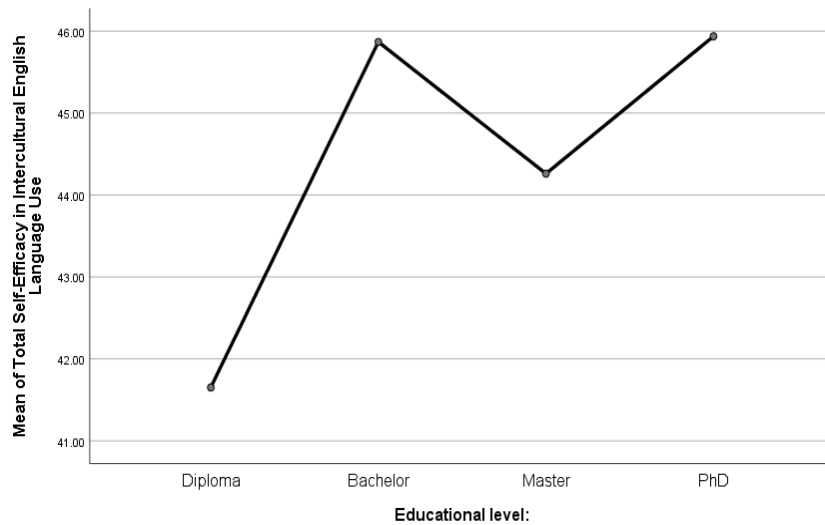


Figure 14: The Impact of Educational Level on ICC Level

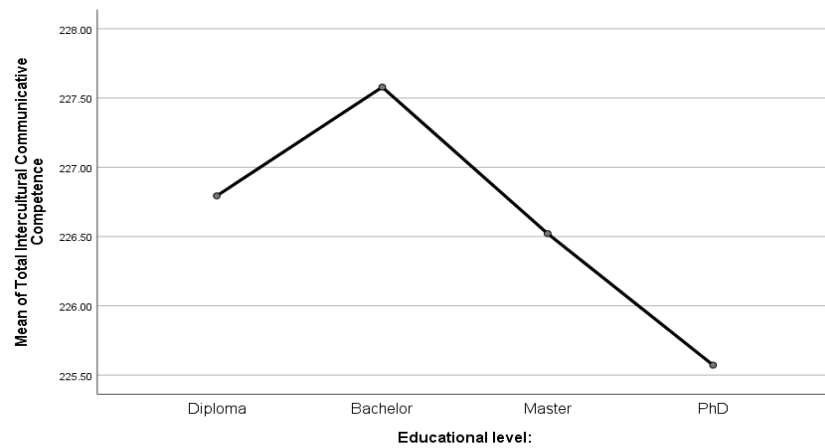


Figure 15: The Impact Of Educational Level on IIF Level

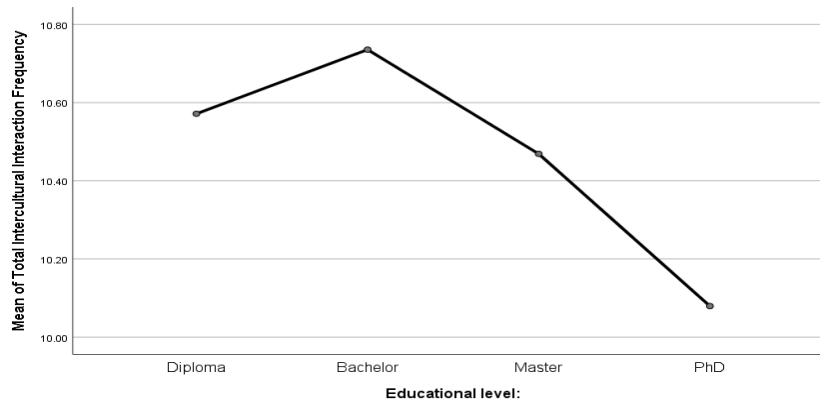
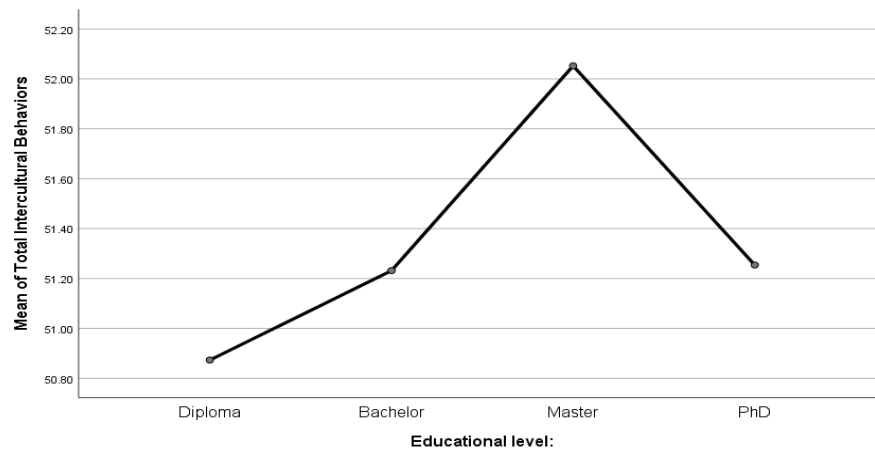


Figure 16: The Impact of Educational Level on IB Level



Though the ICC, IIF, and IB levels of the postgraduate participants represented by the PhD participants were lower than those of the undergraduate participants (statistically insignificant) (see Figure 14-16 above), perhaps due to additional study and research pressures, their SEIELU level was the highest (see Figure 13 above). This suggests that the postgraduate and PhD participants in particular may have developed this level of SEIELU through doing research in English, which involves a lot of reading and writing.

On the other hand, based on the figures above, although the undergraduates represented by bachelor's degree participants tended to have a high IIF, their IB was not significantly different from other groups in depth and breadth. Thus, they tended to perform similarly in SEIELU to other groups.

Because of the insignificant differences in the ICC, IFF, and IB mean scores and the very small significant difference in the SEIELU mean scores among the participants at different educational levels,

it was concluded that the participants across all educational levels largely tended to perform similarly in intercultural contexts. The educational level therefore played no role in the participants' intercultural competence development, particularly in the aforementioned variables.

5.10 Omani Participants' Self-Ranked Reasons to Limited Intercultural Interactions

At the end of the survey, the participants (N=343) were provided with a list of nine barriers to meaningful intercultural interactions in general. They were also provided with space to reflect on any additional barriers to these interactions. The participants' added barriers were not new, as they were already on the list, but their addition helped provide insights into the already listed ones. As seen in Table 1 in Appendix 17, the list included four barriers that I considered as cultural reasons to not interact with the Other. These barriers were participants' negative perception of other cultures, their perception of Others' mutual negative perception of their identity and culture, customs and traditions, and fear of negative images and reactions from inner-circle group for stepping beyond its circle. They were thus clipped together as cultural reasons (Table 2, Appendix 17).

According to the magnitude of means presented in Table 2 (ibid.), the cultural reasons were evidently the most prevalent reasons to not interact meaningfully with the culturally distinct counterparts (M=20.25), followed by personality reasons (M=7.62). The linguistic and family reasons tended to have an equal prevalence among the participants (M=5.01 & 4.97 respectively). The least common ones were the educational/professional reasons and cognitive reasons (M= 3.49 & 3.84 respectively).

To make use of the results above in the presentation of the study-abroad students' reasons to not interact meaningfully while abroad in the discussion chapter (Chapter 7), and also since the interviews were carried out with only study-abroad participants, the stay-in-Oman ones were excluded. Despite this exclusion, Table 3 (ibid.) shows that the aforementioned reasons prevailed in the same order above, and the family and linguistic reasons also tended to have an equal prevalence among the study-abroad participants (N=311).

5.11 Contribution of ICC and IIF to the SEIELU Development

This part examines the extent of the contribution of each of IIF and ICC as a general variable and its components (attitudes to cultural differences, negative emotion regulation, skills, intercultural cognition, and behaviours) all as independent variables to the development of SEIELU as a dependent variable, using the multiple linear regression analysis.

However, before this analysis, it is important to have an idea about the participants' development level across the aforementioned variables. This helps create an overview of the participants' abilities in making the maximum use of study abroad in intercultural competence development. The median was used as a point to differentiate between the limited and competent levels. The average means that are equal or below the median were considered limited, and those above the median were regarded as competent.

Table 17: Statistics for the Developmental Level of Variables Under Study

	Intercultural Attitudes	Intercultural Emotion Regulation	Intercultural Skills	Intercultural Cognition	IB	IIF	ICC	SEIELU
N Valid	343	343	343	343	343	343	343	343
N Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	74.9679	14.4636	49.8542	36.0845	51.3994	10.5102	226.7697	44.6560
Median	74.0000	15.0000	50.0000	36.0000	51.0000	11.0000	227.0000	44.0000
Std. Deviation	7.92853	2.25384	4.46255	3.87696	7.43909	2.72830	18.49742	8.07447
Minimum	56.00	7.00	34.00	19.00	23.00	3.00	173.00	18.00
Maximum	97.00	20.00	65.00	48.00	71.00	15.00	280.00	65.00

From Table 17 above, the median score of SEIELU was 44.00 while its average mean was 44.65. This indicated that the Omani participants' SEIELU was almost limited. Similarly, the participants' IIF and ICC were evidently limited. The participants' ICC development was limited as a general competence and across all its five sub-competencies.

To find out the participants' weekly initiated intercultural interactions, a scale was created as follows. The IIF scale had three items with a five-item Likert scale. The total number of three items was multiplied by each level in the Likert scale as follows:

Table 18: A Five-Point Scale for Participants' Weekly Initiated Intercultural Interactions

Corresponding scale item	Never	Less than once per week	Once a week	Two to six times a week	Every day or more often
Scale level	1 X 3	2 X 3	3 X 3	4 X 3	5 X 3
Corresponding average mean	3	6	9	12	15

By locating the IIF average mean of 10.51 from Table 17 in the scale above (Table 18), it can be noticed that the participants' average frequency of weekly intercultural interactions tended to be once a week. These interactions were limited not only in frequency but also in quality as indicated by the limitation in the sub-competence of IB (see Table 17).

Now, to find out the extent of the aforementioned variables' contribution to SEIELU development, two models were proposed. The first model was composed of the ICC and IIF variables as two predictors of the dependent variable, SEIELU. The second prediction model included the same variables as in the first model; however, the ICC variable was replaced by its five composing sub-competencies (attitudes to cultural differences, emotion regulation, skills, intercultural cognition, and intercultural behaviours). This was to ascertain the part of the general ICC that makes the largest significant unique contribution to the development of SEIELU and thus of ICC. The preliminary analyses were carried out to ensure there were no outliers and there was no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multi-collinearity, and homoscedasticity as shown next.

From Table 1 in Appendix 16, the ICC and IIF as independent variables showed some correlation with the dependent variable, SEIELU, ($r = .47$ & $.23$ respectively) and the correlation between the two predictors ($r = .41$) did not exceed $.7$, which was an indication of no violation of the assumption of multi-collinearity. Thus, all variables were retained in the model. The meeting of this assumption was also ensured as all the VIF values are 1.21 , that is, below 10 , and the tolerance values are 0.83 , that is, above 0.1 , according to Field (2013) and Pallant (2016); see Table 19 below.

Table 19: ICC and IIF Coefficients in the Prediction of SEIELU

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta				Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
	(Constant)	-1.508	4.774					-.316	.752	-10.899	7.883		
1 Total ICC	.197	.023	.452		8.603	.000	.152	.242	.471	.423	.411	.828	1.207
Total IIF	.138	.155	.047		.886	.376	-.168	.443	.234	.048	.042	.828	1.207

a. Dependent Variable: Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use

For the assessment of normality, the reasonably straight diagonal line from the bottom left to top right in the Normal P-P plot and the symmetrical bell-shaped histogram, presented in Appendix 16 all indicated no violation of normality.

As seen in the scatterplot in Appendix 16, the points were randomly and evenly dispersed throughout the plot (roughly rectangularly distributed), with most scores in the centre closer to zero,

indicating no violation of the assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity (Field, 2013; Pallant, 2016). The standardized residuals of the cases shown in the scatterplot were within the range of ± 3.3 , indicating there were no outliers in my dataset. However, the case-wise diagnostics as shown in Table 2 in Appendix 16 demonstrated that some cases had standardized residuals exceeding ± 3.3 , which is more likely to occur in large samples, and thus no action needed to be taken with these a few cases (Field, 2013; Pallant, 2016).

However, for more assurance, Mahalanobis distances, shown in Table 3 in Appendix 16, were checked to find out whether these cases with outliers had any hazardous effect on the results. Since my regression model included two independent variables, the chi-square critical value corresponding to this number of variables is 13.82 based on Tabachnick and Fidell’s guidelines (as cited in Pallant, 2016, p. 161). The maximum value for the Mahalanobis distance was 12.76, which did not exceed the corresponding critical value and the maximum value of .04 for Cook’s Distance, which also did not exceed the value of 1, both suggesting there were no major problems regarding the results with these cases (Pallant, 2016).

From Table 20 below, the Durbin-Watson value of 1.89 was neither below 1 nor above 3. In fact, it was closer to 2, indicating that the assumption of independent errors had almost certainly been met.

Table 20: Model Summary of the Two Predictors: IIF and ICC

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.473 ^a	.224	.219	7.13534	1.886

a. Predictors: (Constant), Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency, Total Intercultural Communicative Competence

b. Dependent Variable: Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use

Table 21: ANOVA for the Two Predictors: IIF and ICC

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	4986.941	2	2493.470	48.975	.000 ^b
1 Residual	17310.465	340	50.913		
Total	22297.405	342			

a. Dependent Variable: Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use

b. Predictors: (Constant), Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency, Total Intercultural Communicative Competence

From Table 20 and Table 21 above, the two predictor model accounted for 22.4% of the variance in the SEIELU scores, $F(2, 340)=48.97$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .224$, $R^2_{adjusted} = .219$. From Table 19 above, the ICC variable made the strongest and only significant unique contribution to the prediction of SEIELU

($\beta = .45, p < .0001$), uniquely explaining 16.89% of the variance in the SEIELU scores. The IIF variable made no significant unique contribution to this prediction ($\beta = .04, p = .37$).

As seen in Tables 4 and 5 in Appendix 16, when replacing the general ICC predictor with its five main composing sub-competencies, the six predictor model was able to account for 26.1% of the variance in the SEIELU scores, $F(6, 336) = 19.75, p < .001, R^2 = .261, R^2_{adjusted} = .248$.

From Table 6 in Appendix 16, intercultural attitudes (respect, intolerance of cultural differences, and tolerance of ambiguity and uncertainty) made the strongest statistically significant unique contribution to the prediction of SEIELU ($\beta = .24, p < .001$), followed by intercultural cognition ($\beta = .20, p < .001$) and intercultural behaviours (engagement, inter-group flexibility and context adaptability) ($\beta = .20, p < .001$) respectively, each uniquely explaining 3.39%, 2.82%, and 2.49% of the variance in the SEIELU scores, respectively. On the other hand, IIF, negative emotion regulation, and critical thinking and communication skills made no statistically significant unique contributions to this prediction ($p > .05$).

5.12 Summary of Quantitative Findings

To summarize, this chapter focused on examining the impact of one year of study abroad in a context that was characterised more by a culturally individualist tendency (the UK, the US, Canada, Australia & New Zealand) on the SEIELU, ICC and IIF of Omani individuals coming from a country that was categorised as culturally having a more unique collectivist tendency. It examined the impact of the host countries above as one context and later on as different host countries as well as the impact of time spent abroad. Within- and between-group statistical comparisons were carried out, with the former to track changes in the levels of variables under study (effectiveness) and with the latter to assess the causality association of the change. The chapter also checked the role of multilingualism and educational level in the development of the aforementioned variables before the chapter was concluded with an examination of the contributions of ICC (and its composites) and IIF to the development of SEIELU.

The statistical between- and within-group comparisons between the research groups of Omani participants studying abroad and those staying at home, as well as the additional statistical comparisons carried out within and between the subgroups composing the experimental group (represented by male vs female, staying abroad alone or with own family members, and having previous study-abroad experiences or not) unanimously revealed that the one year of study abroad in the aforementioned countries as one context and also as different host countries did not show any impact on the Omani participants' ICC, SEIELU, and IIF levels. The participants required more than six years of stay abroad in order for a noticeable change in their performance to be observed in the three variables under study.

The educational level as being a PhD, master's, bachelor's or diploma candidate did not play a significant role of development in the study variables. The participants' ICC, IIF, and IB levels in general tended to decrease as they moved to the postgraduate programs, while their SEIELU levels witnessed an ascending development tendency. This increase was suggested to be as a result of academic factors such as doing research in English, but it had less to do with intercultural interactions. Multilingualism also appeared to play a limited role in intercultural development based on the absence of any statistical significance in the ICC and IIF mean scores, and the very small significant difference in the SEIELU and IB mean scores.

The results have also shown that the interaction frequency should not be at the expense of its quality. The intercultural interactions that were high in frequency but low in quality tended to be less influential in ICC and SEIELU development (see Tables 7-10 in Appendix 11). On the other hand, the intercultural interactions that were high in quality, though low in frequency, were more influential (see Figure 9-12).

In general, the participants demonstrated evident limitations in IIF, SEIELU, and ICC and across all of the sub-competencies (intercultural attitudes, emotion regulation, skills, cognition, and behaviours). The study participants in general and study-abroad ones in particular reported having several reasons for not interacting meaningfully with the Other, with the cultural reasons appearing as the main reasons that limited the quality of their intercultural interactions, followed by the personality, family, and linguistic reasons respectively. The educational/professional and cognitive reasons were the least common reasons to interact less interculturally.

Hence, a further development in SEIELU was clearly conditioned by the development of ICC, mainly through the development of positive attitudes towards cultural differences in the first place, and then sufficient and accurate intercultural cognition and competent behaviours that help individuals experience breadth and, more importantly, depth in their frequently experienced intercultural interactions. Although the interaction quality was considered the ultimate means to achieve higher levels of SEIELU (and subsequently ICC), it was evident that its achievement required the individuals' development of positive attitudes towards other cultures and intercultural cognition as well.

On the other hand, despite their necessity, the mere frequency of intercultural interactions, negative intercultural emotion regulation, and critical thinking and communication skills on their own were inadequate and, subsequently, they were less influential in the development of SEIELU and intercultural competence in general. The frequently experienced intercultural interactions and skills become less influential when these interactions actually lacked meaningfulness. As individuals build communication

skills, and achieve control and regulation of their unpleasant feelings, they should step forward to undertake meaningful interactions with the Other in various contexts with positive attitudes and better cognition of the counterpart culture.

Finally, semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain an in-depth understanding of the participants' lived experiences abroad and the meanings associated with these experiences. The next chapter (Chapter 6) will mainly explore the participants' inability to make use of the study-abroad opportunity for further development in ICC, SEIELU and IIF, beyond those levels achieved at home.

Chapter Six: Qualitative Research Results and Findings

An Exploration of Omani Students' Lived Intercultural Experiences Abroad

6.1 Introduction

The quantitative findings presented in chapter five above demonstrated that studying in the UK, North America (the USA and Canada), Australia and New Zealand did not establish any significant effect on Omani students' self-efficacy in intercultural English language use (SEIELU), intercultural communicative competence (ICC), and intercultural interaction frequency (IIF) beyond the level of development achieved in Oman. Statistically significant advancements in the aspects above were only noticed after students staying abroad for more than six years.

Based on the qualitative second phase, this chapter aims to provide a detailed explanation and interpretation of the key quantitative findings above and subsequently generate an in-depth understanding of the Omani students' lived experiences abroad particularly in the UK by attempting to answer the following additional questions:

4. What were the possible reasons, according to Omani students, why the quantitative results showed no study-abroad effect except after a period of more than six years abroad?
5. What were the Omani students' reported motives to study abroad particularly in the UK?
6. What benefits did the Omani students report having gained from study abroad?
7. What were the Omani students' perceptions of the study-abroad experience in general and its outcomes in particular?

The in-depth understanding of the experience through the research questions above was deductively guided by the conceptual framework of my Developmental Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (DMICC) (see Figure 1), mainly by exploring the students' English language capabilities, personality characteristics, attitudes towards cultural differences, control and regulation of negative emotional reactions resulting from experiencing unpleasant intercultural incidences, communication skills adopted, intercultural cognition, and the resulting communication behaviours as inputs and means of the experiential learning process before exploring the interviewees' perceptions of benefits gained from and satisfaction with the study-abroad experience as outputs of this process. For the semi-structured interview guide, please see Appendix 18.

Despite being thematically guided by the framework of this model, attention was paid to the emergent themes, also called rich points, (Asar, as cited in O'Connor & Gibson, 2003), and details (sub-themes and codes) were identified inductively as a result of an in-depth exploration of the main guiding themes. For example, although the dimension of attitudes towards cultural differences in the DMICC

comprised eight components, only three emerged from the thematic analysis. Table 1 in Appendix 20 summarizes the themes and their sub-themes and codes obtained from the thematic analysis of two qualitative datasets: 1) 10 semi-structured interview transcripts (9 individual & 1 paired interviews) with 11 participants (for a transcript example, see Appendix 19), and 2) 15 pieces of qualitative data obtained from an open-ended question included in the quantitative questionnaire where the survey respondents were asked to reflect on any additional barriers to the already provided list of nine barriers before ranking them (for the survey qualitative responses, please see Appendix 21). Table 22 below shows an overview of my thematic structure based on the 11 interviewees, who were referred to in the table by their assigned numbers, and 15 open-ended question (OEQ) respondents. For more corresponding details about the interviewees, such as their pseudonyms, educational levels, types of stay abroad, methods of interview and other details, please see Appendix 4, Table 4.

Table 22: Thematic Structure Based on 11 Interviewees and 15 Open-Ended Question Respondents

No.	Main Theme	Sub-Themes	Interviewees & Open-Ended Question (OEQ) Respondents
1	Motives to study abroad	Professional development	Interviewee 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9 & 10
		Security and comfort zone	Interviewee 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9 & 10
		Prior to experience positive expectations and assumptions	Interviewee 1, 2, 5, 7, 8 & 9
		Enjoyment and excitement for novelty	Interviewee 2, 7, 9 & 11
		Experience practicality	Interviewee 3, 8 & 9
		An obligatory experience	Interviewee 1, 8 & 11
2	Cultural reasons to not interact		Respondent 4, 5, & 10
		Limited tolerance of cultural differences	Interviewee 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10 & 11
		Limited motivation to interact	Interviewee 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11 & respondent 9
3	Linguistic reasons to not interact	Limited open-mindedness to the Other	Interviewee 2, 5, 8, 10 & 11
		Limited confidence in English language	Interviewee 2, 5, 6 & 9, & respondent 3

	Limited speaking abilities	Respondent 1, & Interviewee 2, 6 & 8	
	Limited listening abilities	Interviewee 2, 3, 4, 9 & 10	
	Limited vocabulary and knowledge of topics under discussion	Interviewee 5 & 6	
4	Personality-Related reasons to not interact	Shyness of incompetent English and fear of perceived consequences	Interviewee 2, 4, 5 & 6, & Respondent 11 & 15
		Innately shy and introvert	Respondent 2, 6, 7, 8 & Interviewee 2
		Fear of intercultural misunderstandings and violation of host culture taboos	Interviewee 2 & 6, & respondent 14
		Limited intercultural knowledge and awareness	Interviewee 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 & 11
5	Cognitive reasons to not interact	Negative intercultural stereotypes	Interviewee 1, 2, 5, 6, 10 & 11
		Limited knowledge of general life management and daily living requirements	Interviewee 1 & 7
		Study commitments and time restrictions	Interviewee 1, 3, 4, 5, 9 & 10
6	Educational reasons to not interact	Limited research knowledge and incompatible learning skills	Interviewee 1, 3, 5 & 10
		Limited awareness of the host educational system	Interviewee 1 & 5
			Interviewee 1, 2, 4 & 7
7	Family reasons to not interact		
8	Emotional reasons to not interact	Interviewee 1, 6 & 7	
9	Communication skills-related reasons to not interact	Interviewee 2, 3 & 5	
10	Behavioural reasons to not interact	Limited intercultural interaction initiatives	Interviewee 1 & 2
		Limited frequency and depth in the frequently initiated intercultural interactions	Interviewee 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11
		Limited breadth in intercultural interactions contexts	Interviewee 1,3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11
		Higher frequency of inner-circle interactions	Interviewee 1, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11

11	Study-abroad outcomes	No perceived improvements	Interviewee 1, 4, 7 & 11
		Limited English language improvement	Interviewee 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8 & 10
		Limited intercultural competence development	Interviewee 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11
		Professional and research skills development	Interviewee 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9 & 10
		Enjoyment and some personal development	Interviewee 3, 7, 9 & 10
12	Satisfaction of study-abroad experience	A great experience	Interviewee 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 & 10
		Limited satisfaction	Interviewee 11

As presented in Table 22 above, Omani students had six motives for studying abroad. These motives, based on their commonality among the participants, were professional development, security and comfort zone, positive expectations and assumptions held by students prior to departure abroad, enjoyment of and excitement about novelty, the practicality of the experience and, lastly, the obligation to study abroad, respectively.

The Omani students who reported to experience limited intercultural interactions abroad for cultural, linguistic, personality, and cognitive reasons ranked in that order. They were also unable to interact meaningfully for other less commonly expressed reasons, which were educational, family, emotional, and communication skills-related reasons.

As a result of these different, but inter-related, reasons, the interviewed students tended to show limited intercultural interaction initiatives and experienced limited frequency, breadth and depth in intercultural interactions, and, on the one hand, a higher frequency of inner-circle interactions. As a result, the intercultural outcomes were very limited. A detailed explanation of these reasons is presented below, starting with the students' motives to study abroad, and then followed by an explanation of the reasons behind their limited intercultural interactions when abroad. The main purpose of these explanations was to provide an answer to why Omani students may be unable to achieve measurable benefits of study abroad, particularly in the UK, in developing their SEIELU, ICC, and IIF beyond that developed in Oman? Before reporting the interviewees' speeches, it is worth mentioning that the interviewees were referred to throughout this chapter by their pseudonyms and those who provided the survey comments by OEQ (open-ended question) respondent followed by a number.

6.2 Omani Students' Motives to Study Abroad

Before providing a detailed description of the students' study-abroad experience and subsequently of their intercultural interactions, it is important to understand why Omani students were motivated to study abroad in the first place.

The 11 interviewees reported that they were motivated to study abroad particularly in the UK for various reasons. Based on their commonality among the interviewed students, these reasons, in order, revolved around professional development, security and comfort zone, positive expectations and assumptions prior to study-abroad, enjoyment of and excitement about novelty, the practicality of the experience, and finally, the obligation to study abroad. For a better understanding of these motives together and their relationship with students' limited intercultural interactions abroad, a general summary will be provided at the end of this section.

6.2.1 Professional Development

Professional development as part of their study abroad was a concern for 8 out of 11 participants. Studying abroad was considered *a dream* (Sa'ad & Dalila) as the eight interviewees believed that further professional development was attainable abroad through the obtainment of higher quality levels of education, qualifications, exposure to intercultural interactions, and subsequently, language exposure and development. Nora explained:

I thought it would add a lot to me, for example, in terms of the language, getting new insights into my career, and so on. So, I wanted really to try getting my master's degree in a different country, from a different perspective.

With regard to the high quality of education as a motive to study abroad, eight interviewees (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9 & 10) opted for the UK because *it was [considered] a good educational environment* (Khalil) for *the quality of teaching there, especially in [the target] major[s]* (Aryam) and the availability of opportunities to *mingle with people speaking English, ... meet experts in [the target study] field and also to get to know the culture there, the culture of the language that ...[some student teachers] taught as well* (Khalil). Therefore, studying abroad was thought of as *a great experience to expand ...skills and ...knowledge about different topics in education* (Yahiya). Aryam described that *the universities in Oman weren't as good as universities abroad*. Hence, it was believed that *the individuals who graduate from abroad, who get their degrees and qualifications from abroad, are considered well-qualified, compared to others* (Dalila). Studying and graduating from *well-reputed universities* abroad was not only *a kind of honour* (Sa'ad), but it was also thought to create a good *social reputation* (Sa'ad). Besides the social reputation, Lora went further to explain that studying abroad would create more and better recruitment

opportunities for study-abroad individuals. She explained that she *chose to study abroad...[for]the added benefit of having 'UK graduate' added to ...[her] CV that [would]make ...[her] automatically more appealing to companies wanting to recruit new employees.*

For the expected advantages quoted above, the students seemed not only motivated by their own desire to undergo the study-abroad experience but also received further encouragement from people close to them. For example, Dalila explained that besides gaining academically and socially well-reputed qualifications, her *parents encouraged ...[her] to go and complete ...[her] study abroad.*

Moreover, being abroad was considered an opportunity for further professional development through intercultural interactions and, subsequently, language exposure and development. Khalil explained:

I think since I am an ELT specialist, the first choice would definitely be to study in an English-speaking country to hear the language from the native speakers ...[and] to continue speaking in English with people who speak English.

Lora supported the view that *studying abroad would give ...the real experience of being among people who speak the [English] language and interacting with them while being a full-time student at the university.* From here, studying abroad, particularly in the UK, was considered an opportunity *to improve ... English and accent* (Subhi) and a destination that would offer *a more comprehensive educational experience than what was offered here in Oman* (Lora).

From the eight interviewees' aforementioned descriptions of their motives to study abroad prior to departure, they were not only open-minded regarding the academic, linguistic, and educational aspects of the experience but also regarding its cultural aspects. They expressed motives (intentions) to interact with locals abroad for further intercultural cognition and linguistic development in particular.

6.2.2 Security and Comfort Zone

Out of 11 interviewees, 7 (1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9 &10) were motivated to study in the UK in particular for the perceived feeling of comfort and security there. These feelings stemmed from the fact that *most of ...[students'] friends and colleagues usually go to the UK. [Moreover,] Oman has good relations with the UK. [So,] if there are any problems with the students, ...things can be sorted out easily* (Yahiya) and thus *[several students] [...felt] safer in the UK* (Yahiya).

The feeling of comfort and security was also triggered by the fact that *[...some interviewees] had a [previous] chance to travel to the UK, and ...studied English there [...]. So, [...they were] a little bit aware of the country and its culture* (Khalil). They thus came to *understand more how things [...were], and the university that had [...their] chosen major was also very well known ...*(Lora). They had a very

good learning experience (Zaid). They liked the country, so [...they] decided to study in the UK rather than studying in other countries (Khalil).

Moreover, *because of what [...these students] also heard and saw, [...they] really loved the UK and wanted to travel there (Nora). From here, having some [positive] background knowledge ...encouraged [these students] to go there (Nora) and helped them build this feeling of comfort and security.*

From the above, some Omani students were motivated to study abroad in the UK, for example, as there were already other Omani students in the UK, creating a comfort zone for the arrivals. This gives an indication that some students were initially less open to the host culture and its people. On the other hand, other students' positive reports of having had a 'very good' learning experience in the UK in the past, knowledge and awareness of the UK and its culture, and admiration for this country conveyed a message that despite being among their Omani colleagues abroad, some other students were also open to the host culture and its people. Because of their previously gained learning outcomes, they wanted to repeat the experience, and they would thus be expected to learn more through the recent experience.

6.2.3 Positive Expectations and Assumptions held Prior to Study Abroad

Six interviewees' goals set for the intercultural experience abroad were also driven by *unrealistic expectations about studying abroad (Khalil)*. These students, particularly those who went *for the first time to...Britain, Australia, Canada or the US to learn English [for example], ... would expect that the host family would be there for them 24/7 [for] practising their English with them (Khalil)*. *[...They thus...] assumed that [their] language would be more developed, and [...they would] interact with the other culture and [...would have] that experience other than just simply education (Zaid).*

However, *when they arrive[d] there, they experience[d] a shock (Khalil)* due to the gap between the unrealistic expectations and the reality encountered while abroad. For example, Yahiya explained: *I thought I would be like a native speaker, but now I think I still feel I need to improve more...We think that if we go there, we will improve our language to a higher extent.*

These unrealistic expectations were formed due to limited knowledge and awareness of the experience and others' deliberately exaggerated stories of success abroad. These stories were reported with exaggeration to *not demotivate (Khalil)* other students from undergoing the experience. Because of these exaggerated stories, studying abroad became *a dream (Khalil)* for these students.

On the other hand, such an exaggeration had a negative impact on some students' awareness and expectations of study abroad as *it [some students' exaggeration of success abroad] deprive[d] ...students*

from a lot of beneficial knowledge about being abroad (Khalil). So, it [...was] very important to make students aware of what they [...were] going to face there (Khalil).

The exaggerated stories of success abroad tended to emerge as a socially desirable response to the commonly held expectations and beliefs about study abroad learning returns. *[T]hey [several students] assume[d] that people [...were] expecting them to talk about their experience this way (Khalil), and thus they report[ed] themselves according to others' expectations... to look like very successful individuals in the eyes of others and to not lose face in front of the others (Khalil).*

This sub-theme seems to indicate that some students' decisions to study abroad were more driven by others' reports of success abroad than being initially self-determined. Many students, if not all, already assumed that by being abroad, they would develop linguistically and interculturally.

6.2.4 Enjoyment of and Excitement about Novelty

Statements summarized under this sub-theme suggest that 4 out of the 11 interviewed students (2, 7, 9 & 11) had an open mind towards new cultures, institutions, and people before they went abroad.

These four interviewees wanted to study abroad *because it [...was] a new experience for [them] (Nora). They were thus quite excited about the idea ...of travelling, meeting new people from different cultures, [and] different places [as well as to] enjoy the idea of independence and wanting to become more dependent on ...[themselves] (Ruba).*

Moreover, some of those who had previously studied abroad tended to prefer studying in a certain country over another due to *trying to find something different (Talib), for example, a new educational system in a different country (Nora). Others were excited about studying abroad in the UK, for example, as they had heard a lot [of good news and stories] about the UK, so [...they] really wanted to try that experience (Nora). Sa'ad, for example, also wanted to be here [in the UK] because [...he was] a big fan of Manchester United...football team. In short, some students wanted to study abroad as they wanted to combine enjoyment with getting the degree, getting well-educated and well-qualified (Nora).*

From the above, although some students' decision to study abroad was taken due to their enjoyment of and excitement about undergoing a new well-praised experience, this excitement seemed to be accompanied with openness to the host culture abroad. By such reporting, students would be expected again to develop linguistically and interculturally when abroad.

6.2.5 Practicality of Study Abroad

The practicality of the experience was considered a concern for 3 out of the 11 interviewed students. These three students opted for the UK in particular as *that was [considered more] practical (Nora). This is because to have a master's degree in the UK, ...[students] need only to study for one year...especially*

[when] want[ing] to continue [their] career[s] as well (Nora). Lora shared the same idea by stating that *the university courses can be completed in a year*.

In addition, *the UK was considered more attainable ...than the US, Australia and Canada...because it is closer to Oman* (Lora) and subsequently *compared to the US, [...students] need only a 7-hour flight* (Yahiya).

6.2.6 Obligation of Study Abroad

Two interviewees (Yahiya & Talib) found that *[they...had] to study abroad because there [...were] no other options [available] here in Oman[. For example,] there [...was] no PhD program [available] here in Oman [in their sought specialization]* (Yahiya). For further higher education and professional development, some interviewees found themselves obliged to meet *the expectation of the institution where [...they] work[ed]* (Khalil). *They [were] expected to do [...their] degree[s] in a certain number of countries, such as the UK, Australia, Canada and the US* (Khalil). Moreover, some students found themselves personally obliged to study in a certain country due to their inability to meet the sought program's requirements in another counterpart country. In this regard, Talib explained:

The UK was not my first option. I actually did not intend to study in the UK...My plan was to study in the United States. The problem was with my program, as I couldn't find a university offering the same program I was looking for. So, I didn't have much time to look for it. Also, the sponsor was insisting on certain universities, so I didn't have any options...So, I ended up in the UK. Because of the program requirements, I could not go to the US.

This sub-theme states that some students were not open to distinct cultures; they were just obliged to undergo the study-abroad experience. These students were expected to learn less from the experience and to develop the lowest levels of linguistic and intercultural competence.

6.2.7 Summary of Study-Abroad Motives

Based on the qualitative data analysis, the Omani students included in this project studied abroad for a wide range of reasons. Based on their commonality, these reasons in order were professional development, security and comfort zone, expectations and assumptions prior to studying abroad, enjoyment of and excitement about novelty, practicality of the experience, and finally, the obligatory nature of the experience. Although two interviewees showed limited openness to the recent study-abroad experience and had been obliged to undergo it, the first four most reported motives seem to indicate that Omani students had openness to other cultures and people prior to departure and were thus intuitively expected to go further in their development of SEIELU, ICC, and IIF.

However, by looking at the nature of the study-abroad goals set by my interviewed students, it can be noticed that they studied abroad for a mix of cultural and instrumental goals, which made it difficult

to determine that students as individuals approached the experience purely as a means to achieve cultural or instrumental goals. Furthermore, at the goal nature level, it can be noticed that the instrumental goals were more prevailing in my qualitative data than the cultural ones, which included an exposure to the English language, and an opportunity for intercultural interaction with and knowledge of the host culture. The instrumental goals, on the other hand, included, for example, building a better employment opportunity and social reputation, which stemmed from the good reputation of the UK universities and the UK as a country, obtainment of academic qualifications, an opportunity for independence and self-dependence, and tourism. The cultural goals were mentioned 13 times by 7 students (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 10), while the instrumental ones were mentioned 28 times by 9 students (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10). Furthermore, although some Omani students studied abroad for intercultural interactions and for exposure to the English language, these goals seemed to be more set based on positive expectations and assumptions formed around the study-abroad experience. In addition, making the decision to study abroad due to being motivated by others' positive stories of success, the large numbers of Omani students already abroad, the encouragement of close individuals and the expectations of home institutions, and the obligation to undergo the experience indicated that decisions were less self-determined and were more as a response to an external stimulus. The instrumental nature of the bigger number of Omani students' goals and their less self-determined goals may perhaps help explain why the students could not develop greater intercultural competences, according to my quantitative results.

6.3 Omani Students' Reasons for Limited Intercultural Interactions When Abroad

Based on the number of interviewees and OEQ respondents who expressed them, the cultural (15), linguistic (12), personality-related (11), and cognitive (9) reasons, in this order, were the most commonly expressed reasons to not interact while abroad. On the other hand, the emotional (3), communication skills-related (3), educational (6), and family (4) reasons were the least commonly expressed reasons.

In short, the Omani students experienced an accumulation of various reasons that stood as barriers to intercultural interactions. These reasons are presented in order below before being followed with a general summary of these reasons at the end of the section.

6.3.1 Cultural Reasons

The 11 interviewees could not interact meaningfully with the host people abroad for firstly cultural reasons. These reasons, according to their commonality among the 11 interviewees and 15 OEQ respondents, in order, were limited tolerance of cultural differences, and consequently, limitations in motivation to interact, and open-mindedness to the Other as detailed below.

6.3.1.1 Limited Tolerance of Cultural Differences

Nine interviewees (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, & 11), and three OEQ respondents (4, 5 & 10) demonstrated limited tolerance of cultural differences and expressed that *the cultural differences were the main reason for ...[their] limited interactions with ...[local people abroad]* (Dalila). The interviewees did not tolerate especially the *cultural activities that were against [...their] religion, such as drinking alcohol and clubbing (UK-based female respondent 10)* and *food* (Dalila) as well. Aryam added that *it was slightly harder to interact specifically with white English people because of some cultural barriers including lifestyle choices, drinking alcohol, and going out to pubs*. She indicated that *it was a shock to [...her] because there were a lot of white people whom [...she] couldn't get along with [...as] their culture was absolutely different*. The interviewees also explained that *[they] did not interact with them from a social aspect because their way of socializing was [also] very different from [...theirs]* (Ruba). Ruba expressed having *much more meaningful relationships with ...friends and colleagues at work*.

In general, the students *did not enjoy* the places where the cultural gap was large (Lora), and hence found it *very difficult living with them [...the culturally distinct individuals]* (Lora), *difficult to spend a very long time with them* (Dalila), *wouldn't feel comfortable being with [culturally distinct] people* (Aryam) and *...[did] not find it (hanging out with them) interesting* (Talib). In short, most interviewees *[did] not like these cultures* that were different from theirs (Talib). From here, *although [...some interviewees] did befriend some English people, their preference of [the aforementioned] activities stopped [...them] from going out with them and as such, drifting away* (Lora) or at least *to keep... interactions with [...them] at a formal level* (Khalil).

Limited tolerance of cultural differences also appeared in some inner groups' negative reactions to its members' attempts at getting involved with these cultural differences, especially when the cultural gap was large. These negative reactions appeared in the creation and adoption of *wrong images of us [students attempting to step beyond their inner circle]* (UK-based female respondent 5). Zaid also explained, *"Some people [Omani and other Arab colleagues] created bad ideas about me, so I stopped speaking to them [the culturally distinct colleagues]"*. From the examples above, this exaggerated reaction had a negative impact on some individuals, as it went against their desires to experience meaningful interactions with the locals abroad.

Furthermore, several interviewees not only expressed limited tolerance of cultural differences, but they also tended to perceive a mutual limited tolerance of cultural and ethnic differences from some host locals. Inter Sa'ad explained:

I feel seriously that some British colleagues do not want to get along with us as Arabs. They have only their own zone as British. They are somehow distancing themselves. They only approach us for something related to study as we share study space with them. But, for the social life, they don't.

This limited tolerance was also perceived as some host study colleagues were *not welcoming* [...their Arab counterparts'] talk ...in work groups (Omani UK-based female survey respondent 12). Ruba stated, “Of course, it impacted me when you hear ...things like “You are a terrorist, go back to your country!”. Due to this perceived limited tolerance, Lora, for example, felt *racism, discrimination and like a criminal simply because [...she] was Arab*, and subsequently the feeling of *fear of culturally distinct individuals' negative perceptions and reactions* (Omani UK-based male survey respondent 4).

On the other hand, while some interviewees' perception of some host individuals' limited tolerance of cultural and ethnic differences seemed to be based on an experienced fact (Lora), some of these perceptions also seemed to be an overestimation of others' negative behaviours. As a result, some host people's individual *rude* behaviours, as described by Lora and survey respondent 13, another Omani UK-based female, seemed to be misinterpreted as discrimination or racism practised against the Omani and Arab students in general while these *rude* behaviours were only representative of some individuals, which viewed in another way, reflect individual differences in interpersonal communications rather than being necessarily representative of the host culture. Perhaps because of previously accommodated stereotypes, some interviewees seemed unable to differentiate between cultural and individual differences in intercultural interactions. Therefore, some of these perceptions of some counterparts' limited tolerance of cultural differences did not necessarily have a solid basis of truth. This was obvious, as some interviewees most often used speculation when talking about these perceptions. For example, Aryam clearly stated that (speculative statement underlined):

Nothing happened very obviously especially in a university setting, but I think my religion, apparently my hijab, made people look at me and treat me differently. They would make a lot of assumptions about you and your culture. I guess they are more reserved or sensitive towards the hijab.

For another example, Nora stated:

There were of course [unpleasant incidences]. I remember once I was asking one of the people about something, but maybe because we were covered, the person ignored us. Sometimes, non-Muslims don't treat Muslims in a good way.

From the discussion above some interviewees tended to have greater and some others had a more limited tolerance of cultural differences. But, in general, besides their limited tolerance of differences, they also tended to accommodate some negative perceptions and misinterpretations of the counterparts'

negative reactions. Perhaps this was due to the lack of intercultural knowledge and awareness, and previously adopted negative stereotypes about people from other cultures. Such intolerance, as described above, had a negative impact on the interviewees' motivation to interact and open-mindedness to people from other cultures while abroad.

6.3.1.2 Limited motivation to interact

Seven interviewees (1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 9 & 11) and OEQ respondent 9 expressed limited motivation to interact with people of distinct cultures while abroad.

The presence of motivation is essential for intercultural interactions to take place. The interviewees realized that *it [interacting with the Other] is intentional [and subsequently] whether [Omani students] chose to meet Arabs or not, they were there and other people were there, too* (Khalil). Despite the availability of opportunities to interact with the Other at the university through the availability of *tens and hundreds of programs, ...activities, and networks to join if [...one] want[ed] to interact..., a massive number of courses...related to the language, ...culture, and ...interaction* (Yahiya), *we [several Omani students] [...didn't] have the intention and desire to interact with others* (Yahiya) or were *simply not in mood to communicate* (Omani UK-based female survey respondent 9). *[M]ost of [...Omani PhD students as an example] [...didn't] want to interact with others because they actually said they were in need of the PhD* (Yahiya). Sa'ad supported this view by stating, *"[We] are here [simply] to study"*.

Although pressure of academic studies seemed to present a challenge to building meaningful interactions and relationships with locals abroad, on its own it did not stand as the ultimate barrier to a meaningful intercultural engagement. In this regard, Yahiya explained:

I do not think doing my PhD was a barrier to my engagement with people abroad. it is the opposite. It actually encourages me to interact with others because I have to ask and learn from others. I have to attend seminars and workshops. So, it was a means to interact with others.

Lack of motivation was what actually prevented some students from interacting with the Other. Therefore, Yahiya continued:

but it was my fault, not because of my study. I had a lot of time. I spent just 5 to 6 hours in my study. I still have 17 hours. It is about that you should have the desire and a strong intention to encourage you to interact with others.

Yahiya justified his lack of motivation to step forward for meaningful interactions with the Other by stating, *"There [...was] nothing in common between me and them in terms of interest, ... culture [...and] study"*. Some students, therefore, would interact *as long as there was a reason that made us [Omani students and the host locals] interact with each other* (Subhi). They seemed to wait rather than created a reason to interact. In fact, they tended to create reasons and justifications to not interact. This

opportunity seemed to never happen, as according to Yahiya, as an example, *There [...were] no other challenges to interact with others, but...[several students] [...felt] more related to Arabs* for the shared culture, interest and goals. Yahiya confirmed clearly that even *the language [...was] not a challenge [to some students, but again] it [...was] because of the conflicting interests, [and] cultures.*

Finally, while *some [...individuals] were coming from a country where there was no barrier to speak about corruption and things like that, [...some Omani students] did not like talking about these topics because [...they] didn't want to get into trouble with [the government of] Oman* (Zaid) for violating the home country's restrictions regarding the topics of discussion. Zaid went further to explain that *we [Omani students] were told to not go and discuss issues like these with people.*

All in all, the various expressions articulated by 7 out of 11 interviewees, in addition to the survey respondent, indicate that several Omani students had limited motivation to interact with culturally distinct people abroad. They mainly referred this limitation in motivation to cultural differences manifested primarily in the conflicting interests and goals.

6.3.1.3 Limited Open-Mindedness to the Other

In addition to their limitations in tolerance of cultural differences and, consequently, motivation to interact, five interviewees (2, 5, 8, 10 & 11) also expressed limited open-mindedness to the Other.

To begin with, some interviewees would describe...*Omanis and in general...Arabs [as...] more open people than the British people* (Sa'ad). They tended to put the ball in the Other's court by attributing their limited intercultural open-mindedness to their perception of limited open-mindedness from the Other. In this regard, Zaid elaborated upon this by stating that *they [the locals] were not really very open because those people [...thought] that we [...were] very fundamental. We did not like going to these places [such as bars, discos and so on] and sitting with people who were drinking.* English people were in general perceived by some interviewees as being *socially introverted themselves, cautious of contacting (socializing) or communicating with just anyone* (Sa'ad), as they were also *sensitive* (Zaid). Sa'ad explained that *this sometimes prevent[ed] us [several Omani students] or hinder[ed] us from approaching them[; otherwise],* according to Talib, *it is not easy to establish a friendship with them [compared to other international students sharing the same study space as an example]* (Talib) or at least *to establish a good relationship with English people* (Zaid).

According to Zaid, *they [English people] did not want to speak to others [...particularly] Muslim people because ...they [perhaps] had a misconception about Islam...maybe because of the media* (Zaid); *[therefore,] Zaid claimed, whenever you [Omani students] tried to establish a relationship with them, they tried to run away from you.*

Interviewee 5, for example, *found Australians friendlier than English people*. Talib supported this by stating, *“I have found out that what I heard from my friends before I travelled abroad confirmed that the English people are not open to others, like Americans or others.*

Interactions are generally initiated and developed through the roles played by both counterpart parties. Although some Omani students attempted to attribute their inability to experience meaningful relationships with the locals abroad to the locals’ limited open-mindedness to those who were different from them, the impact of their intolerance of cultural differences tended to limit not only their motivation to interact but also their open-mindedness to the Other and cultural differences in general. Therefore, Omani students *should be open-minded to others and should have the intention to interact with others* (Yahiya). Yahiya continued to state that *of course, they [Omani students] [...would] say they want[ed] to interact with others, but ...[several Omani] students ... [were neither] really open-minded, ...[nor] want[ed] to interact with others*. Zaid described how *we [Omani students] are conservative. We are not very open to others and other cultures due to our customs and traditions, so it [our intercultural interaction] [...was] very limited* (Zaid). Zaid clarified that *these customs and traditions are informed by the principle of religion. [...therefore], in Islam, you cannot be very open [in socializing] with ladies [for example]. You cannot, for example, go to public places like bars and things like that ... if you are a good Muslim.*

Several interviewees seemed to have more welcoming interactions for academic purposes in some academic contexts. For example, they were [more] *open to different cultures...before the classes start where we [Omani and other students] talked about different topics..., about ...[Omani] clothes and culture* (Dalila).

6.3.1.4 Summary

Although several interviewees expressed some impressions of openness to other cultures and people prior to their departure abroad, they conveyed a different attitudinal message when they were abroad. They had limited tolerance of cultural differences, which apparently led to limited motivation to interact with and show open-mindedness to the Other.

6.3.2 Linguistic Reasons

Meaningful intercultural interactions became even harder when students, in addition to cultural reasons, also had linguistic reasons to not interact. Ten interviewees (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, &10) and OEQ respondents (1 & 3) cited linguistic reasons for their inability to interact interculturally. The expressed linguistic reasons, in order, were given as limited confidence in speaking the English language, limited

listening and speaking abilities, and finally, limited vocabulary and knowledge of topics under discussion.

6.3.2.1 Limited Confidence in English Language

To begin with, Interviewees 2, 5, 6 and 9, and OEQ respondent 3 demonstrated having limitations in the English language capabilities they had developed in Oman. For example, Sa'ad explained: *I thought my English learnt in Oman was perfect, [but] when I went to England, ...I found that my English was nothing.* Nora also expressed “*Sometimes there were some expressions that we wanted to convey to others, but maybe the limitations in the [English] language could have been a barrier to the communication between us [Omani students and locals abroad]*”. Some interviewees attributed their weakness in the English language to the lack of the meaningful practice and exposure to the language in Oman. For example, Nora explained, *At school, before we were here [abroad], we didn't have to speak English. We were mainly speaking in Arabic, even sometimes with our instructors.*

Due to limited confidence in their English language ability, several interviewees commented that they were *reluctant regarding [...their] ability to communicate with those people [abroad] because of the [weak language] skills* (Zaid).

6.3.2.2 Limited Speaking Abilities

Three interviewees (2, 6 & 8) and an OEQ respondent 1 referred to their limited confidence to their limited speaking skills, saying they lacked *...the ability to speak fluently and socially with others without fear* (Sa'ad). Sa'ad, for example, clarified that he *did not struggle in doing [in-class] presentations [for example] because they were prepared in advance ...and thus speaking was more dependent on memorizing things* (Sa'ad). However, the story was different when it came to a *face-to-face conversation, as [...one] need[s] to get that quick response to some of the questions [and points under discussion] in conversations* (Sa'ad). Yahiya added that he *had to think in Arabic before speaking*. Aryam demonstrated another example of the gap between some Omani students' performance in class and real-life situations by stating:

When they were in Oman, they were just perfect students who [could] understand everything and [...could] express themselves, but then when they came to the UK, they felt their English wasn't good [enough]. The same as me, they weren't able to express themselves and felt...they weren't as smart as other people in class.

Aryam went further to state:

I wasn't able to express myself fully and I would feel a bit as if there was a wall between me and everybody else who [...didn't] speak Arabic. Sometimes I would feel inferior to other people because of my lack of language abilities.

Some of these interviewees and OEQ respondents had trouble with speaking the English language cross-culturally, as they also had *difficulties with the correct English word pronunciation* (UK-based female OEQ respondent 1).

6.3.2.3 Limited Vocabulary and Knowledge of Topics Under Discussion

Moreover, two interviewees (5 & 6) experienced limited vocabulary and knowledge of topics under discussion. Aryam, for example, explained: *I even found it harder to explain the stuff that I understood about [...the topics under discussion] because I didn't have the right vocabulary. Therefore, it was harder to make deep conversations about, for example, politics, sociology, and current issues [in the world]* (Aryam). Experiencing *deep conversations* (Aryam) was also difficult, as besides the limited vocabulary, some students *[didn't] have enough information about [some topics under discussion]* (Zaid), so *[...they] [...did] not want to speak about something which [...they] [...didn't] know about* (Zaid).

6.3.2.4 Limited Listening Abilities

Besides the aforementioned language ability limitations, five interviewees (2, 3, 4, 9 & 10) also discussed having limited listening abilities. Some of them encountered *the difficulty of sometimes understanding the different accents of people abroad* (Lora). This *slightly caused [...them] to keep asking them to repeat the question or their responses* (Lora). Dalila stated, *"It was difficult for us to understand the people who were talking to us when, for example, calling taxis or ordering food from restaurants"*. As a result, some of them tended to perceive some counterparts' limited tolerance of their language limitations in intercultural communications. In this regard, Aryam explained:

I'm not introvert, but people in those countries think that whoever doesn't speak good English is considered illiterate or not well-educated. So, the way they look at you, maybe, makes you feel inferior to them because simply you don't speak English as well as they do.

Due to their limited capabilities in the English language in intercultural contexts, the ten interviewees tended to withdraw to their inner circles due to *being more comfortable and confident to interact with those who speak the same language [the Arabic language]* (Nora).

6.3.2.5 Summary

The linguistic reasons accompanied the cultural reasons for Omani students' inability to experience meaningful interactions with people abroad. These reasons were having limited confidence in using the English language due to limited language skills, the speaking and listening abilities in particular, and limited vocabulary and knowledge of topics under discussion. Such linguistic limitations contributed to my understanding of why Omani students could not develop in ICC, SEIELU, and IIF while abroad.

6.3.3 Personality-Related Reasons

In addition to the previous cultural and linguistic reasons, 4 of the 11 interviewees (2, 4, 5 & 6) and 7 out of the 15 OEQ respondents (2, 6, 7, 8, 11, 14 & 15) expressed some personality-related reasons for interacting less while abroad. Based on their commonality among the participants above, these reasons, in order, were students' shyness regarding their limited English and a fear of the perceived consequences, innate shyness and introversion, and lastly, a fear of intercultural misunderstandings and violation of host culture taboos.

6.3.3.1 Shyness of Incompetent English and Fear of Perceived Consequences

Four interviewees (2, 4, 5 & 6) and two OEQ respondents (11 & 15) showed that they had a shy introvert personality because of their limited English language capabilities. Their shyness also tended to mix with their fear of hearing negative feedback or experiencing negative reactions to their linguistic limitations.

To begin with, Subhi stated “...because of my English, ...I am a bit shy. I should not talk [as] I do not want others to laugh at me”. Sa’ad confirmed this by stating, *I believe we are shy and afraid of committing mistakes in English [...as] people might laugh at us, especially we are not speaking the language. It is not our native language.*

As a consequence, these students tended to feel *worried* (Subhi), *embarrassed about [...their] English language* (male OEQ respondent 11) and *fear of looking like a fool [as well when speaking weak English or committing mistakes] in English* (female OEQ respondent 15). Therefore, they *did not want others to hear [their incompetent English]* (Subhi) or comments, such as “*Oh, look at this guy. He is an English teacher while he is making some pronunciation or some English mistakes*” (Subhi).

While it was possible that some locals abroad may not tolerate engaging in a conversation with incompetent English speakers, it was also possible that several students tended to overestimate the locals' negative reactions to their English language mistakes. Some interviewees *found [many] people on [...their] side* (Zaid). They found them *helpful, supportive, and polite* in pointing out the unfortunate use of the English language (Zaid). Sa’ad added to this by stating that *so many people here [abroad] always encouraged us by saying...your language is brilliant, so good.*

6.3.3.2 Innately Shy and Introvert

While some students tended to refrain from intercultural interactions because of their limited language capabilities and their resultant shyness, fear, and introversion, four OEQ respondents (2, 6, 7 & 8) and one interviewee (2) also explained not interacting with people, whether these people were from other cultures or their culture, because they were innately shy and introvert.

To begin with, Sa'ad described himself as *a shy person*. OEQ female respondent 2 also explained that she experienced limited intercultural interactions due to *the nature of [...her] personality and love of staying alone (introversion)*. They and other students thus *tend[ed] to avoid being around people as much as possible regardless of their cultures* (female OEQ respondent 7). Another Omani female UK-based OEQ respondent 8 pointed out that *[...her] shy personality clashes with [...her] desire to join cultural groups*. Because of this shyness, some interviewees mentioned some hesitations in approaching others. For example, Sa'ad explained:

They have some social teams and groups that help go together. They go out for adventures. There are so many fun things they do that I haven't experienced so far. This is again because we are shy, we really hesitate to approach them and to get in contact with them.

Sa'ad went further to mention that some students appeared *shy as being too polite [as] to not harm people around them*. So, according Sa'ad, *shyness was a kind of showing respect and politeness to others*.

6.3.3.3 Fear of Intercultural Misunderstandings and Violation of Host Culture Taboos

Besides being embarrassed by their incompetent performance in the English language and subsequently being afraid of unexpected negative comments and reactions from others, two interviewees (2 & 6) and female OEQ respondent 14 also expressed having fear of intercultural misunderstandings and of violating the host culture taboos. For example, Omani UK-based female respondent 14 mentioned her *fear of being misunderstood by others due to cultural differences*. Others *[...were] afraid of ...doing something that [...could violate the host culture taboos]* (Sa'ad). Sa'ad went further to explain that *because of [...some students'] less knowledge of [...the host] culture* and subsequently being too *cautious* of the counterpart, they *[...had] hesitations [whether] to interact with them or not* (Sa'ad).

6.3.3.4 Summary

As seen above, because of their shy, introvert, and hesitant personality, some Omani students were unable to interact with the Other while abroad. These personality characteristics were either innate or resultant of the students' incompetent English language capabilities and fear of intercultural misunderstandings and violation of host culture taboos, with the last resulting from the students' limited intercultural knowledge and awareness.

6.3.4 Cognitive Reasons

Nine interviewees (1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10 & 11) also explained cognitive reasons for their limited intercultural interactions. These reasons, according to their commonality among the nine interviewed students, were limited intercultural knowledge and awareness, adoption of negative intercultural stereotypes, and limited knowledge of life management and daily living as detailed below.

6.3.4.1 Limited Intercultural Knowledge and Awareness

Eight interviewees (1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 & 11) expressed limited intercultural knowledge and awareness. They were *not fully aware of the [host] culture, its people (Khalil), [and the] traditions of the [host] country (Ruba)*. As a result, some of these interviewees were less knowledgeable about *how to interact with others (Yahiya)*. Sa'ad provided evidence of this by stating, *"I ... do not know their culture very well[, specifically] how I am going to approach them, what I am going to say, how to do this? How to do that with them? Is that ok? Is that not? Is that acceptable with them [or not]?"*

Because of the insufficient knowledge and awareness of the host culture, some of the interviewees not only *[...found] it [intercultural interaction] a bit challenging [but] the biggest challenge (Sa'ad)*. Aryam demonstrated the importance of intercultural knowledge and awareness in developing more meaningful intercultural interactions and relationships by stating, *"Although some Omani students in the UK graduated from private schools [in Oman] with perfect English and also don't wear Hijab, they don't have English friends here in the UK"*. This example demonstrates that despite its significance, the English language on its own is insufficient to develop meaningful relationships with the Others due to the inadequacy of intercultural knowledge and awareness.

Some interviewees justified their reliance on the expectations they had prior to departure and their limited intercultural knowledge, and they were aware of having insufficient preparation for the study-abroad experience. Khalil, for example, explained that *"knowing what you are going for, knowing what you are going to face, having skills to deal with these challenges and issues would definitely maximize the benefits of ...study abroad"*. He continued:

If authorities in charge of education, plus sponsors decide to increase the level and quality of the input given to students about studying abroad before they travel abroad, this would definitely reduce the chances of students not asking the right people, or not getting the right picture about what they should expect to go through when they travel abroad.

Aryam also added:

If they [officials at Mulhaqiya-Oman Cultural Attaché in London] told us more about the English culture, the university culture and perhaps how to deal with English people, it would have been easier for Omani students to be with them while at the same time sticking with our own values, religion, and culture. That would have been amazing.

Other interviewees suggested *spending time with homestay families [as cultural mediators] for a year or so to know the culture and traditions of the country a bit more (Ruba) or by at least reading about it [study abroad] before ...travel (Talib)*.

6.3.4.2 Negative Intercultural Stereotypes

The interviewees not only explained having developed only limited intercultural knowledge and awareness, but six interviewees (1, 2, 5, 6, 10 & 11) also demonstrated having developed negative stereotypes about the host locals and people from other cultures even before going through the study-abroad experience. They tended to overgeneralize the developed images and assumptions by referring to the culturally distinct people as one group without highlighting the possible differences within the counterpart cultural group. For example, Sa'ad overgeneralized by stating, "*I had in my mind ...that the American people are more sociable than the British ones*". Sa'ad gave another example by stating, "*I feel we, Omanis, have an impression that these [English] people are close. They do not like to talk to others, compared to the Americans*". He also added, "*I heard that they sometimes don't like Arab people..., so we do not have the courage to go and approach them or talk to them*" (Sa'ad).

Most importantly, these stereotypes had no obvious solid self-experienced evidence of truth. In this regard, Sa'ad explained, "*I heard that they sometimes don't like Arab people. But from my experience when I came here, I didn't experience this myself indeed [...]. The impression that I've got at the beginning and after coming here and living with them was different*". Dalila also supported this view by stating, "*When you spend so much time with other people, you get to know them very well...[; therefore,] our negative perspective has changed*".

The interviewees' stereotypes more tended to be *impressions* (Sa'ad), *perspectives* (Dalila) and *rumours* as well (Talib), *heard from ...friends who studied in the UK before and also from friends in the United States* (Talib). These stereotypes stemmed more from generalized speculations. This was obvious in the interviewees' intensive use of "*I guess*" (Aryam), "*I feel*" (Sa'ad), "*we thought*", "*I think*", "*most of us here [in Oman] think*", "*we thought*" (Dalila), "*we assume*" (Khalil) and many more.

Due to the previously held stereotypes, some of the interviewees tended to perceive the negative individual behaviours as deliberate reactions practised against their Arab ethnicity and religion. They were unable to differentiate between the general cultural differences and individual personality differences. For example, Talib explained:

There were wrong stereotypes or something like rumours about the English people, which [...were] false and at some points [it was] true that [English] people were arrogant, but actually people have different personalities.

Therefore, according to Khalil, *a lot of little things [based on misunderstandings] ...might make people stay away from each other*. On the other hand, as conveyed by Sa'ad from the host old English lady, *English people sometimes do not like to get along with Arabs...because of the impression they have got about Arabs in general*. According to Zaid, this impression was there *because of the media owned*

by the state. Zaid explained, “*The media create some wrong conceptions about Muslims...by trying to create a correlation between terrorism and Muslims*”. Therefore, due to Islamophobia, *they [several host locals] do not trust [...] Muslims* (Zaid).

Although there might be people who were *bad or arrogant..., but [definitely] not all people [were so]* (Zaid). Ibid. explained “*I got to know that there were a lot of English people who were very nice and friendly. Even when they saw us on the bus or in supermarkets, they smiled at us*”.

From above, the opportunities of experiencing meaningful interactions with the locals abroad were still available and abundant; however, several students were unable to step forward due to the negative stereotypes and misunderstandings they held about the Other. The limited knowledge of the Other represented by *misconceptions and also the cultural gap between international students and the culture of the [host] country...[...did] play a role in this kind of cultural segregation* (Khalil). This seems to explain that the limited knowledge of the Other and the large cultural gap inflated stereotypes and subsequently increased intercultural group segregation.

6.3.4.3 Limited Knowledge of General Life Management and Daily Living Requirements

In addition to the cognitive limitations above, two interviewees (1 & 7) also demonstrated having limited knowledge of life management and daily living. They had limited knowledge of *even simple things, such as the hygiene and the recycling system as well as the bus system which [...was] among the things that [...were] not easy to understand* (Ruba). Doing all these things with the lack of the necessary information could take a significant amount of students’ time. Therefore, *some students struggle[d] for about 5, 6 and 7 days, and sometimes even more than a week just to get to know how to ...register with an electricity company [as an example]* (Khalil).

Again, the interviewees attributed this issue to the inadequate preparation for the study-abroad experience. For example, Khalil explained:

It would be a good idea for students’ associations...from Oman or other countries to prepare booklets ...[to] explain what you need to do about these different daily life aspects, so you get to know about these things before you even travel [...]. When you are there, you are fully aware or at least you are aware to a great extent of what you are supposed to do there.

6.3.4.4 Summary

From above, several Omani students had a limited ability to interact with people abroad for cognitive reasons. These reasons in order were limited intercultural knowledge and awareness, adoption of negative intercultural stereotypes, and limited knowledge of life management and daily living. These reasons tended to reduce the frequency and quality of Omani students’ intercultural interactions and, subsequently, their intercultural and linguistics returns.

6.3.5 Educational Reasons

In addition to the aforementioned most frequently reported reasons to not interact, there were other reasons, which though less common, contributed to students' limited interactions with people abroad. Among these were the educational circumstances as reported by six interviewees (1, 3, 4, 5, 9 & 10). The educational circumstances or reasons, in order, were study commitments and time restrictions, limited research knowledge and incompatible learning skills, and finally, limited awareness of the host educational system.

6.3.5.1 Study Commitments and Time Restrictions

The first educational reasons that helped reduce the intercultural interactions of the six interviewees (1, 3, 4, 5, 9 & 10) were the study commitments and time restrictions. As a result, they commented that *it [their recent study-abroad experience] wasn't at this level of enrichment ...because [of] ...educational and family commitments* (Khalil). Khalil explained the educational commitments by stating:

You, as a PhD student, were expected to spend at least eight to nine hours on a daily basis working on your PhD, and one of the major issues [besides] was that the majority, if not all, of students there in that program were Arab PhD students. They had this huge educational load on them.

The other interviewees supported this view by stating, *"It was a master's degree, so we were busy most of the time. Hence, we were spending most of our time inside the flat (Dalila), or in the library doing our work (Nora). Subhi went further to state, "I sometimes have to spend all my day at the library or in my room, just doing my assignments". As stated by Nora, so we [students] did not have that kind of [intercultural] interaction except when it [...was] actually related to our studies.*

Even when some of these Omani students interacted with other students for study purposes, the incompatible academic performances tended to reduce these interactions, especially with the time restrictions. Nora explained:

[Besides the lack of] trust and being comfortable and confident to interact with those who speak the same language...I [also] interacted less with people [students] from other cultures [because] they [did not] have the same educational level [academic performance] [...]. For example, there were so many Chinese students there, and Chinese students were a bit intelligent, but [also] a bit slower learners. So, perhaps that could be one of the educational differences [incompatible academic performances].

Dalila added, *"They [Chinese friends] were hardworking, but at the same time, they liked to postpone things, so we avoided working with them [... and] it was difficult for them to understand [the task requirements in the same way].*

6.3.5.2 Limited Research Knowledge and Incompatible Learning Skills

The study commitments tended to increase as four of the interviewed students (1, 3, 5 & 10) showed limited research knowledge and incompatible learning skills, which had a negative impact on their intercultural interactions and could possibly result in the absence of development in ICC, SEIELU, and IIF

These interviewees explained that they were not trained enough with regard to *issues related to how to do a PhD, how to, for example, do a literature review, how to write a methodology chapter, how to use research tools such as SPSS, referencing tools and so on* (Khalil). Zaid also added that “[he] wasn’t trained for critical reading at the beginning and technology as well”.

The differing incompatible educational systems raised the level of the educational challenge. Zaid explained:

It was really a big challenge for me because I wasn’t used to the system in England. I used to be lectured here [in Oman]. Even the lecturers are different. There is a communication barrier. The education is different. The assessment is different ...[and] the criteria of evaluation are different.

Hence, these students *struggle[d] to adjust to a heavy curriculum unlike what [...they were] used to in Oman* (Lora). According to Khalil:

Students, in fact, struggle[d] in the first two years just to know and learn these things, especially the ones who [...were] being abroad for the first time, and especially in cities where there [...were] no others from the same country who would ...help them.

The level of this challenge even tended to rise when students did not get enough support with regard to developing the necessary research and learning skills to cope with the educational challenges they encountered. Zaid explained:

Although it is said that when you study abroad, you will get much support and everyone will be with you, it is really not true. [...] Most of the time you are working independently, and sometimes you feel that you are alone trying to cope with the [educational] challenges you are facing.

Some of these students tended to dedicate a lot of their time in their studies for developing the necessary skills and meeting study deadlines, as students were also expected to accomplish this development and complete their studies abroad within a certain period of time. Therefore, *time management [...was] one of the problems we [some Omani students abroad] [...were] facing* (Zaid). According to Zaid, *most of the students [...got] extension because they couldn’t manage the time though*

[...they were] spending many hours in study. He went on further to state, “It was a big challenge because whenever I planned for something, I could not achieve it as planned”.

Therefore, according to Khalil, *if students [...were] fully aware of research skills and research philosophy [for example], they would definitely have more time to focus on their subject areas, and they would have time to probably attend gatherings and educational events. Moreover, as Khalil continued, [t]hey would have time also to explore the country, to get to know about the regulations there, to focus on successful experiences, whether these experiences [...were] educational, or related to management, business and so on.*

Ultimately, to these students, *“They [the educational challenges] [...were] some of the reasons that encouraged [...them] to interact with [...their] close friends (Dalila) to overcome these educational challenges resulting from their limited research knowledge and learning skills. According to Khalil, more knowledgeable and fast-learning students [...were] expected to support other students from their country and even from the neighbouring [Arab] countries. To Khalil, these [expectations] were other additional commitments that would add to the time of you being busy and would reduce the time of you probably focusing on other issues or other interactions.*

6.3.5.3 Limited Awareness of the Host Educational System

Besides the limited research knowledge and learning skills, two out of the six interviewees who encountered educational challenges (1 & 5) also had limited awareness of the host educational system. They complained that they did not have *a clear picture of what [...was] going on in these universities abroad (Zaid). Zaid also explained:*

our government is very generous in sending us to study abroad and providing us with enough budget to live abroad, but at the same time, they do not give us enough information about these universities and their systems.

From the example above, the government of the sending country (Oman) was *generous (Zaid)* at the level of student services (e.g., the monthly allowance, air tickets, health insurance, tuition fee payment and so on) but not at the level of intercultural preparation. Therefore, *students [were less] aware of what they [were] going to face there [...], how to deal and interact with ...supervisors and the university, and ...a lot of students [...were] not aware of their rights [and] obligations...when they [...were] abroad (Khalil).* Khalil gave an example of these rights by stating that *several students were not even aware that they were entitled to get some money allocated to attend conferences, to present and so on.* According to Khalil:

This [being aware of the host educational system] would definitely reduce the time they [Omani students] spend on these issues and give them more time to interact with the culture and people

there, and to focus on things that would really add to their language, knowledge, experience and so on.

6.3.5.4 Summary

Several Omani study-abroad students tended to encounter different educational challenges when they attended their universities abroad. The level of the educational challenge had a tendency to increase in response to the large gap between the two incompatible educational systems abroad and in Oman, and more importantly, the students' study commitments and time restrictions. Usually, these study commitments increased, as students also had limited research knowledge and incompatible learning skills, as well as only limited awareness of the host education system. This challenge had made it difficult for several Omani students to spare sufficient time for building meaningful interactions with the locals and even other people from other cultures except for some interactions for academic purposes, and even these learning interactions tended to reduce in frequency and quality when both counterparts' learning performances tended to become incompatible.

6.3.6 Family Reasons

Four interviewed students (1, 2, 4 & 7) explained that family commitments and responsibilities were among the other barriers to meaningful exposure to the host culture and interactions with the Other, especially when the family was fully dependent on the student in easing their living while abroad. To begin with, Sa'ad stated, *"I really want to join and get more engaged with ... lots of activities and tasks to do outdoors and sometimes indoors, but one of the challenges that we've got ... is having a family in here.* He continued that *sometimes this would hinder and prevent you from doing all these activities because you have some responsibilities as well to your family.* Subhi supported this by stating, *"When you ... have a family with you, it becomes a bit hard to spend time with others [...]. It is unlike when you are single. [...] I couldn't do what I had used to do before [travelling with a family...]"*. Khalil also confirmed:

when I first came to the UK to do a language course, I was alone. I didn't have commitments at that time. Therefore, the opportunities to meet others and to mingle with locals were much better. But with family commitments, it was a bit difficult to be committed to meet others.

In general, because of travelling with their families, *there were fewer opportunities [for several Omani parent students] to meet people from other cultures. [...except] at the university, during the university time, at the library, and during the daytime (Subhi). After the hours ...spent on the campus, [...several students were] busy with their families, ...travelling around..., looking after the house..., and finishing things that [...they] didn't have time to do during the working days (Khalil).* Khalil explained

that parents were expected to drop their kids at school, ...pick them up from school, ...and then help with their homework to make sure that they were on the right track. He added that kids were [also] uprooted from their home culture to a new culture, so several kids were in a way in [a] cultural shock. They thus needed a lot of support from their parents to overcome that challenge. He continued, *You, as a parent, are responsible for creating a good environment for your kids, to look after and help your kids.* As stated by Khalil, *kids did determine the nature of the gatherings that the family used to attend.* Therefore, through children's school and social activities, some parent students could attend intercultural events and gatherings and also had some interaction with the locals and other people from other cultures when dropping off and picking up their school children although these interactions, according to Khalil, *lack[ed] depth.*

In conclusion, although several Omani parent students explained being committed to family responsibilities, especially when the accompanying family members were fully dependent on these students in running their life abroad, and these responsibilities seemed to reduce their intercultural interactions, these family commitments and responsibilities did not seem to be the main reason for the parent students not interacting with the Other, as Omani school children were apparently a means to help their parent students interact with other people through school and other social activities, for example. However, other reasons, such as the cultural and linguistic ones or personality-related reasons, appeared to be the main reasons why several parent students could not interact meaningfully while abroad.

6.3.7 Emotional Reasons

The other quality that individuals should have is the control and restoration of their negative emotions resulting from experiencing unpleasant incidences in intercultural contexts for the sake of building meaningful interactions with the Other and subsequently gaining language and intercultural competence development. However, three interviewees (1, 6 & 7) showed limited control and regulation of their negative emotions in intercultural contexts. For example, Aryam explained:

They [the unpleasant intercultural incidences] definitely affected me, but I [...tried] to overcome [or] ...just...ignore them because of how I saw, specifically white people, how they were a bit conservative and sensitive when it came to someone wearing Hijab [or] ...from a different colour or race.

After several attempts at controlling the negative emotions resulting from some unpleasant incidents, Aryam, for example, lost control over her negative emotions by stating:

I would just be blunt to people. I would just say ...very clearly that my Hijab is none of their business, and if they treated me in this way because of my Hijab, then I would just make them feel bad for commenting or treating me differently because of the way I look.

Consequently, she explained, *“I would just try to avoid people including the white British people [as] I am just tired of trying to justify myself to them.* She continued:

Why [do] I care about interacting with those people or even trying to be friends with them? I’d rather be with my other international friends who don’t have these assumptions or just [with] my Muslim friends who are from different cultures, like British Muslim friends.

On the other hand, some other interviewees demonstrated an ability to control these emotions by giving a justification to do so. For example, Khalil stated, *“I didn’t like those incidents when they occurred, but after a while, I just took them lightly. I just considered them as being representative of the individuals who did them”*. Khalil justified this by stating that *“these are people. You’d definitely meet the same people in your home country, who would just think badly about you”*. Ruba also explained:

It affected me when you hear the odd comment of things like ‘You’re a terrorist! Go back to your country’, [and] things like that...., but I don’t think that bothered me too much because the majority of people are quite accepting of my culture and my religion. [...] it comes from a small number of people.

As individuals in control of their emotional reactions, they should step forward to have meaningful interactions with their counterparts. However, although Khalil and Ruba seemed to have better control over their emotional reactions, their intercultural interactions, along with the interactions of those of who could not regulate their negative emotions, tended to be limited in both frequency and quality as will be described in the section on behavioural reasons. Khalil and Ruba reported other reasons for not interacting, such as the cultural, linguistic, and personality-related reasons. After all, the limited ability to control and then regulate emotions contributed to the explanation of why Omani students, though few, could not experience a greater linguistic and intercultural competence development while abroad.

6.3.8 Communication Skills-Related Reasons

Besides the English language communication skills, individuals should also have the skills that help build meaningful interactions with the Other. These skills should include how to start a conversation, showing interest in having a conversation, using jokes as a means to talk with the Other, smiling, asking questions to show interest and so on.

Some interviewees, though only few are reported here, did have an interest in talking with people from other cultures. For example, Zaid explained, *“Whenever I meet some people, I try to establish a topic to speak about, particularly about the weather. So, I start from this, and then we start to speak, particularly when I go to the X-café”*.

Sa’ad gave another example of showing interest to interact with people who were culturally closer to Omani students than the host locals were. He stated that *“The majority of students in here were*

Chinese. They have their own culture [...and] way of doing things, [so] I asked them, How would you do that? Is that good in your culture?

Asking questions (Sa'ad) was a means for some interviewees to communicate cross-culturally especially with those individuals around them due to their large numbers in the shared context, such as the Chinese students and those coming from cultures closer to that of the interviewees. Since the interviewees' interactions were more limited to counterparts from their own or closer cultural backgrounds, they got to know more about the cultures of these counterparts and less about the English locals' culture.

Moreover, some interviewees tended to act more as listeners than as meaning negotiators as they were *conservative*, so *[...did] not like to speak about some of the topics under discussion* (Zaid). *Listening to others* emerged as a way of *knowing about others* (Zaid).

Furthermore, due to the differing cultural *preferences of ...activities[, lifestyles, drinks and foods, for example,]* (Lora), some interviewees developed interaction escape and avoidance skills as a way of *drifting away ...from going out with them* (Lora), though, according to Zaid, *rejecting* invitations was done in a *very polite and diplomatic way to not embarrass them*.

Some interviewees expressed awareness of their limited communication skills; therefore, they urged *the Ministry of Higher Education and those who [...were] sponsoring [...them] to support them to live with others and help them develop some communication skills to communicate with others, what [...were] the things they [...could] do with others and life skills* (Zaid).

In brief, although some Omani students showed interest in conversational exchange with the Other, they seemed to more restrict their discussions and subsequently the use of communication skills (e.g., asking questions) with people around them in the study space mainly because of their large numbers and focused especially on those who were culturally closer to them. Due to the limited scope of communication skill use and the preference for interactions with those who were culturally closer, students tended to develop better knowledge and awareness of the cultures that had a smaller gap between their culture and Omani culture, and evidently had limited cognition of the host nationals' culture where the cultural differences were larger as explained in the section on study-abroad outcomes.

6.3.9 Behavioural Reasons

All the 11 interviewed students unanimously expressed evident incompetent communication behaviours while abroad, which directly explained the absence of measurable development in ICC, SEIELU, and IIF while abroad. The students' incompetent behaviours emerged as limited interaction initiatives as well as limited frequency, depth, and breadth of intercultural interactions. The incompetent

behaviours were a result of the previously mentioned cultural, linguistic, personality, and cognitive reasons in the first place as well as the educational, family, emotional, and communication skills-related reasons.

6.3.9.1 Limited Intercultural Interaction Initiatives

Two interviewees (1 & 2) demonstrated limited intercultural interaction initiatives. Although *both parties should interact...it is ...more on the part of the international students...[as] they should be the ones who initiate interactions with the locals* (Khalil). As I mentioned in a previous section, some students tended to wait rather than to create an opportunity for interactions. Sa'ad mentioned, "*I could have joined in, interacted and engaged more [, but] I really feel regret because I didn't*".

6.3.9.2 Limited Frequency and Depth of Intercultural Encounters

Ten interviewees (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11) explained that they had limited frequency and, more importantly, depth in their frequently experienced intercultural interactions.

The interviewees' intercultural interactions tended to take place at *school* during the drop-off and pick-up of their children, *birthday parties arranged by classmates' families and school events, in the house* when fixing some problems with the property, *at the estate agent, with neighbours ...on [the] way out of...flats, at the restaurants where they work* (Khalil), *coffee shops* (Subhi), *at shops, in the bus, and on campus* (Khalil). Dalila mentioned that her interactions and those of her friend, Nora, were *most of the time inside the classrooms and when [...they] had a break outside the classroom*. Nora supported this by stating that her interactions were in general *during the breaks, before the class time, and during the lectures as sometimes [...they, as students,] had to work in groups where [...they] talked about issues related to study and so on* (Nora). Students also had opportunities to interact with the Other when *going shopping, asking for a taxi for a ride from one place to another* (Nora & Dalila) or in their *shared houses* (Subhi). It can be understood from the list of places where Omani students tended to interact, their intercultural interactions were more initiated for an instrumental motivation to obtain a service.

These interactions tended to be limited in frequency and, more importantly, depth. With regard to their frequency, the interviewees tended to interact with the host locals *once every two or three weeks* (Sa'ad), *probably twice a week* (Zaid), *maybe once or twice a week* (Yahiya), or even *once a month* (Ruba). Khalil added, "*As parents [from different cultural backgrounds], we used to promise each other to get in touch after the event, but, to be honest, the only time that we met again was at a new event, like kids' events and birthday parties*". Subhi also supported by stating:

I moved to a shared house. In that shared house, there were seven students from different countries (Oman, Taiwan, Germany, Poland, and England). Though we were all staying in one house, there wasn't much interaction between us.

Although some students tended to *spend about two or three hours together* (Talib) with their local colleagues, they used to *meet [only] once or twice a month* (Talib). The majority of interviewees' intercultural interactions obviously tended to decline particularly with the *white* English locals. Yahiya stated, "*I didn't have any interaction with English people maybe except with two cases. I [...had] a friend from the UK. He was a colleague actually. I sometimes had some interaction with him, and that was a normal interaction with people from the UK*". Similarly, Khalil stated:

I think I did interact a lot with people from other cultures...[but] I didn't really have the right level of interaction with the British people there, with the locals [...]. I did interact a lot with people from Asian cultures...[and] Mediterranean cultures [as well as] from North America ..., Brazil and Argentina.

Zaid mentioned, "*Though I [...had] many friends in England, ...the relationship [...was] limited*". The frequency of intercultural interactions tended to reduce as students moved away from the university campus, and they would concentrate their interactions with Arab and Muslim individuals. For example, Dalila mentioned:

For the other Arab friends...we started spending too much time with them. Sometimes, we had dinner together. Sometimes, we had lunch together. Sometimes even ...we spent the whole weekend together trying to go to different parts of the UK.

Although some students did have a high frequency of interactions with the locals, these interactions, in fact, tended to lack depth. Khalil mentioned:

When I was there, I used to get in touch with locals on a daily basis, but the issue wasn't really [with] the frequency of getting in touch with these people. It [the issue] was [with] the depth of getting on with these people because most of the conversations were actually casual conversations which didn't really last for a long time.

Khalil confirmed, "*I did interact with English people on a daily basis at shops, in the bus and on campus, but the depth of the encounters was low. It wasn't really up to my expectations*". Zaid also explained "*...when going shopping, I tried a little bit to speak with others, though it was very limited*". In general, although some interviewees *had chances to talk to some British people...about different issues..., the depth was not really there* (Khalil). Khalil frequently confirmed that "*the conversation lacked the depth. It was like casual conversations here and there. The encounters were quick* (Khalil). The conversation or the meeting would last for about *10 to 20 minutes* (Yahiya), *half an hour [to] 40 minutes* (Khalil), *one hour* (Subhi) or even *one hour a week* (Zaid). And *most of the conversation would be too formal* (Khalil). Sa'ad added, "*We talk[ed] about something very general*". Nora and Dalila also supported this by stating, "*We need[ed] to contact these people in their language which [...was], of*

course, English, and we talk[ed], of course, about things in general [. This is] because we didn't have a very close relationship with them”.

In conclusion, the Omani students did interact with the Other while abroad; however, their interactions were very limited in frequency and, most importantly, quality. Based on the list of places of interaction, their frequent intercultural encounters tended to take an instrumental motivation tendency to achieve the goal of obtaining a service more than to actually build meaningful relationships with the locals abroad.

6.3.9.3 Limited Breadth in Intercultural Interaction Contexts

Besides the limitation in the interaction frequency and quality, ten interviewees (1,3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11) also experienced limited breadth in the contexts of interactions due to their limited flexibility with different cultural groups and their adaptability to different intercultural interaction contexts.

The interviewees unanimously explained that *since [...they] [...were] studying together with different people from different cultures [and] spending most of [...their] time on campus, most of the [their intercultural] interaction [...was] inside the university* (Dalila). *It [...was] easier to just meet up on campus* (Aryam), as the university campus and academic courses helped bring students from different national cultures to one place and thus the opportunities to interact interculturally were made available and possible to Omani students and those from other countries and cultures. Subhi explained, “*My interaction in the first month of study abroad was all with people from other countries because I took a pre-sessional English language course where I had the opportunity to meet classmates from different countries”.*

More importantly, Omani and other students had a mutual shared academic reason to interact among themselves mainly *for studying together...at the library or somewhere else at the university* (Aryam), as well as *to exchange knowledge about research and [...their] studies* (Yahiya). Aryam added, “*On campus, we studied there, we did our own work, and then we got to see each other at the same time, talking during breaks and then went again to lectures. [...]* It is the student lifestyle as Aryam described. Dalila went further to explain, “*We were mostly communicating with these people only ...inside the classroom or going to the library to finish our work, so sometimes we met each other there, but [unfortunately] it [...was] not for a very long time.* Subhi similarly explained, “*My interactions with them [students from other national cultures] [...were] just during the class period, and when discussing or working on a project together”.*

On the other hand, the interviewees tended to prefer spending time with their Omani and Arab colleagues when the opportunity was available. Dalila explained, “*To be honest, because we [three*

Omani female students] had the same course...we were in the same classes, so we were spending most of our time together". She confirmed this further by stating:

We were communicating with them [other students]. We were working in groups together [..., especially] our teachers there when making groups...focused on mixing people from different cultures. [...] But when it comes to outside the classroom, ...we contacted them, as she (Nora) said, when we wanted them to understand something for an assignment and so on. [...] Otherwise, we spent most of our time outside the classroom with other Omani friends and the friends from other Gulf countries.

The frequency of the interviewees' intercultural interactions evidently decreased off the campus of study. Nora explained:

Inside the university, we met mates from different countries. [...] But when we were outside, we usually spent our time with our friends from Gulf countries, like Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia. Some of them were from Oman as well.

Yahiya supported this by stating, *"Most of my interaction was inside the university. Outside the university, I spend most of the time with my family, and with Arab and Omani friends".* Yahiya explained the intercultural interactions off campus by stating, *"Most of the time, we interacted [with the Other] in the shops [and] restaurants with few interactions".*

In general, the interviewees' intercultural interactions off campus were *mostly limited to encounters at restaurants, invitations to parties (Khalil), supermarkets and small shops (Subhi), barbers' (Zaid) and hotels because [...of] travelling from one place to another (Dalila).* Talib added, *"Sometimes, we [Omani students] met English people at conferences, seminars, lectures, sometimes on the street, and some people I've met on the train".*

The interviewees seemed to be unable to have *this kind of meaningful interaction (Talib)* with white English students even when sharing the same study space. Talib justified this by stating that *"We [different students] didn't have any connection [any commonalities]"*.

Some of the interviewees got opportunities to engage with individuals of *minorities (Aryam)* mainly coming from the same or similar cultural and Islamic background. Aryam explained:

I also [...had] a lot of British friends from ethnic minorities who [...were] originally Pakistani, Indian, Iranian, Afghani, [and] Arabs [as well as from] African origins, from different minority backgrounds. Most of my friends [...were] not white.

Aryam also added, *"I joined some societies [such as the Islamic Society and Pakistani Society] that [...had] closer cultural interactions [relationships] with my culture".* Similarly, Khalil stated, *"I had lots of conversations with British people who were originally from other cultural backgrounds".*

These interactions tended to reduce as the cultural and religious gap enlarged and when students experienced more academic pressures. Khalil explained:

We had a lot of gatherings with Arabs there and Omanis. This was very true, to be honest with you, to most Omani and Arab students there. There were also other students from Turkey and Iran. There were other [Muslim] students with who we used to get together a lot. This, as I saw it, was common to most of the [Arab] students at the college.

With regard to the academic pressures, Khalil explained, “*In the first three years, I did interact a lot with people from other cultural backgrounds, but in my final two years, I interacted more with Arabs, mainly with Omanis*”. The interviewees unanimously stated that they spent *most of [...their] time ...with Arabs, compared with people from other cultures* (Subhi). Although the interviewees did have some interactions with people from other Arab countries, they were *heavily involved with Omanis* in the first place (Ruba). Ruba explained that “*there [...was] definitely a pattern that Omanis stick with Omanis, and they usually don’t interact with many other people. That’s the long and short of it*”.

With regard to interactions with individuals other than the white English individuals, the interviewees tended to interact more with students coming from *Southeast Asia* (Ruba), *such as the Philippines, Korea* (Ruba), and *China* (Sa’ad). Compared with the *white* English local students, *it was slightly easier [for several Omani students] to make better friendships with international students such as Asian, Black, and Latin people and even those coming from other European countries and the U.S.* (Aryam). Aryam justified this by stating it was “*because we were all international students living in a different country*”.

The major surprise was that some interviewees referred to cultures by countries, so they referred to different Arab countries as other different cultures. For example, Nora and Dalila tended to refer to students from other Arabian Gulf countries as students from other cultures. Subhi also asked, “*Can we consider ...Arabs from other countries [...as individuals coming from] different cultures, or would you consider them as [from] one culture?*” In the same line, Khalil stated, “*It might have to do with the way we define ...other cultures*”. It was obvious that some interviewees, when talking about interacting with people from other cultures, actually interacted with individuals from Arab cultural and Islamic countries, particularly from the Arabian Gulf countries.

Moreover, although some of the interviewees stated they had friends from other cultures, these individuals were actually more like colleagues due to the limited interaction frequency, engagement, and flexibility as well as limited context adaptability. The conversations were also *formal* and *general*. For example, Talib explained, “*You cannot say that people in your class are your friends...I should call them ‘colleagues’ because there is nothing in common. Most of our meetings are formal*”. He continued, “*I*

cannot find this kind of emotion that I want to be a friend with them and then spend hours [with them] talking about different stuff". Ruba supported this by stating, "Some of them would be colleagues, as we usually meet at hospital events. The extent of our interaction probably takes place at dinner or at a restaurant that's organized by the department". She continued, "In terms of friends, I would usually feel comfortable inviting them to my house rather than going to someone else's house, ...a restaurant or to a park".

6.3.9.4 Higher Frequency of Inner Circle Interactions

The same reasons that limited the Omani students' interactions with people from other cultures and host locals in particular also encouraged them to interact more within their inner-group circle along with other additional reasons as reported below by eight interviewees (1, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11). These reasons included the comfort zone created by the large numbers of Arabs abroad, and subsequently cultural commonalities. The inner-group also tended to provide various educational, everyday life, and emotional supports and feeling of security as explained below.

6.3.9.4.1 A Comfort Zone

These students stated unanimously that their inner-circle interactions were *overwhelmingly* higher than their interactions outside this circle due to the comfort zone created by the large numbers of Omani and Arab individuals abroad and subsequently living within the shared cultural similarities away from the complexity of intercultural interactions triggered by cultural differences. Yahiya stated:

Most of my interaction is with Omanis and Arabs...because we have something in common. We have the same culture, the same language, even [...the same] food and goals. We share the same interest. [thus,] I feel closer to Omanis and Arabs.

Talib supported this view by stating, *"We have interacted with Arabs because we share the same culture, the same principles"*.

According to Aryam, the shared cultural similarities made it much *easier* to interact with individuals coming from the same or even a similar culture. Because of this comfort, *Omani students [...were] all the time together with each other.[...] They wouldn't come out of their comfort zone to go and be friends with other non-Omani and non-Arab people* (Aryam). Furthermore, more inner-group engagements took place due to the students' limited knowledge and awareness of the host culture and its people. In this regard, Subhi commented, *"When you go abroad, you still don't know the other cultures. [So,] when people come here..., they usually like to stay within their own groups"*.

On the other hand, *sometimes it [the concentration of interactions within the inner-circle] wasn't [necessarily] because of religious or language issues, but because in my workplace I used to have lots*

of friends ...from the same nationality (Khalil). Regardless of the discomfort created by cultural differences, the larger numbers of Omani and Arabs than those of other students, English students in particular, on the same course and in the same department increased the chances of interaction within the inner-circle compared to the outer-circle. Khalil explained:

I think this [the concentration of interactions within the inner-circle] was expected and ...a bit normal. [...This is as] the overwhelming majority of the students at the college were from Arab countries ...and even at the study hub, the majority were Arab students.

Khalil repeatedly mentioned that *it [the cause] was honestly [that] the percentage of the Omani and other Arab students was really high*. He continued, “*They were a huge support most of the time to me, but at the same time the chance of meeting ...the British students and people from other cultures was not really very high*”. This is as “*The number of British students was not really high in my program itself*” (Khalil).

6.3.9.4.2 An Educational Support

Besides the comfort zone made by the existence of large numbers of Omani and other Arab students abroad and subsequently staying within cultural similarities, the interviewees also tended to stay within their inner-circle groups for the sake of getting an educational support to overcome the educational challenges experienced in the host educational environment. Nora stated:

My very close friends were Omani..., who went with me to study abroad. We were all living in the same flat, sharing everything together [...]. If we [...had] questions and inquiries about our studies or whatever, we were always there to support and help each other.

6.3.9.4.3 An Everyday Life Support

Getting everyday life support was a reason to stay within the inner-circle. According to Khalil, this was:

because students, in fact, struggle[d] for the first two years just to get to know these things [learning skill development and awareness of the host educational system], especially for the ones... being abroad for the first time, and especially in cities where there [...were] no others from the same country who would definitely support them.

He mentioned another example by stating:

being with students from the same country or ...neighbouring countries of the same culture was not really a bad thing [...]. It did have its benefits. For example, the students who were [especially] there for the first time got a lot of help from these students. They tried to make their life much easier there,[...as] they provided a lot of support to them.

Ruba added, “*Having a good group of friends from Oman [...was] extremely important because by the end of the day, Omanis [...would] help Omanis*”. She further explained:

When you try to stay away from the group of Omanis, you always end up having more problems when it comes to other studies or interpersonal relationships or social relationships compared to us who stayed together.

6.3.9.4.4 An Emotional Support and Security

Finally, some other interviewees stayed together with their Omani colleagues also for emotional support and security. Taking Nora, as an example, she mentioned that staying within her intracultural group was beneficial as “[staying with] [...her] close friends...would make [...her] psychologically and emotionally secure and comfortable”. She added, “That would actually encourage me to do my best in my studies and so on”. She continued, “Sometimes people around you make the experience even better, so being with my close friends... made it a smooth comfortable experience”. Aryam also supported this by stating, “I think I would have wanted to be closer to my Omani friends [...]. I think that would have improved my mental health, my self-esteem and all that”. Dalila also explained, “I was worried because it was the first time for me to travel alone without a family [...], but then when I knew that there [would be] somebody whom I knew [...would] be with me, I felt some inner security”.

6.3.10 Summary

After all, the existence of all the various but interrelated cultural, linguistic, personality, cognitive, educational, family, emotional, and communication skills-related reasons resulted in the development of limited intercultural communication behaviours. The Omani students tended to play passive roles in their intercultural experiences abroad as indicated by the limitations in interaction initiatives, and the frequency, scope, and, more importantly, quality of their interactions. They achieved a higher frequency of interactions within their inner-circle groups for their comfort zone as well as for educational, everyday life and emotional support and security. These different reasons and their resultant poor communicative competence no doubt explained why the study-abroad did not lead to measurable changes in the Omani students’ ICC, SEIELU, and IIF or why the Omani students were not able to achieve determinable development in the aforementioned aspects beyond those levels developed at home. The next section will highlight the benefits of study abroad as reported by the 11 interviewees.

6.4 Study-Abroad Outcomes

As explained in the previous sections, Omani students developed limited inputs into their intercultural experience abroad and subsequently tended to play passive intercultural roles while abroad. Although being abroad, the Omani students’ meaningful interactions were concentrated among themselves and other Arabs in general, and their interactions tended to be largely similar to those in Oman. Hence, the Omani students were unable to develop their SEIELU, ICC, and IIF while abroad.

Specifically, the 11 interviewed students' statements of study-abroad benefits ranged from frank declarations of no perceived benefits to very limited improvements in the linguistic and intercultural competences. Students tended to perceive more the development of professional and research skills as well as enjoyment and some personal development.

6.4.1 No Perceived Improvements

Three students frankly declared they did not perceive or were unsure if there was any linguistic and intercultural competence improvement due to studying abroad. Ruba stated, *"I think it's healthy as well to see people from other cultures[;otherwise,] there's just zero point coming to a different country"*. She added, *"You [Omani students] could have just stayed in Oman. [Coming here] probably would not have made any difference"*. Along the same lines, Subhi stated, *"Studying at a university where there are a lot of other Arabs and Omanis means [...makes] no difference between studying here in Oman and studying abroad."* He questioned, *"What's the [learning] difference if I'm staying with Omanis and Arabs, living in the same house and going out together?"*

Talib summed it up by stating, *"Studying in the UK did not add anything to my knowledge or my skills, to be honest"*. He added, *"The same thing, the same language. What I carried from Oman to the UK remained the same"*. On the one hand, Khalil stated, *"I'm not really sure whether I improved or I didn't improve. I'm not really sure of this issue"*. After all, it was not surprising for an employer in Oman, as quoted from Aryam, to end[...] up recruiting Omani students who had studied in Oman, instead of those who had stud[ied] abroad. According to this employer:

Studying abroad doesn't make any difference for a lot of applicants since many of those applicants who had studied abroad did not have good results [grades], and they [...didn't] have as much knowledge, experience, and skills as those who had studied in Oman (Aryam).

She continued that *"[...this employer] was surprised this happens even though people have more opportunities abroad"*. This can be understood more after going through the limited study-abroad outcomes presented below.

6.4.2 Limited English Language Improvement

Linguistically, only 1 out of the 11 interviewees stated that *by being abroad he improved a lot [and] there [...was] a huge improvement [...in the English language]* (Sa'ad). Despite this exceptional statement, the English language benefits gained by seven interviewees (1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8 & 10), including those of Sa'ad, while abroad were limited.

Khalil sceptically asked, “*Regarding English, when you talk to Arab students, what kind of improvements would you get out of conversations in Arabic?*” Ruba also stated, “*I think that my level of English probably stayed pretty much the same*”. Yahiya justified that, saying:

The most important thing here is the exposure to the language, whether we [...were] in Oman or in the UK. We [...did] not get exposed to the language. We [...did] not interact with others. This is ...why we [...didn't] improve our language to the extent that we [had] aim[ed] to.

As discussed in the previous sections, the interviewees’ interactions with the Other were limited in frequency and, more importantly, depth. Most of these interactions tended to take place on campus for the shared academic courses and classrooms and were more for academic purposes. According to the seven interviewees, *the majority of the conversations were around research and things related to research* (Khalil) and, subsequently, when these interviewees, *went there [abroad], at least ...had the opportunity to practice and use [and subsequently develop] more English [as an] academic language* (Subhi) or, in other words, as a specialist language.

By getting more focused and engaged with their academic studies and research, these interviewees also stated having *practised [and thus developed] more reading and writing skills* in the first place (Zaid). To several of these interviewees, the academic *writing skill was the most important skill [...they] have improved* (Yahiya) simply *because we [students] had to write* (Subhi). Yahiya also justified the development of the academic writing skills by stating it was “*because I have to write during the MSc and now for the PhD. I have to write a couple of hundreds of words*”. Dalila also expressed a supportive justification by stating, “*Regarding writing, of course, we have to write a lot of assignments, so my writing skills have really improved*”. Subhi also supported this by stating it was “*because we [students] had to write 3000 or 4000 words. The dissertation was [composed of] 18, 000 to 20, 000 words. So, it was [mostly] the reading and writing*”.

The academic reading and writing skills were the most developed language skills. This is because the ability to write successful academic and research writings tended to parallel the development of the ability to read academic and research papers and vice versa. Therefore, according to Subhi, “*You cannot write your assignment or your research without reading about 20 books or references*”. Similarly, the interviewees tended to improve regarding their reading skills since because they *had to conduct research, they needed to read so many resources for ...[the intended]research* (Nora). Dalila supported by stating, “*Regarding the reading skills, our study was actually research-based assignments, not written exams. So, we had to do a lot of research, to read a lot of books*”.

From the intensive academic reading, Dalila commented, “*We [students also] gained some educational terminologies which we didn't know about before*”. Learning the new vocabulary also tended

to parallel reading, and thus it appeared among the most benefits gained from studying abroad. Learning the new vocabulary was attainable not only through academic reading but also from reading the ingredients of products while doing shopping and reading boards in public places. In this regard, Nora mentioned:

It is an English country, so everything on the road [and] in the restaurant you read was in English. When we went shopping, we had to read carefully the ingredients of products that we had to buy. So, when you read everything in English, your English vocabulary [...would] develop as well. [...] One of the words that I learned from them was, 'Cheers'. It is one of the words that I will never forget.

So, academic reading in particular, as well as *speaking and listening to those people enriched vocabulary and grammar as well* (Zaid). Some students tended to improve their language *grammar and accuracy because we [the Omani students as second language learners] had ...a grammar course teaching grammar in detail, starting from the part of word and so on* (Dalila). Besides, new vocabulary and grammar, some students also gained *some expressions, for example, where are you after?* (Subhi).

With regard to listening, several students *[...got] to understand the colloquial language used there [and thus] became familiar with the accent used in the town and other accents in the country* (Khalil). Khalil added that this *was really helpful in terms of improving fluency [but] to a certain extent*. To Khalil, *the fluency, getting familiar with the accents and dialects there ...were the most and the main things [...he] ...benefited from study abroad*. Some interviewees had also developed an accented English, as they were *able to pronounce [English] exactly the way they [local people abroad] [...did] it* (Subhi).

On the other hand, speaking was the least developed language skill among the interviewees. Dalila explained the reason for this by stating, *"Regarding the speaking skill, I cannot say that all our communication was in English because we had Omani and [other] Arab friends. We had only [a better opportunity] to speak in English in the classroom"*. However, some students could develop *politeness in speaking* (Dalila). According to Dalila, *"Because we [Omani female colleagues] had people from different countries. I think it's inappropriate to speak in your language in front of other people"*.

In general, several interviewees tended to develop speaking more as an academic skill mainly *to give presentations* (Nora) and *to interact* with fellows and colleagues for academic purposes. They also developed their academic speaking skills, as they needed to *conduct [research] interviews* (Nora). Besides the limited language fluency, the interviewees also learnt *the [right] pronunciation of some words* (Dalila).

After all, the interviewees' English language tended to improve within the educational environment more as an academic medium of interaction, and thus they tended to *feel [more] confident* in using the

English language within this environment (Dalila). On the other hand, the English language was used outside this context as a form of survival to meet the needs of life abroad. Although Zaid, for example, experienced *some kind of communication with them [host locals abroad], he became more confident on how to speak and also initiate a conversation*. Similarly, although Yahiya stated, “*We [Omani and Arab students] [...did] not get exposed [adequately] to the language [and] we [...did] not interact with others [meaningfully]*”, he reported having *more confidence in speaking*. In fact, though some interviewees felt they had developed linguistic confidence, this confidence was actually still limited. Yahiya stated that “*[although] there [...was] an improvement, ...the improvement [...was] [ultimately] not to the extent to which I had hoped at the beginning of the journey*”. Furthermore, this confidence was felt as English was more used with other second language learners who were perceived by some Omani students to have developed lower levels of performance in English and, at the same time, English was less used with its native speakers. In other words, this confidence was felt in reference to that of other international English language learners. For example, Zaid stated, “*In comparison with other L2 learners, I was better than those Europeans when I spoke English and even better than those Indian people [, so] I am more competent in English*”.

6.4.3 Limited Intercultural Competence Development

Besides the limited English language development, ten interviewees (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11) also explained gaining no or only very limited developmental benefits in their intercultural communicative competence when abroad. Yahiya, for example, stated, “*In terms of outside our studies, no. In terms of interaction and intercultural communication, no. I feel that I would have had a better experience with them if I had interacted with them*”.

The interviewees, as mentioned above, in general tended to develop more knowledge about the objective (tangible) aspects of the host country and less about its core subjective aspects. With regard to the objective cultural aspects, they *learnt about their food* (Dalila), *the food they usually eat* (Zaid). *It was also possible to get to know about some of the events and ceremonies that they usually celebrate* (Khalil). They also got to learn about *their geographical places* (Zaid). Sa’ad mentioned, “*I know that the UK comprises four countries: Wales, Scotland, England, and Ireland*”. The interviewees also got to know about the government system *[more about its educational system]*, *...how to travel in the country [and] how to go to the clinic*” (Khalil). They also became more familiar with *the streets, things to do, currency, where to buy food from, the amount of money needed to survive per month for a student, the weather ...*” (Lora) and about their economy as well (Zaid). They also managed to understand the bus and metro systems, travelling to different areas of the UK, shopping, *[and] the differences in the*

educational system (Lora). Even when some interviewees mentioned that they came to learn about ...their [host] cultures (Nora), they actually referred to the occasions they [host locals] are celebrating, the food they have there [such as] fish and chips (Nora). This food in general was found more in the market. Due to their engagement with the educational system, Nora stated, “We [Omani students] learned about how their education system works [...]. We came to learn more about their grading system, and about their teaching methodologies as well.

On the other hand, since several interviewees tended to have more interactions with individuals from similar cultures, they got to know more about the cultures of these individuals than the culture of the host country. For example, Aryam explained:

Because I lived with my Hong Kong nice friends for two years and then ...with Chinese people in my first year...I got interested in Chinese culture. So, I got to know a lot about Chinese food. I always cook different kinds of Chinese food. [...] Through my friends, I got to know about Chinese politics, and then I started learning a bit of Chinese. [...] [W]hen I came back to Oman, instead of giving my siblings gifts that [...were] related to the English culture, I actually gave them gifts that [...were] related to the Chinese culture because that’s what I [...was] interested in

Ruba supported this by stating, *“I think I gained a lot of insight into a lot of cultures, the Korean culture in particular[,...] about the history of the country and the different dishes”.*

The interviewees had limited opportunities to learn about the subjective (core) aspects of the host country’s culture, such as the customs and traditions. For example, Khalil stated, *“I obviously wanted to be, honestly, in a much more multicultural educational environment [, but...] it was a bit difficult to achieve all my goals [...as] I wasn’t able ... to get deeply involved in cultural issues to get to know more about the British families [...such as] different ways of thinking and different approaches to life”.*

With regard to stereotypes, some interviewees stated that their *negative perspective [about the locals abroad] had changed because of interaction (Dalila). They found some of the rumours they had heard before ...[were] totally wrong (Talib).* On the other hand, some of these stereotypes persisted among some interviewees. For example, Sa’ad stated, *“I also know about the people [in general]. As I said, they are NOT very social”.*

6.4.4 Professional and Research Skills Development

In addition to the academic English language, the interviewees’ concentrated their interactions in academic contexts, and their involvement in academic studies and research helped seven interviewees (1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9 & 10) to also gain other academic (professional) benefits. For example, the research students *improved [...their] research skills [and] in [...the] field of study as well (Yahiya).* In terms of

research competence, the interviewed research students *learnt how to paraphrase, summarize, cite, and quote information from books, journals, and whatsoever [as well as] to be selective about what exactly ...to look for ...[and] include in ... research* (Nora). They also learnt to *conduct interviews and give presentations* (Nora). Dalila added, “*We [Omani research students] also learnt group work, collaboration, ...critical thinking skills and problem solving skills*”.

With regard to critical research skills, Zaid explained, “*I wasn’t trained for critical reading at the beginning [...]. [By studying abroad,] I came to know about critical reading; how to write critique articles and a systematically critical literature review, how to choose the best methodology, ethics, and quality of research.*” H also added, “*We [Omani research students...learnt how] to make use of technology and ...electronic programs like Endnote, NVivo, and SPSS.*” Nora also added:

I learnt a lot in terms of theoretical and practical things [...]. We learned so many things in terms of conducting research, using the research instruments, how to make a questionnaire, how to distribute it, how to analyse the data and how to put everything together to do good scientific research [...]. That added a lot, of course, to my educational background. It added to my insights about, for example, education, and learning and teaching a different language.

In general, the interviewees *could develop* professional skills such as *teaching skills* and *research skills* (Nora) and perhaps *some computer skills* as well (Yahiya). Being backed by the improvement of professional and research skills, they developed a professional reputation by *getting [...their academic] degrees from [...abroad]* (Nora) and building a social reputation as well, and thus *making [...their] families proud of [...them]* (Nora).

6.4.5 Enjoyment and Some Personal Development

In addition to the previous benefits above, four interviewees (3, 7, 9 & 10) mentioned other benefits of studying abroad, which were enjoyment and some personal development. The interviewees’ enjoyment of studying abroad stemmed from their enjoyment of being together with other Omani colleagues in particular and Arab ones in general. Nora mentioned, “*In terms of enjoyment, we [Omani individuals] spent a wonderful time together with [...other Arab] friends although there were moments that were very stressful and ...sometimes [...felt] homesick*”. The interviewees also enjoyed the experience, as they also *enjoyed travelling to [...different] places there [... and] spent really unforgettable moments there* (Nora).

The interviewees thus tended to experience some personal development, as they *learnt to be independent and responsible* (Nora). Experiencing life independence, self-dependence, and freedom also contributed to their enjoyment of studying abroad. Lora stated, “*I enjoyed the experience, as I enjoyed living independently, cooking, cleaning for myself, walking to and from the university, spending time*

with friends, and the openness of the teaching staff and their understanding". She added, "[Besides] travelling to new places, I have learned to be dependent on myself, that I am able to travel abroad and live alone for a long time, that I can move house within a foreign country quickly without trouble and without needing anyone's help".

Nora supported by stating, "When I was here in Oman, I was a dependent person to a certain extent. I was not used to doing household chores, but when I was there, I learned everything such as cooking, washing, cleaning and so on". She added, "There I learned how to do shopping and how to be an economic person, how to spend my money in a good way" (Nora). She went on to state, "I was an unsocial person, but when I went there, I think my communicative skills developed, even the way I discussed with my family, I was able to convince them. They were amazed". Therefore, besides independence, some interviewees also developed some *problem-solving skills, [and] life management skills* (Ruba).

6.4.6 Summary

To summarize, due to their limited intercultural interactions, the interviewees' learning returns from studying abroad ranged from statements of no to limited perceptions of benefits especially with regard to intercultural learning as represented here by the further development of the English language and intercultural communicative competence.

Linguistically, the interviewees tended to develop more at the level of language content represented by the specialist and general vocabulary, grammar, and language expressions. In terms of language skills, they could develop listening skills through understanding various local English language accents and dialects, as well as both reading and writing skills which tended to develop in parallel for their side-by-side involvement in the students' research and academic studies. Accordingly, the interviewees' proficiency in the English language had more developed academically and less as an everyday real-life intercultural communication language especially when moving away from the academic environment as the oral language production was the least practised though some students could develop an accented English and learnt some English word pronunciation.

Even though some students expressed to have developed more confidence in the intercultural English language use, this confidence was still limited. These interviewed students tended to overestimate their confidence for their lack of sense of their language abilities as these abilities remained largely unchallenged. The language was more used with other second language learners, particularly with those from the same and similar cultural backgrounds, whom were perceived by some of these interviewees as performing less competently in the English language.

Similarly, the interviewees' intercultural communicative competence development was largely limited to knowledge of the host culture' tangible aspects for their limited interaction with it and its people. On the other hand, while some interviewees could correct some intercultural stereotypes, other stereotypes persisted and even strengthened.

Professionally, the interviewed students, besides their academic English language and field knowledge development, were able to improve their professional skills, such as teaching and research skills, as well as some computer skills. Hence, being backed by their attainment of academic qualifications from abroad, they tended to develop a professional and social reputation.

Finally, the students also experienced some personal development which was more limited to their ability to live independently, to be self-dependent, to have freedom and a sense of responsibility. While it was a form of personal development, it was also a type of enjoyment, especially for the female students, to experience all of these aspects. In other words, the personal development tended to parallel the enjoyment of the ability to experience all the aforementioned aspects.

6.5 Emotional Response to Study Abroad

From the above, the cultural outcomes of study-abroad were obviously very limited especially with regard to the development of SEIELU, ICC, and IIF. Better benefits of study abroad were gained from the students' engagement with the educational aspect and subsequently the development of their professional and research skills, and the other benefit emerged as an enjoyable element accompanying the experience. This enjoyment was mainly resultant from enjoying interactions within the inner-circle groups (intracultural interactions) and from travelling in the host country.

Despite the limited benefits of study abroad, especially the intercultural ones, ten interviewees (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 & 10) described the study-abroad experience, using different but similar expressions, as *a great experience*. Only interviewee 11 (Talib) was less satisfied with the experience.

In more detail, 2 out of the 11 interviewees were [largely] *satisfied with the experience* (Nora), as the intercultural interactions and their returns were not part of their main goals for studying abroad. Nora explained, "*I was satisfied with the experience. Because for me, I wanted to combine enjoyment with getting the degree, getting well-educated and well-qualified. I learnt a lot in terms of theoretical and practical things*". She added:

For me, it was actually one of the best experiences that I have gone through in my life for so many reasons. First of all, I liked being in a different place than my homeland and being totally independent ...and also being with my close [Omani] friends made it very comfortable and convenient for me.

On the other hand, several interviewees expressed that they were *to some extent* satisfied with the benefits they gained while abroad. This is because these interviewees could not achieve all their goals, especially the intercultural ones. Khalil commented, “*It does not mean that studying abroad is always the best*”. Talib also stated:

I was expecting much more from the university, but unfortunately, I couldn't because everything [...was] about academic matters, which I [...was] fed up of. Everything [...was] about research, which I knew about. Perhaps I improved my English at some point.

Nonetheless, despite the fact that study abroad was not as fruitful as they had hoped, especially with regard to its intercultural benefits, the interviewees *didn't regret* undertaking the experience (Khalil). Khalil explained:

Still, when you look at it from a different perspective, you find that it is in a way still rewarding to get to know a lot of people who are specialized in the same field, and you also get to have friends who might be from the same country or neighbouring countries and then to whom you can network with, whom you can do research with in the future.

Lora also supported this view by stating, “*Although I had some challenges [...], it was ultimately very satisfying [...as I] made some great friends and memories*. Yahiya confirmed, “*Of course, it is not perfect. I have lots of ups and downs. Sometimes, I missed the country [Oman]. I missed my family, but it was a great experience.*”

After all, regardless of its limited intercultural learning returns, almost all interviewees highly valued the experience. They described study abroad as *a good experience* (Sa'ad), *a great experience* (Yahiya), *an amazing experience* (Aryam), *a very positive experience* (Ruba), *a wonderful experience* (Dalila), *a very, very great learning opportunity* (Khalil), *a really good experience* (Subhi), *really interesting* (Yahiya), and *really awesome* (Zaid). Therefore, they felt *grateful, glad* (Aryam), and *happy about the experience* (Khalil). Aryam explained, “*I am really glad about making this decision to study abroad [...]. I have made a lot of friendships that I never thought I would make. It made a lot of opportunities in terms of career aspects and other aspects. So, I think it is an amazing experience that I'm glad to go through it again*”. Similarly, Yahiya described, “*It was a great experience. [...] I want to repeat it again and again*”. Finally, Ruba stated, “*I would definitely recommend everyone to [...study abroad]*”.

6.5.1 Summary

To summarize, from the aforementioned very positive descriptions and recommendations of study abroad despite its limited intercultural benefits in terms of SEIELU, ICC, and IIF development in

particular, the students seemed to overgeneralize the personally perceived positive side of the experience to all of the general picture, and thus, as can be seen, the experience appeared as extremely and undoubtedly always beneficial in all its aspects while closer examination of the data reveals this was not the case. The interviewees' enjoyment of and satisfaction with study abroad seemed to have less to do with the intercultural aspects of the experience including the intercultural interactions compared to the academic aspects.

6.6 Summary of Qualitative Findings

This chapter has provided an in-depth exploration of the possible reasons why the Omani students' ICC, SEIELU and IIF could not improve while abroad and their levels remained similar to those of students staying in Oman. The qualitative findings generated a clearer picture and a deeper understanding of Omani students' study-abroad experience and subsequently provided an interpretation of the quantitative findings regarding the impact of study abroad on Omani students or lack thereof.

According to my qualitative findings, the Omani students reported that they chose to study particularly in the UK for a variety of reasons although study abroad was also an obligatory experience for some students. The first motives were the desire for further professional development, the perceived feeling of security and comfort generated in the first place by the large numbers of Omani students already abroad, and positive expectations and assumptions they held prior to the experience which were partially formed by other students' positive stories of success abroad. Enjoyment of and excitement for the novelty and the practicality of the intended experience were less common among the 11 interviewees but nonetheless played a motivational role in the decision to study abroad.

According to my analysis, Omani students in my sample studied abroad to achieve a mixture of cultural and instrumental goals; however, the instrumental goals appeared to be more common based on the list of goals set by students for studying abroad, the number of interviewees who expressed these goals, and their frequency as well as the list of places where the Omani students interacted most frequently while abroad. Culturally, the students studied abroad to get exposed to the English language as it is spoken by the host locals, thereby making use of the perceived opportunities for interactions and, subsequently, to have more knowledge and awareness of the host culture, the culture of the language they had been learning in Oman. The instrumental goals, on the other hand, included, for example, building a better employment opportunity and social reputation, which stemmed from the good reputation of the UK universities and the UK as a country; obtaining academic qualifications; having an opportunity for independence and self-dependence; and tourism.

Although several Omani students studied abroad to have intercultural interactions and, subsequently, an exposure to the English language and host culture, these goals seemed to be more set based on the perceived positive expectations and assumptions about study-abroad prior to the actual experience. In addition, students made the decision to study abroad after being motivated by others' positive stories of success, by the large numbers of Omani students already abroad, due to the encouragement of close individuals and the need to meet the expectations of home institutions, and the obligatory nature of the experience as well; all these reasons indicated that decisions were less self-determined and were more as a response to an external reason. The instrumental nature of the bigger number of Omani students' goals and less their self-determined nature helped explain why the students could not develop greater intercultural competences.

When abroad, the students stated having experienced interactions that were limited in frequency, breadth, and quality, and subsequently, they harvested only limited (unmeasurable) developmental returns with regard to ICC and SEIELU development. My DMICC proposed three primary gates for Omani students' intercultural competence development. These sources were intercultural education, an actual intercultural experience, and an intercultural personality. According to the interviewees, there was a lack of any intercultural education (or student intercultural preparation). On the other hand, although the study-abroad experience was available and the students had undergone it, and therefore its impact could be assessed by the current study, it had a limited (quantitatively insignificant) impact on Omani students' intercultural competencies (ICC and SEIELU). It was assumed that the achievement of the intended development through the study-abroad experience was conditioned by the assumption that students should develop an intercultural personality with positive attitudes towards cultural differences. However, some students claimed to have developed a general tendency to be shy, hesitant and introverted, and hence they had a more limited acceptance of cultural differences when abroad. In short, the students could not achieve measurable improvements in SEIELU, ICC, and IIF through study abroad mainly because of the lack of study-abroad preparation programs and the nature of the graduates of the education system in Oman.

Though being physically abroad, Omani students largely seemed to be living in a parallel world. The interviewed students (n=11) and 15 OEQ respondents expressed a variety of related cultural, linguistic, personality, cognitive, educational, family, emotional, communication skills and ultimately behavioural reasons for having a limited ability to experience meaningful interactions with people of distinct cultures abroad. Based on the number of interviewees and OEQ respondents who expressed these reasons, the cultural, linguistic, personality, and cognitive reasons were the most commonly expressed

reasons to not interact while abroad, respectively. On the other hand, the emotional, communication skills-related, educational, and family reasons were the least commonly expressed reasons.

Culturally, the students reported having developed negative attitudes towards cultural differences, as manifested in their limited tolerance of cultural differences, and subsequently, the limitations in their motivation to interact with and open-mindedness to the Other.

Linguistically, several interviewees also expressed limited confidence in their intercultural English language use due to their limited English language capabilities, their speaking skills in particular, and their limited vocabulary and knowledge of topics of conversations.

Cognitively, several students also reported that they commonly had limited intercultural knowledge and awareness, and at the same time, they had adopted negative stereotypes about the Other. A few students reported also having limited knowledge of general life management and living necessities. The cognitive reasons here extended to include limitations in research knowledge and awareness of the host education system, which were categorized as educational reasons. Due to their negative attitudes towards cultural differences and the adoption of negative stereotypes, they also seemed to develop escape and avoidance skills with regard to interaction, though such an avoidance was done in a diplomatic way. The limitations in the intercultural cognition and awareness, as seen above, tended to lead to a subsequent limitation in the communication skills, and vice versa.

The less competent English language capabilities and the limited intercultural cognition and awareness helped create a shy introvert hesitant personality although some students were innately shy and introvert. Some students developed a personality that was characterised by shyness about their poor English language capabilities and a fear of intercultural misunderstandings and violation of host culture taboos and of the possible consequences.

The reasons above were the most commonly experienced barriers to intercultural interactions and to the development of ICC, SEIELU, and IIF. The reasons below were the least common reasons to interact less.

Some students were more incapable of controlling and, more importantly, of regulating the negative emotions resulting from experiencing direct and indirect unpleasant incidents. In addition, those who reported being able to control and regulate these emotions could not experience intercultural engagements. Though these students seemed to prevent these negative emotions from emerging, they also did not seem to regulate them effectively. Thus, they also tended to not interact meaningfully with the Other.

Some students seemed to experience more challenges in their intercultural interactions due to educational and family reasons. The educational challenges stemmed from students' study commitments and time restrictions, their limited research knowledge and incompatible learning skills, and their limited awareness of the host education system as well. Those students who stayed abroad with their Omani families also tended to experience additional commitments.

Although these educational issues and family commitments contributed to the challenges encountered by Omani students in their interactions with the locals abroad, primarily, the negative attitudes towards the cultural differences and other widely reported reasons (e.g., linguistic, personality, and cognitive reasons) seemed to make them refrain from interacting meaningfully with the Other.

All the aforementioned factors, though they varied in the level of contribution, resulted in incompetent intercultural communication behaviours, which was manifested in obvious limitations in interaction initiatives, and the frequency, breadth, and depth of intercultural interactions.

In return, the students reported that the learning outcomes of study abroad were either not perceived or limited. The students experienced limited development of their English language skills and intercultural competence. The development of professional and research skills, and enjoyment and personal development, though limited, were the two aspects that received the most benefit of study abroad due to students' intensive engagement with their academic studies and research, and their sense of joy in feelings of independence, self-dependence, and freedom while abroad, especially female students.

Though the intercultural learning returns were limited, the students tended to highly value the study-abroad experience for instrumental returns including the joy of staying in a different country, building friendships with other Omani and Arab students, obtaining the intended qualification, tourism, and so on.

The qualitative findings presented in this chapter will be integrated with the quantitative findings in the discussion and conclusion chapter next.

Chapter Seven: Discussion and Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This explanatory sequential quasi-experimental mixed-methods research aimed at providing research-based evidence about the accuracy of several Omani students', the public's and officials' common beliefs about the effectiveness of study abroad in the UK, the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand in achieving advancements in Omani students' Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use (SEIELU), and Intercultural Interaction Frequency (IIF) in addition to those obtained in Oman. The study resonates strongly with previous research, Al-Makhmari and Amzat (2012) in particular, in the field of study-abroad assessment.

Intercultural interactions, especially those that extend beyond the classroom, are considered key to success in the further development of the intercultural competencies under study (Deardorff, 2009b; Dewey et al., 2013; Firmin et al., 2013; Froese et al., 2012; Gemignani, 2009; Kuchinke et al., 2014; Meier & Daniels, 2013; Reid, 2015; Schartner & Young, 2020; Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002; Tang & Choi, 2004; Yashima, 2010). These competencies were approached through a newly developed model, called the Developmental Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (DMICC). The first motivator for this work was my observation of a contradiction between several Omani nationals' subjective positive reports heard in Oman about study abroad and the seemingly limited communication between Omanis and host locals I observed abroad, specifically in the UK.

The quantitative data were collected through newly constructed scales used as pre- and post-tests: a 58-item multidimensional ICC scale, a 14-item unidimensional SEIELU scale, and a 3-item IIF scale. The pre- and post-tests were applied within the experimental (study-abroad) and control (stay-in-Oman) groups to examine the level of change while abroad, and the between-group comparisons to determine the causality of change. The quantitative study sample included a total of 343 Omani participants staying in Oman as a control group and those studying abroad in the UK, the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand as an experimental group. They were distributed as 250 pre-test respondents (231 study-abroad vs 19 stay-in-Oman), and 93 post-test respondents (86 study-abroad vs 7 stay-in-Oman), aged between 17 and 52 years old.

The quantitative inquiry was followed up by a qualitative inquiry for an in-depth exploration of the key quantitative findings, through semi-structured interviews with 11 participants (10 UK- & 1 New Zealand-based) and a survey open-ended question (N=15 UK-based respondents).

The main results from the quantitative inquiry showed that the one-year abroad, no matter the country of stay, gender, type of stay abroad (alone or with one's own Omani family), and with previous

intercultural experiences or not, did not trigger any significant changes in the respondents' ICC, SEIELU, and IIF levels, beyond the levels of participants staying in Oman. The educational level and multilingualism also did not seem to play considerable roles in the development of the three aspects above. The quantitative results indicated that the participants only witnessed remarkable changes in the respective aspects after more than six years of stay abroad.

My qualitative results showed that the counter-intuitive survey results indicating no significant changes could be due to the participants perceiving opportunities to interact with outer-circle people abroad as limited. According to the qualitative inquiry, the cultural, linguistic, personality-related, and cognitive reasons were the most frequently expressed reasons to interact less with host locals abroad, while the educational, family, emotional, and communication skills-related reasons were the least commonly expressed as shown in Chapter 6 and the thematic table (Appendix 20). Nonetheless, despite there being no measurable gains, the vast majority of students were satisfied with the experience.

The regression test revealed that the development of SEIELU is conditioned more by the development of ICC, mainly through the development of positive attitudes towards cultural differences in the first place, and then knowledge and awareness of the host culture and competent interaction behaviours that achieve breadth and, more importantly, depth in interactions. On the other hand, despite their necessity, the mere frequency of intercultural interactions, negative intercultural emotion regulation, and critical thinking and communication skills on their own were inadequate in the development of SEIELU and consequently, ICC.

For more understanding of the findings above, this discussion chapter theorises the impact of study abroad firstly as an effect of context and then as an amount of time spent in that context, and later on as an outcome of individuals' intentional decisions with regard to their engagement (active or passive) with the intercultural experience and its accompanying challenges over the course of time abroad. In the discussion of the last aspect, the chapter will clarify that the limited impact of study abroad on ICC, SEIELU, and IIF levels parallels their limited engagement with the intercultural experience abroad. This limited engagement in turn could be a translation of students' instrumental (less cultural) approach of the experience and less self-determined goals for studying abroad, as well as their limited intercultural, personal, linguistic, and cognitive competencies. It could also stem from their limited communication skills including interaction avoidance skills and limited ability to control negative emotions resulting from experiencing unpleasant intercultural incidences, besides the educational and familial challenges.

After that, the chapter will conclude with a discussion of the factors contributing to SEIELU development and the resultant learning and psychological outcomes of study abroad among Omani

students. The chapter summarizes the limited impact of study abroad as a resultant outcome of Omani students' reduced engagement with the intercultural experience abroad, the lack of student preparation for the intercultural experience where cultural differences are large, and the limited language capabilities of graduates from the educational system in Oman.

7.2 Study Abroad Outcomes as an Effect of Context and Time

The Omani government, represented by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, formerly called the Ministry of Higher Education, has been offering an increasing number of scholarships to Omani students to study abroad particularly in native English-speaking countries, namely, the UK, the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (see Appendix 4, Table 5) to develop their communication skills as demanded by employers in Oman in addition to the acquisition of specialist knowledge in their fields (Ministry of Higher Education, 2011a, 2011b). These increasing numbers over the years in the absence of any impact assessment of the study-abroad experience indicates a strong belief that Omani students would develop their intercultural and linguistic competencies as required by employers and the Omanisation process of the public and private sectors when studying abroad (Al Barwani, 2002; Alyahmadi, 2006; Brummer, 2013). This belief was strengthened by the positive reports provided by students and the research results revealed by Al-Makhmari and Amzat (2012).

Therefore, the natural question to ask is “What impact does study abroad in native English-speaking countries (the UK, the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) have on Omani students' ICC, SEIELU, and IIF?” The answer to this question was verified by examining the impact of study abroad as an effect of being in study-abroad context and then as an amount of time spent in it.

7.2.1 As a context

Contrary to this popular belief and humble evidence revealed by Al-Makhmari and Amzat (2012), this study, in line with Collentine (2009) and Cohen and Shively (2007) and many others, showed that studying in the US, Canada, the UK, New Zealand, and Australia as target countries did not have any considerable impact on the ICC, SEIELU, and IIF of the Omani students (see Table 13 and Table 14, & Tables 3 & 4 in Appendix 11). My study, therefore, strengthens Collentine and Cohen and Shively's studies, as the levels of Omani study-abroad participants' ICC, SEIELU, and IIF were similar to those of individuals staying in Oman (see Table 9 and Table 10, & Tables 1 & 2 in Appendix 11) and remained similar even after one year abroad (see Table 11 and Table 12, & Tables 1 & 2 in Appendix 11).

The comparisons within the study-abroad group confirmed that the one-year abroad did not have any considerable impact on the three examined aspects of the participants, whether these participants were male or female, staying abroad alone or with their own Omani family members, and with previous

intercultural experiences or not (see Tables 7-30 in Appendix 14). The factors above and the geographic locations of study abroad may be more advantageous to other student groups for developing these three dimensions to a greater extent than Omani students, and perhaps other Arab students, could do (Hutchins, 1996; Shaftel & Shaftel, 2011; Vandenberg, Connor-Linton, & Paige, 2009). For example, further intercultural and L2 English competence development abroad was a possible advantage for Japanese university students with previous overseas experiences (Apple & Aliponga, 2018). With regard to the study-abroad destination, Cubillos and Ilvento's (2012) pre-post survey study revealed that participation in a study-abroad programme, regardless of its length or destination, had a significant positive impact on American college students' foreign language skills especially listening and speaking.

Some of the interviewed students in my study believed that the host countries addressed here would have a varying impact on the variables studied (Sa'ad & Talib as examples). This was because some of them had a strong belief generated by the reports of several Omani students who were studying or who had previously studied in the US that studying in the US would be interculturally more influential than their current longer study experience in the UK. They attributed this to the American people's friendlier personality, which would create more opportunities for intercultural interactions than in the UK. Based on this, the Omani participants studying in the US were supposed to outperform those studying in the UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Oman in the first place. However, my quantitative findings confirmed that the countries addressed here with individualist national cultures, though in different contexts, did not show any varying impact on the Omani participants' development in the variables addressed. The different groups of participants performed similarly in ICC, SEIELU, and IIF across all the countries of study abroad and even to those staying in Oman (see Appendix 12). My findings together with Collentine (2009) and Cohen and Shively (2007) strongly suggest that studying abroad in any English-speaking context does not influence the outcome in terms of intercultural gains, as measured by these studies.

Whether having previously studied in the UK, the US or any other non-Arab countries, contrary to Vandenberg et al. (2009) and Shaftel and Shaftel (2011), the recent comparisons between the current Omani participants with and without previous intercultural experiences in non-Arab countries confirmed that the Omani participants' previous intercultural experiences along with the current one-year abroad did not help their intercultural competence development (see Tables 27-30 in Appendix 11). The two groups tended to demonstrate a similar competence across all the recent variables under examination (see Tables 23 & 24 in Appendix 11), and their performances remained almost constant over the recent one-year abroad (see Tables 25 & 26 in Appendix 11).

From the above, in agreement with Amuzie and Winke (2009), Behrnd and Porzelt (2012), Bennett (2009), Cohen and Shively (2007), Collentine (2009), Cushner (2007), Jackson (2009), Martin and Griffiths (2014), Meier and Daniels (2013), McMurray (2007), and Pedersen (2010), despite its significance, the mere fact of being abroad, where the opportunities for the development of intercultural and linguistic competence were available and abundant, on its own was insufficient to trigger the intended intercultural and language gains over and above those developed in the home country, Oman. The achievement of higher levels of intercultural competencies was not an automatic gain of simply being abroad in an English-speaking country. Moreover, although my research participants claimed to have different cultural goals (e.g., improving their English language proficiency and their knowledge of the host culture) underpinning study abroad, achievement of these goals was not guaranteed by simply being abroad, as Chapdelaine and Alexitch (2004) and Meier and Daniels (2013) stated.

7.2.2 As an Amount of Time

In line with Amuzie and Winke (2009), Behrnd and Porzelt (2012), Dwyer (2004), Hutchins (1996), Ingraham and Peterson (2004) and Lu and Hsu (2008), despite the importance of the intercultural context abroad, the context tended to yield significant advancements in individuals' L2 and intercultural competence development in relation to the duration of the stay abroad. The longer the individuals stayed abroad, the more they were expected to develop in the target aspects.

However, from the above, spending one year abroad seemed to be insufficient for the Omani students to trigger higher levels of ICC, SEIELU, and IIF beyond those developed in Oman. In fact, while the other cultural groups, including those from other collectivist national cultures, tended to outperform those staying in their home countries in the intended intercultural and L2 competences within one year of staying abroad (Behrnd & Porzelt, 2012; Dwyer, 2004; Hernández, 2010; Kang, 2014; Kehl & Morris, 2008; Paik et al., 2015; Sasaki, 2011), Omani students were slow at developing the competencies under study and accordingly needed more than six years of stay abroad (six times longer than that required by other cultural groups) in order to develop higher levels of ICC, SEIELU, and IIF, and, accordingly, outperform those staying in Oman (see Appendix 13 & Figures 6-8).

Omani and other international students share many of the challenges to intercultural interactions and the consequent benefits. This means that the challenges Omani students faced abroad are universal (Hua, 2019; Jung et al., 2007; Liu, 2007; Paternotte et al., 2015). However, groups of Arab students, in this case Omani students, tended to experience additional challenges to those experienced by other cultural groups, as stereotypes mean they are widely linked with terrorism, based on my interviewee, Lora, and existing research (Al-Harathi, 2005; Koermer, 2013; Mahmud & Swami, 2010; Neal, 2010;

Safdar et al., 2008; Saroglou et al., 2009; Strabac & Listhaug, 2008), and the cultural gap is larger than with other non-Islamic collectivist national cultures when compared to the individualist national culture of host locals.

7.3 Primary Reasons to Omani Students' Limited Study-Abroad Benefits

Although Omani students, like other international students (Fritz et al., 2008; Gu et al., 2010), experienced universal challenges when abroad, the process of learning begins when undergoing these challenges with determination and commitment and making use of the available learning opportunities rather than seeing themselves as victims of these challenges (Cheng & Erben, 2012; Covert, 2014; Cushner, 2007; Evanoff, 2006; Gallucci, 2014; Hua, 2019; Koskinen & Tossavainen, 2004; Marx & Moss, 2011; Milstein, 2005; Vande Berg et al., 2009; Vande Berg et al., 2012; Zhou et al., 2008). Although the intercultural experience is challenging due to the wide variety of challenges, Omani students, based on my qualitative results, did not seem to help themselves by turning these challenges into opportunities for learning.

This section discusses the reasons why Omani students, despite being abroad for one year and more, could not develop the competencies under study within one year and why they needed more than six years before any obvious development was observed. Answers to these questions explain that, besides the fact that study abroad is a multi-factorial experience in support of Paik et al. (2015), based on my qualitative results, it is more challenging for Omani and perhaps other Arab Muslim students than other student groups for the larger cultural gap in the first place. The answers also clarify that despite the significance of being abroad in practical terms and the amount of time spent abroad, its effectiveness is more determined by the goals set by students for study abroad and subsequently their interaction with the experience over the course of their time abroad.

7.3.1 Limited Interaction with Host Locals

Active intercultural interactions are considered the key gate towards L2 practice and intercultural learning in both academic and non-academic intercultural settings (Deardorff, 2009b; Dewey et al., 2013; Firmin et al., 2013; Froese et al., 2012; Gemignani, 2009; Kuchinke et al., 2014; Meier & Daniels, 2013; Reid, 2015; Schartner & Young, 2020; Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002; Tang & Choi, 2004; Yashima, 2010).

Although the length of stay abroad is important to gain more profound benefits, in line with Cubillos and Ilvento (2012) and Paik et al. (2015), the more frequent and deeper the intercultural interactions become, the more positive is the impact they have on L2 and intercultural development in even shorter periods of time and vice versa (Behrnd & Porzelt, 2012; Czerwionka et al., 2015; Dunkley,

2009; Dwyer, 2004; Gitimu, 2010; Hutchins, 1996; Ingraham & Peterson, 2004; Jackson, 2009; Kaypak & Ortaçtepe, 2014; Kehl & Morris, 2008; Llanes & Muñoz, 2009; Sasaki, 2011).

Although the Omani undergraduate students, as well as those staying abroad alone without their Omani families and those studying in the US, tended to have a higher frequency of intercultural interactions compared to their Omani counterparts in this study, their interactions did not seem to maintain any depth and hence were less influential in developing the competencies under study (see Figures 13-16, Appendix 15, & Appendix 11, Tables 7-10).

Although students from other collectivist cultural groups tended to experience hardship in finding friends among the host locals when studying in environments associated with higher individualist orientations (Gareis, 2012; Redmond, 2000), due to the larger cultural gap (*ibid.*), Omani students even found it harder to experience this. The Omani students' intercultural interactions abroad were generally very limited in frequency, breadth, and depth. They tended to interact with the Other once a week on average (see Table 17 & Table 18), while for some Omani students, based on my qualitative results, interaction was limited to once every month or to meeting the Other in an event and then not again until the next event perhaps at the end of a school or college semester or even in a new student conference. Some students' intercultural interactions tended to be very limited even when sharing the same study space and living in the same property according to my qualitative inquiry.

The Omani students also spent the least amount of time in 'experienced' intercultural interactions. They tended to spend a total of 10-60 minutes a week in these interactions. In comparison with Dewey et al. (2013) and Hernández's (2010) studies, students from the US studying in Arab countries (Jordan & Egypt) and Spain tended to spend two hours a day with the host locals or an average of 60.68 hours a week, respectively. This means that the available intercultural interactions were less accessible to Omani students, and the ones they did access were less "experienced". As a result, while Omani students required more than six years of stay abroad in order to experience an advancement in their intercultural competence and outperform those staying at home in this regard (see Appendix 13 & Figures 6-8), some other international students could develop these competencies within a period of one semester abroad (Hernández, 2010).

According to both my quantitative and qualitative findings, Omani students' intercultural interactions were largely limited in frequency, as they also maintained limited flexibility with different cultural groups and insufficient adaptability to different intercultural interaction contexts. They also preferred to interact with individuals from the same cultural background and, when they were

unavailable, they interacted with those from closer cultural backgrounds, that is, mainly from Islamic or South Asian cultural backgrounds (Volet & Ang, 2012).

In general, as the cultural gap increased, Omani students' intercultural interactions tended to decline in frequency, breadth, and depth. Therefore, with regard to intercultural flexibility, the students had the lowest frequency of interactions with the white native English language speakers, the dominant group in the host country (because of also not sharing the identity of being international students and subsequently having fewer shared commonalities). Again, as the cultural gap increased, these interactions also became more instrumental and less expressive (Manev & Stevenson, 2001), and subsequently, conversations, based on my qualitative results, were more general and formal (perhaps superficial also), with a greater tendency to take place in public settings such as shops, restaurants, schools, estate agents, bus stations, inside the classroom, on the university campus, or in hotels when travelling, or in their accommodation when fixing some problems with the property, and so on. Some of these encounters were accidental such as when, for example, both students and their neighbours were on the way out of their flats or met on the street.

Omani students' intercultural interactions tended to have a higher frequency on the university campus, though such interactions were still limited in general. This is because the university campus, academic courses, and teachers through academic activities and study groups during class time as well as the shared study goals and common interests (Meier & Daniels, 2013) helped bring international and local students together in one place, and thus the opportunities for intercultural interaction were made available and possible to them. Based on Meier and Daniels (2013) and Manev and Stevenson (2001), although these interactions start weak and are instrumental in nature especially at the beginning, they become stronger and more expressive and may continue even beyond the academic context, as long as students invest in them. However, this opportunity did not seem to happen, as the Omani students did not take the initiative to achieve this intercultural goal. In fact, they seemed to wait for rather than create a reason to interact.

Although some Omani students, based on my qualitative results, justified their limited interactions with the host native English language-speaking students in particular for the limited numbers of native English speakers on their attended courses and departments compared to those of Omani and Arab students, and students from other similar collectivist national cultures (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean and so on), they also had more interactions with other international students, due to them sharing the identity of being international (Fedor, 2014) and subsequently having some common shared challenges. Therefore, for some of these students, as also demonstrated by Cubillos and Ilvento (2012) and Vande

Berg et al. (2009), when the choice of interaction was up to them and the interaction guidance and structure tended to decrease, intercultural interactions also tended to decrease, with Omani students preferring to interact with individuals coming from the same or similar cultural and Islamic backgrounds whenever the opportunity was available. Even these intercultural interactions tended to decline as students moved away from the study campus, and even when being on campus when some Omani students also found their academic performance to be incompatible with that of other students especially in the existence of academic pressures.

According to my qualitative inquiry, although some of Omani students reported having friends from other cultures, these individuals were actually more colleagues than friends due to the limited interaction frequency, engagement, and flexibility as well as limited context adaptability. The conversations were formal and general. They lacked the feelings of friendship due to limited open-mindedness to each other and the limited scope of conversation, discussion topics, and time spent in these relationships. Moreover, they were limited by there being only a few places where such interactions occurred. They tended to take place more in public places, such as study spaces, occasions organized by others, and several other public places. The feelings of comfort tended to diminish when moving beyond these places and occasions. The counterpart individuals had limited comfort inviting each other to their private accommodation.

Similar to other international students especially from collectivist national cultures (Brown, 2009b; Gareis, 2012; Schweisfurth & Gu, 2009; Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002), the Omani students in my study found forming relationships with the host locals challenging and thus their interactions focused on their inner-circles due to their large numbers and those of other Arab Muslim students abroad, which, in line with Pedersen et al. (2011), was a disadvantage of travelling in large numbers.

This density created a comfort zone for interaction due to the students' shared interests, identity, culture, history, religion, and the Arabic language (Evanoff, 2006; Fedor, 2014; Schmitz, 2012; Worchel, 2005), as well as due to its provision of the educational, emotional (Myles & Cheng, 2003; Volet & Ang, 2012), security (Chen, 1999; Derderian-Aghajanian & Wang, 2012), and everyday life support when needed, and, subsequently, the higher levels of self-esteem (Fedor, 2014), especially when this support was less available from the host locals and institutions. According to Cushner (2005), and Wrobel, Farrag, and Hymes (2009), this gathering could also be a mechanism for unity, culture, and identity maintenance when living in a context dominated by another cultural group.

Although the co-nationals' support was important to help reduce the effects of students' intercultural stress, especially at the beginning of the experience (Lee et al., 2004; Wrobel et al., 2009),

and to help them navigate through the experience with less reliance on it throughout the experience, the persistence in staying within the comfort zone obviously had a negative impact on their further adaptation to the host culture and any consequent intercultural and L2 learning (Jackson, 2009; Milstein, 2005; Myles & Cheng, 2003; Pedersen et al., 2011; Taylor, 2006).

Therefore, at a later stage of the experience, the co-nationals' support should not always and intensively be relied on, as the co-nationals themselves may not be successful in their adaptation to the host culture (Spitzberg, 2000), and this support may not always be available when it is needed, as demonstrated by my interviewee, Subhi (Andrade, 2006). By the availability of all these large numbers of co-nationals and subsequently the support and comfort zone, Omani students in this study seemed to perceive less need to step beyond their inner circles (Collentine, 2009). Therefore, the rest and comfort provided by the inner group was at the expense of intercultural interactions and, subsequently, L2 practice and intercultural learning (Cushner, 2005; Douglas & Jones-Rikkens, 2001).

7.3.2 Instrumental and Less Self-Determined Goals

As already shown in the section above, the large numbers of Omani and Arab students abroad and their persistence in staying within their comfort zone led to limited (more instrumental) interaction with the study-abroad experience. This section and the upcoming ones highlight other additional reasons that determined the nature of this interaction, its frequency, and the time spent in it and, ultimately, the gains from study abroad, among which are the motives and goals set for study abroad in line with Al-Issa (2014), Badstübner and Ecke (2009), Hernández (2010), Kitsantas (2004), and Spitzberg (2000). Regarding the most significant of these reasons, participation in intercultural interactions is largely an intentional choice made by the immersed individuals rather than a mere automatic consequence of being abroad. So, what were the Omani students' reported motives for studying abroad particularly in the UK?

7.3.2.1 Largely Instrumental Motives

First, similar to international students from other countries (Badstübner & Ecke, 2009; Cheng, 2014; Huják, 2015; Jung et al., 2007; Pedersen et al., 2010; Pope et al., 2014; Sasaki, 2011; Zhai, 2000), Omani students studied abroad for a variety of shared motives and goals, and their motivation to undergo study abroad increased when the experience was perceived as offering additional benefits (instrumental and cultural) to those attainable in the home country, in this case, Oman (Hackney et al., 2012; Kaypak & Ortaçtepe, 2014; Zhuang et al., 2015) (see Table 22), with the perceived instrumental ones (e.g., better employment and promotion opportunities when back home) appearing the most motivating reasons to study abroad in line with Hackney et al. (2012) and Zhuang et al. (2015).

By this, similar to several students from other collectivist national cultures (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006), Omani students' demand for higher education (Alyahmadi, 2006; Brummer, 2013), English language learning (Al-Issa, 2014; Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2014), and study abroad as presented here by my study was dominated by instrumental motives for more professional, employment, financial, and social advantages when back home. Accordingly, Omani students in this study navigated through the study abroad experience to achieve these instrumental ends, with intercultural interactions seemingly being perceived as less useful in achieving these ends, and hence, less time and effort were invested in them (Relyea et al., 2008) compared to specialist education and academic qualifications.

Experiencing meaningful intercultural interactions and the subsequent development of L2 and intercultural competencies is largely attainable through integrative learning motivation (Badstübner & Ecke, 2009). Although Omani students in this study mentioned cultural (integrative) goals (e.g., interacting with host nationals and subsequently exposure to the English language and host culture, etc.) as a motive for studying abroad, these goals were largely based on expectations and assumptions, and also appeared as a social response to meet the expectations of the Omani public and officials that by being abroad, they would be exposed to new cultures and intercultural interactions, and would subsequently improve their English language, and communication skills in general. However, these cultural goals are not automatically achieved by just being abroad. Both Omani students and international students found achieving these goals challenging (Hammer, 2012b; Kuchinke et al., 2014; Meier & Daniels, 2013; Pitts, 2009), and they are less achievable when students' objectives in studying abroad are dominated by instrumental motives and in the absence of support (Schweisfurth & Gu, 2009).

The decisions to study abroad were less culture-related and more based on perceived feelings of security and comfort of being in the host country, which in turn, were positively affected by the number of Omani students in the host country, previous knowledge of the host country and its education system, and the good relationship between the host country and Omani governments. The number of Omani students in the host country was perceived important by several Omani students as offering a comfort zone and support to the new arrivals to help accomplish the study-abroad experience (control belief) (Zhuang et al., 2015).

Therefore, along with Hackney et al. (2012), having friends and, seemingly, family, whether travelling alone or not, and the practicality of the experience with regard to the distance to the host country all played a role in some students' decisions to study abroad. Besides the geographical proximity, some Omani students added the aspect of the time needed to obtain the required qualification in determining the practicality of the experience.

7.3.2.2 Less Self-Determined Goals

Besides the fact that students' decisions to study abroad were largely instrumental (less cultural), these decisions were also less-self determined. Study abroad, according to my qualitative results, was somehow imposed on some students against their preferences as an obligatory experience in general or at least at the host country choice level. Some Omani students tended to study abroad as their friends and families shared the same belief in the importance of studying abroad and its potential in achieving better financial and employment opportunities, especially when it is funded (Huják, 2015; Zhuang et al., 2015).

Friends and families in collectivistic societies intervene significantly in their members' decisions. This intervention seems to be largely instrumental as in the case of Omani students in this study, in line with (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2014). In their positive perception of study abroad and due to financial and social circumstances (Alyahmadi, 2006; Brummer, 2013), Omani families are more likely to encourage students to undergo the experience due to the better job opportunities, promotions, and subsequently, financial support to their families as well as social reputation and prestige.

Due to collectivist cultures' large emphasis on the individual's loyalty to the group, the superiority of group decisions to individual decisions, and individuals' major concern about the needs, interests, and satisfactions of others, their individual interdependence, and their large emotional dependence on the group (Darwish & Huber, 2003), the decisions of most Omani students to study abroad, like several individuals from other cultures, were less-self determined. Instead, they were made to meet their significant individuals' expectations (Alyahmadi, 2006; Brummer, 2013) at the expense of their intercultural openness, adaptation, adjustment, and experiential learning (Chirkov et al., 2007; Chirkov et al., 2008; Hadis, 2005; Schartner & Young, 2020). Omani students were less likely to not comply with pressure from their families and friends in order to gain their approval and due to care for their well-being (Brummer, 2013; Darwish & Huber, 2003).

In addition, similar to other international students (Chen, 1999; Kim & Goldstein, 2005), some Omani students also relied on the expectations and the stories by other Omani individuals of success abroad in perceiving the study abroad benefits (e.g., interactions with the host locals and subsequently authentic opportunities to improve their English language proficiency and knowledge of the host culture) before taking the decision to study abroad. The high positive expectations of the benefits of study abroad and stories of success abroad triggered Omani students' enthusiasm for and excitement about undergoing the experience (Brown & Holloway, 2008) especially when its provision of perceived professional development, based on my qualitative inquiry, was combined with the excitement of meeting new people from other cultures and visiting new places while being in the host country and an opportunity to enjoy

independence and self-reliance; this is especially true among female students in this research (Hammer, 2012a; Hammer, 2012b).

However, according to my qualitative results, these unrealistic expectations, which were also strengthened by the exaggerated stories of success, made several Omani students underestimate the challenges and efforts required to undergo it (Savicki et al., 2004). These expectations emerged as a result of the limited knowledge and awareness of the experience in general (Al-Harhi, 2005) in the articulation of the deliberately exaggerated positive stories of success abroad shared by their colleagues, friends, and relatives who had studied abroad or who were still abroad based on my qualitative inquiry. As revealed by this study, the aim of this exaggeration by students was to not demotivate those considering the option of studying abroad from undergoing the experience; it also served as a socially desirable response to the commonly held expectations and beliefs about the learning benefits of studying abroad, and subsequently, enabled the students to appear as very successful individuals in the eyes of others and to not lose face in front of them (Khalil) (Pitts, 2009).

However, students' expectations of study abroad regarding language performance and intercultural interactions were confronted with a different reality (Gu et al., 2010; Hammad, 2016; Pitts, 2009).

Consequently, although students experienced both excitement and enthusiasm for the new experience prior to their departure abroad, some students tended to experience varying levels of cultural shock when abroad, depending on the size of the gap between their unrealistic expectations and the confronted reality abroad as well as the cultural distances (Beiser et al., 2015; Brown & Holloway, 2008) in the absence of prior information about the new cultural experience (Chen, 1999; Pitts, 2009) and the culture-specific skills, which would have allowed for a more effective intercultural adjustment and helped students fit into the new culture (Zhou et al., 2008).

Some adaptation stress would also increase as students were already burdened with the expectations of the home country, family, and friends who had faith in them and the state that has sponsored them. Some students could manage this psychological nuance while others could not. This was more likely to have a more negative impact on new students' adaptation to the new culture (Chen, 1999; Derderian-Aghajanian & Wang, 2012; Jung et al., 2007; Pitts, 2009), especially when the cultural distance is great (Beiser et al., 2015). Although appropriate social support from friends can reduce the psychological effects of cultural shock especially at the beginning of the sojourn, further relief is attainable through experts and, more importantly, meaningful intercultural interactions with the host individuals (Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004; Heyward, 2002).

7.3.3 Limited Intercultural Competence

In addition to their instrumental and less self-determined goals behind the decision to study abroad, Omani students in this study experienced other additional challenges to their intercultural interactions while abroad. The challenges were a result of the limited intercultural and linguistic competencies students developed in Oman. Based on the Intercultural Development Inventory, the current Omani students had the lowest developmental level of ICC (Bennett & Bennett, 2001; Bennett & Salonen, 2007; Hammer, 2012a; Hammer, 2015). Although these challenges were universal, they seemed to have a more profound negative impact on Omani students due to the large cultural gap with the host locals (Beiser et al., 2015; Redmond, 2000).

Thus, the cultural, linguistic, personality-related, and cognitive reasons emerged in this order of frequency as the primary reasons for this limited interaction while the educational, family, communication skills-related, and emotional reasons worked as secondary reasons.

To begin with, according to my qualitative and quantitative findings (see Table 22 above & Table 3 in Appendix 17), the cultural reasons were the most reported reasons for Omani students' limited intercultural interactions. The Omani students in this study, based on both the quantitative and qualitative results (Table 17 & Table 22) showed negative attitudes towards cultural differences, demonstrated by the qualitative results as limited tolerance of cultural differences, which generated only limited motivation to interact with and open-mindedness to the Other. As indicated by existing research, they also had ethnocentrism and ambiguity avoidance as discussed below.

7.3.3.1 Limited Tolerance of Cultural Differences

The recent Omani students showed limited tolerance of cultural differences, especially when the cultural gap tended to be large, and the cultural activities and lifestyle went against their customs and traditions.

The students' customs and traditions tended to impose some restrictions and prohibitions on their interactions. Some of these restrictions stemmed not only from national customs and traditions but also from the Islamic religion. Friendships between males and females (e.g., boyfriend and girlfriend) and any other interactions between the two genders that would violate customs, traditions, and Islamic principles were prohibited. The prohibitions and restrictions extended to include clothes, conceptualizations of individual decency, honour, food and drinks, etc. These norms and conceptualizations are less likely to be shared with individuals from other non-Islamic collectivist national cultures (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Brazilians, etc.). Therefore, the cultural gap between the

individualist national culture of the host country and the Islamic collectivist national culture was larger than that of the individualist culture with other non-Islamic collectivist national cultures.

The students, like other Muslims, were expected to comply with the common customs and traditions to maintain success in relationships and interactions within their inner group (Darwish & Huber, 2003). Stepping into meaningful engagements with the host locals abroad required challenging the adopted customs and traditions (Kabasakal & Bodur, 2002).

However, this scenario seemed to be difficult to undertake, as these customs and traditions deal with their fundamental beliefs, attitudes, and values (Cushner, 2005) and are less negotiable as they are also long held (Ying, 2005) and some come from Islamic teachings (Al-Harthi, 2005). Adherence to these traditions and customs is perceived as a mechanism for group identity protection and unity (Cushner, 2005). Therefore, most students in my study opted to retain these cultural values and their inner-circle relationships at the expense of those from outside the group (Mujtaba et al., 2010).

On the other hand, those who had a greater desire to interact with individuals from outside the inner circle and were less concerned with these customs and traditions, based on my qualitative inquiry, were cautious of the inner group's negative reactions to this violation (Kabasakal & Bodur, 2002). The inner circle tended to have a huge influence on its members. The negative consequences and limited tolerance of non-compliance with the values, norms, traditions, and customs appeared as negative social perceptions and images created and adopted against the violators, which, according to Al-Harthi (2005) and Brummer (2013), may extend to including the reputation and honour of their families, especially those of female students. Therefore, based on Al-Harthi (2005), the presence of individuals, especially men and women together, from this cultural background in the same intercultural context may form an obstacle to their participation and interaction with the Other.

From the above, the limited tolerance of cultural differences was not only at the individual level but also at the group level. Therefore, due to fear of these negative reactions and their subsequent compliance with the group expectations, those students preferred staying within the inner-group circle to maintain a positive reputation at the expense of any intercultural interactions (Lu & Hsu, 2008).

In addition, the inner group, based on my qualitative findings, was also of significance to these individuals and some other members, as they were more dependent on it as a comfort zone as well as for educational, psychological, and social support as previously mentioned. Therefore, the students, due to limited tolerance of cultural differences, tended to adopt interaction escape and avoidance skills.

While the students tended to demonstrate limited tolerance of the encountered cultural differences, some of them also perceived a mutual limited tolerance of their cultural and ethnic differences from some

host locals. This tolerance appeared as racism and discrimination. Based on Beiser et al. (2015), the greater the cultural distance, the greater is the discrimination experienced by the international individuals and vice versa. Therefore, some Omani students, and perhaps other Arab students, experienced more practices of racism and discrimination against them compared to their international colleagues sharing the same context. This made these Omani students feel as if they were being treated like criminals and subsequently this generated the feeling of fear among some students of the host locals' unpredictable negative reactions towards them in intercultural communication. In line with Worchel (2005), they thus preferred staying away due to reasons of safety and security, which is an indication of the lower levels of adaptation to the host culture according to Abbe et al. (2010).

However, the students' perception of some locals' limited tolerance of cultural and ethnic differences, according to my qualitative inquiry, was not always based on an experienced incidents and a solid basis of truth but rather an overestimation or unfortunate interpretation of the perceived intolerance. This is because several students tended to rely on speculations (e.g., *I guess, maybe, I think* and so on) in their interpretation of the perceived unwelcoming behaviours, which, according to Hua (2019), and Spencer-Rodgers and McGovern (2002), was due to a lack of experience and subsequently inadequate knowledge about other cultural groups. Some students tended to perceive such limited tolerance as a result of their overestimation of the negative behaviours of less-known others in the presence of previously adopted stereotypes about their counterparts. According to Hua (2019), due to inadequate knowledge of the Other and reliance on the held negative stereotypes, some individuals may look for any negative evidence to affirm the held beliefs about the Other. Therefore, some of these perceived negative reactions tended to be misinterpreted as deliberate discrimination and racism being practised against Omani and Arab students in general.

These negative behaviours, according to my study, could have reflected individual differences in interpersonal communications rather than necessarily be representative of the host culture. However, because of previously accommodated stereotypes and the limited knowledge and awareness of the Other (Fedor, 2014; Hua, 2019; Lebedko, 2014), as will be discussed later on, some students seemed to be unable to differentiate between cultural and individual differences in intercultural interactions.

7.3.3.2 Limited Motivation for Intercultural Interactions

Meaningful intercultural communication is less likely to occur if individuals are not intrinsically motivated to interact with those from other cultures and perceive less importance and fewer benefits of carrying out the act of communication compared to its costs (Rudd & Lawson, 2007b; Spitzberg, 2000). As a consequence of the instrumental goals set for study abroad and the limited tolerance of cultural

differences, the students in this study showed insufficient motivation to interact with the Other. This is despite the fact that they realized the benefits they could gain from meaningful interactions and even though the opportunities for interaction with the Other were available and abundant on the university campus, for example, through student classes and activities (Ife, 2000; Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart, 2002), and even though the English language sometimes was not a barrier. Although some students explained they had no or at least a very limited number of host locals in their study programs, student activities were available through which they could have developed their intercultural networks (Meier & Daniels, 2013). This limited motivation to interact with the counterpart was also grounded in cultural differences, as individuals from collectivist national cultures tend to show less willingness to interact with the culturally different individuals than individualist people with collectivist ones (Lu & Hsu, 2008).

Some of these students justified their lack of desire to interact with the Other as they were abroad to attain specialist education and academic qualifications (and thus apparently gave less importance to intercultural interactions in achieving the educational goals) and they felt more related and comfortable with Omani and Arab individuals due to the mutual understanding provided by shared commonalities including the Arabic language and Islamic Arab culture, interests, and goals. Others attributed it to the conflicting interests of topics of conversation (Cao & Philp, 2006); in particular, some Omani students had a fear of violating Oman's restrictions on the topics of discussion while abroad and of bearing the possible consequences.

Therefore, due to the lack of integrative motivation, in line with Hernández (2010) and Rudd and Lawson (2007b), the Omani students in my study tended to contact the Other more for instrumental reasons to achieve contemporary goals and survival needs, such as food and drink, health, study, transport, and others. Once the service was obtained, the interaction was abandoned. These intercultural encounters took place more in shops, medical practices, restaurants, hotels, and train stations when travelling, and on the way into and out of the property. Along with Bennett, Aston, and Colquhoun (2000), by being able to secure everyday living necessities (e.g., food and drinks and so on) and achieve contemporary goals, Omani students may appear interculturally competent; however, such an ability on its own is not a reliable sign of success in intercultural interactions and adaptation to the host culture. In accordance with Vande Berg et al. (2009) and Volet and Ang (2012), even when the opportunity is available, intercultural interaction rarely takes place when students are left to make their own choices, especially in the absence of learning intentions and intercultural interventions.

Some Omani students tended to perceive a mutual tendency from the Other, as some local students were motivated to approach Omani students only when it was necessary for study purposes rather than

due to any interest in building social interactions. This was to be expected, as in the presence of large cultural differences, people tend to approach each other less expressively (Manev & Stevenson, 2001).

7.3.3.3 Limited Open-Mindedness to the Other

In addition to their limited tolerance of cultural differences and motivation to interact, several students also tended to develop limited open-mindedness to the Other. In an attempt to justify their limited open-mindedness, they tended to put the ball in the Other's court by attributing their limited intercultural open-mindedness to their perception of the limited open-mindedness from the Other. Although this was considered to be true of some host locals, it was also true, according to my study, that the impact of the students' limited tolerance of cultural differences, such as customs and traditions, limited not only their motivation to interact but also their open-mindedness to the Other.

Some students tended to show more open-mindedness to the Other, though it was limited overall, particularly intercultural interactions in academic contexts mainly for academic purposes. Some of these interactions, especially the ones in the classroom, were managed by teachers. Otherwise, when the opportunity arose, the students showed a preference for interacting with colleagues from the same culture or at best with those individuals coming from similar collectivist backgrounds, such as Pakistan, India, the Philippines, Turkey, and other South and East Asian countries. The tolerance of cultural differences, motivation to interact, and open-mindedness to the Other clearly tended to decline as the cultural gap increased. Therefore, Omani students tended to show less open-mindedness to the white English people who formed the dominant group in the host country, that is, the native speakers of the English language, which Omani students had set as a goal for improvement prior to study abroad.

7.3.3.4 Ethnocentrism and Ambiguity Avoidance

Based on the existing knowledge, the limited intercultural interactions and their instrumental nature indicate that the students had not only limited willingness to communicate (Cao & Philp, 2006; Kang, 2014; Yashima et al., 2004) but also high levels of uncertainty and ambiguity avoidance due to their limited intercultural knowledge and awareness and subsequently perception of threat (Al-Harthi, 2005; Cushner, 2005; Froese et al., 2012; Neuliep, 2012; Schmitz, 2012). They also appeared to have ethnocentrism (Abbe et al., 2010; Apple & Aliponga, 2018; Arasaratnam & Banerjee, 2011; Bennet, 2010; Bennett & Bennett, 2001; Bennett, 2004; Dong et al., 2008; Genç & Bada, 2005; Guirdham & Guirdham, 2017; Hammer, 2012b; Manev & Stevenson, 2001; Zhang, 2014).

Therefore, according to Cushner (2008), Arasaratnam and Doerfel (2005), Martincová and Lukešová (2015), and Yoshida et al. (2013), these students were less likely to show open-mindedness to different cultural groups and perspectives.

7.3.4 Limited Intercultural Personality Quality

According to my DMICC, the intercultural personality, intercultural education, and intercultural experiences constituted the three main gates to a more meaningful intercultural experience abroad (Figure 1). However, there was a significant lack of intercultural preparation programs for the study-abroad experience. Though the Omani students had undergone intercultural experiences abroad, these experiences were also less “experienced” and were subsequently ineffective as has been discussed previously.

According to Dewey et al. (2013), Jang and Kim (2010), and Ying and Han (2006), besides the importance of language, intercultural education, and intercultural experience, the success of individuals from a collectivist culture in a culturally individualist environment is more dependent on building a personality that maintains openness and extroversion towards culturally individualist people than adherence to their customs and traditions that may be of less importance to the host locals and vice versa.

However, a large number of Omani individuals, based on both my quantitative and qualitative results, had a shy introvert personality, which was among the students’ main reasons for interacting less with the Other and was the second most common reason expressed by 311 study-abroad students after the cultural reasons according to the quantitative findings (see Table 3, Appendix 17). This personality quality generated in students’ shyness regarding their poor level of English and subsequent fear of negative reactions, as well as a fear of intercultural misunderstandings and violation of the host culture taboos due to limited knowledge and awareness of the host culture, as will be discussed later on.

While some students tended to refrain from intercultural interactions because of their limited language capabilities and their resultant shyness, fear, and introversion, some others tended to refrain from interactions with people regardless of whether these individuals’ cultures were the same or different from theirs, as they were innately shy and introvert. These students *loved* staying alone to focus more on finishing their studies abroad. Although some of these students had a desire to join cultural groups, such desire was not strong enough to overcome their shy personalities (Sutin, 2011).

Moreover, some of students’ shyness appeared as a show of respect and politeness to the Other. So, being too polite tended to appear as a sign of shyness to some people.

7.3.5 Limited Linguistic Competence

Besides the importance of positive attitudes to cultural differences, motivation to communicate, and so on, higher levels of confidence in the use of the English language are of immense importance for the success of interaction and psychological adjustment in intercultural environments in line with the existing research (Abbe et al., 2010; Ali, 2014a; Cetinkaya-Yildiz et al., 2011; Fantini & Tirmizi, 2007;

Pikhart, 2014b). The confident use of the host language reduces the number of communication difficulties encountered in the host society (Yang et al., 2006).

However, besides the cultural challenges and along with some other international students, several Omani students reported having experienced limited linguistic abilities and subsequently limited linguistic confidence in complex intercultural encounters (Teng, 2005), in contrast to their expectations prior to studying abroad (Brown, 2008). This resulted from limited speaking and listening abilities, and hence, limited vocabulary and knowledge, and subsequently, limited choice of topics under discussion (Liu, 2007).

Due to their perception of the gap between expectations and reality with their limited language abilities, several Omani students lost their confidence regarding participation in intercultural interactions, which was accompanied with the feelings of reluctance, anxiety, shame, and inferiority (Brown, 2008; Neuliep, 2012; White, 2014). These feelings of poor communication skills and poor performance in English and the subsequent regret and sorrow were also present among some students in Oman (Al-Mahrooqi, 2012).

Similar to some other international students, some Omani students had difficulties in expressing themselves to the Other (Yang et al., 2006), especially when it came to speaking spontaneously in the English language without preparation time and when quick exchanges were required (Al-Bulushi & Al-Issa, 2012; Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). Therefore, some Omani students engaged in intercultural gatherings more as listeners than as active meaning negotiators. This was also because of their limited open-mindedness and interest in some conversation topics, accompanied by fears of violating the Omani government's study abroad regulations and restrictions of discussion topics. Although active listening is a way of knowing and understanding the Other, it becomes more effective when one suspends judgement, manages negative emotions (Baten et al., 2011), and tolerates cultural differences and preferences, something several students in my study could not do due to their limited cultural abilities, as has already been discussed.

In line with Brown (2008), Jin and Cortazzi (2006), and Spencer-Rodgers and McGovern (2002), some students in my study tended to perceive some counterparts' limited tolerance of their English language and, subsequently, felt disadvantaged by their low confidence, and this again helped them adopt diplomatic communication avoidance and escape strategies (Al Alawi, 2016) to withdraw to their inner-circles due to shyness mixed with fears and worries of making mistakes (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006), appearing foolish when speaking the language (communication apprehension) (Neuliep, 2012), and concerns about hearing negative feedback or any other negative reactions to their limited English language (Cheng &

Erben, 2012; Fernández-García & Martínez-Arbelaiz, 2014; Kang, 2014), although the provided feedback is important for the improvement of their English language as reported by Fernández-García and Martínez-Arbelaiz (2014).

When attending discussions, several students tended to more prefer listening to speaking. In particular, some students had already perceived some host locals' limited tolerance of their low proficiency in the English language in student work groups for example. Their withdrawal to their inner circle was thus due to them feeling more comfortable and confident in interacting with those who speak the Arabic language and subsequently due to saving face rather than taking risks (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006).

While it was possible that some locals abroad may not tolerate engaging in conversation with those with incompetent English, it was also possible that several students overestimated the locals' negative reactions to their English language mistakes. This overestimation of reactions and unfortunate perceptions was more likely to happen as a result of individuals' lack of experience and knowledge of the Other (Abbe et al., 2010; Bennett, 2009; Brosan et al., 2008; Kruger & Dunning, 2009; Lockley & Yoshida, 2016; Savicki et al., 2004). On the other hand, some Omani students perceived that several host locals were helpful and supportive by expressing statements of encouragement (e.g., *'Your English is brilliant - so good!'*) and were also polite when pointing out the inaccurate use of the English language. Some locals also expressed appreciation of students being able to speak more than one language. However, several students preferred interaction avoidance to risk taking at the expense of their English language improvement. As a result, Omani students' communication in English tended to decline in frequency and amount of time (Apple & Aliponga, 2018).

The cause of this limited confidence was traced back to students' experiences in Oman. Similar to several students from other collectivist cultures (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006), the Omani students' exposure to the English language and its meaningful practice inside and outside the classroom was very limited, as reported by some interviewees and as indicated by Al-Bulushi and Al-Issa (2012), and Fahmy and Bilton (2010). This was due to the lack of context for meaningful intercultural contact, so the language was less frequently practised with English language native speakers, especially beyond the classroom and are thus students' language skills were less developed for real life use. The English language was used more as medium of teaching and learning and was perceived more as a foreign language than a second language, so it was used less communicatively than for instrumental purposes, such as to secure an employment, for example (Al-Bulushi & Al-Issa, 2012; Al-Mahrooqi, 2012; Apple & Aliponga, 2018; Hernández, 2010). Therefore, students may perceive the development of English as a socio-cultural medium of interaction as having less importance, as it has less impact on their everyday life in Oman (Fahmy &

Bilton, 2010), and as reported by Brummer (2013), the majority of Omani students do not seem to have any desire to stay abroad after graduation.

Its teaching and learning was more meant to pass exams (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006; Kohn, 2011). Therefore, English language teaching, as in other collectivist national cultures, gave more concern to language content teaching and less to culture teaching and language practice for real life (Al-Issa, 2005; Al-Mahrooqi, 2012; Al-Siyabi, 2012; Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). Moreover, the teaching places more emphasis on accuracy than on fluency, which tended to produce graduates with poor performance in English language especially in intercultural communication (Kaypak & Ortaçtepe, 2014; Zhou & Griffiths, 2011).

The productive language skills (speaking and writing), compared to the receptive and passive ones (listening and reading), were thus less practised and, accordingly, were less developed for real life use (Al-Bulushi & Al-Issa, 2012; Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). Al-Harthi (2005) went further to report that some Arab Gulf students, including Omani students, experienced challenges with both the receptive and productive skills.

Less emphasis has also been placed on the development of communication skills (Al-Mahrooqi, 2012), as, in line with Blake et al. (2000), the educational system in Oman tends to approach the foreign language as a target on its own while, in fact, communication in English and the development of the ability fluency should be the target.

Learning is more dependent on memorising vocabulary and grammar (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). Therefore, students tended to feel more confident in English when topics could be prepared in advance, and so they did not struggle much when giving in-class presentations. However, they began to feel the gap between their performance in class and real-life situations when they studied abroad. They demonstrated a loss of confidence in oral communication, especially where communication was spontaneous and skill was required (Al-Bulushi & Al-Issa, 2012), so they did not have time to think in Arabic before speaking in English. Some students also expressed having difficulties with the pronunciation of some English words.

What made real life face-to-face intercultural communication even more difficult is that some students also had limited vocabulary and poor knowledge of the topics under discussion. They had only limited vocabulary to express themselves in intercultural encounters especially when conversations tended to involve in-depth discussions. They also faced challenges when discussing topics beyond their specialisations. Some students went farther to explain that they had difficulties in even expressing concepts they had grasped in their fields of study because of their limited vocabulary set. They thus felt

inferior and less smart in class, for example, compared to those who had better competence in English and the native English language speakers in particular. Therefore, they tended to drift away from discussions about topics they were less familiar with or, at least, they preferred listening and occasionally giving their thoughts from time to time rather than active spontaneous speaking.

Besides the language limitations above, some students also had limited listening abilities (Al-Harthi, 2005). Though this occurred more at the beginning of the intercultural journey abroad, they tended to encounter varying levels of difficulty in understanding the locals' different accents of English, similar to students from other collectivist national cultures (Liu, 2007), especially when speaking at greater speed. They tended to rely on asking these people to repeat their questions and answers to understand them better, especially where non-verbal communication was missing, such as when calling taxis or ordering food from restaurants over phone, for example. According to the research, most of the meaning conveyed in interaction contexts comes from non-verbal behaviours, which helps people understand each other and their spoken language (Matsumoto & Takeuchi, 1998; Nazarenko, 2015; Schmitz, 2012).

After all, prior to study abroad, the Omani students tended to evaluate their English language capabilities as excellent due to the high grades they obtained in the standardised English language tests (e.g., IELTS and TOEFL). More importantly, their English was not challenged as it was less used as discussed above (Abbe et al., 2010; Evanoff, 2006; Savicki et al., 2004). When abroad, they encountered a different reality about these capabilities (Brown, 2008). According to research, scoring highly in the standardized English language tests (e.g., IELTS and TOEFL) does not guarantee confidence in using English in intercultural engagements; neither does it guarantee communication success (Brown, 2008; Cheng & Erben, 2012; Sawir et al., 2012). These tests were there to ensure students developed a satisfactory performance in English to meet the minimum linguistic requirements to pursue their studies at the host institutions abroad (Lebcir et al., 2008; Zhang & Mi, 2010).

7.3.6 Limited Cognitive Competence

Omani students also stated having had limited cognitive abilities which, in order of frequency, as limited intercultural knowledge and awareness, adoption of negative intercultural stereotypes, and limited knowledge of general life management and daily living requirements.

7.3.6.1 Limited Intercultural Knowledge and Awareness

Similar to students from other cultures (Zhou & Griffiths, 2011), several Omani students had limited awareness of cultural differences, and they had less knowledge of the counterparts' cultural prohibitions and acceptances. Therefore, their interactions were limited, as they had poor knowledge of

any mechanisms that could be used to interact with them (Spitzberg, 2000) and to participate in discussion topics (Liu, 2007), and were less able to predict the host locals' behaviours, which possibly led to higher levels of stress and anxiety according to Hullett and Witte (2001). This insufficient knowledge and awareness of the host culture not only may reduce the motivation to interact, according to Spitzberg (2000) but also made interactions with the host locals more challenging despite the fact that some Omani students reported having a good level of English language and were less concerned about adhering to their Omani customs and traditions. From this, although poor language abilities are more likely to limit success in intercultural situations in line with Martin (2013), as also stated by Jackson (2008), Jackson (2009), and Rudd and Lawson (2007b), despite its significance, the English language on its own is insufficient to develop meaningful relationships with Others in the inadequate knowledge and awareness of the counterpart culture and its people.

Hence, students tended to rely on expectations and stereotypes (Matsumoto et al., 2005), as will be explained next, during their navigation of the intercultural experience. According to several students in my study, their intercultural knowledge and awareness of their limitations resulted from their insufficient preparation for the study-abroad experience. The Omani government sent its students abroad with the belief that by being abroad, students would find ways to participate in intercultural interactions and develop their learning, but the officials were mistaken in this belief. Moreover, according to some students, intercultural interventions and mediations abroad were frequently unavailable to help them acquire adequate knowledge and better awareness and understanding of the host locals' culture. Omani students were less likely to develop knowledge and awareness of the host culture, as they showed limited tolerance of cultural differences and limited motivation to interact with the Other.

Besides being embarrassed by their incompetent performance in the English language and subsequently being afraid of unexpected negative comments and reactions from others, some other students also expressed a fear of intercultural misunderstandings that could result from cultural differences, especially when the knowledge of the host culture was limited. According to Spitzberg (2000), individuals' knowledge of the host culture and communication can be developed by the adoption of knowledge acquisition strategies that include deliberate violation of local customs for the purposeful value assessment of different actions in some social contexts (posturing) besides observing others, asking questions, and exchanging information (Spitzberg, 2000). However, these students felt too cautious about violating the host culture taboos and the counterparts' negative reactions to such a violation. They thus were hesitant with regard to intercultural interactions. Such fear and exaggerated caution deprived the students of the opportunity to develop intercultural knowledge and awareness and interactions.

7.3.6.2 Negative Intercultural Stereotypes

Due to their limited knowledge and awareness of the host culture, some students tended to rely on negative stereotypes about the host locals and other people from other cultures even before going through the study-abroad experience. They tended to overgeneralize the held images, impressions, and assumptions by referring to the culturally distinct people as one group without acknowledging the possible differences within the counterpart cultural groups. They relied on national comparisons (between the American and English peoples, for example) for classifying and categorising people and subsequently in their approach to these people, some even before studying abroad. These stereotypic behaviours are a normal translation of the lack of knowledge of differences within the counterpart cultural groups and even the overgeneralisation of past negative experiences (Hua, 2019; Schmitz, 2012; Schneider, 2005), especially when contact is reduced (Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002). Most of these stereotyped categorisations and overgeneralisations, according to my study, were based on feelings, previously heard stories, rumours, thoughts, impressions, images, guesses, assumptions, and speculative statements that had no obvious solid self-experienced evidence of truth.

Due to the overestimated perceptions of threat and limited intercultural cognition, some students tended to misinterpret negative, but perhaps undeliberate, behaviour as a sign of hatred towards them and among several students as behaviours that were representative of the host locals at large. Some students may deliberately work on tracing every possible negative sign as ‘evidence’ to convince themselves of the truth of their negative perceptions against the counterpart (Hua, 2019; Schmitz, 2012; Tusting et al., 2002).

Limited intercultural knowledge and awareness regarding the prevalence of negative stereotypes generated misinterpretations of some of the encountered behaviours. Therefore, though the opportunities for interaction with the locals abroad were still available and abundant, several students were unable to move beyond the negative stereotypes and misunderstandings they held about the Other as well as feelings of threat from the counterpart (Jung et al., 2007; Kunst et al., 2012). The larger cultural gap, especially when the knowledge and awareness of the Other is limited, seemed to inflate these misunderstandings, discrimination, and the perception of threat, and ultimately, exacerbated intercultural group segregation for security and safety reasons (Al-Harathi, 2005; Beiser et al., 2015; Chen, 1999; Derderian-Aghajanian & Wang, 2012; Froese et al., 2012; Gareis, 2012; Mehta et al., 2006; Nes et al., 2007; Safdar et al., 2008). Therefore, according to Worchel (2005), the recognition and acceptance of cultural differences must be mutual to achieve a greater feeling of security in intercultural communication.

Stereotypical impressions were noticed not only among some Omani students; in addition, there were also unfortunate overgeneralisations and inaccurate conceptions among some host locals about Muslims. In support of Derderian-Aghajanian and Wang (2012), Howard et al. (2006), Lane-Toomey and Lane (2013), and Strabac and Listhaug (2008), in contrast to other cultural groups, some Western media, especially after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, tended to systematically promote negative stereotypes of Muslims and Arabs in particular, representing them as criminals and terrorists and referring to them by their religion and ethnicity although Omani individuals, the example here, were found to be peaceful and approachable when interacted with, as revealed by Koerner (2013). Therefore, Muslim Arab individuals were more vulnerable to prejudice and discrimination (Al-Harhi, 2005; Howard et al., 2006; Kunst et al., 2012; Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002; Strabac & Listhaug, 2008), which was also reported by my interviewee, Lora.

Such correlations of Muslims with terrorism and crimes have created feelings of Islamophobia among some host locals abroad especially in the limitation of interactions between the two groups; females in particular are easily recognisable by their appearance in line with Al-Harhi (2005), Elchardus and Spruyt (2014), Kunst et al. (2012), Mahmud and Swami (2010), and Saroglou et al. (2009).

Similarly, while some Omani students experienced real racism and discrimination, other students also felt more vulnerable than other cultural groups to such anti-Arab and anti-Islam practices. The feelings of insecurity tended to increase due to the limited knowledge and awareness of the Other and subsequently of their unpredictable behaviours.

Therefore, the other quality that individuals should have is the control and restoration of their negative emotions resulting from experiencing unpleasant incidents in intercultural contexts to stop the overgeneralization of these negative images and incidents to all people in the host culture and subsequently to provide more room for building meaningful interactions with the Other (Matsumoto et al., 2005; Matsumoto et al., 2007; Yoshida et al., 2013).

Despite their attempts to overcome such feelings, some students lost control of these feelings and thus tended to avoid interactions especially with the host white people due to their perceptions of this group practising more racism and discrimination.

On the other hand, there were other Omani students who seemed to have a better control over these feelings, as they could justify such control. These students in the first place were able to control the intervention of intercultural stereotypes in interactions and then to see individual differences in the interactions. They realised that such bad behaviours were not necessarily representative of the host culture and deliberate bad behaviours practised against Muslims. According to several students, there

were host locals who showed sympathy to and solidarity with Muslims. This means that the opportunities for intercultural interactions and intercultural development were still available and, perhaps, more abundant than thought.

After all, although the control and regulation of negative intercultural emotions was necessary, it was inadequate on its own. As individuals control their emotional reactions, they should participate in meaningful interactions with the counterparts. However, these students' intercultural interactions were also limited, like those of students who could not control their negative intercultural emotions. This may explain why these students could not regulate their negative emotions effectively. The cultural, linguistic, personality-related, and cognitive reasons were also more influential than just controlling and regulating these negative intercultural emotions.

7.3.6.3 Limited Knowledge of General Life Management and Daily Living Requirements

Besides their limited knowledge and awareness of cultural differences, this study added that limited knowledge of simple but new things such as, hygiene, recycling regulations, public transportation, and electricity and water registration can cause additional difficulty to general life management and daily living requirements abroad. The unavailability of this information from the sending sponsor and experts abroad made students rely on inner-circle individuals for learning all this at the expense of intercultural interactions.

7.4 Secondary Reasons to Omani Students' Limited Study Abroad Benefits

While the less self-determined and instrumental goals to study abroad as well as the cultural, personality, linguistic, and cognitive reasons were the most frequently expressed and influential barriers to Omani students' intercultural interactions, the educational, family, emotional, and skills-related reasons were the least influential ones, even though some of them (e.g., family reasons) tended to be highly reported by 311 Omani study-abroad students (see Appendix 17, Table 3). The emotional and communication skills have already been discussed along with the main reasons. This part will discuss the educational and family challenges.

7.4.1 Educational Challenges

Almost all Omani students in my study also encountered educational challenges, which included, in order of frequency, study commitments and time restrictions, limited research knowledge and incompatible learning skills, and finally, limited awareness of the host educational system.

7.4.1.1 Incompatible Learning Skills, and Study and Time Commitments

Similar to other international students, especially those from other collectivist national cultures, intercultural pressures increased, as some Omani students had limited knowledge of scientific research

and suffered from incompatible learning skills. These pressures increased even more as students moved from undergraduate studies to postgraduate ones (see Figures 14, 15, &16). They were less trained in Oman with regard to, for example, research skills including, but not limited to, writing a literature review or methodology chapter, analysing data, referencing, and using technology (e.g., SPSS and NVivo) in this regard. The educational system in Oman, largely similar to that in other collectivist nations, emphasizes more the development of low learning skills, such as memorisation and recalling information, so students' higher learning skills, such as criticality, knowledge analysis, synthesis and application abilities were underdeveloped compared with in the counterpart educational system abroad (Al-Harathi, 2005; Al-Sadi, 2012; Al Barwani, 2002; Brummer, 2013; Derderian-Aghajanian & Wang, 2012; Jin & Cortazzi, 2006; Kelly, 2009; Kohn, 2011; Walker, 2004; Zhou et al., 2008).

The gap in teaching and learning styles, requirements, skills, assessments, and expectations between the educational systems was reported to exert academic pressures and subsequently stress on several Omani students in their adaptation to the system, and this may extend to include teachers in the host educational system as well (Adrian-Taylor et al., 2007; Gill, 2007; Lebcir et al., 2008).

Moreover, grades were of concern to some Omani students (for example, Zaid), as their learning is largely judged and awarded by the grades they obtain (Al-Mahrooqi, 2012; Al-Siyabi, 2012; Alyahmadi, 2006; Brummer, 2013; Chen, 1999; Jin & Cortazzi, 2006; Kohn, 2011). For more details of the differences between the two educational systems, please see section 2.9: Educational Challenges.

Besides the study commitments, learning stress seemed to increase as students' study abroad was restricted due to deadlines. The students' failure to meet the deadline for attaining the intended academic degrees abroad was more likely to make them bear some financial costs, as they would automatically cease to receive some study-abroad allowances.

Therefore, Omani students tended to invest more time and effort not only to meeting the counterpart system's requirements and expectations as well as those of the sponsor but also to finishing their academic studies with perhaps high grades and distinctions, though this was apparently at the expense of intercultural interactions including those in the academic settings. Omani students interacted with the Other, especially those from closer cultural backgrounds, for study purposes; however, these interactions were largely abandoned when some Omani students witnessed incompatible learning performances from these students, which would affect their learning (Lebcir et al., 2008).

These educational challenges and the students' resultant psychological problems in the limited support expected from others, and sometimes even from other Omani colleagues, encouraged students to study on their own or withdraw to their intracultural groups due to the high expectations of getting

educational and psychological support (Chen, 1999) especially from those who were more knowledgeable and fast learning regarding improving their academic performance and confidence (Lebcir et al., 2008). Such expectations of support were other additional commitments that would add to the time of one being busy with his/her studies and giving support to colleagues from the same country or another Arab country and thus reduced the opportunities for interaction with the Other.

7.4.1.2 Limited Awareness of the Host Educational System

While the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation in Oman provided students with good student services (e.g., the monthly allowance, air tickets, health insurance, tuition fee payment, and so on), it obviously provided less with regard to students' preparation for this intercultural experience. Therefore, besides study commitments, time restrictions, limited research knowledge, and incompatible learning skills, some Omani students also had limited awareness of the host educational system. They tended to rely on expectations as they were not aware of what they were going to face abroad, the nature of the student-supervisor relationship, and their rights and obligations.

The intensity of these educational struggles could have been reduced if the government of Oman, as represented by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation had provided students with preparation programs to increase students' knowledge and awareness not only of the host community's culture but also of the host educational system and its culture of learning by making them aware of differences. It could have helped students by exposing them to and sponsoring educational programs similar to those the students would encounter when studying abroad, especially with regard to scientific research knowledge and learning skills. This would have reduced the gap between expectations and reality and so would have reduced the resultant psychological nuances (Pitts, 2009; Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006; Young et al., 2013).

As explained above, the large gap and incompatibility between the home and host educational systems was the main cause of Omani students' educational struggles, which in turn, had a negative impact on their intercultural interactions. However, their limited preparation for the experience increased the students' struggles in their adaptation and adjustment to the new educational system.

Although the educational challenges added an additional burden to some students more than others, and may seem to be among the most serious adjustment challenges to international students according to Malaklolu and Selan (2011), these challenges could not hold themselves as the primary reasons for several Omani students' limited interactions abroad (see Appendix 15). In addition, they were the least commonly cited reasons for interacting less with the host locals (see Appendix 17, Table 3). Moreover, according to my qualitative findings, these challenges were perceived by several students to create

opportunities to interact with the other to seek knowledge and experience about research, for example. Engaging in these interactions would have helped Omani students adjust more successfully to the academic environment and subsequently they would have attained better academic success (Young et al., 2013). The educational context through academic and development courses, discussion sessions, classes, seminars, and student conferences provided by the host institution and those organised by university students helped provide Omani students with opportunities for interaction with students from other cultures and subsequently better adjustment to campus life (Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002).

In addition, though to varying degrees, several students also tended to have time during the day and around their hours of study to exploit to opportunity to experience intercultural interactions and achieving their study purposes. However, several Omani students preferred to seek more support from members of their inner-circle groups and less from Others. Such preference and the consequent limited engagement in university activities is an indicator of several Omani students' limited adjustment to the counterpart culture (Bennett, 2004; Manev & Stevenson, 2001; Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002).

7.4.2 Family Challenges

Several Omani students preferred taking their families with them abroad to staying alone, as the families seemed to play a role in helping students settle emotionally and psychologically. This was believed to help students focus on their studies. However, several students living abroad with their Omani family members tended to experience an additional burden manifested as family commitments and responsibilities, such as, but not limited to, taking care of their families, dropping off and picking up their children from school, and helping their school children with their learning.

Moreover, along with Causin and Ayoun (2011), the family's intercultural struggle seemed to have a negative impact on students' intercultural success. Some families, especially children, tended to experience cultural shock because of the large distance and significant cultural differences (UK Council for International Student Affairs, 2013). So, students felt obliged to help their families overcome this challenge. This burden tended to increase when the family was more dependent on the student to meet their everyday needs.

As stated by Chapdelaine and Alexitch (2004), study pressures seemed to reduce the time the students spent with their families, which seemed to have a negative impact on the partners' satisfaction of staying abroad with the student. Therefore, these students preferred spending their free time with their children and partners by helping with the housework or spending time out together.

In line with Volet and Ang (2012), family commitments and responsibilities tended to clash with some students' desires (though not strong enough as previously discussed) to join social and student

activities abroad. So, the opportunities for intercultural interaction tended to be reduced among these students staying abroad with their families compared to those staying abroad alone (see Appendix 11, Tables 7 & 9). Most of these students' intercultural interactions tended to take place more at the university campus, at the library, during class time or between class breaks.

Overall, several Omani parent students needed to dedicate time and energy to family responsibilities and commitments, and this burden tended to increase, though to varying degrees, in accordance with the level of the family's dependence on the student in running their life abroad. These responsibilities seemed to reduce their intercultural interactions. Omani students studying abroad (N=311) ranked being abroad with their Omani families as the third most commonly experienced reason for interacting less with the Other after the cultural and personality-related reasons. Despite the fact that the family responsibilities and commitments exerted a greater additional burden for some students than for others, the family did not seem to be an influential reason for students' limited intercultural interactions abroad (see Appendix 11, Tables 7-10). Moreover, Omani school children were bridges for their parent students to interact with the Other through, for example, school and other social activities and gatherings. Despite the family commitments and responsibilities, opportunities for intercultural interaction were still available. From here, the instrumental and less self-determined decisions to study abroad as well as the cultural, linguistic, personality-related, and cognitive reasons seemed to be the main reasons behind Omani students' limited interactions abroad.

Perhaps, the students use family commitments as an excuse for their inability to experience true intercultural relationships, or perhaps they exaggerate the extent to which this reason is a genuine barrier. In line with Ife (2000), the participants may accuse a third party in order to absolve themselves of intercultural failure. Although a third party may interfere in determining the relationship between the Omani students and host locals, the participants were the major obstacle to their intercultural interactions.

7.5 Omani Students' Learning Benefits of Study Abroad

The reasons above not only made the intercultural interactions abroad challenging for Omani students, but they were even more challenging compared with other cultural groups, as indicated by the absence of the role of previous experience in the current situation and the longer period of time needed by Omani students to develop their intercultural and linguistic competencies.

Subsequently, the fewer intercultural interactions and the preference for staying within the comfort zone of the inner-circle made students' interactions abroad largely similar to those of students staying in Oman, which made study abroad less effective in producing additional benefits to those obtained in Oman (Bennett & Bennett, 2001; Douglas & Jones-Ridders, 2001). In addition, the less developed

intercultural and linguistic abilities prior to studying abroad were a factor in the learning returns of students undergoing this experience and the time required in this regard (Collentine, 2009). After all, what benefits did the Omani students report having gained from study abroad?

In answering this question, although Omani students' intercultural interactions were very limited, one cannot say that none of the students benefitted from study abroad. In fact, along with Jackson (2015) and Liu (2007), for example, while some students could not experience any improvement in their intercultural communicative competence and self-efficacy in intercultural English language use and intercultural interaction when abroad, other students experienced some improvement, though it was still limited.

7.5.1 Limited Intercultural Learning

With regard to intercultural communicative competence, in contrary to students from other national cultures including the other collectivist national cultures (Brown, 2009; Cushner, 2008; Gu, 2012; Miladinovic, 2014b; Norris & Gillespie, 2009), my interviewed Omani students' intercultural learning was more restricted to knowledge development of the host culture's tangible observable elements, and less with regard to in-depth knowledge and awareness of the host locals' unique worldviews, perspectives, traditions, and customs (Bennett & Bennett, 2001; Bennett, 2009). Based on my qualitative inquiry, the students developed knowledge about the geography and the market food. They also came to know about some of the events and ceremonies that people in the host country usually celebrate (e.g., Easter, Christmas, Bank holidays, Black Friday, and so on). They were able to learn about travel within the host country, weather, the currency, streets, buildings, tourist attractions, and many others. They also came to know more about the host country's educational system, such as schemes of assessment and evaluation. Even when some students claimed to have developed knowledge and awareness of the host locals' culture, they tended to refer more to the tangible (objective) aspects of the host culture (e.g., occasions of celebration, food and so on).

The hidden aspects of a culture are considered the biggest and most influential element of a culture and how it affects its individuals' behaviours (Bennett & Bennett, 2001; Bennett, 2009; Cushner, 2005). Such learning is more attainable through engagement with the host culture (Heyward, 2002). Although individuals' knowledge of objective culture is important, it is insufficient on its own for paving the way to the development of intercultural competence, as our knowledge and awareness of the subjective culture is what gives us access to the worldview of various groups of people and their wide range of experiences and, what is more, it facilitates intercultural communication, especially when accompanied by understanding, respect, and appreciation of these various experiences and differences (Bennett &

Bennett, 2001). Along with Bennett (2009), if intercultural exposures and study-abroad programs are about learning the objective culture of people, then self-study alone is largely enough to build this knowledge without the need to study abroad.

Several Omani students got to know more about the cultures of individuals they had more interactions with due to the smaller cultural distance than they learned about the host locals. Therefore, some of their previously held misconceptions about the locals persisted and even became stronger among some Omani students.

Other than the development of superficial knowledge of the host cultures, the rest of the intercultural components (behaviours, deep knowledge, control of negative emotions resulting from negative intercultural incidences, communication skills) remained largely undeveloped.

7.5.2 Limited English Language Learning

Similarly, although some Omani students in my study declared that they had improved their linguistic competence and some perceived to have improved *a lot*, this improvement was actually limited. As in Oman, English learning was more restricted to the classroom setting and the academic context in general. Therefore, supported by specialist vocabulary and field knowledge of topics under discussion, students gained more confidence in speaking English as an academic language.

Based on my study, the academic reading and writing skills were the most developed language skills. This is as students' ability to write successful academic and research papers tended to parallel the development of their ability to critically read other academic and research papers and subsequently build a specialist vocabulary, and vice versa. Some students also learned the language's grammar by listening to others and mainly by taking grammar teaching courses while abroad.

In the same vein, according to my qualitative results, outside the academic context, students could gain general vocabulary from reading the ingredients of products while shopping and reading information from boards in public places. Besides the new vocabulary, they also learnt some language expressions. Thus, it is not surprising that some students reported learning *a lot* with regard to the English language, as several students in collectivist cultures of learning largely perceive English language learning as learning vocabulary and memorizing wordlists according to Jin and Cortazzi (2006).

They also learned the correct pronunciation of new words and came to understand the English accent and dialect used in their living areas abroad. They developed an accented English. These benefits were considered among the most significant benefits of study abroad to some students.

As in Oman, speaking was the least developed language skill due to its being practised the least. My interviewed students had better opportunities to speak English during classes and on campus in

general, and as a survival language to meet everyday life necessities. Similar to some other international students (Brown, 2008), the first language, Arabic here, due to students' tendency to remain within the inner-circle group and the large numbers of Omani and Arab students, was the most frequently and expressively used language among Omani students even when abroad.

On the other hand, many Omani students in my study felt that their use of English was limited when abroad, especially with native speakers. Nonetheless, they reported that they developed greater confidence in oral communication in English. Similar to findings from other studies (Abbe et al., 2010; Bennett, 2009; Brosan et al., 2008; Kruger & Dunning, 2009; Lockley & Yoshida, 2016; Savicki et al., 2004), my findings showed that this confidence was developed above all when speaking with other international English language users, mostly from Arab countries and South Asia. These international users were perceived as more accepting of their limited English.

In sum, the listening, reading, and writing skills, and the vocabulary, language expressions, grammar, and pronunciation received the most benefit due to study abroad. Speaking an accented English and using new expressions and vocabulary could make Omani students feel as if they have gained immense language benefits from studying abroad while this learning was largely attainable in Oman through classroom learning and some efforts of self-learning without the need to study abroad to move beyond what can be learnt within the confines of classroom.

7.5.3 Enjoyment of Comfort Zone, and Limited Personal Development

In support of Gu (2012), enjoyment and personal development were the other benefits international students derived from studying abroad. However, based on my qualitative results, several Omani students' enjoyment of studying abroad stemmed from their enjoyment of being together with other Omani colleagues in particular and Arab ones in general, which, in line with Pedersen et al. (2011), was a disadvantage of travelling in large numbers to the same place. They enjoyed travelling together to different places in the host country and thus stated that they had spent unforgettable moments there.

By being abroad, some Omani students, based on my study, tended to experience some personal development, as they learnt to be independent and responsible in line with Cushner (2008), Gu (2012), and Gu, Schweisfurth and Day (2010). Experiencing autonomy and self-reliance in running their life abroad and the sense of freedom also contributed to their enjoyment of study abroad. In line with Gu (2012), due to their autonomy, some Omani students also developed some problem-solving skills, and life-management skills.

From the above, the personal development was more limited to the ability to live independently, show self-reliance, and have freedom and the sense of responsibility in line with Gu (2012). While it was

a form of personal development, it was also an enjoyment, especially for the female students, to experience all of these, according to my study.

The personal development (e.g., independence, self-reliance, etc.) is largely attainable in Oman, as there are Omani students who travel from remote areas to study and must live away from their families, and thus depend on themselves to meet their everyday needs, largely similar to those studying abroad.

7.5.4 Academic and Social Reputation

Due to their engagement mostly focusing on their academic studies, students in my study were able to improve their research competence and field knowledge as well in support of Gu (2012). In terms of research competence, they learnt research skills, such as plagiarism avoidance skills (e.g., paraphrasing, summarizing, citing, and quoting). Their research competence also included, but was not limited to, critical thinking, being selective in the search of information, conducting scientific research, writing research papers, and communicating research through presentations, for example. This competence also included the use of data analysis applications, such as SPSS and NVivo.

Based on my qualitative results, the Omani students, similar to other international students (Gu, 2012), also reported having developed field knowledge and professional skills, such as teaching skills and perhaps some computer skills. Being backed by their improvement of professional and research skills, they could develop a professional and social reputation by getting their academic degrees from abroad, and thus making their families proud of them.

Omani study-abroad students may outperform the stay-in-Oman students in specialist cognition and academic experience (e.g., academic writing, specialist knowledge, academic scientific research, etc.), but, apparently, not in ICC, SEIELU, nor IIF. Based on Muskin (2000), knowledge on its own is not enough to make the intended advancements; rather, it must be accompanied by the necessary competencies.

Students' active engagement with the academic aspect of the experience may be attributed to their perception of the Omani government's need for academic specializations for the purpose of Omanisation rather than for building interactions with culturally distinct individuals that may end when they finish their studies abroad.

Similarly, they may perceive that their current confidence in their English language use is adequate to accomplish the current employment goals in Oman. The use of the English language in Oman is generally limited to some workplaces and academic institutions. It is rarely used as an expressive interaction language. Most Omani students, according to Brummer (2013), do not have any intention of working abroad and so do not perceive the need to develop their English language as an intercultural

linguistic competence. Furthermore, the Omani market's openness to the global market is largely restricted to oil exportation. This limited openness is more likely to limit the operation of Omani businesses in the international market and, accordingly, it restricts the requirements of operating competencies in the local market. All these factors may possibly encourage the Omani students to give more concern to academic learning than to experiential learning.

Along with Biraimah and Jotia (2012), if the study abroad is about gaining base intercultural development, then the implementation of some intercultural development program in Oman is sufficient without the need to study abroad. If the significance of the study abroad is perceived only in the acquisition of specialist knowledge, it is then simply easy to state that the number of Omani students sent abroad should be restricted. It would be better for the government of the Sultanate of Oman to bring to Oman the best specialists and experts in the world to deliver their specialist knowledge and expertise in the target fields to a larger percentage of Omani students at the local universities and colleges while saving the money, time, and effort allocated for education abroad. This is especially as, in accordance with Jackson (2008) and Young et al. (2017), the increasing numbers of students sent abroad do not seem to be reflected in a corresponding increase in the number of benefits when studying abroad, but instead reflect sponsors' limited awareness of the challenges that students face abroad and, subsequently, the possibilities of intercultural learning.

However, the study abroad experience is no doubt rich in cultural diversity both on and off university campuses. Culturally distinct individuals engage in intercultural contexts with different views and approaches to issues and subjects. They come from different educational systems that promote the development of different skills, competencies, and mentalities (Brummer, 2013; Cushner, 2008).

In line with Vande Berg et al. (2012), Jackson (2009), and Milstein (2005), meaningful engagement with differences, complexities, and challenges is what makes the study abroad experience unique and distinct from study in the home country. This meaningful engagement adds to what the individuals have already developed in the home country. Meaningful engagements with a wide range of people, communities, and networks enhance self-development, global knowledge and awareness, critical thinking, and professional and intercultural development (Gu et al., 2010; Miladinovic, 2014b; Norris & Gillespie, 2009; Tang & Choi, 2004). Moreover, the engaged individuals are expected to progress further in their knowledge building rather than just acquiring information (McLoughlin, 2014).

Therefore, despite the significance of classroom learning, a larger volume of further intercultural competence development is attainable through the individuals' meaningful intercultural engagements beyond the confines of the classroom. Compared to classroom learning, experiential learning is more

influential and empowering, fostering more authentic competencies and skills for real life use and for further language learning (Callen & Lee, 2009; Canto, Jauregi, & Van den Bergh, 2013; Collentine, 2009; Dewey et al., 2013; Diehl & Prins, 2008; Doerr, 2014; Fernández-García & Martínez-Arbelaiz, 2014; Firmin et al., 2013; Gardner et al., 2009), cooperation, innovation, creativity and productivity enhancing (Kelly, 2009; Pikhart, 2014b), and more knowledge digestion (Muskin, 2000).

By their inability to develop the linguistic and intercultural communicative competences under study, the Omani students were less likely to have developed the necessary employment market skills sought by employers (Di Pietro, 2015; Gardner et al., 2009; Miladinovic, 2014a). Thus, the gap between the market demand for skills, and the ability not only of the local higher education in Oman (Alyahmadi, 2006; Brummer, 2013) but also the learning experiences to develop these skills in students seemed to persist as indicated by my current study. This, as demonstrated by Al Barwani (2002) and Al-Issa (2014), may contribute less to Omanisation across the different work sectors in Oman. In support of Bond et al. (2009), and Gardner et al. (2009), my findings show that the individuals may not have an ultimate professional advantage over those staying in their home countries by simply studying abroad. The current research findings support the findings of Alyahmadi (2006) and Brummer (2013) that Omani individuals, in general, tend to give less concern to skill development compared to cognition.

After all, it was not surprising for an outstanding employer in Oman to prefer recruiting Omani students who had studied in local institutes, instead of those who had studied abroad because of the perceived limitations in their academic performance based on the obtained grades, knowledge, experience, and skills compared to those of students who studied locally.

7.6 Necessities for Omani Students' Wider Linguistic Benefits from Study Abroad

This part discusses the question “To what extent do ICC (and its components) and IIF contribute to Omani students' development of SEIELU?” The answer to this question reveals the requirements for Omani students to benefit from study abroad in order to develop self-efficacy in intercultural English language use (SEIELU) and subsequently intercultural communicative competence (ICC) beyond the levels achieved in Oman.

Despite the significance of study abroad, the development volume of self-efficacy in intercultural English language use and the time required to achieve this is conditioned by the development of intercultural communicative competence, which thus appears as a necessity rather than a choice not only for social and economic survival (Kim, 1999; Neculăesei, 2016; Teng, 2005) but also for intercultural learning.

Specifically, the development of both SEIELU and ICC is determined more by the depth of individuals' intercultural interactions as also demonstrated by Cubillos and Ilvento (2012), Hernández (2010), Yashima et al. (2004), and many others. The less the depth and breadth the intercultural interactions maintained by students have, the narrower the achieved benefits and the longer the duration of the stay abroad needed in achieving the intended linguistic and intercultural competences.

Although the quality of intercultural interactions constitutes the solid foundation of SEIELU and ICC development, reaching such a quality requires students to firstly develop positive attitudes towards cultural differences and sufficient and accurate knowledge and awareness of the host culture as well.

On the other hand, despite their necessity, the mere frequency of intercultural interactions, negative intercultural emotion control and restoration, and critical thinking and communication skills on their own were inadequate in the development of SEIELU and ICC. As individuals, for example, build communication skills, and control and regulate their unpleasant feelings, they should participate in meaningful interactions with the Other (Matsumoto et al., 2001; Matsumoto et al., 2003) in various contexts with positive attitudes and better cognition of the counterpart culture (Tables 21 and 22, & Tables 4 and 5 in Appendix 16).

7.7 Omani Students' Satisfaction with the Study-Abroad Experience

This part discusses the answer to the question "What were the Omani students' perceptions of the study-abroad experience in general and its outcomes in particular?"

Based on my research findings and previous research (Apple & Aliponga, 2018; Caligiuri, 2000; Kashima & Loh, 2006; Neuliep, 2012; Yang et al., 2006; Ying & Han, 2006), Omani students were significantly less adjusted to the host culture. However, contrary to previous research considered above, including Gu et al. (2010), the majority of the interviewed students, similar to some Chinese students Gu (2012), tended to highly evaluate the experience despite their limited experience of intercultural interactions. Some were largely satisfied with it as the intercultural interactions and their returns were not part of their main goals of studying abroad. These students looked for a combination of enjoyment and high quality education and subsequently the attainment of well-reputed qualifications as professional development. These students described their study-abroad experience as one of the best experiences they have gone through in their life.

On the other hand, several other interviewed students stated that they were satisfied to some extent with the gained benefits from study abroad. This is because they could not achieve all their goals, especially the intercultural ones. Despite the fact that study abroad was not particularly fruitful especially with regard to its intercultural benefits, they did not regret undertaking the experience, as the experience

was still rewarding to them. This is because study abroad, for example, helped them form friendships within their inner-circles, with individuals from Oman and other Arab neighbouring countries and subsequently provided opportunities for future research collaborations. According to these students, the opportunities of knowing each other would have been less if they did not study abroad. It could also facilitate better employment opportunities for them.

Thus, these students described the study-abroad experience as *amazing, great, wonderful, awesome* and so on. In response, they expressed feelings of happiness regarding studying abroad and thus wanted to repeat the experience, and they also said that they would definitely recommend other Omani individuals to study abroad. Therefore, study abroad may be praised for being highly transformative of the self while it is less relational to the Other as in my study. Study abroad should not only be transformative of the self but also transformative of the self in relation to the cultural counterparts through engagement with them in line with Holmes and O'Neill (2012) and Martin and Griffiths (2014),.

From the aforementioned very positive descriptions and recommendations of study abroad despite its limited intercultural benefits particularly regarding SEIELU, ICC, and IIF development, the students seemed to generalize the positively perceived benefit of the experience and the positively experienced incidences to all its general picture (Gemignani, 2009; Vande Berg et al., 2012) and thus the experience appeared, as one may hear, as always extremely beneficial in all its aspects though in reality, it was not.

The individuals' enjoyment of and satisfaction with study abroad appeared to be less to do with intercultural interactions. Other students, despite their realization of the limited learning returns and their awareness that some of these academic benefits were attainable in Oman, there is a possibility, as reported by my interviewee, Khalil as an example, that they tended to deliberately hide this reality and presented study abroad as a recommended experience due to a "social desirability bias" (p. 23) as it is referred to by Vande Berg et al. (2012). Their aim in doing this, according to my study, was to not demotivate those individuals in Oman from undergoing it and to appear as successful individuals in the eyes of others, that is, as people who could meet expectations and achieve the intended goals of study abroad; subsequently, they would not lose face when they went back home. Furthermore, this overestimation of study-abroad benefits seemed also to stem from them having less knowledge about and awareness of the benefit dimensions of study abroad, especially its cultural aspect (Lockley & Yoshida, 2016). The students seemed to largely restrict the benefit of study abroad to the attainment of the intended qualifications and the formation of friendships with other Omani and Arab individuals.

The next part will highlight the contributions of my study to existing research in the field of study abroad and intercultural communication.

7.8 Research Contributions

With regard to the contribution of my research to the existing knowledge, this study may be the first to study the impact of study abroad on Omani and perhaps Arab students' intercultural and linguistic competencies and subsequently the accuracy of the beliefs that have been promoted in this regard. This study confirmed that strong beliefs, feelings, and expectations of study-abroad effectiveness in developing international students linguistically, interculturally, and professionally beyond development in these areas obtained in the home country do not always reflect reality everywhere, and even when they do, this does not mean students necessarily achieve an increase in the levels of expected development. Therefore, stories of success should not be relied on blindly as evidence of truth without setting parameters for their study.

In fact, my study adds to the existing research knowledge that, in comparison with other international students reported by Dewey et al. (2013) and Hernández (2010) for example, Arab and Omani students in particular had the fewest opportunities for interaction with the host locals and the least amount of time spent in these intercultural interactions. In other words, while their interactions were largely limited in frequency, the 'experienced' ones could not lead to sustainable meaningful relationships. Accordingly, they significantly needed a longer period of time than that of other international students (Hernández, 2010) to demonstrate an evident linguistic and intercultural development. This is partially due to the larger cultural distance between the students' Islamic collectivist national culture and host people's individualist national culture.

The study confirms that despite the importance of context, the profound impact of study abroad stems more from individuals' active engagement with the context over the course of time abroad than simply being passive in it. The influence of intercultural interactions emerges more from their quality (depth/meaningfulness) than simply their frequency. Hence, the frequency of intercultural interactions alone is not a reliable indicator either of competent English language abilities and meaningful practice or high intercultural communicative competence and, subsequently, intercultural adaptation and success abroad.

This study goes even further to add that even when interactions are quite low in frequency, they can become influential when the low frequency of interactions is mitigated by greater depth. It also demonstrates that the breadth of the deep interactions is also of importance, as this helps individuals harvest various benefits from different situations and accordingly become more flexible with distinct cultural groups and adaptable to different intercultural contexts, and ultimately, they develop better intercultural and linguistic competencies (see Figures 9-12).

Although the assessment of attitudes towards cultural differences, intercultural negative emotion regulation, communication skills, and intercultural cognition is important in the assessment of ICC, the assessment in the absence of behaviour competence diagnosis produces less reliable evidence and conveys an inaccurate picture of individuals' true communicative competence in intercultural environments. The study confirms the existing research knowledge (Candel-Mora, 2015; Gillet, 1997; Jackson, 2008; Malaklolunthu & Selan, 2011; Martin, 2013) that although limited language abilities make intercultural experience more challenging, having a competent level of English does not guarantee successful intercultural interactions. While individuals may have good language abilities, they may lag behind in intercultural communicative competence.

The recent study also contributed to the existing knowledge by providing new scales for measuring ICC, SEIELU, and IIF through a new model. The new scales are reliable and maintain a high level of validity, as the traditional assessment of scale validity was enhanced by a statistical assessment and improvement (see Chapter Four: Scale Construction and Improvement). While the IIF scale could measure the frequency of intercultural interactions, the behavioural part of the ICC scale could measure their depth and breadth. Moreover, the full length of the intercultural communicative competence scale can be used for diagnosis purposes and subsequently for helping plan remedy programmes. Alternatively, a short version can be used that includes the main dimensions (attitudes to cultural differences, cognition, behaviours, and self-efficacy in intercultural English language use as well) along with the IIFS for higher survey response and completion rates. The scales can be used with other international students for cross-cultural comparisons. For details about my new model, please see 3.5.1.1: Current Project's Developmental Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (DMICC).

Finally, in support of Jackson (2015), Jackson and Macmillan (2010), Jauregi, De Graaff, and Canto (2011), Kuchinke et al. (2014), Marcoccia (2012), Paik et al. (2015), Peeples, Hall, and Seiter (2012), Sachau, Brasher, and Fee (2010), and Stebleton, Soria, and Cherney (2013), as the study abroad experience lacks structure and there is insufficient management of the intercultural settings, the immersed individuals are more likely to experience limited frequency, depth, and breadth in intercultural interactions and, subsequently, there will be a reduction in the volume of intercultural learning and more demands for longer stays abroad in order to achieve the intended intercultural growth.

7.9 Research Limitations

The current research has a number of limitations and so offers some recommendations to overcome them.

Before all, the current study did not have any statistical violations with regard to, for example, normality, outliers, homogeneity of comparison groups, and so on, and subsequently the unequal numbers of Omani participants staying in Oman and those studying abroad in the target countries did not cause any statistical bias in the obtained research results. However, while the number of Omani students in the US was the largest number of Omani students abroad compared to the numbers of those studying in the other target countries (see Appendix 4, Table 5), they were the least represented in this study. Besides the limited representation of this group in my quantitative study sample, I could not interview these students to understand their perceptions of study abroad in the US while there were strong subjective reports among several Omani students including some of my interviewed Omani UK-based students that studying in the US was believed to be more influential than in the UK. This is although the current study confirmed that the subjective reports based on mere beliefs and feelings about study abroad, imply that it does not necessarily meet reality, and the higher frequency of intercultural interactions does not necessarily reflect a larger volume of intercultural learning; in particular, Omani US-based students' higher frequency of intercultural was at the expense of their depth and breadth as well.

Secondly, this study reported the host locals' perceptions of Omani students through the voices of the participants. Due to the complexity of this study, I could not include host locals in this research to achieve a better understanding of their intercultural perceptions and their impact on Omani students' intercultural experience abroad.

Thirdly, my research did not take into consideration the students' specialisation as a factor of study. Based on my interview with Ruba, scientific specialisations (e.g., health and engineering) may encourage students to work together for the shared training and projects they attend and the nature of their work, though more at workplace and less beyond the workplace.

7.10 Research Recommendations

This part provides recommendations for future research, policy makers and intercultural education practices.

7.10.1 Future Research

For future research, the development of intercultural tests that have a predictive ability of students' intercultural behaviours should be given attention to help choose students who are not only linguistically and personally qualified, but also interculturally ready to benefit from studying abroad.

In addition, since communication is a two-way negotiation of meaning, the assessment of both the international students and host locals' intercultural communicative competences at the same time should be taken into consideration for a better understanding of their intercultural interactions instead of focusing the assessment and development of intercultural competencies within international students as though the other counterpart in the interaction should be passive.

Furthermore, future research should consider studying the minimum depth (time) and frequency for an intercultural interaction to be considered influential to make international students aware of the minimum frequency of these interactions and the amount of time to spend in them daily or weekly.

Moreover, future research should include plans for exploring Omani US-based students' study-abroad experiences and perceptions and the meanings associated with them, preferably through the implementation of on-site close observations or ethnographic studies for direct evidence of ICC, SEIELU, and IIF development rather than the sole reliance on the research methods that produce indirect evidence (e.g., self-report questionnaires and semi-structured interviews). If this future research is to be conducted using questionnaires, my current quantitative scales should be used for comparisons with my current research findings.

I also recommend studying how the sending country, in this case, Oman, is making use of returning students' knowledge and experiences in Oman's development. I anticipate that there is a significant gap between the theory of sending students abroad and the employment of this knowledge and experience. Studying this anticipated gap could be done by surveying the students who have studied abroad after one or two years of their return home to find out their perceptions of the government's employment of their knowledge and experience in Oman's development, as well as perhaps interviewing officials to understand how they make use of students' knowledge and experience in this regard.

Besides above, future research should statistically assess the complex inter-relations among the components composing my DMICC as identified in this study by applying a structural equation modelling through the use of, for example, Smart PLS-SEM or SPSS Amos software for theory verification. Regression analysis is a simple manifestation of such structural modelling.

7.10.2 Policy Making

For policy makers, my current study-abroad assessment should be approached as a foundation for understanding the Omani students' experiences abroad, the nature of study-abroad challenges, the impact of students' collectivist national culture on the quality of their intercultural learning, and, additionally, as a foundation for building any future intercultural intervention and study-abroad preparation programs.

To improve the study-abroad experience, officials in the higher education sector in Oman should first pay more attention to intercultural communication education rather than just English language education. Language is not the only requirement for success abroad. To reflect this new mission, officials should replace the term “English language centres” with that of “intercultural communication centres”.

They should also raise the students’ awareness of the experience by explaining its nature, the possible challenges and benefits, and, more importantly, how to achieve these benefits, as well as the goals and expectations of the national study-abroad program. This helps reduce the gap between the students’ expectations of the experience and the reality, and subsequently, the psychological problems that may be encountered abroad due to this gap and the students’ adaptation to the host culture.

They should also explain that the importance of study abroad is perceived not only in the acquisition of specialist knowledge but also in intercultural engagements in both academic and non-academic settings for better confidence in intercultural English language use and intercultural communicative competence. In addition, they should demonstrate how these abilities are among the market skills that help enhance the strength of the national economy by improving the interactions between individuals as a precursor to improving the interactions between countries. Moreover, it should be made clear how such interactions enhance intercultural understandings and so reduce conflicts between people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds and, hence, develop better intercultural learning and educational environments. Students should not be judged solely by their qualifications and grades but also by their ability to navigate interactions successfully and engage in intercultural activities, projects, and initiatives abroad.

Based on my current research findings and on previous research (Deardorff, 2009a; Lough, 2011; Marx & Moss, 2011; Pedersen, 2010), besides the necessity of students’ self-help, the implementation of well-planned intercultural preparation programs and interventions in the home and host countries becomes a compulsory rather than an additional task to guide students interculturally (before, during, and after the experience) and subsequently improve the quality of their experiences and, ultimately, achieve a larger volume of academic and cultural benefits.

The sending country should inform the receiving institutions abroad of their goals in sending students abroad besides the acquisition of specialist knowledge. This may help the receiving institutions to structure the students’ study abroad program and guide them into intercultural engagements to help achieve the intended goals of study abroad. In general, the study-abroad programme should contain specific goal-setting coaching.

The Omani officials should consider encouraging their Omani students to stay with a host family as a cultural mediator especially in the first year of the study abroad programme. To ensure an effective learning stay, this stay again has to be managed and well-structured with family-based and other activities before assessing the learning returns for further improvement. Otherwise, the availability of an interaction context does not ensure interaction even when staying with a family (Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart, 2002). They may also think of hosting conferences about intercultural education, communication, and study abroad to benefit from different experiences and perspectives in this regard.

7.10.3 Intercultural Education Practices

With regard to enhancing intercultural education, Omani students should be guided through self-reflection sessions to explore the strengths and weaknesses of their behaviours, the impact of their collectivist culture and, consequently, intercultural experience in developing their intercultural competencies. For example, participants could be asked to describe how they would respond to a hypothetical intercultural situation. If these written reflections were administered as both pre- and post-tests (say, before and after a study-abroad programme), researchers could analyse growth in intercultural competence as well (Perry & Southwell, 2011).

While intercultural communication education tends to be largely ignored or is not at the forefront of awareness for sending countries, it also seems to be missing for the receiving institutions abroad in line with Brown (2009b) and Gareis (2012). Bringing international and domestic students into one context of learning does not necessarily ensure meaningful interaction among these students, especially in the presence of cultural differences, the absence of mutual interaction goals, and a lack of necessary intercultural competencies within the two counterparts.

Several host universities abroad do provide international students with different voluntary activities to enhance intercultural cooperation and interactions. By their availability, it could be claimed that these intercultural activities abroad could overcome this issue. This is true when students help themselves by participating in these activities; otherwise, intercultural settings, when less managed, and activities, when made optional, are less likely to attract students from cultural minorities. Therefore, some of these activities and projects should be made compulsory rather than optional. Students from different cultures should be invited by the requirements of their courses to engage in intercultural initiatives where they find mutual goals to interact with the Other. By accelerating the study-abroad students' program, benefits can be attained through making links to campus coursework, conducting community-based research, participating in community service learning, forging collaborations among universities (Davis & Cho, 2005; Kuchinke et al., 2014) and the departments of the one university, as well as emphasizing research

skills and interdisciplinary connections (Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005). Based on Hadis (2005), while such participation should be compulsory, it should also be flexible in giving students the opportunity to choose the activities and projects to join and suit their interests as long as the activities are multi-cultural. Online portfolios can possibly be used as trackers of students' intercultural activity while abroad.

Intercultural communication can be developed and enhanced by, for example, watching a variety of clips (e.g., "An Idiot Abroad" television series, p. 10) that tackle aspects, factors, and challenges to intercultural communications, followed by class discussions (Crook, 2014).

In the classroom, intercultural competence can also be promoted and fostered through drama executed for this purpose. Dramatic plays foster students' language as well as their intercultural learning and competence by watching and exploring complex practices and feelings through the play characters as opposed to simply getting exposed to textbook content (Cunico, 2005).

7.11 Research Conclusion

This explanatory quasi-experimental sequential mixed-methods research aimed at providing research-based evidence about the accuracy of several Omani students', the public's, and officials' common beliefs about the effectiveness of study abroad in the UK, the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand in developing Omani students' ICC, SEIELU, and IIF beyond those levels achieved in Oman. Meaningful intercultural engagements were considered the key to further development of the intercultural competencies under study, approached through a newly developed model, called Developmental Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (DMICC) and subsequently new measurement scales used as pre- and post-tests: a 58-item multidimensional ICC scale, a 14-item unidimensional SEIELU scale and a 3-item IIF scale. The pre- and post-tests were applied within the experimental (study-abroad) and control (stay-in-Oman) groups in parallel to examine the effectiveness of study abroad, and the between-group comparisons in the pre- and post-test stages to determine the causality of changes. The quantitative (foundation) inquiry was followed up by a qualitative inquiry through the use of semi-structured interviews and an open-ended question embedded in the quantitative survey for an in-depth exploration of the key quantitative findings.

The quantitative study sample included a total of 343 Omani participants staying in Oman (control group) and those studying abroad in the target countries (experimental group). They were distributed as 250 pre-test respondents (231 study-abroad vs 19 stay-in-Oman), and 93 post-test respondents (86 study-abroad vs 7 stay-in-Oman), aged 17-52 years old. The qualitative sample included 11 semi-structured interview participants (10 UK- & 1 New Zealand-based) and 15 UK-based open-ended question respondents.

Contrary to previous research (Al-Makhmari & Amzat, 2012) and prevailing beliefs, the quantitative inquiry showed that the one year abroad, no matter the country of stay, gender, type of stay abroad (alone or with one's own Omani family), and with previous intercultural experiences or not, did not yield any significant changes in the respondents' ICC, SEIELU, and IIF levels, beyond the levels of those staying in Oman. The educational level and multilingualism also did not seem to play any considerable roles in the development of the three aspects above. The respondents showed a need for more than six years of stay abroad before experiencing an obvious improvement in these respects, much longer than the time required by other cultural groups in the reviewed literature.

Both the quantitative and qualitative findings showed that the participants had limited frequency, depth, and breadth in interactions with the host locals for their limited ICC (intercultural attitudes, regulation of negative intercultural emotions, communication skills, knowledge and awareness of the host culture) and SEIELU. According to the qualitative inquiry, these interactions were also limited as students' goals to study abroad were more instrumental and less self-determined, and several students had a shy introvert personality. Although staying abroad with one's own Omani family and educational challenges were reasons to interact less with the Other, they were more secondary than primary reasons.

In return, they experienced limited intercultural learning benefits from studying abroad. Students' learning was more restricted to knowledge of the host culture's tangible elements (e.g., food, events of celebration, geography, and many others), education system, and correction of some stereotypes while other stereotypes persisted and strengthened. Similarly, English learning was more restricted to the acquisition of vocabulary, language expressions, grammar, word pronunciation, understanding locals' English accents, developing accented English, and reading and writing skill development. Speaking was the least practised language skill. Enjoyment of being abroad and with other Omani students, travelling, and feelings of independence and self-reliance were the other benefits Omani students got from studying abroad. Academically, participants could develop research competence and field knowledge. Despite the limited learning benefits, students evaluated study abroad highly, which confirms that intercultural development, in addition to being self-related, must be Other-related as well.

Higher levels of SEIELU are more achievable through deeper intercultural interactions whose fulfilment is attainable through the development of ICC (vice versa), primarily through the development of positive attitudes towards cultural differences in the first place, and then knowledge and awareness of the host culture. On the other hand, despite their necessity, the mere frequency of intercultural interactions, negative intercultural emotion regulation, and critical thinking and communication skills on their own were inadequate in the development of SEIELU and ICC.

In summary, based on my DMICC (Figure 1), the development of ICC and SEIELU was assumed to be attainable through three main gates, which were intercultural education (or intercultural preparation programs), intercultural experiences, and an intercultural personality. Undergoing an authentic intercultural experience was assumed more influential, provided that the immersed individual maintains an extrovert personality with positive attitudes towards cultural differences in the first place and has sufficient linguistic competence. However, according to the qualitative findings, Omani student preparation for the intercultural experience was largely unavailable. The intercultural experience abroad was assessed to be interculturally ineffective, and the students also had a shy introvert personality with negative attitudes towards cultural differences. They also had limitations in all other components of the DMICC.

Regarding the generalisability of my research findings, based on the absence of any significant differences between all the comparison groups under study, statistical violations in the collected data and that of normality, as well as the agreement of my current findings with previous research, mutual confirmation of my quantitative and qualitative findings, participation of students from different countries (and regions) under study (though with various numbers) and the quite large study sample all indicate that my research findings are largely generalizable to other Omani students and, presumably, other Arab Muslim students especially from the Gulf Cooperation Council countries for the wide range of shared commonalities in terms of, for example, culture, heritage, history, Arabic language, Islamic religion, and many others.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: First Draft Research Survey (ICCS & SEIELUS)

Intercultural Communicative Competence Scale (ICCS)

No.	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Intercultural Attitudes						
Respect for Cultural Differences						
1	Cultures (values, customs, norms, traditions, perspectives and behaviours) different from my own are worth respecting and appreciating.					
2	I acknowledge the cultural differences encountered in intercultural settings.					
3	I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.					
4	I respect the ways people from different cultures behave.					
Ethnocentrism						
5	My culture should be the role model for other cultures.					
6	Most people would be happier if they lived like people in my culture.					
7	I see people who are similar to me as virtuous.					
Intolerance of Cultural Differences						
8	The values, norms, beliefs, and habits of people from other cultures constitute a threat to my culture, religion and cultural identity.					
9	I do not tolerate the cultures (behaviours, beliefs, norms, etc) that differ from my own.					
10	I often judge people from other cultures negatively because of cultural differences.					
Open-mindedness						
11	I am open-minded to people from other cultures.					

12	I seek out people from different cultural backgrounds.					
13	My communication orientations are based on the racial, ethnic and cultural traits of people I am familiar with.					
14	I adapt my behaviours and perspectives in new intercultural situations.					
Curiosity and Discovery						
15	I always try to find out why people act the way they do or the way they are.					
16	I attempt to find out the beliefs and perspectives of people from different cultures on certain issues.					
17	I often rely on the members of my cultural group to interpret the cultural differences around me.					
18	I seek my own ways and strategies to test the accuracy of the beliefs and assumptions I hold about people from other cultures.					
19	I allocate part of my free time to familiarize myself with people from other cultures around me.					
Motivation						
20	It is better for people to interact within their cultural groups to avoid conflicts caused by cultural differences.					
21	I would seek out friendships with people from different cultures in order to learn about their cultures.					
22	In a party, if I have a choice between conversing with someone from my own culture or someone from a different culture, I would probably choose someone from my own culture.					
23	I mostly associate with people from my own culture because I find it easier than trying to figure out the right way of interacting with someone from a different culture.					

24	There are many things to learn from other cultures in the world.					
25	I find it easier to categorize people based on their cultural identity than their personality.					
26	I usually feel closer to people who are from my own culture because I can relate to them better.					
27	The friends and colleagues I have around me from my culture make me in no need for friends from other cultures.					
28	I have done some research in order to learn about cultures different from my own.					
Autonomy						
29	I have my own independence in determining what is good or bad for me in intercultural interaction contexts, regardless of my cultural group.					
30	The goals of friends and colleagues from my culture are prioritized over those of my own in intercultural contexts.					
31	I find out my own ways to form friendships with people from different cultures around me, regardless of the influence of my cultural group.					
32	The friends and colleagues from my culture influence my choices of people I should form friendships with.					
Tolerance of Ambiguity and Uncertainty						
33	I enjoy the experiences that are ambiguous and unpredictable to me.					
34	I do not feel comfortable with people whose behaviours and reactions are unfamiliar to me.					
35	I avoid interactions with unpredictable results.					
36	I have a fear of unknown and unpredictable people.					
Emotion Regulation						
1	I get irritated quickly by people from other cultures.					

2	I keep calm when things do not go well in intercultural encounters.					
3	My emotions get hurt easily by the unpleasant events experienced with people from other cultures.					
4	It is easy for me to stay calm when my cultural identity gets attacked.					
5	The media representations of Arabs as potential terrorists leave no place for me to develop authentic relationships with people from other cultures.					
6	I keep my respect of people from other cultures even when experiencing problems with them.					
7	I allow a conflict when people disagree with me.					
Critical Thinking and Communication Skills						
Critical Thinking Skills						
1	I recognize the differences among people of the culture I come in contact with.					
2	I reflect on the impact and consequences of my decisions & choices on my cultural learning.					
3	I observe the results of my communication behaviours in intercultural contexts.					
4	Before I commit myself to a solution I think about the consequences.					
5	When misunderstood, I work on finding out the reasons behind this misunderstanding.					
6	When I do not understand a cultural aspect, I discuss it with a person (s) from that culture.					
7	I reflect on my culture and monitor its impact on my communication behaviours.					
8	I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from different cultures.					
9	I reflect on the effectiveness and appropriateness of the strategies I use in intercultural encounters.					

10	I compare the cultural differences between my practices and those of people from other cultures for the purpose of learning.					
11	I recognize the impact of stereotypes and how I am raised on my communication with people different from me.					
Communication Skills						
12	I use humours and smiles as techniques for intercultural interactions.					
13	I monitor others' emotions when talking to them.					
14	I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.					
15	I ask people from other cultures how they say and do things in their cultures when I do not know so.					
16	I try to guess what the other person is thinking of, making use of the facial expressions, for example.					
17	I listen to people attentively and do my best to understand them.					
18	I wait and observe before forming an opinion or an impression about culturally-distinct counterparts.					
19	I repeat, paraphrase or reformulate the received message for more accurate understanding of its meaning before responding.					
20	I try to see the world through the eyes of culturally distinct people.					
Intercultural Cognition						
Intercultural Awareness						
1	I am conscious of the impact of my culture (values and norms) on my behaviours, attitudes, perceptions and learning.					
2	I realize that several conflicts experienced by me with people from other cultures are more cultural than are personal.					

3	I am aware of why people from different cultures behave and think the way they do (about Hijab, for example).					
4	I am aware of the cultural differences and similarities between my culture and other cultures.					
5	I am conscious that cultures are behind people's different behaviours, communication styles and perceptions of each other.					
6	I am conscious how people from other cultures are different from me and how I am different from them.					
Intercultural Stereotypes						
7	I approach people from other cultures based on what media and compatriots (e.g. friends) say about them.					
8	I perceive negative individual behaviours as representatives of different cultures around me.					
9	I deal with Western people based on the pre-existing perceptions, images and beliefs I hold about them.					
10	I rely on the images and assumptions common among my friends when interacting with people from other cultures.					
11	I refer to people from any culture more as one group than as distinct individuals.					
Intercultural Knowledge						
12	I know much about the cultural values, traditions, customs and beliefs of other culture(s).					
13	I know much about entertainment, politics, religion and laws in other culture(s).					
14	I know much about the essential norms and taboos of the other culture(s) (e.g., greetings, dress, behaviours, etc.)					
15	I know much about the arts and crafts of the other culture(s).					

16	I know much about the rules for expressing non-verbal behaviors in the other culture(s).					
Behaviours (appropriate and effective)						
Social Initiative						
1	I leave the initiative to others to make a contact with me.					
2	I think it is difficult to make an interaction with people from other cultures.					
3	I feel inclined to speak out in intercultural gatherings.					
Adaptability						
4	I usually change the way I communicate or address something depending on the person I am talking to.					
5	When I communicate with people from other cultures, I sometimes tend to act differently than I would with people from my own culture.					
6	I hope people from other cultures will understand me easily because it is difficult for me to adjust my behavior.					
7	I change my verbal and non-verbal behaviours when an intercultural situation requires it.					
Flexibility						
8	When I join a group for the first time I quickly build relationships with other group members from other cultures.					
9	I find myself easy-going among different cultural groups.					
10	I can act as a cultural mediator and serve as a bridge between people of different cultures.					
11	I work effectively and comfortably when in a group comprised of culturally distinct individuals.					
12	Most of my close friends are from other cultures.					

13	I celebrate holidays with people from other cultures.					
Social Engagement						
14	I organize trips and social initiatives with people from other cultures.					
15	I visit people from other cultures living nearby.					
16	I engage in parties and events organized by people from different cultures.					
17	I socialise with people from other cultures.					

Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use Scale (SEIELUS)

NO.	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	I don't Know/ I am not sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I usually become afraid of making mistakes when speaking in English to people from other cultures.					
2	I speak English language as my mother tongue.					
3	I read and comprehend English newspapers and magazines very well without using a dictionary.					
4	I easily understand English speakers who are speaking to me as quickly as they would do to each other.					
5	I easily understand two English speakers talking rapidly with each other.					
6	I can confidently argue in English for a position on a controversial topic among people from different cultures.					
7	I can draw inferences/conclusions from what I read in English.					
8	I can write official letters that convey my message accurately with relatively few grammatical errors.					
9	Errors in my writings rarely disturb my English readers.					
10	I easily cope with lengthy detailed conversations and dialogues handled in English with people from other cultures.					
11	I have to think carefully about the words I will say to not violate the taboos when communicating in English.					
12	I sometimes cannot find out proper words in English to express what I mean.					

13	In English, I speak slowly and often repeat what I say.					
14	I think in English when communicating with English speakers.					
15	I easily catch the message expressed by English speakers in social settings.					
16	I easily understand common social expressions, slangs, contractions and accents of people from other cultures.					
17	People easily understand me when I speak in English.					
18	I feel more confident in discussing familiar general topics in English than the unfamiliar detailed ones.					
19	I sometimes find myself stuck in the middle of a conversation handled in English with people from other cultures.					
20	I have forgotten some of my English.					
21	Ordinarily I am calm and relaxed when I am in conversations handled in English with people from other cultures.					
22	My thoughts become confused and jumbled when giving a speech in English in public.					
23	While giving a speech in English, I get so nervous that I forget facts I really know.					
24	My English helps me fulfil my socio-cultural desires and aspirations when interacting with people from different cultures.					
25	I feel excitement and fun when speaking English.					
26	My actual performance in English language in social interactions is above or equals the grade I obtained in the IELTS and TOFEL test.					
27	My capabilities in English language sometimes do not meet the linguistic					

	expectations and demands of the interaction context.					
--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Demographic Information

1. The type of relationship I have with people from other cultures around me is generally more:
 - a. Expressive (friendship, partnership, etc.)
 - b. Instrumental (obtaining a service related to health, shopping, transport, etc.)
2. I study abroad: (to be answered by study abroad students only)
 - a. alone, without my family
 - b. with my family members
3. My educational level:
 - a. Less than Diploma
 - b. Diploma
 - c. Bachelor
 - d. Master
 - e. PhD
4. Gender:
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
5. Location of present study (or stay):
 - a. The UK
 - b. USA and Canada
 - c. Australia and New Zealand
 - d. Oman
6. How long have you been staying in your recent country of study so far? (to be answered by study abroad students only)
 - a. Less than a year
 - b. 1-2 years
 - c. 3-4 years
 - d. 5-6 years
 - e. More than 6 years
7. Have you previously studied abroad in any Western country?

- a. Yes
 - b. No
8. How many languages do you speak besides Arabic?
- a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4 and more
9. Age
- a. 20-24
 - b. 25-29
 - c. 30-34
 - d. 35-40
 - e. More than 40
-

General Questions

10. How often do you talk to and engage in informal conversations with people from other cultures?
- a. Never
 - b. Seldom
 - c. Occasionally
 - d. Often
 - e. Every day
11. How often do you study or do other class work with individuals from other cultures?
- a. Never
 - b. Seldom
 - c. Occasionally
 - d. Often
 - e. Every day
12. How often do you do things socially with individuals from other cultures? (This includes things like sharing meals, going to movies and parties, playing sports, etc.)
- a. Never
 - b. Seldom

- c. Occasionally
- d. Often
- e. Every day

13. Whom do you interact most with? Put them in order

- a. Arabs and Muslims in general
- b. African people
- c. Asian people
- d. Other people

14. What are the things mentioned below that have hindered your communication with people from other cultures more than others? Put them in order

1. Lack of confidence in my English language
 2. My own customs and traditions
 3. Fear of negative reactions from my cultural group members.
 4. Less knowledge about other culture(s)
 5. Family commitments
 6. Study/work commitments
 7. My negative perception of other culture(s)
 8. Culturally-distinct people's negative perception of my culture
-

Appendix 2: Final Full Length Research Survey (ICCS & SEIELUS)

Study Abroad Assessment Project

Research Aims:

This project aims to assess the English language and intercultural communicative capabilities of Omani students studying abroad with those staying in Oman and to find out whether there is a relationship between these two types of capabilities. It also aims to understand how the Omani students have developed in these criteria.

Possible Contributions from Your Participation:

Take this opportunity to tell us about your real experience with people from other cultures. Your participation will help us shape an understanding of your experience and could also have beneficial implications to study abroad students by possibly developing or introducing (perhaps new) programs that would help maximize the benefits of studying abroad, and to stay at home students as well by possibly increasing the study abroad scholarships granted to Omani employees and students.

Data Confidentiality & Anonymity:

The survey will take 15-20 minutes of your time. Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw from the research at any time and in any stage of your survey completion. However, on your completion of the survey, you will enter **a prize draw on £35 Amazon vouchers in the first stage and £50 vouchers in the follow-up stage of the project**. Your answers will be used on an anonymous basis and for research purposes only, and third parties will not be allowed access to them.

Please be informed that the survey is NOT a test, so there are no correct or wrong answers as long as your answers indicate and express what you do or feel in your real life experience.

For more information about this research, please click [Research Information Sheet](#).

By clicking the "**Continue to survey**" button below, you agree to take part in this research.

Demographic and General Questions Section

I'd like to begin the survey with a few quick statements and questions to answer below.

1. The nature of my interactions with people from other cultures around me is generally more:

- Instrumental (obtaining a service related to health, shopping, transport, etc.)
- Expressive (friendship, partnership, etc.)

2. Location of present study (or stay):

- The UK
- North America (USA and Canada)
- Australia and New Zealand
- Oman (I competed for study abroad scholarships but didn't get)
- Oman (I didn't compete for any study abroad scholarships)

3. Length of your stay in the current country so far:

- Less than a year
- 1-2 years
- 3-4 years
- 5-6 years
- More than 6 years

4. Staying in the current country mostly:

- alone, without my family members
- with my family members

5. Have you previously studied abroad in a non-Arab country?

- No
- Yes

6. Educational level:

- Diploma
- Bachelor
- Master
- PhD

7. Gender:

- Male
- Female

8. Number of languages spoken besides Arabic:

- 1
- 2

- 3
- More? (specify): _____

9. Age:

- in years _____

10. Thinking about the last six months, for how many times did you do the following with people from other cultures each week?

	never	less than once per week	once a week	two to six times a week	everyday or more often
engaging in informal conversations (informal conversations)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
studying or doing other class work (class work)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
socializing (this includes things like sharing meals, going to movies and parties, playing sports, etc.) (socializing)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. Thinking about the last six months again, put the following groups in order according to the frequency of your interaction with them.

_____ People from the Middle East

_____ People from Asia, Africa and South America

_____ People from Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand

Intercultural Communicative Competence Scale

Thanks for your answers so far. We'd like now to know to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements based on your real experience with people from other cultures.

No.	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Intercultural Attitudes						
Respect for Cultural Differences						
1	Cultures different from my own are worth appreciating.					
2	I acknowledge the cultural differences encountered in intercultural settings.					
3	I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.					
4	I respect the ways people from different cultures behave.					
Ethnocentrism						
5	My culture should not be the role model for other cultures.					
6	People in my culture would be happier if they lived like people in other cultures.					
7	I see people culturally similar to me as exemplary.					
Intolerance of Cultural Differences						
8	Behaviours different from my own constitute a threat to my identity.					
9	I tolerate the cultural norms different from my own.					
10	I look positively at people with distinct cultures.					
Open-mindedness						
11	I am open-minded to people of different cultures.					
12	I look for people from different cultural backgrounds.					

13	My communication is based on the cultural traits of people I am familiar with.					
14	I adapt my behaviours to get closer to people from different cultures.					
Curiosity and Discovery						
15	I try to find out why people in other cultures act the way they do.					
16	I try to find out other people's perspectives on some issues.					
17	I ask individuals in the experienced culture to interpret the new cultural differences around me.					
18	I seek my own ways to test the accuracy of the beliefs I adopt about people in other cultures.					
19	I allocate part of my free time to familiarize myself with people from different cultures.					
Motivation						
20	I mostly interact within my cultural group.					
21	I excitedly seek out friendships with people from different cultures.					
22	If I have a choice between conversing with someone from my own culture or someone from a different culture, I would probably choose someone from a different culture.					
23	I try to figure out the right way of communicating with individuals from a different culture.					
24	There are many things to learn from other cultures.					
25	I find it easier to categorize people based on their cultural identity than their personality.					
26	I feel closer to people from my own culture because I can relate to them better.					
27	My cultural group members make me in no need for people from other cultures.					

Autonomy						
28	I tend to form relationships with people from other cultures, regardless of my cultural group's influence.					
29	My goals are prioritized over those of my cultural group members in intercultural contexts.					
30	My cultural group members have an influence on my choices of people I should form relationships with.					
Tolerance of Ambiguity and Uncertainty						
31	I enjoy the experiences with ambiguous results.					
32	I feel comfortable with people whose behaviours are unfamiliar to me.					
33	I avoid interactions with unpredictable results.					
34	I have no fear of unknown people.					
Emotion Regulation						
1	I get irritated quickly by people from other cultures.					
2	I keep calm when things do not go well with people from other cultures.					
3	My emotions get hurt easily by the unpleasant events experienced in intercultural encounters.					
4	It is easy for me to stay calm when my cultural identity gets attacked.					
5	The negative representation of my identity on some media leaves no place for me to develop authentic relationships with people from other cultures.					
6	I preserve my respect of people from other cultures when experiencing problems with them.					
7	I allow a conflict when people disagree with me.					
Critical Thinking and Communication Skills						
Critical Thinking Skills						

1	I recognize the differences within the cultural groups I come in contact with.					
2	I do not pay attention to the impact of my decisions on my intercultural learning.					
3	I observe the results of my behaviours in intercultural contexts.					
4	Before I commit myself to a solution I think about the consequences.					
5	When misunderstood, I do not trace the causes of this misunderstanding.					
6	When I do not understand a cultural aspect, I discuss it with a person(s) in that culture.					
7	I monitor the impact of my culture on my intercultural communications.					
8	I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from other cultures.					
9	I monitor the appropriateness of my behaviours when interacting with people from other cultures.					
10	I compare between different cultural groups, including my own, for the purpose of learning.					
11	I recognize the impact of stereotypes on intercultural communications.					
Communication Skills						
12	I use humours as a technique to build interactions with people from different cultures.					
13	I monitor others' emotions when talking to them.					
14	I am observant when interacting with people of different cultures.					
15	I do not ask people how they say/do things in their cultures when I do not know so.					
16	I try to guess what the other person is thinking of, making use of the facial expressions, for example.					

17	I listen to people attentively and do my best to understand them.					
18	I wait to observe before forming an opinion about culturally-distinct counterparts.					
19	I repeat the received message for more accurate understanding of its meaning before responding.					
20	I try to see the world through the eyes of people in other cultures.					
Intercultural Cognition						
Intercultural Awareness						
1	I am conscious of the impact of my culture on my perceptions.					
2	I think several conflicts experienced by me with people from other cultures are more personal than are cultural.					
3	I am aware of why culturally distinct people behave the way they do.					
4	I am aware of the cultural differences and similarities between my culture and those I come in contact with.					
5	I am not conscious that cultures are behind people's different behaviours.					
Intercultural Stereotypes						
6	I approach people from other cultures based on what I hear about them.					
7	I perceive negative individual behaviours as representatives of several cultures around me.					
8	I deal with culturally distinct people based on the perceptions I hold about them.					
9	I rely on the assumptions common among my cultural group members when interacting with people from other cultures.					

10	I refer to people from any culture more as distinct individuals than as one group.					
Intercultural Knowledge						
11	I know about the traditions and customs of the culture(s) I have experienced.					
12	I know about laws in the culture(s) I have experienced.					
13	I know about the essential norms and prohibitions of the other culture(s) (e.g., greetings, dress, behaviours, etc.)					
14	I know about the arts and crafts of the other culture(s).					
15	I know about the rules for expressing non-verbal behaviors in the culture(s) I have experienced.					
Behaviours (appropriate and effective)						
Social Initiative						
1	I take the initiative to make a contact with culturally distinct people.					
2	I find it easy to initiate a conversation with people from different cultures.					
3	I feel inclined to speak out in intercultural gatherings.					
Adaptability						
4	I change the way I address something depending on the person I am talking to.					
5	When I communicate with people from other cultures, I tend to act differently than I would with people from my own culture.					
6	I hope people from other cultures will understand that it is difficult for me to adjust my behaviour.					
7	I find it difficult to adjust my behaviors when interacting with individuals from a different culture.					

Flexibility						
8	When I join a group for the first time I quickly build relationships with other group members from other cultures.					
9	I find myself easy-going among different cultural groups.					
10	I can serve as a bridge between people of different cultures around me.					
11	I feel less comfortable when working in a group of people with distinct cultures.					
12	Most of my close friends are from other cultures.					
13	I celebrate holidays with people from different cultures.					
Social Engagement						
14	I help organize trips with people from various cultures.					
15	I visit people from other cultures living nearby.					
16	I engage in activities (e.g. sports, parties, etc.) organized by people with distinct cultures.					
17	I socialise with people from various cultures.					

Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use Scale

Thanks for the answers you have provided us so far. In this short section, we'd like also to know to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding your use of English language in intercultural contexts.

No	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I feel worried of making mistakes when speaking in English to people from other cultures.					
2	I speak English language as my mother tongue.					
3	I comprehend English newspapers and journals very well without using a dictionary.					
4	I effortlessly understand English speakers who are speaking to me as quickly as they would do to each other.					
5	I easily understand two English speakers talking with each other.					
6	I comfortably argue in English for a position on a controversial topic in intercultural encounters.					
7	I draw conclusions from what I read in English with ease.					
8	I write official English letters that convey my message accurately with relatively few grammatical errors.					
9	Errors in my writings do not disturb my English readers.					
10	I easily cope with lengthy detailed discussions in English in intercultural encounters.					
11	I have to hammer out the words I will say to not violate the taboos when communicating in English.					

12	I cannot find out proper words in English to express what I mean.					
13	I speak English slowly and repeat what I say.					
14	I think in English when communicating with English speakers.					
15	People understand me very well when I speak in English.					
16	I feel more confident in discussing familiar topics in English than the unfamiliar detailed ones.					
17	I find myself stuck in my conversation in English with people from other cultures.					
18	I have forgotten some of my English.					
19	I am ordinarily relaxed when talking in English to people of different cultures.					
20	My thoughts become jumbled when giving a speech in English in public.					
21	While giving a speech in English, I get so nervous that I forget facts I really know.					
22	My English has helped me fulfil my aspirations when interacting with individuals from other cultures.					
23	I find it fun to speak in English.					
24	My capabilities in English language do not meet the linguistic demands of conversations in English.					

In this last question of the survey, please tell me what are the things mentioned below have hindered your communication with people from other cultures more than others? Drag and Drop to put them in order

- _____ Less confidence in my English language abilities
 - _____ My negative perception of other culture(s)
 - _____ Fear of negative images and reactions from my cultural group members
 - _____ Less knowledge about other culture(s)
 - _____ My own customs and traditions
 - _____ Family commitments
 - _____ Study/work commitments
 - _____ Others' negative perception of my identity and culture
 - _____ My shy introvert personality
 - _____ Other:
-

Follow up consent

Would you provide us with your first name and email address? so that we can send the follow up survey in your name directly to your email after nearly six months from now. This will help us prevent the individuals who have not completed this survey from taking part in the follow up stage of this project.

- Yes, as I want to take part in the follow up stage of the project
- No, as I do not want to take part in the follow up stage of the project

Contact Details:

Please provide your contact details in the corresponding boxes below:

- Your first name or family name _____
- Email address _____

Appendix 3: Online Invitation, Completion Reminder, and Thank-You Messages

Research Invitation Message (Stage One of Online Data Collection)

Dear,

I am a PhD student at the University of Exeter in the UK, looking for Omani students studying in the UK, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand as well as Omani students (and employees) staying in Oman, who have completed for joining a study abroad program, to take part in this project.

The project aims to assess the English language and intercultural communicative capabilities of Omani students studying abroad with those staying in Oman and to find out whether there is a relationship between these two types of capabilities as well as to understand how the Omani students have developed in these criteria.

The survey will take 15-20 minutes of your time. Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary, and you can withdraw from the research at any time and in any stage of your survey completion. Your answers will be used on an anonymous basis and for research purposes only, and third parties will not be allowed access to them. Complete surveys will be rewarded by entering prize draws.

If you wish to make a contact about this research, please email the researcher on:

asaa206@exeter.ac.uk

Ahmed Al-Abri

Please click the link below for the survey:

I'll be grateful if you could also circulate this survey among your friends and colleagues both abroad and in Oman.

The survey is open till 3/3/2017

Invitation Email (Stage Two of Online Data Collection)

Dear,

I hope you enjoyed your Eid holiday. Thank you for your participation in the previous stage of my data collection and showing interest for participation in the second stage of my research data collection

Please click the link below to take the questionnaire. It is the same questionnaire you took six months ago.

[Take the Survey](#)

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

https://exeterssis.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/preview/SV_eaLh1zZ8mou6qZT?Q_CHL=preview

The questionnaire is open till the end of this month.

Many thanks

Ahmed Al-Abri

Email: asaa206@exeter.ac.uk

WhatsApp: +968 96662240

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:

[Click here to unsubscribe](#)

A Completion Reminder Email

Dear \${m://FirstName},

Do not forget to complete the survey, please. Your completion of the survey will help us adjust and shorten the survey in a good way. The survey will be closed on 7/1/2017. If you complete it before this day, it would be a great thing to do.

Happy New Year to you.

Follow this link to the Survey:

[\\${l://SurveyLink?d=Take the survey}](#)

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

[\\${l://SurveyURL}](#)

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:

[\\${l://OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}](#)

Thank-You Email (Stage Two of Online Data Collection)

Dear,

I would like to thank you for taking part in the second stage of my PhD study and wish you the best of luck in your study and work. I might be in contact with you if you are only selected to be among those who will be interviewed.

Kind regards

Ahmed

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:

[Click here to unsubscribe](#)

Appendix 4: Study Samples

Table 1: The 581 cases distribution according to the study (stay) location

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Missing data	6	1.0	1.1	1.1
	The UK	358	61.6	66.9	68.0
	North America (USA and Canada)	24	4.1	4.5	72.5
Valid	Australia and New Zealand	61	10.5	11.4	83.9
	Oman (I competed for study abroad scholarships but didn't get)	39	6.7	7.3	91.2
	Oman (I didn't compete for any study abroad scholarships)	47	8.1	8.8	100.0
	Total	535	92.1	100.0	
Missing	System	46	7.9		
Total		581	100.0		

Table 2: The distribution of the 250 pre-test takers according to research group, gender, study location, and educational level

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	experimental group	231	92.4	92.4	92.4
	control group	19	7.6	7.6	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	
Valid	Male	109	43.6	43.6	43.6
	Female	141	56.4	56.4	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	
Valid	The UK	191	76.4	76.4	76.4
	North America (USA and Canada)	8	3.2	3.2	79.6
	Australia and New Zealand	32	12.8	12.8	92.4
	Oman (I competed for study abroad scholarships but didn't get)	19	7.6	7.6	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	
Valid	Diploma	47	18.8	18.8	18.8
	Bachelor	93	37.2	37.2	56.0
	Master	70	28.0	28.0	84.0
	PhD	40	16.0	16.0	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

Table 3: The distribution of the 93 post-test takers according to research group, gender, study location, and educational level

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	experimental group	86	92.5	92.5	92.5
	control group	7	7.5	7.5	100.0
	Total	93	100.0	100.0	
Valid	Male	32	34.4	34.4	34.4
	Female	61	65.6	65.6	100.0
	Total	93	100.0	100.0	
Valid	The UK	73	78.5	78.5	78.5
	North America (USA and Canada)	1	1.1	1.1	79.6
	Australia and New Zealand	12	12.9	12.9	92.5
	Oman (I competed for study abroad scholarships but didn't get)	7	7.5	7.5	100.0
	Total	93	100.0	100.0	
Valid	Diploma	19	20.4	20.4	20.4
	Bachelor	27	29.0	29.0	49.5
	Master	27	29.0	29.0	78.5
	PhD	20	21.5	21.5	100.0
	Total	93	100.0	100.0	

Table 4: An Overview of The 11 Interviewed Participants

No.	Interviewee Pseudonym	Edu. level	Stay abroad	Mode of interview	Pre-IIF	Post-IIF	IIF Change	Pre-SEIELU	Post-SEIELU	SEIELU Change	Pre-ICC	Post-ICC	ICC Change	Interview duration
1	Khalil	PhD	with family	Synchronous interview	14	8	-6	63	62	-1	259	246	-13	89 mins
2	Sa'ad	PhD	with family	Synchronous interview	11	12	1	50	54	4	208	219	11	51 mins
3	Lora	BA	alone	Email interview	14	14	0	62	53	-9	259	251	-8	Time flexibility
4	Subhi	MA	with family	Synchronous interview	6	5	-1	50	51	1	242	217	-25	40 mins
5	Zaid	PhD	alone	Phone interview	12	9	-3	47	47	0	233	243	10	51 mins
6	Aryam	BA	alone	Synchronous interview	12	10	-2	52	60	8	212	215	3	46 mins
7	Ruba	BA	with family	Synchronous interview	12	11	-1	56	62	6	230	248	18	42 mins
8	Yahiya	PhD	alone	Phone interview	9	10	1	35	39	4	224	218	-6	34 mins
9	Nora	MA	alone	Group interview	5	15	10	47	39	-8	229	213	-16	56 mins
10	Dalila	MA	alone	Group Interview	10	10	0	49	45	-4	237	219	-18	56 mins
11	Talib	PhD	alone	phone interview	15	12	-3	38	33	-5	226	227	1	36 mins

Table 5: Total Numbers and Percentages of Omani Students according to Academic Years

Academic Year	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	Total	Total % of Scholarships
Total number of external scholarships	5974	9355	6459	8282	8335	38405	
Total number of scholarships in non-Arab countries	5670 (95%)	6775 (72%)	5564 (86%)	7042 (85%)	7234 (87%)	32285 (84%)	
USA	2640	N/A	N/A	2250	1973	6863	21.26%
Canada	N/A	N/A	N/A	175	123	298	0.92%
UK	1180	N/A	N/A	1883	1523	4586	14.20%
Australia	476	N/A	N/A	830	782	2088	6.47%
New Zealand	99	N/A	N/A	231	231	561	1.74%

Email Information provided by National Centre for Statistical Information in Oman on July 12, 2021

Appendix 5: Certificates of Ethical Approval



GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

St Luke's Campus
Heavitree Road
Exeter UK EX1 2LU

<http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/education/>

CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

Title of Project: Self-Efficacy in English Language Use and Intercultural Communicative Competence through Study Abroad? An Examination of Omani Students' Perceptions and Experiences.

Researcher(s) name: Ahmed Salim Abdulla Al-Abri

Supervisor(s): Gabriela Meier
Esmaeel Abdollahzadeh

This project has been approved for the period

From: 19/12/2016
To: 15/11/2017

Ethics Committee approval reference:

D/16/17/19

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Durrant', with a small star-like mark at the end.

Signature: (Dr Philip Durrant, Chair, Graduate School of Education Ethics Committee) Date: 19/12/2016

CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL - EXTENSION

Title of Project: Self-Efficacy in English Language Use and Intercultural Communicative Competence through Study Abroad? An Examination of Omani Students' Perceptions and Experiences.

Researcher(s) name: Ahmed Salim Abdulla Al-Abri


Supervisor(s): Gabriela Meier
Esmaeel Abdollahzadeh

This project has been approved for the period

From: 01/03/2018
To: 01/05/2018

Ethics Committee approval reference:

D/17/18/25

Signature:  Date: 30/02/2018
(Professor Dongbo Zhang, Graduate School of Education Ethics Officer)

CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

Title of Project:

Self-Efficacy in English Language Use, Intercultural Communicative Competence and Frequent Intercultural Encounters through Study Abroad? An Examination of Omani Arab Students' Intercultural Perceptions and Lived Experiences Abroad

Researcher(s) name: Ahmed Al Abri

Supervisor(s): Gabriela Meier
Esmaeel Abdollahzadeh

This project has been approved for the period

From: 09/06/2020

To: 25/09/2021

Ethics Committee approval reference: D1920-173

Signature:



Date: 09/06/2020

(Professor Dongbo Zhang, Professor of Science and Environmental Education, Ethics Officer)

Appendix 6: English Version-Final Shortened Research Survey (ICCS & SEIELUS)

Study Abroad Assessment Project (English)

Research Aims:

This project aims to assess the English language and intercultural communicative capabilities of Omani students studying abroad with those staying in Oman and to find out whether there is a relationship between these two types of capabilities. It also aims to understand how the Omani students have developed in these criteria.

Possible Contributions from Your Participation:

Take this opportunity to tell us about your real experience with people from other cultures. Your participation will help us shape an understanding of your experience and could also have beneficial implications to study abroad students by possibly developing or introducing (perhaps new) programs that would help maximize the benefits of studying abroad, and to stay at home students as well by possibly increasing the study abroad scholarships granted to Omani employees and students.

Data Confidentiality & Anonymity:

The survey will take 15-20 minutes of your time. Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw from the research at any time and in any stage of your survey completion. However, on your completion of the survey, you will enter **a prize draw on £35 Amazon vouchers in the first stage and £50 vouchers in the follow-up stage of the project**. Your answers will be used on an anonymous basis and for research purposes only, and third parties will not be allowed access to them.

Please be informed that the **survey is NOT a test**, so there are no correct or wrong answers as long as your answers indicate and express what you do or feel in your real life experience.

For more information about this research, please click [Research Information Sheet](#).

By clicking the "**Continue to survey**" button below, you agree to take part in this research.

1. Location of present study (or stay):
 - The UK
 - North America (USA and Canada)
 - Australia and New Zealand
 - Oman (I competed for study abroad scholarships but didn't get)
 - Oman (I didn't compete for any study abroad scholarships)

2. Length of your stay in the current country so far:
 - Less than a year
 - 1-2 years
 - 3-4 years
 - 5-6 years
 - More than 6 years

3. Staying in the current country mostly:
 - alone, without my family members
 - with my family members

4. Have you previously studied abroad in a non-Arab country?
 - No
 - Yes

5. Educational level:
 - Diploma
 - Bachelor
 - Master
 - PhD

6. Gender:
 - Male
 - Female

7. Number of languages spoken besides Arabic:
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - More? (specify): _____

8. Age:
 - in years _____

9. Thinking about the last six months, for how many times did you do the following with people from other cultures each week?

	Never	less than once per week	once a week	two to six times a week	everyday or more often
engaging in informal conversations (Informal conversations)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
studying or doing other class work (Studying)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
socializing (this includes things like sharing meals, going to movies and parties, playing sports, etc.) (socializing)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Intercultural Communicative Competence Scale

Thanks for your answers so far. I'd like now to know to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements based on your real experience with people from other cultures.

No.	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Intercultural Attitudes						
Respect for Cultural Differences						
1	Cultures different from my own are worth appreciating.					
2	I acknowledge the cultural differences encountered in intercultural settings.					
3	I respect the ways people from different cultures behave.					
Ethnocentrism						
4	My culture should not be the role model for other cultures.					
5	People in my culture would be happier if they lived like people in other cultures.					
6	I see people culturally similar to me as exemplary.					
Intolerance of Cultural Differences						
7	Behaviours different from my own constitute a threat to my identity.					
8	I tolerate the cultural norms different from my own.					
9	I look positively at people with distinct cultures.					
Open-mindedness						
10	I look for people from different cultural backgrounds.					
11	My communication is based on the cultural traits of people I am familiar with.					
12	I adapt my behaviours to get closer to people from different cultures.					
Curiosity and Discovery						

13	I try to find out why people in other cultures act the way they do.					
14	I ask individuals in the experienced culture to interpret the new cultural differences around me.					
15	I seek my own ways to test the accuracy of the beliefs I adopt about people in other cultures.					
Motivation						
16	I mostly interact within my cultural group.					
17	I excitedly seek out friendships with people from different cultures.					
18	I try to figure out the right way of communicating with individuals from a different culture.					
19	I feel closer to people from my own culture because I can relate to them better.					
Autonomy						
20	I tend to form relationships with people from other cultures, regardless of my cultural group members' influence.					
21	My goals are prioritized over those of my cultural group members in intercultural contexts.					
22	My cultural group members have an influence on my choices of people I should form relationships with.					
Tolerance of Ambiguity and Uncertainty						
23	I enjoy the experiences with ambiguous results.					
24	I feel comfortable with people whose behaviours are unfamiliar to me.					
25	I avoid interactions with unpredictable results.					
26	I have no fear of unknown people.					
Emotion Regulation						
1	I get irritated quickly by people from other cultures.					
2	I keep calm when things do not go well with people from other cultures.					

3	My emotions get hurt easily by the unpleasant events experienced in intercultural encounters.					
4	It is easy for me to stay calm when my cultural identity gets attacked.					
5	I allow a conflict when people disagree with me.					
Critical Thinking and Communication Skills						
Critical Thinking Skills						
1	I recognize the differences within the cultural groups I come in contact with.					
2	I do not pay attention to the impact of my decisions on my intercultural learning.					
3	When misunderstood, I do not trace the causes of this misunderstanding.					
4	When I do not understand a cultural aspect, I discuss it with a person(s) in that culture.					
5	I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from other cultures.					
6	I monitor the appropriateness of my behaviours when interacting with people from other cultures.					
7	I compare between different cultural groups, including my own, for the purpose of learning.					
Communication Skills						
8	I use humours as a technique to build interactions with people from different cultures.					
9	I am observant when interacting with people of different cultures.					
10	I do not ask people how they say/do things in their cultures when I do not know so.					
11	I listen to people attentively and do my best to understand them.					
12	I wait to observe before forming an opinion about culturally-distinct counterparts.					
13	I repeat the received message for more accurate understanding of its meaning before responding.					

14	I try to see the world through the eyes of people in other cultures.					
Intercultural Cognition						
Intercultural Awareness						
1	I am conscious of the impact of my culture on my perceptions.					
2	I am aware of why culturally distinct people behave the way they do.					
3	I am aware of the cultural differences and similarities between my culture and those I come in contact with.					
4	I am not conscious that cultures are behind people's different behaviours.					
Intercultural Stereotypes						
5	I approach people from other cultures based on what I hear about them.					
6	I perceive negative individual behaviours as representatives of several cultures around me.					
7	I rely on the assumptions common among my cultural group members when interacting with people from other cultures.					
Intercultural Knowledge						
8	I know about the traditions and customs of the culture(s) I have experienced.					
9	I know about the essential norms and prohibitions of the other culture(s) (e.g., greetings, dress, behaviours, etc.)					
10	I know about the arts and crafts of the other culture(s).					
Behaviours (appropriate and effective)						
Social Initiative						
1	I take the initiative to make a contact with culturally distinct people.					
2	I find it easy to initiate a conversation with people from different cultures.					

3	I feel inclined to speak out in intercultural gatherings.					
Adaptability						
4	I change the way I address something depending on the person I am talking to.					
5	When I communicate with people from other cultures, I tend to act differently than I would with people from my own culture.					
6	I find it difficult to adjust my behaviours when interacting with individuals from a different culture.					
Flexibility						
7	When I join a group for the first time I quickly build relationships with other group members from other cultures.					
8	I find myself easy-going among different cultural groups.					
9	I can serve as a bridge between people of different cultures around me.					
10	I feel less comfortable when working in a group of people with distinct cultures.					
11	Most of my close friends are from other cultures.					
Social Engagement						
12	I help organize trips with people from various cultures.					
13	I visit people from other cultures living nearby.					
14	I engage in activities (e.g. sports, parties, etc.) organized by people with distinct cultures.					
15	I socialise with people from various cultures.					

Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use Scale

Thanks for the answers you have provided me so far. In this short section, I'd like also to know to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding your use of English language in intercultural contexts.

No	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I feel worried of making mistakes when speaking in English to people from other cultures.					
2	I effortlessly understand English speakers who are speaking to me as quickly as they would do to each other.					
3	I comfortably argue in English for a position on a controversial topic in intercultural encounters.					
4	I easily cope with lengthy detailed discussions in English in intercultural encounters.					
5	I have to hammer out the words I will say to not violate the taboos when communicating in English.					
6	I cannot find out proper words in English to express what I mean.					
7	I speak English slowly and repeat what I say.					
8	I think in English when communicating with English speakers.					
9	People understand me very well when I speak in English.					
10	I feel more confident in discussing familiar topics in English than the unfamiliar detailed ones.					
11	I find myself stuck in my conversation in English with people from other cultures.					
12	I am ordinarily relaxed when talking in English to people of different cultures.					

13	My thoughts become jumbled when giving a speech in English in public.					
14	While giving a speech in English, I get so nervous that I forget facts I really know.					
15	I find it fun to speak in English.					
16	My capabilities in English language do not meet the linguistic demands of conversations in English.					

In this last question of the survey, please tell us what are the things mentioned below have hindered your communication with people from other cultures more than others? Drag and Drop to put them in order

- _____ Less confidence in my English language abilities
 - _____ My negative perception of other culture(s)
 - _____ Fear of negative images and reactions from my cultural group members
 - _____ Less knowledge about other culture(s)
 - _____ My own customs and traditions
 - _____ Family commitments
 - _____ Study/work commitments
 - _____ Others' negative perception of my identity and culture
 - _____ My shy introvert personality
 - _____ Other:
-

Follow up consent:

Will you provide us with your first name and email address? So that we can send the follow up survey in your name, directly to your email after nearly 6 months from now. This will help us prevent those who have not taken part in this survey from taking part in the follow up survey.

- Yes, as I want to take part in the follow up survey.
- No, as I do NOT want to take part in the follow up survey.

Contact Details:

Please enter your contact details in the boxes below:

- Your first name or family name _____
- Email address _____

Follow up consent (semi-structured interviews)

Would you like to participate in the coming interview (the last stage of the study) to further discuss your experience?

Please be informed that only a few individuals will be interviewed from among all those who are willing to be interviewed due to time and effort restrictions.

- Yes, I want to take part in the follow up interview.
- No, I do NOT want to take part in the follow up interview.

The type of interview you prefer to attend:

- Single
- Group
- No Preference

Please enter your contact details below:

- Your first name or family name _____
 - Email address _____
 - Country of stay: \${study location/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices}
-

Appendix 7: Arabic Version -Final Shortened Research Survey (ICCS & SEIELUS)

مشروع تقييم الدراسة في الخارج

أهداف البحث

يهدف هذا المشروع إلى تقييم قدرات اللغة الإنجليزية وقدرات التواصل مع الثقافات الأخرى للطلبة العمانيون الدارسون في الخارج، مع أولئك الطلبة و الموظفين ممن لم يحظوا بفرصة الدراسة في الخارج. كما يهدف المشروع الى معرفة ما إذا كانت هناك علاقة بين هذين النوعين من القدرات و إلى أيضا فهم كيفية قيام الطلبة المستهدفين بتطوير هاتين القدرتين

نتائج إيجابية ممكنة من مشاركتك

إنتهز هذه الفرصة لإخبارنا عن تجربتك مع الناس من الثقافات الأخرى. فمشاركتك ستساعدنا على فهم تجربتك و ربما قد يكون لها نتائج إيجابية للطلبة الدارسين في الخارج من خلال تطوير و تحسين البرامج الحالية أو ربما استحداث برامج جديدة تسهم في تحقيق أكبر قدر ممكن من فوائد الدراسة في الخارج و كذلك للطلبة و الموظفين ممن لم يحظوا بتجربة الدراسة في الخارج و ذلك قد يكون من خلال زيادة عدد بعثات الدراسة في الخارج الممنوحة للموظفين و الطلبة العمانيين بشكل عام.

سرية هوية المشارك و بياناته

ستأخذ الإستبانة 15 إلى 20 دقيقة من وقتك. تعد مشاركتك في جميع مراحل هذا المشروع عملا طوعيا، كما يمكنك الانسحاب منه في أي وقت تشاء و في أي مرحلة من مراحل إكمالك للإستبانة. إلا أنه في حال إكمالك للإستبيان، فستدخل في سحب على قسائم شراء من أمازون تتراوح قيمتها بين 35 جنيها إسترلينا في المرحلة الأولى و 50 جنيها إسترلينا في المرحلة التالية و الجدير بالذكر على أنه سيتم التعامل مع إجاباتك بسرية، مع عدم التطرق لهوية المشارك و سيتم إستخدامها لغرض بحثي فقط، دون السماح لأي طرف ثالث بالولوج إليها. في نهاية المطاف، يرجى الأخذ في الاعتبار بأن هذه الإستبانة ليست بمثابة إمتحان، لذلك لا توجد هناك إجابات صحيحة أو خاطئة طالما إن إجاباتك تدل و تعبر عما تقوم أو تشعر به في واقع تجربتك

للمزيد من المعلومات حول هذا البحث، الرجاء الضغط على معلومات عن البحث

بضغطك على زر " إنتقل إلى الإستبانة " في الأسفل، فإنك توافق على المشاركة في هذا البحث

1. مكان الدراسة أو الإقامة الحالية:
- المملكة المتحدة
 - أمريكا الشمالية (الولايات المتحدة و كندا
 - أستراليا و نيوزيلندا
 - سلطنة عمان (نافست للحصول على بعثة للدراسة في الخارج و لكن لم أوفق)
 - سلطنة عمان (لم أنافس على أية بعثة للدراسة في الخارج)

2. مدة إقامتك في البلد الحالي حتى الآن:

- أقل من سنة
- من سنة الى سنتين
- من ثلاث الى اربع سنوات
- من خمس الى ست سنوات
- أكثر من 6 سنوات

3. مكثت في البلد الحالي تقريبا:

- وحيداً بدون أفراد عائلتي
- مع أفراد عائلتي

4. هل درست سابقا في دولة غير عربية؟

- لا
- نعم

5. المستوى التعليمي:

- دبلوم
- بكالوريوس
- ماجستير
- دكتوراة

6. الجنس:

- ذكر
- أنثى

7. عدد اللغات التي تتحدث بها إلى جانب اللغة العربية:

- 1
- 2
- 3

أكثر؟ (حدد): _____

8. العمر بالسنوات _____

9. بالرجوع إلى آخر ستة أشهر، كم عدد المرات التي قمت فيها بفعل الأشياء التالية مع أناس من ثقافات أخرى في الأسبوع الواحد؟

	أبدا	أقل من مرة واحدة في الأسبوع	مرة واحدة في الأسبوع	مرتين إلى ستة مرات في الأسبوع	كل يوم أو في معظم الأوقات
الانخراط في محادثات اجتماعية غير رسمية	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
المذاكرة أو القيام بأعمال صافية أخرى	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
المخاطبات الاجتماعية (يتضمن هذا أشياء مثل تقاسم أطباق الطعام، الذهاب إلى السينما و الحفلات، ممارسة الأنشطة الرياضية..... الخ)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

مقدمة الى الجزء التالي من الاستبانة

شكرا لك على إجاباتك. نود الآن معرفة إلى أي مدى توافق أو لا توافق على العبارات التالية، بناءا على تجاربك مع أناس من ثقافات أخرى.

تقييم كفاءة التواصل الثقافي

الرقم	البند	لا أوافق بشده	أوافق	محايد	أوافق	أوافق بشدة
الميول الثقافي						
إحترام الإختلافات الثقافية						
1	تستحق الثقافات المغايرة عن ثقافتي التقدير.					
2	أعترف بالإختلافات الثقافية التي أصادفها في المواقف الثقافية.					
3	أحترم طريقة تصرف الناس من الثقافات الأخرى.					
التكبر الثقافي						
4	لا يجب أن تكون ثقافتي بمثابة قدوة للثقافات الأخرى.					
5	سيكون الناس في ثقافتي أكثر سعادة لو كانت طريقة معيشتهم شبيهة بتلك التي عند الناس في الثقافات الأخرى.					
6	أرى الناس الشبهيين بي ثقافيا كقدوة لغيرهم من الناس في الثقافات الأخرى.					
عدم تحمل الإختلافات الثقافية						
7	تشكل السلوكيات المغايرة لتلك التي عندي تهديدا لهويتي.					

					لا تشكل الأعراف الثقافية التي تختلف عن تلك التي في ثقافتني هاجسا إلي.	8
					أنظر بإيجابية إلى الناس ذوي الثقافات المختلفة.	9
الإنتفاح الثقافي						
					أبحث عن أناس من ذوي خلفيات ثقافية مختلفة.	10
					يعتمد تواصلني مع غيرني من الناس على السمات الثقافية للناس الذين أعرفهم.	11
					أكيف من سلوكياتني بغية التقرب من الناس المنتمين إلى ثقافات مختلفة.	12
الفضول و حب الإستكشاف الثقافي						
					أحاول إكتشاف السبب الكامن وراء تصرفات الناس في الثقافات الأخرى من حولني.	13
					أسأل الناس في الثقافة الأخرى لتفسير الإختلافات الثقافية الجديدة من حولني.	14
					أستعين بطريقي الخاصة لتأكد من دقة الإعتقادات التي أتبناها حول الناس في الثقافات الأخرى.	15
الدافعية الثقافية						
					غالبا ما ينحصر تواصلني مع أفراد المجموعة التي أنتمي إليها.	16
					أسعى بشغف إلى تكوين صداقات مع أشخاص من ثقافات مختلفة.	17
					أحاول معرفة الطريقة الصحيحة للتواصل مع أشخاص ينتمون إلى ثقافة مغايرة.	18
					أشعر بأنني أكثر قربا إلى الأفراد المنتمين إلى ثقافتني و ذلك لإستطاعتي على التواصل معهم بشكل أفضل.	19
الإستقلالية						
					أسعى إلى تكوين صداقات مع أناس من ثقافات مغايرة، بغض النظر عن تأثير أفراد مجموعتي على قراراتني.	20
					أعطي الأولوية لأهدافني على تلك الأهداف المتبناة من قبل أفراد مجموعتي عند التواجد بين أفراد من ثقافات مختلفة.	21
					يتترك أفراد مجموعتي تأثيرا على خياراتي من الناس الذين أأرب في تكوين علاقات معهم.	22
تحمل الغموض						
					أستمع بخوض التجارب ذات النتائج الغامضة.	23

					أشعر براحة عند تواجدي بين أشخاص ذوي سلوكيات غير مألوفة إلي.	24
					أتجنب الاختلاطات الاجتماعية ذات النتائج الغير قابلة للتكهن المسبق.	25
					ليس لدي خوف من الأشخاص الغير معروفين عندي.	26
التحكم في المشاعر السلبية و تنظيمها						
					يستفزني الناس المنتمين إلى ثقافات مغايرة أكثر من غيرهم.	1
					أبقى هادنا عندما لا تسير الأمور بشكل جيد مع أناس من ثقافات أخرى.	2
					تتأثر مشاعري بسهولة بالمواقف السيئة التي تمر بي في اللقاءات الثقافية.	3
					من السهولة بالنسبة لي أن أظل هادئاً عندما تتعرض هويتي الثقافية لهجوم ما.	4
					أسمح بخلق مشكلة ما عندما لا يتفق الناس معي.	5
مهارات التفكير النقدي و التواصل						
مهارات التفكير النقدي						
					ألاحظ الاختلافات بين أفراد المجموعة الثقافية الواحدة التي أكون على اتصال بها.	1
					لا أنتبه إلى تأثير قراراتي على فرصتي في التعلم من الثقافات الأخرى.	2
					لا أتعقب أسباب سوء الفهم، عندما يبسيء أحد ما فهمي.	3
					عندما يشكل علي فهم جانب من الجوانب الثقافية لثقافة ما، فانني أقوم بمناقشة ذلك الجانب مع شخص ينتمي إلى تلك الثقافة.	4
					أتحقق من دقة معرفتي بثقافة ما، ما أن أتفاعل مع أشخاص من تلك الثقافة.	5
					أراقب مدى ملائمة سلوكياتي عند إختلاطي بأناس ينتمون إلى ثقافات أخرى.	6
					أقارن بين المجموعات الثقافية المختلفة، بما فيهن مجموعتي، وذلك لغرض التعلم.	7
مهارات التواصل مع الآخرين						

					استخدم الفكاهات كأسلوب لبناء تواصل مع أناس من ثقافات مغايرة.	8
					أجد نفسي كثير المراقبة عند تفاعلي مع أناس من ثقافات مغايرة.	9
					لا أستوضح من الناس حول كيفية حديثهم أو قيامهم بأمر ما في ثقافتهم، عند جهلي بذلك.	10
					أستمع بإصغاء إلى الآخرين وأبذل قصارى جهدي لفهمهم.	11
					أتأني لأراقب قبل تكوين رأي ما عن الأفراد المختلفين عني ثقافيا.	12
					أقوم بإعادة صياغة الرسالة التي أتلقها، بغية فهمها بشكل أدق قبل الرد عليها.	13
					أحاول رؤية العالم بعيون الناس في الثقافات الأخرى.	14
المعرفة الثقافية						
الوعي الثقافي						
					أعي مدى تأثير ثقافتي على تصوراتي.	1
					أعي الأسباب الكامنة وراء طريقة تصرف الناس المختلفين عني ثقافيا.	2
					أعي أوجه التشابه والاختلاف بين ثقافتي وثقافة من أتواصل معهم.	3
					لست مدركا بأن الثقافات تقف وراء السلوكيات المختلفة للناس.	4
الصور النمطية حول الثقافات						
					أتعامل مع الناس من الثقافات الأخرى، بناء على ما أسمعهم عنهم.	5
					أرى أن السلوكيات السلبية للأفراد تمثل الثقافات التي نشأت فيها.	6
					أعتمد على التصورات الشائعة بين أفراد مجموعتي، عند تعاملي مع أناس ينتمون إلى ثقافات أخرى	7
المعرفة الثقافية						
					عندي معرفة بالعادات و التقاليد السائدة في الثقافات التي مررت بها.	8
					عندي معرفة بالأعراف و الممنوعات في الثقافات الأخرى (مثل أسلوب إلقاء التحية، و اللباس و السلوك..الخ).	9
					عندي معرفة بالفنون والحرف اليدوية الموجودة في الثقافات الأخرى.	10
السلوكيات (مدى تناسبها و فعاليتها)						
المبادرة الاجتماعية						

					أخذ زمام المبادرة في تكوين تواصل مع الأفراد المختلفين عني ثقافياً.	1
					أجد الأمر سهلاً في بدء حديث ما مع أناس ينتمون إلى ثقافات مغايرة.	2
					أميل إلى الحديث في اللقاءات التي تجمع بين أفراد من ثقافات مختلفة.	3
التكيف						
					أغير من طريقة طرحي لموضوع ما، اعتماداً على الشخص الذي أتحدث إليه.	4
					أميل إلى التواصل مع الناس من الثقافات الأخرى بطريقة تختلف عن طريقة تواصلني مع أناس ينتمون إلى ثقافتي.	5
					أجد صعوبة في أقامة سلوكياتي عند تفاعلي مع أشخاص ينتمون إلى ثقافة ما مختلفة.	6
المرونة						
					عندما ألتحق بمجموعة ما لأول مرة، فاني أقوم سريعاً ببناء علاقات مع باقي أعضاء المجموعة من الثقافات الأخرى.	7
					أجد نفسي سهل الإنسجام بين المجموعات الثقافية المغايرة.	8
					يمكنني أن أكون بمثابة جسراً للتواصل بين مختلف الناس من الثقافات الأخرى.	9
					أشعر بقليل من الراحة عند العمل في مجموعة تضم أناس ذوي ثقافات مختلفة.	10
					معظم أصدقائي المقربين من ثقافات أخرى.	11
الإنخراط الإجتماعي						
					أساعد في تنظيم رحلات مع أفراد من ثقافات متنوعة.	12
					أقوم بزيارة جيراني من الثقافات الأخرى.	13
					أنخرط في الأنشطة الرياضية و الإحتفالات التي يقوم بتنظيمها أفراد ذوي ثقافات مغايرة.	14
					أماشي أناس من خلفيات ثقافية متنوعة.	15

مقدمة الى الجزء التالي:

شكرا لك على الإجابات التي قمت بالإدلاء بها حتى الآن. في هذا الجزء القصير من الإستبانة، نود معرفة أيضا إلى أي مدى توافق أو لا توافق على العبارات التالية فيما يتعلق باستخدامك للغة الإنجليزية في المواقف الثقافية المتعددة

تقييم الكفاءة الذاتية في استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية

الرقم	البند	لا أوافق بشدة	لا أوافق	لا أعلم/لست متأكدًا	أوافق	أوافق بشدة
1	أشعر بالقلق من ارتكاب خطأ ما عند التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية إلى أشخاص من ثقافات أخرى.					
2	لا أبذل الكثير من الجهد لفهم متحدثي اللغة الإنجليزية عند التحدث إلي بنفس سرعة تحدثهم لبعضهم البعض.					
3	أتكلم اللغة الإنجليزية بأريحية عند خوضي لحوار ما حول موضوع مثير للجدل في المواقف الثقافية.					
4	تعيني لغتي الإنجليزية بكل سهولة في خوض النقاشات الطويلة المفصلة في المقابلات الثقافية.					
5	أركب الكلمات في عقلي قبل البوح بها، حتى لا أرتكب ممنوعا ما عند التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية.					
6	لا أجد الكلمات المناسبة في اللغة الإنجليزية للتعبير عما أريد البوح به.					
7	أتحدث الإنجليزية ببطء، وغالبا ما أكرر ما أقول.					
8	أعالج أفكاري في عقلي باللغة الإنجليزية عند تواصلتي مع متحدثي اللغة.					
9	يفهمني الناس بصورة جيدة جدا عندما أتحدث إليهم باللغة الإنجليزية.					
10	أشعر بثقة أكبر عند استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية في مناقشة المواضيع المألوفة لدي أكثر من استخدامها في مناقشة المواضيع الغير مألوفة المليئة بالتفاصيل.					
11	أجد نفسي عالقًا عند الحديث باللغة الإنجليزية مع أشخاص من ثقافات أخرى.					
12	أكون مرتاحًا نفسيًا عند التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية إلى أناس ذوي ثقافات مغايرة.					
13	تصبح أفكاري غير مرتبة عند إلقائي لخطاب ما باللغة الإنجليزية أمام جمهور من الناس.					

					أرتبك عندما ألقى خطابا باللغة الإنجليزية لدرجة أنني أنسى معلومات أنا على معرفة حقيقية بها.	14
					أشعر بالمتعة عند التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية.	15
					قدراتي في اللغة الإنجليزية لا تجاري المتطلبات اللغوية للأحاديث المجراة باللغة الإنجليزية.	16

في هذا السؤال الأخير من الإستبانة، رتب النقاط التالية وفقاً لأكثر العوامل التي أعاققت تواصلك مع الناس من الثقافات الأخرى عن طريق تحريكك للعبارات فيما بينها:

_____ قلة ثقتي بقدراتي في اللغة الإنجليزية

_____ نظرتي السلبية للثقافات الأخرى

_____ الخوف من التكهات و ردود الفعل السلبية التي قد تصدر من أفراد مجموعتي

_____ قلة معرفتي بالثقافات الأخرى

_____ عاداتي و تقاليدي

_____ إلتزاماتي العائلية

_____ إلتزاماتي الدراسية و العملية

_____ نظرة الآخرين السلبية لهويتي و ثقفتي

_____ شخصيتي الخجولة و الانعزالية

_____ أخرى:

موافقة المشاركة في المرحلة التالية من البحث:

هل بالإمكان تزويدنا بإسمك الأول و عنوان بريدك الإلكتروني؟ حتى يتسنى لنا إرسال الإستبانة اللاحقة بإسمك مباشرة إلى بريدك بعد حوالي 6 أشهر من الآن. سيساعدنا هذا الإجراء على تجنب أولئك الذين لم يشتركوا في هذه الاستبانة من الإشتراك في الإستبانة اللاحقة.

- نعم، أود في المشاركة في الإبتانة اللاحقة
- لا، لا أود المشاركة في الإبتانة اللاحقة

الرجاء إكمال الحقول في الأسفل

- الإسم الأول أو القبيلة (باللغة الإنجليزية إن أمكن) _____
- عنوان بريدك الإلكتروني _____

الموافقة على إجراء المقابلة:

هل ترغب بالمشاركة في المقابلة القادمة (المرحلة الأخيرة من هذا الدراسة) حتى يتسنى لنا مناقشة تجربتك بالدراسة في الخارج؟ للعلم بأن عددا قليلا من الراغبين في المشاركة في المقابلات سيتم مقابلتهم و ذلك لضيق الوقت و الجهد المطلوب في إجراء هذه المقابلات

- نعم، أرغب في المشاركة في المقابلات
- لا، لا أرغب في المشاركة في المقابلات

نوع المقابلة التي تود المشاركة فيها:

- فردية
- جماعية
- لا أفضلية لدي في المقابلات

الرجاء تزويدنا بالبيانات التالية حتى يتسنى لي التواصل معك لترتيب المقابلة:

- أسمك الأول أو إسم العائلة: _____
- بريدك الإلكتروني: _____
- دولة الدراسة: _____

**Appendix 8: Summary of the Main Changes Done to the Survey Construction over
Three Stages of Improvement**

The demographic and general questions section

No.	Original items	Item development stage two	Comments	Item development stage three	Comments
1	<p>The type of relationship I have with people from other cultures around me is generally more:</p> <p>a. Expressive (friendship, partnership, etc.)</p> <p>b. Instrumental (obtaining a service related to health, shopping, transport, etc.)</p>	<p>My real life interactions with people from other cultures around me are most often more:</p> <p>a. Instrumental (obtaining a service related to health, shopping, transport, etc.)</p> <p>b. Expressive (friendship, partnership, etc.)</p>		<p>The nature of my interactions with people from other cultures around me is generally more:</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Instrumental (obtaining a service related to health, shopping, transport, etc.)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Expressive (friendship, partnership, etc.)</p>	Deleted to shorten the survey
2	<p>I study abroad: (to be answered by study abroad students only)</p> <p>a. alone, without my family</p> <p>b. with my family members</p>	<p>I have mostly stayed abroad: (to be answered by study abroad students only)</p> <p>a. alone, without my family members</p> <p>b. with my family members</p>		<p>Staying in the current country mostly:</p> <p><input type="radio"/> alone, without my family members</p> <p><input type="radio"/> with my family members</p>	Reducing the number of words in the question
3	<p>My educational level:</p> <p>a. Less than Diploma</p>	<p>My educational level:</p> <p>a. Diploma</p> <p>b. Bachelor</p>	Students with less than	<p>Educational level:</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Diploma</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Bachelor</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Diploma c. Bachelor d. Master e. PhD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. Master d. PhD 	Diploma were unavailable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Master <input type="radio"/> PhD 	
4	<p>Gender:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Male b. Female 	<p>Gender:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Male b. Female 		<p>Gender:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Male <input type="radio"/> Female 	
5	<p>Location of present study (or stay):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The UK b. USA and Canada c. Australia and New Zealand d. Oman 	<p>Location of present study (or stay):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The UK b. North America (USA and Canada) c. Australia and New Zealand d. Oman 		<p>Location of present study (or stay):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> The UK <input type="radio"/> North America (USA and Canada) <input type="radio"/> Australia and New Zealand <input type="radio"/> Oman (I competed for study abroad scholarships but didn't get) <input type="radio"/> Oman (I didn't compete for any study abroad scholarships) 	Added to stop their participation for sampling reasons
6	<p>How long have you been staying in your recent country of study so far? (to be answered by study abroad students only)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Less than a year b. 1-2 years c. 3-4 years d. 5-6 years 	<p>How long have you been staying in your recent country of study (stay) so far? (to be answered by study abroad students only)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Less than a year b. 1-2 years c. 3-4 years d. 5-6 years 		<p>Length of your stay in the current country so far:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Less than a year <input type="radio"/> 1-2 years <input type="radio"/> 3-4 years <input type="radio"/> 5-6 years <input type="radio"/> More than 6 years 	To reduce the number of words to reduce response fatigue and subsequently increase

	e. More than 6 years	e. More than 6 years			completion and response rate
7	<p>Have you previously studied abroad in any Western country?</p> <p>a. Yes b. No</p>	<p>Have you previously studied abroad in a non-Arab country?</p> <p>a. No b. Yes</p>		<p>Have you previously studied abroad in a non-Arab country?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes</p>	
8	<p>How many languages do you speak besides Arabic?</p> <p>a. 1 b. 2 c. 3 d. 4 and more</p>	<p>How many languages do you speak besides Arabic?</p> <p>a. 1 b. 2 c. 3 d. More:(specify)</p>		<p>Number of languages spoken besides Arabic:</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> More? (specify): _____</p>	Similarly
9	<p>Age:</p> <p>a. 20-24 b. 25-29 c. 30-34 d. 35-40 e. More than 40</p>	<p>Age:</p> <p>a. 20-29 b. 30-39 c. 40-49 d. 50-59 e. 60 or above</p> <p>_____</p>		<p>Age:</p> <p><input type="radio"/> in years _____</p>	Range of participants' ages is unknown. Made open

10	<p>How often do you talk to and engage in informal conversations with people from other cultures?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Never b. Seldom c. Occasionally d. Often e. Every day 	<p>2. How often have you talked to and engaged in informal conversations with people from other cultures in the last six months?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Almost never b. Seldom c. Sometimes d. Very Often e. Regularly 		<p>Thinking about the last six months, for how many times did you do the following with people from other cultures each week?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Never 2. less than once per week 3. once a week 4. two to six times a week 5. everyday or more often 	<p>Turning the ambiguous meaning of frequency adverb scale into a quantified scale</p>
11	<p>How often do you study or do other class work with individuals from other cultures?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Never b. Seldom c. Occasionally d. Often e. Every day 	<p>How often have you studied or done other class work with individuals from other cultures in the last six months?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Almost never b. Seldom c. Sometimes d. Very Often e. Regularly 			
12	<p>How often do you do things socially with individuals from other cultures? (This includes things like</p>	<p>How often have you done things socially with individuals from other cultures in the last six months? (This includes things like sharing meals, going</p>			

	<p>sharing meals, going to movies and parties, playing sports, etc.)</p> <p>a. Never b. Seldom c. Occasionally d. Often e. Every day</p>	<p>to movies and parties, playing sports, etc.)</p> <p>a. Almost never b. Seldom c. Sometimes d. Very Often e. Regularly</p>			
13	<p>Whom do you interact most with? Put them in order</p> <p>a. Arabs and Muslims in general b. African people c. Asian people d. Other people</p>	<p>Whom have you interacted most often with, in the last six months?</p> <p>a. People from the Middle East, Asia, Africa and South America b. People from Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand</p>		<p>Thinking about the last six months again, put the following groups in order according to the frequency of your interaction with them.</p> <p>_____ People from the Middle East _____ People from Asia, Africa and South America _____ People from Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand</p>	Deleted to shorten the survey
14	<p>What are the things mentioned below that have hindered your communication with people from other cultures more than others? Put them in order</p>	<p>What are the things mentioned below have hindered your communication with people from other cultures more than others? Put them in order</p> <p>1. Less confidence in my English language</p>		<p>In this last question of the survey, please tell us what are the things mentioned below have hindered your communication with people from other cultures more than others? Drag and Drop to put them in order</p>	

	<p>9. Lack of confidence in my English language</p> <p>10. My own customs and traditions</p> <p>11. Fear of negative reactions from my cultural group members.</p> <p>12. Less knowledge about other culture(s)</p> <p>13. Family commitments</p> <p>14. Study/work commitments</p> <p>15. My negative perception of other culture(s)</p> <p>16. Culturally-distinct people's negative perception of my culture</p> <hr/>	<p>2. My own customs and traditions</p> <p>3. Fear of negative reactions from my cultural group members</p> <p>4. Less knowledge about other culture(s)</p> <p>5. Others' negative perception of my cultural identity</p> <p>6. Family commitments</p> <p>7. Study/work commitments</p> <p>8. My negative perception of other culture(s)</p> <p>9. Other:</p> <hr/>		<p>_____ Less confidence in my English language abilities</p> <p>_____ My negative perception of other culture(s)</p> <p>_____ Fear of negative images and reactions from my cultural group members</p> <p>_____ Less knowledge about other culture(s)</p> <p>_____ My own customs and traditions</p> <p>_____ Family commitments</p> <p>_____ Study/work commitments</p> <p>_____ Others' negative perception of my identity</p> <p>_____ My shy introvert personality</p> <p>_____ Other:</p>	
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The Intercultural Communicative Competence Scale

No.	Original Statements (stage one)	comments	Second stage survey item development	Comments	Final Survey items	Comments
Intercultural Attitudes						
Respect for Cultural Differences						
1	Cultures (values, customs, norms, traditions, perspectives and behaviours) different from my own are worth respecting and appreciating.	Unnecessary words	Cultures different from my own are worth respecting and appreciating .	Double-barrelling	Cultures different from my own are worth appreciating.	
2	I acknowledge the cultural differences encountered in intercultural settings.	---	I acknowledge the cultural differences encountered in intercultural settings.	---	I acknowledge the cultural differences encountered in intercultural settings.	
3	I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.	---	I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.	---	I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.	
4	I respect the ways people from different cultures behave.	---	I respect the ways people from different cultures behave.	---	I respect the ways people from different cultures behave.	
Ethnocentrism						
5	My culture should be the role model for other cultures.	Negatively reworded	My culture should not be the role model for other cultures.	---	My culture should not be the role model for other cultures.	
6	Most people would be happier if they lived like people in my culture.	Positively reworded	Most people in my culture would be happier if they lived like people in other cultures.	Deleted “Most” to make the	People in my culture would be happier if they lived like people in other cultures.	

				sentence general		
7	I see people who are similar to me as virtuous .	Simplified vocabulary	I see people who are culturally similar to me as high-principled and exemplary .	Double-barrelling	I see people culturally similar to me as exemplary.	
Intolerance of Cultural Differences						
8	The values, norms, beliefs, and habits of people from other cultures constitute a threat to my culture, religion and cultural identity.	Unnecessary words	The beliefs and behaviours different from my own constitute a threat to my cultural identity.	double-barrelling	Behaviours different from my own constitute a threat to my identity.	
9	I do not tolerate the cultures (behaviours, beliefs, norms, etc) that differ from my own.	Unnecessary words; positively reworded	I tolerate the behaviours and norms that differ significantly from my own.	Double-barrelling	I tolerate the cultural norms different from my own.	
10	I often judge people from other cultures negatively because of cultural differences.	Frequency adverb; positively reworded; long	I often judge people with distinct cultures positively.	Frequency adverb	I look positively at people with distinct cultures.	
Open-mindedness						
11	I am open-minded to people from other cultures.		I am open-minded to people with different cultures.		I am open-minded to people of different cultures.	Sentence deleted for the abstract compound word
12	I seek out people from different cultural backgrounds.	Simplified vocabulary	I always look for people from different cultural backgrounds.	Frequency/ absolute adverb	I look for people from different cultural backgrounds.	

13	My communication orientations are based on the racial, ethnic and cultural traits of people I am familiar with.	Unnecessary words	My communication orientations are based on the cultural traits of people I am familiar with.	Unnecessary word	My communication is based on the cultural traits of people I am familiar with.	
14	I adapt my behaviours and perspectives in new intercultural situations.	rewritten	I adapt my behaviours and perspectives to accommodate people from different cultures.	Double-barrelling; rewritten	I adapt my behaviours to get closer to people from different cultures.	
Curiosity and Discovery						
15	I always try to find out why people act the way they do or the way they are.	---	I always try to find out why people act the way they do or the way they are .	Frequency adverb; double-barrelling	I try to find out why people in other cultures act the way they do.	
16	I attempt to find out the beliefs and perspectives of people from different cultures on certain issues.	Rewritten; negatively reworded	I am quite not curious about finding out the perspectives of people from different cultures on some issues.	Intensifier (ambiguous word); long; positively reworded	I try to find out other people's perspectives on some issues.	
17	I often rely on the members of my cultural group to interpret the cultural differences around me.	Reversed	I often look for people from the other culture to interpret the new cultural differences around me.	Frequency adverb; change verb	I ask individuals in the experienced culture to interpret the new cultural differences around me.	
18	I seek my own ways and strategies to test the accuracy of the beliefs and assumptions I hold about people from other cultures.	Unnecessary words	I seek my own ways to test the accuracy of the beliefs and assumptions I hold about people from other cultures.	Unnecessary words; simplified verb	I seek my own ways to test the accuracy of the beliefs I adopt about people in other cultures.	

19	I allocate part of my free time to familiarize myself with people from other cultures around me.	---	I allocate part of my free time to familiarize myself with people from other cultures.	Removed the ambiguity of “other”	I allocate part of my free time to familiarize myself with people from different cultures.	
Motivation						
20	It is better for people to interact within their cultural groups to avoid conflicts caused by cultural differences.	Long; rewritten to make it subjective	It is better for me to interact within my cultural group to avoid cultural conflicts.	long	I mostly interact within my cultural group.	
21	I would seek out friendships with people from different cultures in order to learn about their cultures.	The word “would” reflect intentions but not necessarily the practise; long	I eagerly seek out friendships with people from different cultures.	Simplified vocabulary	I excitedly seek out friendships with people from different cultures.	
22	In a party , if I have a choice between conversing with someone from my own culture or someone from a different culture, I would probably choose someone from my own culture.	Deleted the phrase to make the statement general; reversed	If I have a choice between conversing with someone from my own culture or someone from a different culture, I would probably choose someone from a different culture.	---	If I have a choice between conversing with someone from my own culture or someone from a different culture, I would probably choose someone from a different culture.	
23	I mostly associate with people from my own culture because I find it easier than trying to figure out the right way of interacting with someone from a different culture.	long	I mostly associate with people from my own culture because I find it easier to associate with people from my own culture than trying to figure out the right	long	I try to figure out the right way of communicating with individuals from a different culture.	

			way of interacting with someone from a different culture.			
24	There are many things to learn from other cultures in the world.	---	There are many things to learn from other cultures in the world.	Unnecessary words	There are many things to learn from other cultures.	
25	I find it easier to categorize people based on their cultural identity than their personality.	---	I find it easier to categorize people based on their cultural identity than their personality.	---	I find it easier to categorize people based on their cultural identity than their personality.	
26	I usually feel closer to people who are from my own culture because I can relate to them better.	---	I usually feel closer to people who are from my own culture because I can relate to them better.	Frequency adverb	I feel closer to people from my own culture because I can relate to them better.	
27	The friends and colleagues I have around me from my culture make me in no need for friends from other cultures.	Unnecessary words	The friends I have from my culture often make me in no need for people from other cultures.	The sentence made general; frequency adverb	My cultural group members make me in no need for people from other cultures.	
28	I have done some research in order to learn about cultures different from my own.	Deleted	----	Deleted	---	Deleted
Autonomy						
29	I have my own independence in determining what is good or bad for me in intercultural interaction contexts, regardless of my cultural group.	rewritten	I have my own independence in forming friendships with people from other cultures, regardless of my cultural group's influence.	rewritten	I tend to form relationships with people from other cultures, regardless of my cultural group's influence.	

30	The goals of friends and colleagues from my culture are prioritized over those of my own in intercultural contexts.	reversed	My goals are often prioritized over those of my cultural group in intercultural contexts.	Frequency adverb	My goals are prioritized over those of my cultural group members in intercultural contexts.	
31	I find out my own ways to form friendships with people from different cultures around me, regardless of the influence of my cultural group.	deleted	---	deleted	---	deleted
32	The friends and colleagues from my culture influence my choices of people I should form friendships with.	Made general; slightly rewritten	My cultural group has an influence on my choices of people I should form relationships with.	simplified	My cultural group members have an influence on my choices of people I should form relationships with.	
Tolerance of Ambiguity and Uncertainty						
33	I enjoy the experiences that are ambiguous and unpredictable to me.	long	I enjoy the experiences with ambiguous and unpredictable results.	Double-barrelling	I enjoy the experiences with ambiguous results.	
34	I do not feel comfortable with people whose behaviours and reactions are unfamiliar to me.	reversed	I feel comfortable with people whose behaviours are unfamiliar to me.	---	I feel comfortable with people whose behaviours are unfamiliar to me.	
35	I avoid interactions with unpredictable results.	---	I avoid interactions with unpredictable results.	---	I avoid interactions with unpredictable results.	
36	I have a fear of unknown and unpredictable people.	reversed	I have no fear of unknown and unpredictable people.	Double-barrelling	I have no fear of unknown people.	

Emotion Regulation						
1	I get irritated quickly by people from other cultures.	---	I get irritated quickly by people from other cultures.	---	I get irritated quickly by people from other cultures.	
2	I keep calm when things do not go well in intercultural encounters.	---	I keep calm when things do not go well in intercultural encounters.	clarified	I keep calm when things do not go well with people from other cultures.	
3	My emotions get hurt easily by the unpleasant events experienced with people from other cultures.	---	My emotions get hurt easily by the unpleasant events experienced with people from other cultures.	Changed to make the sentence shorter	My emotions get hurt easily by the unpleasant events experienced in intercultural encounters.	
4	It is easy for me to stay calm when my cultural identity gets attacked.	---	It is easy for me to stay calm when my cultural identity gets attacked.	---	It is easy for me to stay calm when my cultural identity gets attacked.	
5	The media representations of Arabs as potential terrorists leave no place for me to develop authentic relationships with people from other cultures.	Approached negatively by students; adding some to meet the reality	The negative representation of my identity on some media leaves no place for me to develop authentic relationships with people from other cultures.	---	The negative representation of my identity on some media leaves no place for me to develop authentic relationships with people from other cultures.	
6	I keep my respect of people from other cultures even when experiencing problems with them.	changed vocabulary	I preserve my respect of people from other cultures when experiencing problems with them.	---	I preserve my respect of people from other cultures when experiencing problems with them.	
7	I allow a conflict when people disagree with me.	---	I allow a conflict when people disagree with me.	---	I allow a conflict when people disagree with me.	
Critical Thinking and Communication Skills						

Critical Thinking Skills						
1	I recognize the differences among people of the culture I come in contact with.	rewritten	I most often recognize the differences within the cultural groups I come in contact with.	Frequency adverb	I recognize the differences within the cultural groups I come in contact with.	
2	I reflect on the impact and consequences of my decisions & choices on my cultural learning.	---	I rarely reflect on the impact and consequences of my decisions & choices on my intercultural learning.	Frequency adverb; double-barrelling; rewritten; reversed	I do not pay attention to the impact of my decisions on my intercultural learning.	
3	I observe the results of my communication behaviours in intercultural contexts.	Unnecessary word	I observe the results of my behaviours in intercultural contexts.	---	I observe the results of my behaviours in intercultural contexts.	
4	Before I commit myself to a solution I think about the consequences.	---	Before I commit myself to a solution I think about the consequences.	---	Before I commit myself to a solution I think about the consequences.	The statement can have positive and negative interpretations; deleted
5	When misunderstood, I work on finding out the reasons behind this misunderstanding.	---	When misunderstood, I rarely work on finding out the reasons behind this misunderstanding.	frequency adverb; reversed and slightly rewritten	When misunderstood, I do not trace the causes of this misunderstanding.	
6	When I do not understand a cultural aspect, I discuss it with a person (s) from that culture.	---	When I do not understand a cultural aspect, I often discuss it with a person (s) from that culture.	frequency adverb	When I do not understand a cultural aspect, I discuss it with a person(s) in that culture.	

7	I reflect on my culture and monitor its impact on my communication behaviours.	Double-barrelling	I monitor the impact of my culture on my intercultural communications.	---	I monitor the impact of my culture on my intercultural communications.	
8	I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from different cultures.	---	I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from other cultures.	---	I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from other cultures.	
9	I reflect on the effectiveness and appropriateness of the strategies I use in intercultural encounters.	Made general	I often do not pay attention to the effectiveness and appropriateness of my behaviours in intercultural encounters.	Double-barrelling; simplified	I monitor the appropriateness of my behaviours when interacting with people from other cultures.	
10	I compare the cultural differences between my practices and those of people from other cultures for the purpose of learning.	long	I compare between different cultural groups, including my own, for the purpose of learning.	---	I compare between different cultural groups, including my own, for the purpose of learning.	
11	I recognize the impact of stereotypes and how I am raised on my communication with people different from me.	Double-barrelling	I recognize the impact of stereotypes on intercultural communications.	---	I recognize the impact of stereotypes on intercultural communications.	
Communication Skills						
12	I use humours and smiles as techniques for intercultural interactions.	clarified	I sometimes use humours and smiles as techniques to build	Frequency adverb;	I use humours as a technique to build interactions with people from different cultures.	

			interactions with people from different cultures.	unnecessary words		
13	I monitor others' emotions when talking to them.	---	I always monitor others' emotions when talking to them.	Frequency adverb	I monitor others' emotions when talking to them.	
14	I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.	---	I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.	intensifier	I am observant when interacting with people of different cultures.	
15	I ask people from other cultures how they say and do things in their cultures when I do not know so.	---	I rarely ask people how they say and do things in their cultures when I do not know so.	Frequency adverb	I do not ask people how they say/do things in their cultures when I do not know so.	
16	I try to guess what the other person is thinking of, making use of the facial expressions, for example.	---	I often try to guess what the other person is thinking of, making use of the facial expressions, for example.	Frequency adverb	I try to guess what the other person is thinking of, making use of the facial expressions, for example.	
17	I listen to people attentively and do my best to understand them.	---	I always listen to people attentively and do my best to understand them.	Frequency adverb	I listen to people attentively and do my best to understand them.	
18	I wait and observe before forming an opinion or an impression about culturally-distinct counterparts.	Second verb turned as a purpose for the first verb	I often wait to observe before forming an opinion or an impression about culturally-distinct counterparts.	Frequency adverb; unnecessary words	I wait to observe before forming an opinion about culturally-distinct counterparts.	
19	I repeat, paraphrase or reformulate the received message for more accurate understanding of its meaning before responding.	---	I sometimes repeat, paraphrase or reformulate the received message for more accurate understanding of its meaning before responding.	Frequency adverb; triple-barrelling	I repeat the received message for more accurate understanding of its meaning before responding.	

20	I try to see the world through the eyes of culturally distinct people.	---	I always try to see the world through the eyes of culturally distinct people .	Frequency adverb; simplified	I try to see the world through the eyes of people in other cultures.	
Intercultural Cognition						
Intercultural Awareness						
1	I am conscious of the impact of my culture (values and norms) on my behaviours, attitudes, perceptions and learning .	Unnecessary words; quad-barrelling	I am quite conscious of the impact of my culture on my attitudes and perceptions .	Intensifier; double-barrelling	I am conscious of the impact of my culture on my perceptions.	
2	I realize that several conflicts experienced by me with people from other cultures are more cultural than are personal .	reversed	I think several conflicts experienced by me with people from other cultures are more personal than are cultural .	---	I think several conflicts experienced by me with people from other cultures are more personal than are cultural.	
3	I am aware of why people from different cultures behave and think the way they do (about Hijab, for example).	---	I am aware of why culturally distinct people behave and think the way they do (about Hijab, for example).	Double-barrelling; made general	I am aware of why culturally distinct people behave the way they do.	
4	I am aware of the cultural differences and similarities between my culture and other cultures .	clarified	I am aware of the cultural differences and similarities between my culture and those I come in contact with .	---	I am aware of the cultural differences and similarities between my culture and those I come in contact with.	
5	I am conscious that cultures are behind people's different behaviours, communication	reversed	I am quite not conscious that cultures are behind people's different behaviours ,	Intensifier; triple-barrelling	I am not conscious that cultures are behind people's different behaviours.	

	styles and perceptions of each other.		communication styles and perceptions of each other.			
6	I am conscious how people from other cultures are different from me and how I am different from them.	deleted	---	deleted	---	deleted
Intercultural Stereotypes						
7	I approach people from other cultures based on what media and compatriots (e.g. friends) say about them.	simplified	I approach people from other cultures based on what I hear about them.	---	I approach people from other cultures based on what I hear about them.	
8	I perceive negative individual behaviours as representatives of different cultures around me.	---	I perceive negative individual behaviours as representatives of different cultures around me.	---	I perceive negative individual behaviours as representatives of several cultures around me.	
9	I deal with Western people based on the pre-existing perceptions, images and beliefs I hold about them.	Made general	I often deal with culturally distinct people based on the pre-existing perceptions and beliefs I hold about them.	Frequency adverb; Double-barrelling	I deal with culturally distinct people based on the perceptions I hold about them.	
10	I rely on the images and assumptions common among my friends when interacting with people from other cultures.	Unnecessary words	I often rely on the assumptions common in my cultural group when interacting with people from other cultures.	frequency adverb	I rely on the assumptions common among my cultural group members when interacting with people from other cultures.	
11	I refer to people from any culture more as one group than as distinct individuals.	reversed	I refer to people from any culture more as distinct individuals than as one group.	---	I refer to people from any culture more as distinct individuals than as one group.	

Intercultural Knowledge						
12	I know much about the cultural values, traditions, customs and beliefs of other culture(s).	---	I fairly know much about the values , traditions and customs of the culture(s) I have experienced.	Intensifier adverb; unnecessary words	I know about the traditions and customs of the culture(s) I have experienced.	
13	I know much about entertainment, politics, religion and laws in other culture(s).	reversed	I know less about entertainment, politics and laws in the other culture(s) I have experienced.	Intensifier; double-barrelling	I know about laws in the culture(s) I have experienced.	
14	I know much about the essential norms and taboos of the other culture(s) (e.g., greetings, dress, behaviours, etc.)	---	I fairly know much about the essential norms and taboos of the other culture(s) (e.g., greetings, dress, behaviours, etc.)	Intensifier adverb; simplified vocabulary	I know about the essential norms and prohibitions of the other culture(s) (e.g., greetings, dress, behaviours, etc.)	
15	I know much about the arts and crafts of the other culture(s).	reversed	I know less about the arts and crafts of the other culture(s).	---	I know about the arts and crafts of the other culture(s).	
16	I know much about the rules for expressing non-verbal behaviors in the other culture(s).	---	I fairly know much about the rules for expressing non-verbal behaviors in the other culture(s).	Intensifier adverb	I know about the rules for expressing non-verbal behaviors in the culture(s) I have experienced.	
Behaviours						
Social Initiative						
1	I leave the initiative to others to make a contact with me.	reversed	I take the initiative to make a contact with culturally distinct people around me.	---	I take the initiative to make a contact with culturally distinct people.	

2	I think it is difficult to make an interaction with people from other cultures.	reversed	I find it easy to initiate an interaction with people from other cultures.	---	I find it easy to initiate a conversation with people from different cultures.	
3	I feel inclined to speak out in intercultural gatherings.	---	I feel inclined to speak out in intercultural gatherings.	---	I feel inclined to speak out in intercultural gatherings.	
Adaptability						
4	I usually change the way I communicate or address something depending on the person I am talking to.	---	I usually change the way I communicate or address something depending on the person I am talking to.	Frequency adverb; double-barrelling	I change the way I address something depending on the person I am talking to.	
5	When I communicate with people from other cultures, I sometimes tend to act differently than I would with people from my own culture.	---	When I communicate with people from other cultures, I sometimes tend to act differently than I would with people from my own culture.	---	When I communicate with people from other cultures, I tend to act differently than I would with people from my own culture.	
6	I hope people from other cultures will understand me easily because it is difficult for me to adjust my behavior.	long	I sometimes hope people from other cultures will understand that it is difficult for me to adjust my behaviour.	Frequency adverb	I hope people from other cultures will understand that it is difficult for me to adjust my behaviour.	
7	I change my verbal and non-verbal behaviours when an intercultural situation requires it.	---	I sometimes find it difficult to adjust my verbal and non-verbal behaviours when the intercultural situation requires it.	Frequency adverb; double barrelling; made general	I find it difficult to adjust my behaviors when interacting with individuals from a different culture.	
Flexibility						
8	When I join a group for the first time I quickly build	---	When I join a group for the first time I quickly build	---	When I join a group for the first time I quickly build	

	relationships with other group members from other cultures.		relationships with other group members from other cultures.		relationships with other group members from other cultures.	
9	I find myself easy-going among different cultural groups.	---	I find myself easy-going among different cultural groups.	---	I find myself easy-going among different cultural groups.	
10	I can act as a cultural mediator and serve as a bridge between people of different cultures.	Unnecessary words	I can serve as a bridge between people of different cultures around me.	---	I can serve as a bridge between people of different cultures around me.	
11	I work effectively and comfortably when in a group comprised of culturally distinct individuals.	Double-barrelling; reversed	I feel less comfortable when working in a group of people with distinct cultures.	---	I feel less comfortable when working in a group of people with distinct cultures.	
12	Most of my close friends are from other cultures.	---	Most of my close friends are from other cultures.	---	Most of my close friends are from other cultures.	
13	I celebrate holidays with people from other cultures.	---	I sometimes celebrate holidays with people from different cultures.	Frequency adverb	I celebrate holidays with people from different cultures.	
Social Engagement						
14	I organize trips and social initiatives with people from other cultures.	Adding the verb "help"	I sometimes help organize trips and social initiatives with people from various cultures.	Frequency adverb; double-barrelling	I help organize trips with people from various cultures.	
15	I visit people from other cultures living nearby.	---	I sometimes visit people from other cultures living nearby.	Frequency adverb	I visit people from other cultures living nearby.	

16	I engage in parties and events organized by people from different cultures.	---	I engage in parties and events organized by people with distinct cultures.	shortened	I engage in activities (e.g. sports, parties, etc.) organized by people with distinct cultures.	
17	I socialise with people from other cultures.	---	I socialise with people from various cultures.	---	I socialise with people from various cultures.	

The Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use Scale

NO.	Original (first draft) survey items	Comments	Stage two survey items	Comment	Final survey items	comments
1	I usually become afraid of making mistakes when speaking in English to people from other cultures.	---	I usually become afraid of making mistakes when speaking in English to people from other cultures.	Frequency adverb; changed adjective	I feel worried of making mistakes when speaking in English to people from other cultures.	
2	I speak English language as my mother tongue.	---	I speak English language as my mother tongue.	---	I speak English language as my mother tongue.	
3	I read and comprehend English newspapers and magazines very well without using a dictionary.	---	I read and comprehend English newspapers and magazines very well without using a dictionary.	Double-barrelling	I comprehend English newspapers and journals very well without using a dictionary.	
4	I easily understand English speakers who are speaking to me as quickly as they would do to each other.	Changed vocabulary	I effortlessly understand English speakers who are speaking to me as quickly as they would do to each other.	---	I effortlessly understand English speakers who are speaking to me as quickly as they would do to each other.	
5	I easily understand two English speakers talking rapidly with each other.	Deleted “rapidly” to make it general	I easily understand two English speakers talking with each other.	---	I easily understand two English speakers talking with each other.	
6	I can confidently argue in English for a position on a controversial topic among people from different cultures.	Leading auxiliary verb that does not necessarily reflect an action/ability in the present time, but perhaps in the future.	I comfortably argue in English for a position on a controversial topic among people with distinct cultures.	Slightly shortened	I comfortably argue in English for a position on a controversial topic in intercultural encounters.	

7	I can draw inferences/conclusions from what I read in English.	Leading auxiliary verb that does not necessarily reflect an action/ability in the present time, but perhaps in the future.	I draw inferences/conclusions from what I read in English with ease.	---	I draw conclusions from what I read in English with ease.	
8	I can write official letters that convey my message accurately with relatively few grammatical errors.	Leading auxiliary verb that does not necessarily reflect an action/ability in the present time, but perhaps in the future.	I write official English letters that convey my message accurately with relatively few grammatical errors.	---	I write official English letters that convey my message accurately with relatively few grammatical errors.	
9	Errors in my writings rarely disturb my English readers.	---	Errors in my writings rarely disturb my English readers.	Frequency adverb; negatively reversed	Errors in my writings do not disturb my English readers.	
10	I easily cope with lengthy detailed conversations and dialogues handled in English with people from other cultures.	Unnecessary words	I easily cope with lengthy detailed conversations in English with culturally distinct people.	Slightly shortened	I easily cope with lengthy detailed discussions in English in intercultural encounters.	
11	I have to think carefully about the words I will say to not violate the taboos when communicating in English.	---	I have to hammer out the words I will say to not violate the taboos when communicating in English.	---	I have to hammer out the words I will say to not violate the taboos when communicating in English.	
12	I sometimes cannot find out proper words in English to express what I mean.	---	I sometimes cannot find out proper words in English to express what I mean.	Frequency adverb	I cannot find out proper words in English to express what I mean.	
13	In English, I speak slowly and often repeat what I say.	Slightly rewritten	I speak English slowly and often repeat what I say.	Frequency adverb	I speak English slowly and repeat what I say.	

14	I think in English when communicating with English speakers.	---	I think in English when communicating with English speakers.	---	I think in English when communicating with English speakers.	
15	I easily catch the message expressed by English speakers in social settings.	deleted	---	deleted	---	deleted
16	I easily understand common social expressions, slangs, contractions and accents of people from other cultures.	deleted	---	deleted	---	deleted
17	People easily understand me when I speak in English.	---	People understand me very well when I speak in English.	---	People understand me very well when I speak in English.	
18	I feel more confident in discussing familiar general topics in English than the unfamiliar detailed ones.	---	I feel more confident in discussing familiar general topics in English than the unfamiliar detailed ones.	Double-barrelling	I feel more confident in discussing familiar topics in English than the unfamiliar detailed ones.	
19	I sometimes find myself stuck in the middle of a conversation handled in English with people from other cultures.	Slightly shortened	I sometimes find myself stuck in my conversation in English with people from other cultures.	Frequency adverb	I find myself stuck in my conversation in English with people from other cultures.	
20	I have forgotten some of my English.	---	I have forgotten some of my English.	---	I have forgotten some of my English.	

21	Ordinarily I am calm and relaxed when I am in conversations handled in English with people from other cultures.	shortened	Ordinarily I am calm and relaxed when talking in English to people from other cultures.	Double-barrelling	I am ordinarily relaxed when talking in English to people of different cultures.	
22	My thoughts become confused and jumbled when giving a speech in English in public.	---	My thoughts become confused and jumbled when giving a speech in English in public.	Unnecessary words	My thoughts become jumbled when giving a speech in English in public.	
23	While giving a speech in English, I get so nervous that I forget facts I really know.	---	While giving a speech in English, I get so nervous that I forget facts I really know.	---	While giving a speech in English, I get so nervous that I forget facts I really know.	
24	My English helps me fulfil my socio-cultural desires and aspirations when interacting with people from different cultures.	Change the verb tense; unnecessary words	My English has helped me fulfil my aspirations when interacting with English speakers.	Made general	My English has helped me fulfil my aspirations when interacting with individuals from other cultures.	
25	I feel excitement and fun when speaking English.	---	I feel excitement and fun when speaking English.	Unnecessary words	I find it fun to speak in English.	
26	My actual performance in English language in social interactions is above or equals the grade I obtained in the IELTS and TOFEL test.	deleted	---	deleted	---	deleted
27	My capabilities in English language sometimes do not meet the linguistic expectations and demands of the interaction context.		My capabilities in English language sometimes cannot meet the linguistic demands of the interaction context.	Leading auxiliary verb; frequency adverb	My capabilities in English language do not meet the linguistic demands of conversations in English.	

Appendix 9: Statistical Tables of Current Scales' Validation

Table 1: Item labels and their corresponding scale codes

Item label & number	Name of subset/scale
Rspct...	Respect for cultural differences
Ethn...	Ethnocentrism
Intol...	Intolerance of cultural differences
Open...	Open-mindedness
Curio...	Curiosity and discovery
Mot...	Motivation
Auto...	Autonomy
Ambig...	Tolerance of ambiguity and uncertainty
Emot...	Emotion regulation
Critic...	Critical thinking
Comu...	Communication skills
Aware...	Intercultural awareness
Stereo...	Intercultural stereotypes
Know...	Intercultural knowledge
Initiat...	Social initiative
Adapt...	Adaptability
Flex...	Flexibility
Engag...	Social engagement
Lang...	Self-efficacy in English language use

Table 2: Results of Principal Component Analysis on the 13 Remaining Items in the SEIELUS

Item no.	Item Code.	Item	Component 1
1	Lang13	I speak English slowly and repeat what I say.	.743
2	Lang12	I cannot find out proper words in English to express what I mean.	.735
3	Lang 20	My thoughts become jumbled when giving a speech in English in public.	.698
4	Lang24	My capabilities in English language do not meet the linguistic demands of conversations in English	.696
5	Lang10	I easily cope with lengthy detailed discussions in English in intercultural encounters.	.689
6	Lang 21	While giving a speech in English, I get so nervous that I forget facts I really know.	.645
7	Lang 6	I comfortably argue in English for a position on a controversial topic in intercultural encounters.	.639
8	Lang 19	I am ordinarily relaxed when talking in English to people of different cultures.	.637
9	Lang 1	I feel worried of making mistakes when speaking in English to people from other cultures.	.618
10	Lang15	People understand me very well when I speak in English.	.591
11	Lang17	I find myself stuck in my conversation in English with people from other cultures.	.550
12	Lang11	I have to hammer out the words I will say to not violate the taboos when communicating in English.	.462
13	Lang4	I effortlessly understand English speakers who are speaking to me as quickly as they would do to each other.	.364
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. a. 1 components extracted.			

Table 3: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.795
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	6405.155
	df	2080
	Sig.	.000

Table 4: Total Variance Explained

Factor	Extraction Sums of Squared								
	Initial Eigenvalues			Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	8.181	12.587	12.587	7.586	11.671	11.671	2.674	4.113	4.113
2	4.064	6.252	18.839	3.477	5.350	17.021	2.419	3.721	7.835
3	3.880	5.970	24.809	3.412	5.250	22.270	2.247	3.457	11.291
4	2.407	3.703	28.512	1.835	2.822	25.093	2.105	3.239	14.530
5	2.151	3.309	31.821	1.556	2.394	27.487	1.886	2.901	17.431
6	1.807	2.780	34.601	1.169	1.799	29.286	1.806	2.778	20.210
7	1.717	2.641	37.242	1.166	1.793	31.079	1.782	2.742	22.951
8	1.514	2.329	39.571	1.062	1.634	32.713	1.735	2.669	25.620
9	1.504	2.313	41.884	1.048	1.613	34.326	1.629	2.507	28.127
10	1.421	2.186	44.070	.810	1.246	35.572	1.310	2.016	30.143
11	1.383	2.127	46.197	.849	1.306	36.877	1.255	1.930	32.073
12	1.325	2.038	48.235	.728	1.120	37.997	1.232	1.896	33.969
13	1.247	1.918	50.153	.766	1.179	39.176	1.154	1.775	35.744
14	1.220	1.877	52.030	.717	1.102	40.278	1.138	1.750	37.494
15	1.142	1.757	53.787	.595	.915	41.194	1.092	1.680	39.174
16	1.121	1.725	55.512	.588	.905	42.099	1.028	1.582	40.756
17	1.090	1.677	57.189	.591	.909	43.008	.806	1.241	41.997
18	1.024	1.575	58.764	.564	.868	43.875	.784	1.207	43.203
19	1.015	1.562	60.326	.436	.671	44.546	.666	1.025	44.228
20	1.002	1.541	61.867	.432	.665	45.211	.639	.983	45.211
21	.968	1.489	63.356						
22	.950	1.461	64.818						
23	.935	1.439	66.256						
24	.899	1.384	67.640						
25	.844	1.298	68.938						
26	.834	1.283	70.221						
27	.808	1.244	71.465						
28	.792	1.218	72.683						
29	.776	1.194	73.877						
30	.741	1.139	75.016						
31	.736	1.132	76.149						
32	.724	1.114	77.263						
33	.700	1.076	78.340						
34	.679	1.045	79.385						
35	.673	1.035	80.420						
36	.662	1.019	81.439						
37	.630	.969	82.408						
38	.602	.926	83.334						

39	.595	.915	84.249
40	.569	.875	85.123
41	.540	.831	85.954
42	.529	.814	86.768
43	.516	.794	87.562
44	.510	.785	88.347
45	.490	.753	89.101
46	.475	.731	89.832
47	.461	.709	90.540
48	.454	.698	91.239
49	.441	.678	91.917
50	.436	.670	92.588
51	.422	.650	93.238
52	.415	.639	93.877
53	.387	.596	94.473
54	.371	.570	95.043
55	.366	.564	95.607
56	.350	.538	96.145
57	.340	.523	96.668
58	.326	.502	97.170
59	.315	.485	97.655
60	.294	.452	98.107
61	.278	.428	98.534
62	.260	.400	98.935
63	.245	.376	99.311
64	.233	.358	99.669
65	.215	.331	100.000

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood.

Table 5: Comparison of Eigenvalues Obtained from IBM SPSS and Parallel Analysis

Component No.	Actual eigenvalue from IBM SPSS	Criterion value from parallel analysis	Decision
1	8.181	2.0406	Retained
2	4.064	1.9495	Retained
3	3.880	1.8839	Retained
4	2.407	1.8265	Retained
5	2.151	1.7838	Retained

Table 6: Total Variance Explained

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	8.181	12.587	12.587	7.470	11.493	11.493	5.787	8.903	8.903
2	4.064	6.252	18.839	3.287	5.057	16.550	4.164	6.406	15.310
3	3.880	5.970	24.809	3.214	4.944	21.494	3.599	5.537	20.847
4	2.407	3.703	28.512	1.686	2.594	24.088	2.013	3.098	23.945
5	2.151	3.309	31.821	1.425	2.192	26.280	1.518	2.336	26.280
6	1.807	2.780	34.601						
7	1.717	2.641	37.242						
8	1.514	2.329	39.571						
9	1.504	2.313	41.884						
10	1.421	2.186	44.070						
11	1.383	2.127	46.197						
12	1.325	2.038	48.235						
13	1.247	1.918	50.153						
14	1.220	1.877	52.030						
15	1.142	1.757	53.787						
16	1.121	1.725	55.512						
17	1.090	1.677	57.189						
18	1.024	1.575	58.764						
19	1.015	1.562	60.326						
20	1.002	1.541	61.867						
21	.968	1.489	63.356						
22	.950	1.461	64.818						
23	.935	1.439	66.256						
24	.899	1.384	67.640						
25	.844	1.298	68.938						
26	.834	1.283	70.221						
27	.808	1.244	71.465						
28	.792	1.218	72.683						
29	.776	1.194	73.877						
30	.741	1.139	75.016						
31	.736	1.132	76.149						
32	.724	1.114	77.263						
33	.700	1.076	78.340						
34	.679	1.045	79.385						
35	.673	1.035	80.420						
36	.662	1.019	81.439						
37	.630	.969	82.408						
38	.602	.926	83.334						
39	.595	.915	84.249						

40	.569	.875	85.123
41	.540	.831	85.954
42	.529	.814	86.768
43	.516	.794	87.562
44	.510	.785	88.347
45	.490	.753	89.101
46	.475	.731	89.832
47	.461	.709	90.540
48	.454	.698	91.239
49	.441	.678	91.917
50	.436	.670	92.588
51	.422	.650	93.238
52	.415	.639	93.877
53	.387	.596	94.473
54	.371	.570	95.043
55	.366	.564	95.607
56	.350	.538	96.145
57	.340	.523	96.668
58	.326	.502	97.170
59	.315	.485	97.655
60	.294	.452	98.107
61	.278	.428	98.534
62	.260	.400	98.935
63	.245	.376	99.311
64	.233	.358	99.669
65	.215	.331	100.000

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood.

Table 7: Summary of Maximum Likelihood Factor Analysis Results With Varimax Rotation for the Intercultural Communicative Competence Scale (N=340)

Item	Rotated Factor Loadings				
	intercultural engagement	intercultural respect	intercultural flexibility	intercultural skills	intercultural open-mindedness
I engage in activities (e.g. sports, parties, etc.) organized by people with distinct cultures.	.628	-.026	.030	.023	-.099
I can serve as a bridge between people of different cultures around me.	.622	.225	-.009	.179	-.060
I help organize trips with people from various cultures.	.610	-.075	-.045	-.081	-.094

I socialise with people from various cultures.	.607	.163	.183	.191	.145
I take the initiative to make a contact with culturally distinct people.	.604	.103	-.071	.019	-.113
I visit people from other cultures living nearby.	.595	-.062	-.039	.025	.028
When I join a group for the first time I quickly build relationships with other group members fro...	.594	.163	.096	.111	.015
I find myself easy-going among different cultural groups.	.591	.129	.223	.097	-.010
I find it easy to initiate a conversation with people from different cultures.	.557	.119	.099	.059	.047
Most of my close friends are from other cultures.	.484	-.023	.171	-.106	.299
I excitedly seek out friendships with people from different cultures.	.474	.239	.057	-.067	-.079
I know about the traditions and customs of the culture(s) I have experienced.	.431	.194	-.017	.276	.065
I know about the arts and crafts of the other culture(s).	.410	.168	-.038	.033	.018
I look for people from different cultural backgrounds.	.378	.340	-.016	-.016	-.006
I know about the essential norms and prohibitions of the other culture(s) (e.g., greetings, dress...	.368	.138	-.008	.149	.016
I tend to form relationships with people from other cultures, regardless of my cultural group members' influence	.346	.226	.272	-.008	.269
I have no fear of unknown people.	.328	.070	.250	-.159	.065
I avoid interactions with unpredictable results.	.325	-.070	.240	-.037	.123
I am not conscious that cultures are behind people's different behaviours.	-.305	.186	.123	.272	-.132
I use humours as a technique to build interactions with people from different cultures.	.305	.277	-.132	-.010	-.016

I enjoy the experiences with ambiguous results.	.295	.189	.190	-.086	.184
Cultures different from my own are worth appreciating.	.009	.562	.166	-.093	.009
I look positively at people with distinct cultures.	.127	.487	.222	-.132	-.069
I try to find out why people in other cultures act the way they do.	.066	.471	-.024	.105	-.078
I monitor the appropriateness of my behaviours when interacting with people from other cultures.	-.032	.463	-.100	-.009	.044
I acknowledge the cultural differences encountered in intercultural settings.	.022	.462	.090	.024	-.159
I try to figure out the right way of communicating with individuals from a different culture.	.129	.459	-.049	.152	-.129
I compare between different cultural groups, including my own, for the purpose of learning.	.107	.445	-.029	.140	.128
I am conscious of the impact of my culture on my perceptions.	-.093	.439	.041	-.005	-.052
I wait to observe before forming an opinion about culturally-distinct counterparts.	.085	.432	-.004	.127	-.071
I listen to people attentively and do my best to understand them.	.118	.432	.089	-.060	.047
I try to see the world through the eyes of people in other cultures.	.140	.366	.032	-.023	.092
I respect the ways people from different cultures behave.	.192	.364	.238	.006	.005
I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from other cultures.	.144	.360	-.078	.193	.011
I seek my own ways to test the accuracy of the beliefs I adopt about people in other cultures.	.128	.342	-.157	.074	-.050
I recognize the differences within the cultural groups I come in contact with.	.090	.332	.033	.184	.161

I am aware of the cultural differences and similarities between my culture and those I come in co...	.131	.288	.136	.238	.031
I tolerate the cultural norms different from my own.	.092	.270	.224	-.041	.122
I adapt my behaviours to get closer to people from different cultures.	.150	.267	-.253	-.011	.085
I approach people from other cultures based on what I hear about them.	-.092	.035	.557	.037	-.058
Behaviours different from my own constitute a threat to my identity.	.060	.093	.540	.103	-.007
I get irritated quickly by people from other cultures.	.003	.108	.491	.120	-.033
I rely on the assumptions common among my cultural group members when interacting with people from other cultures	.020	.242	.480	.084	-.108
I feel closer to people from my own culture because I can relate to them better.	.285	-.105	.455	-.122	.305
My cultural group members have an influence on my choices of people I should form relationships with	.039	.033	.451	.015	.039
I mostly interact within my cultural group.	.334	.019	.445	-.119	.069
I perceive negative individual behaviours as representatives of several cultures around me.	.043	.061	.420	.201	.012
My communication is based on the cultural traits of people I am familiar with.	.069	-.053	.419	-.013	-.023
My emotions get hurt easily by the unpleasant events experienced in intercultural encounters.	.139	-.056	.382	.164	.007
I find it difficult to adjust my behaviours when interacting with individuals from a different culture	.204	.033	.324	.302	-.028

When I communicate with people from other cultures, I tend to act differently than I would with people from my own culture	.061	.210	-.323	-.105	-.109
I see people culturally similar to me as exemplary.	-.219	-.106	.268	-.003	.025
I do not pay attention to the impact of my decisions on my intercultural learning.	.012	-.006	.149	.553	.072
I do not ask people how they say/do things in their cultures when I do not know so.	.057	.179	.216	.522	.087
When misunderstood, I do not trace the causes of this misunderstanding.	-.111	.216	.150	.419	-.092
I feel less comfortable when working in a group of people with distinct cultures.	.110	.023	.284	.358	.324
It is easy for me to stay calm when my cultural identity gets attacked.	-.026	.167	.054	-.354	.028
When I do not understand a cultural aspect, I discuss it with a person(s) in that culture.	.183	.150	.018	.294	-.066
I am observant when interacting with people of different cultures.	-.024	.252	-.176	.188	.447
I allow a conflict when people disagree with me.	.153	-.002	-.332	.069	.386
I feel inclined to speak out in intercultural gatherings.	.307	.122	-.016	-.065	-.367
I feel comfortable with people whose behaviours are unfamiliar to me.	.291	.220	.159	-.222	.345
I change the way I address something depending on the person I am talking to.	.054	.253	-.128	-.022	-.283
I ask individuals in the experienced culture to interpret the new cultural differences around me.	.106	.191	-.036	.054	-.271
People in my culture would be happier if they lived like people in other cultures.	.042	.002	-.193	-.172	.239
Eigenvalues	8.181	4.064	3.880	2.407	2.151

% of variance	12.587	6.252	5.970	3.703	3.309
α	.85	.78	.69	.37	.18

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

Table 8: Factor Transformation Matrix

Factor	1	2	3	4	5
1	.822	.450	.302	.156	.082
2	-.474	.220	.796	.304	.031
3	-.291	.814	-.448	.145	-.177
4	-.055	.267	.250	-.926	-.074
5	-.110	.123	-.113	-.067	.977

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Table 9: KMO and Bartlett's Test- Intercultural Attitudes

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.754
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square
	1313.220
	df
	231
	Sig.
	.000

Table 10: Total Variance Explained-Intercultural Attitudes

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared			Rotation Sums of Squared		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Loadings			Loadings		
				Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.872	17.601	17.601	3.872	17.601	17.601	2.882	13.102	13.102
2	2.367	10.760	28.361	2.367	10.760	28.361	2.803	12.742	25.844
3	1.530	6.952	35.314	1.530	6.952	35.314	2.083	9.470	35.314
4	1.296	5.892	41.205						
5	1.190	5.407	46.613						
6	1.082	4.919	51.531						
7	1.002	4.556	56.088						
8	.905	4.112	60.199						
9	.878	3.993	64.192						
10	.802	3.646	67.838						
11	.792	3.600	71.438						

12	.770	3.501	74.939
13	.713	3.239	78.178
14	.699	3.179	81.356
15	.657	2.987	84.344
16	.581	2.640	86.984
17	.562	2.555	89.539
18	.526	2.392	91.931
19	.511	2.322	94.253
20	.471	2.142	96.395
21	.422	1.916	98.311
22	.371	1.689	100.000

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Figure 1: Scree Plot-Intercultural Attitudes

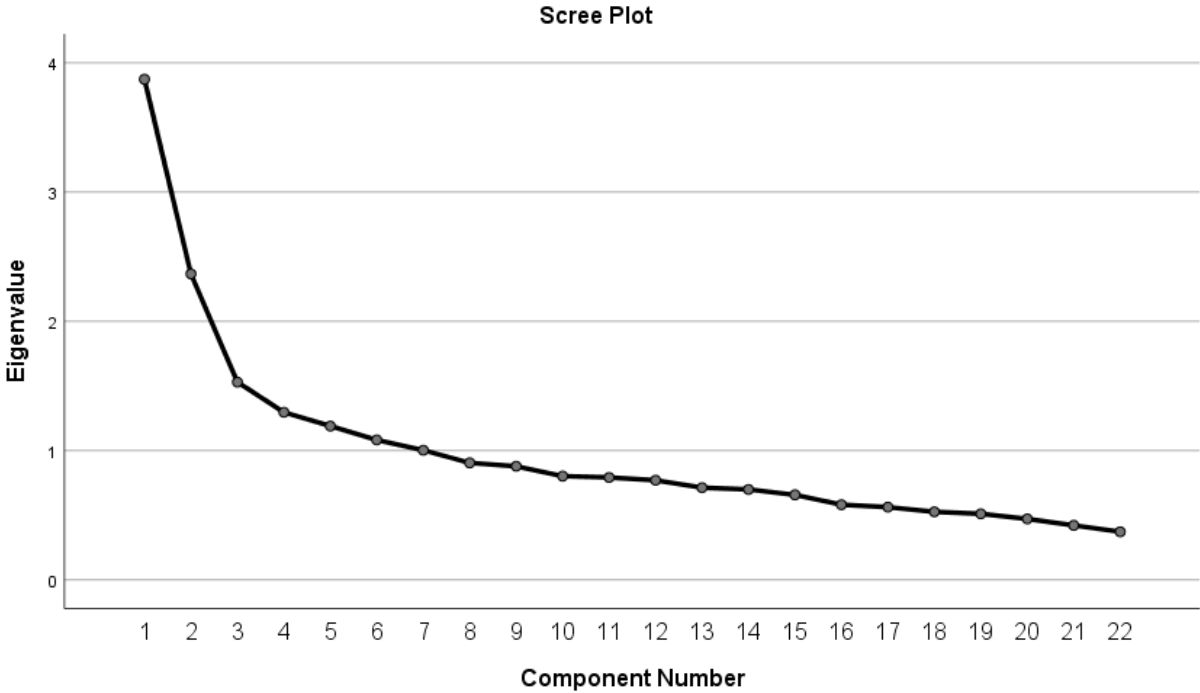


Table 11: Summary of Principal Component Analysis Results for Intercultural Attitudes Subscale

(N=343)-Total Variance Explained (35.31%)

No.	Item	Intercultural Attitudes		
		Tolerance of Ambiguity and Uncertainty	Respect for Cultural Differences	Intolerance of Cultural Differences
Ambig34	I have no fear of unknown people.	.596	.038	.084
Ambig31	I enjoy the experiences with ambiguous results.	.588	.104	.008
Ambig33	I avoid interactions with unpredictable results.	.581	-.133	.178
Auto28	I tend to form relationships with people from other cultures, regardless of my cultural group mem...	.560	.177	.109
Ambig32	I feel comfortable with people whose behaviours are unfamiliar to me.	.555	.148	.076
Mot21	I excitedly seek out friendships with people from different cultures.	.531	.321	-.163
Mot20	I mostly interact within my cultural group.	.521	-.040	.340
Mot26	I feel closer to people from my own culture because I can relate to them better.	.500	-.207	.397
Open12	I look for people from different cultural backgrounds.	.493	.376	-.284
Curio15	I try to find out why people in other cultures act the way they do.	.015	.610	.004
Rspct1	Cultures different from my own are worth appreciating.	.037	.604	.259
Mot23	I try to figure out the right way of communicating with individuals from a different culture.	.086	.603	-.108
Intol10	I look positively at people with distinct cultures.	.204	.601	.188
Rspct2	I acknowledge the cultural differences encountered in intercultural settings.	-.016	.562	.114
Curio18	I seek my own ways to test the accuracy of the beliefs I adopt about people in other cultures.	.119	.493	-.346
Rspct4	I respect the ways people from different cultures behave.	.209	.440	.326

Curio17	I ask individuals in the experienced culture to interpret the new cultural differences around me.	.014	.367	-.148
Intol8	Behaviours different from my own constitute a threat to my identity.	.124	.115	.673
Auto30	My cultural group members have an influence on my choices of people I should form relationships with	.111	.006	.542
Open13	My communication is based on the cultural traits of people I am familiar with.	.160	-.063	.529
Intol9	I tolerate the cultural norms different from my own.	.107	.255	.463
Ethno5	My culture should not be the role model for other cultures.	-.022	-.016	.175
	Eigenvalues	3.87	2.37	1.53
	% of variance	17.60	10.76	6.95
	α	.73	.67	.52

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Table 12: Component Transformation Matrix- Intercultural Attitudes

Component	1	2	3
1	.734	.587	.342
2	-.328	.747	-.579
3	-.595	.313	.741

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Table 13: KMO and Bartlett's Test-Intercultural Cognition

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.658	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	406.805
	df	45
	Sig.	.000

Table 14: Total Variance Explained- Intercultural Cognition

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared			Rotation Sums of Squared		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Loadings			Loadings		
				Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.161	21.607	21.607	2.161	21.607	21.607	2.030	20.298	20.298
2	1.761	17.615	39.221	1.761	17.615	39.221	1.739	17.392	37.690
3	1.282	12.823	52.044	1.282	12.823	52.044	1.435	14.354	52.044
4	.897	8.975	61.019						
5	.799	7.994	69.013						
6	.729	7.291	76.304						
7	.725	7.251	83.555						
8	.615	6.146	89.701						
9	.565	5.647	95.348						
10	.465	4.652	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 15: Summary of Principal Component Analysis Results for Intercultural Cognition Subscale (N=343)-Total Variance Explained (52.04%)

Item Code	Item	Intercultural Cognition		
		Intercultural Knowledge	Intercultural Stereotypes	Intercultural Awareness
Know13	I know about the essential norms and prohibitions of the other culture(s) (e.g., greetings, dress, behaviours, etc.)	.782	.042	-.141
Know11	I know about the traditions and customs of the culture(s) I have experienced.	.775	.040	-.032
Know14	I know about the arts and crafts of the other culture(s).	.605	-.025	.075
Aware4	I am aware of the cultural differences and similarities between my culture and those I come in contact with.	.445	.153	.378
Stereo6	I approach people from other cultures based on what I hear about them.	-.055	.795	-.031
Stereo7	I perceive negative individual behaviours as representatives of several cultures around me.	.045	.717	.018
Stereo9	I rely on the assumptions common among my cultural group members when interacting with people from other cultures	.086	.708	.162

Aware1	I am conscious of the impact of my culture on my perceptions.	.018	-.032	.761
Aware5	I am not conscious that cultures are behind people's different behaviours.	-.184	.230	.623
Aware3	I am aware of why culturally distinct people behave the way they do.	.455	-.106	.520
Eigenvalues		2.16	1.76	1.28
% of variance		21.61	17.62	12.82
α		.60	.61	.37

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 4 iterations.

Figure 2: Scree Plot-Intercultural Cognition

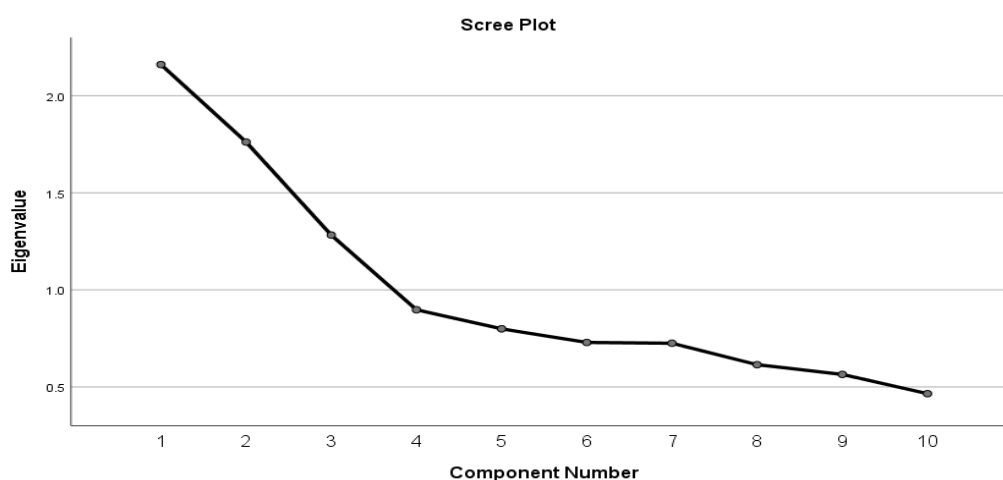


Table 16: Component Transformation Matrix- Intercultural Cognition

Component	1	2	3
1	.860	.345	.376
2	-.451	.858	.246
3	-.237	-.382	.893

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Table 17: KMO and Bartlett's Test-Intercultural Behaviours

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.855
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1325.419
	df	105
	Sig.	.000

Table 18: Total Variance Explained-Intercultural Behaviours

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared			Rotation Sums of Squared		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Loadings			Loadings		
				Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.539	30.261	30.261	4.539	30.261	30.261	3.016	20.105	20.105
2	1.683	11.218	41.479	1.683	11.218	41.479	2.742	18.278	38.383
3	1.300	8.670	50.149	1.300	8.670	50.149	1.765	11.766	50.149
4	.991	6.609	56.759						
5	.901	6.008	62.766						
6	.795	5.302	68.069						
7	.747	4.978	73.047						
8	.642	4.280	77.327						
9	.621	4.138	81.464						
10	.596	3.976	85.440						
11	.500	3.330	88.770						
12	.482	3.215	91.985						
13	.453	3.017	95.002						
14	.385	2.567	97.569						
15	.365	2.431	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Figure 3: Scree Plot- Intercultural Behaviours

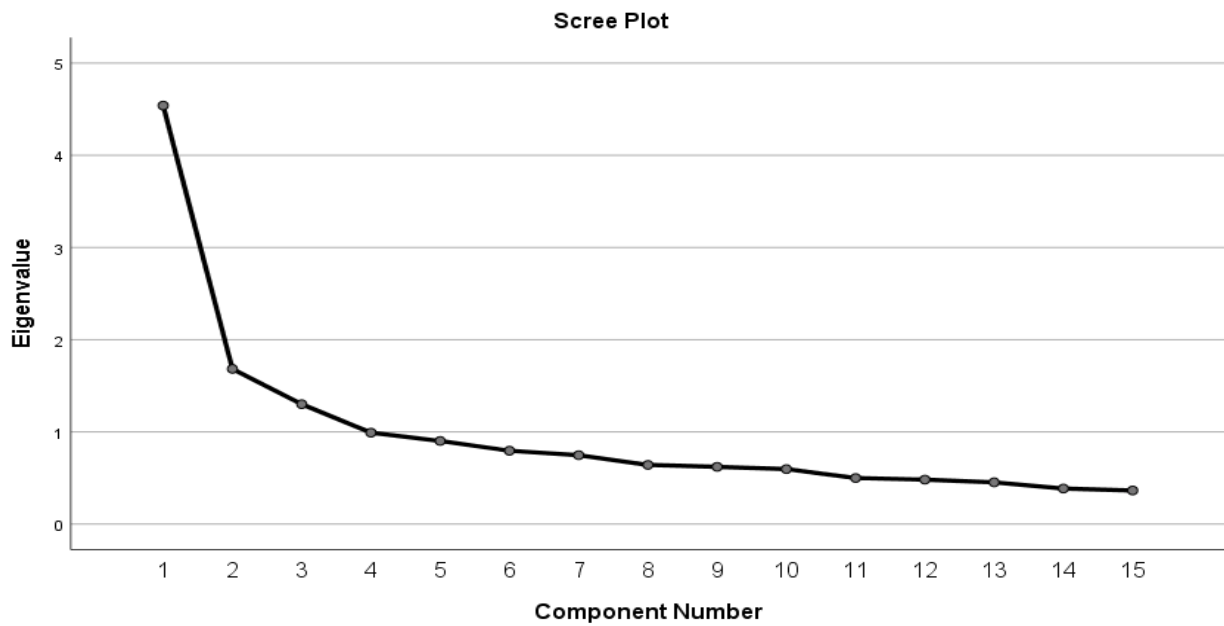


Table 19: Summary of Principal Component Analysis Results for Intercultural Behaviour Subscale (N=343)-Total Variance Explained (50.15%)

Item Code	Item	Intercultural Behaviours		
		Intercultural Engagement	Intercultural Flexibility	Intercultural Adaptability
Engage14	I help organize trips with people from various cultures.	.816	.023	.017
Engage15	I visit people from other cultures living nearby.	.766	.114	-.047
Engage 16	I engage in activities (e.g. sports, parties, etc.) organized by people with distinct cultures.	.705	.179	.120
Engage 17	I socialise with people from various cultures.	.537	.475	-.055
Initiat 1	I take the initiative to make a contact with culturally distinct people.	.490	.339	.354
Flex 12	Most of my close friends are from other cultures.	.458	.329	-.141
Flex 9	I find myself easy-going among different cultural groups.	.299	.705	.162
Intiat 2	I find it easy to initiate a conversation with people from different cultures.	.294	.650	.180
Flex 8	When I join a group for the first time I quickly build relationships with other group members from other cultures.	.337	.631	.146
Adapt 7	I find it difficult to adjust my behaviours when interacting with individuals from a different culture.	-.021	.584	-.110
Flex 11	I feel less comfortable when working in a group of people with distinct cultures.	-.074	.547	-.487
Flex 10	I can serve as a bridge between people of different cultures around me.	.416	.484	.307
Adapt 4	I change the way I address something depending on the person I am talking to.	-.179	.160	.660

Adapt 5	When I communicate with people from other cultures, I tend to act differently than I would with people from my own culture	-.013	-.124	.651
Initiat 3	I feel inclined to speak out in intercultural gatherings.	.169	.116	.563
	Eigenvalues	4.54	1.68	1.30
	% of variance	30.26	11.22	8.67
	α	.78	.72	.41

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Table 20: Exploratory Factor Analysis Results for the Emotion Regulation Subscale's Unidimensionality

No.	Item	Component 1
Emot1	I get irritated quickly by people from other cultures.	.747
Emot7	I allow a conflict when people disagree with me.	.591
Emot3	My emotions get hurt easily by the unpleasant events experienced in intercultural encounters.	.528
Emot2	I keep calm when things do not go well with people from other cultures.	.397
Emot4	It is easy for me to stay calm when my cultural identity gets attacked.	.186

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 1 components extracted.

Table 21: Reliability of the 4 Item Unidimensional Emotion Regulation Subscale

Item Code	Item	Item-Total Statistics					Cronbach's Alpha
		Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	
Emot1	I get irritated quickly by people from other cultures.	10.38	3.349	.306	.103	.127	.33
Emot7	I allow a conflict when people disagree with me.	10.99	2.909	.178	.053	.274	
Emot3	My emotions get hurt easily by the unpleasant events experienced in intercultural encounters.	11.40	3.493	.140	.058	.310	
Emot2	I keep calm when things do not go well with people from other cultures.	10.62	4.231	.090	.012	.347	

Table 22: Exploratory Factor Analysis Results for the Critical Thinking Subscale's Unidimensionality

No.	Item	Component 1
Critic10	I compare between different cultural groups, including my own, for the purpose of learning.	.623
Critic8	I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from other cultures.	.612
Critic1	I recognize the differences within the cultural groups I come in contact with.	.564
Critic6	When I do not understand a cultural aspect, I discuss it with a person(s) in that culture.	.553
Critic5	When misunderstood, I do not trace the causes of this misunderstanding.	.458
Critic9	I monitor the appropriateness of my behaviours when interacting with people from other cultures.	.427
Critic2	I do not pay attention to the impact of my decisions on my intercultural learning.	.334

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 1 components extracted.

Table 23: Reliability of the 7 Item Unidimensional Critical Thinking Subscale

No.	Item	Item-Total Statistics					Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Cronbach's Alpha
		Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted		
Critic10	I compare between different cultural groups, including my own, for the purpose of learning.	22.62	6.183	.309	.168	.473	.53	
Critic8	I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from other cultures.	22.88	6.199	.301	.155	.476		
Critic1	I recognize the differences within the cultural groups I come in contact with.	22.73	6.536	.272	.110	.489		
Critic6	When I do not understand a cultural aspect, I discuss it with a person(s) in that culture.	22.78	6.179	.324	.115	.467		
Critic5	When misunderstood, I do not trace the causes of this misunderstanding.	23.15	5.821	.275	.123	.487		
Critic9	I monitor the appropriateness of my behaviours when interacting with people from other cultures.	22.65	6.813	.185	.061	.519		
Critic2	I do not pay attention to the impact of my decisions on my intercultural learning.	23.16	6.194	.192	.103	.527		

Table 24: Exploratory Factor Analysis Results for the Communication Skills Subscale's Unidimensionality

No.	Item	Component 1
Comu17	I listen to people attentively and do my best to understand them.	.635
Comu12	I use humours as a technique to build interactions with people from different cultures.	.594
Comu18	I wait to observe before forming an opinion about culturally-distinct counterparts.	.507
Comu20	I try to see the world through the eyes of people in other cultures.	.495
Comu19	I repeat the received message for more accurate understanding of its meaning before responding.	.455
Comu14	I am observant when interacting with people of different cultures.	.444
Comu15	I do not ask people how they say/do things in their cultures when I do not know so.	.232

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 1 components extracted.

Table 25: Reliability of the 6 Item Unidimensional Communication Skill Subscale

Item Code	Item	Item-Total Statistics					Cronbach's Alpha
		Scale Mean if Deleted	Scale Variance if Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	
Comu17	I listen to people attentively and do my best to understand them.	18.83	5.006	.331	.133	.384	.46
Comu12	I use humours as a technique to build interactions with people from different cultures.	19.50	4.374	.282	.098	.383	
Comu18	I wait to observe before forming an opinion about culturally-distinct counterparts.	19.25	4.978	.230	.066	.417	
Comu20	I try to see the world through the eyes of people in other cultures.	19.42	4.455	.209	.099	.431	

Comu19	I repeat the received message for more accurate understanding of its meaning before responding.	19.39	4.801	.181	.113	.443
Comu14	I am observant when interacting with people of different cultures.	19.56	4.639	.192	.046	.439

Appendix 10: Normality of Data Distribution

Table 1: SEIELU Data Distribution in the Pre-Test

			Statistic	Std. Error
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	Mean		44.3120	.52073
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	43.2864	
		Upper Bound	45.3376	
	5% Trimmed Mean		44.1600	
	Median		44.0000	
	Variance		67.790	
	Std. Deviation		8.23346	
	Minimum		18.00	
	Maximum		65.00	
	Range		47.00	
	Interquartile Range		11.00	
	Skewness		.220	.154
	Kurtosis		.422	.307

a. test stage = pre-test

Table 2: SEIELU Data Distribution in the Post-Test

			Statistic	Std. Error
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	Mean		45.5806	.78769
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	44.0162	
		Upper Bound	47.1451	
	5% Trimmed Mean		45.4194	
	Median		45.0000	
	Variance		57.703	
	Std. Deviation		7.59623	
	Minimum		26.00	
	Maximum		65.00	
	Range		39.00	
	Interquartile Range		10.50	
	Skewness		.416	.250
	Kurtosis		.215	.495

a. test stage = post-test

Figure 1: Normal Q-Q Plot of Pre-Total SEIELU Scores

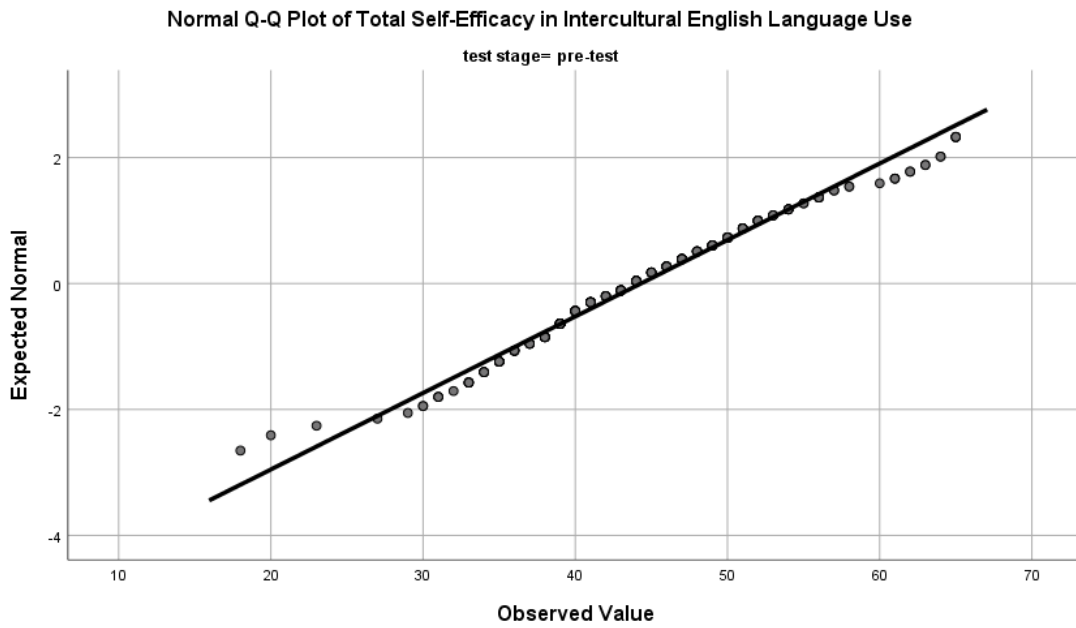
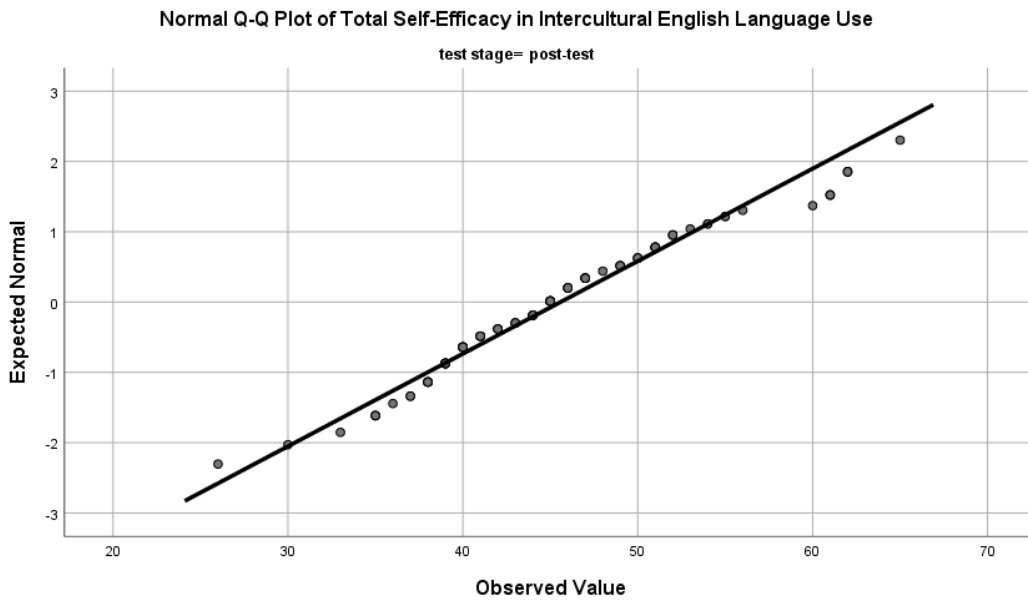


Figure 2: Normal Q-Q Plot of Post-Total SEIELU Scores



Appendix 11: Study Abroad Impact

Table 1: Group Statistics for the Experimental and Control Groups in the Pre and Post-Tests (File 2)

	group type: experimental or control	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
	control group	7	9.1429	3.07834	1.16350
Pre-Test Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	experimental group	86	45.2791	8.54008	.92090
	control group	7	52.1429	5.87164	2.21927
Pre-Test Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	experimental group	86	227.2558	19.24467	2.07521
	control group	7	245.5714	15.57623	5.88726
post-test total intercultural interaction frequency	experimental group	86	10.2442	2.69612	.29073
	control group	7	9.7143	3.77334	1.42619
Post-Test Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	experimental group	86	45.2558	7.75687	.83645
	control group	7	49.5714	3.50510	1.32480
Post-Test Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	experimental group	86	226.3372	16.79749	1.81132
	control group	7	233.7143	11.13125	4.20722

Table 2: Independent Samples-T Test for the Experimental and Control Groups in the Pre and Post-Tests (File 2)

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Upper	
pre-test total intercultural interaction frequency	Equal variances assumed	.031	.862	.968	91	.335	1.17110	1.20926	-1.23095	3.57314
	Equal variances not assumed			.968	7.012	.365	1.17110	1.20988	-1.68882	4.03101
Pre-Test Total Self-Efficacy in	Equal variances assumed	1.702	.195	-	91	.040	-6.86379	3.29778	-13.41442	-.31316
	Equal variances not assumed			2.081						

Intercultural English Language Use	Equal variances not assumed			-	8.227	.021	-6.86379	2.40275	-12.37806	-1.34952
				2.857						
Pre-Test Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	Equal variances assumed	.196	.659	-	91	.016	-18.31561	7.47754	-33.16882	-3.46241
				2.449						
	Equal variances not assumed			-	7.575	.020	-18.31561	6.24230	-32.85206	-3.77917
				2.934						
post-test total intercultural interaction frequency	Equal variances assumed	2.690	.104	.485	91	.629	.52990	1.09268	-1.64057	2.70038
	Equal variances not assumed			.364	6.508	.727	.52990	1.45552	-2.96528	4.02509
Post-Test Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	Equal variances assumed	2.855	.094	-	91	.149	-4.31561	2.96774	-10.21067	1.57944
				1.454						
	Equal variances not assumed			-	11.607	.018	-4.31561	1.56676	-7.74216	-.88907
				2.754						
Post-Test Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	Equal variances assumed	.860	.356	-	91	.258	-7.37708	6.47896	-20.24673	5.49258
				1.139						
	Equal variances not assumed			-	8.410	.144	-7.37708	4.58056	-17.85091	3.09676
				1.611						

Table 3: Paired Samples Statistics for the Experimental Group Between the Pre-and-Post Tests (File2)

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	pre-test total intercultural interaction frequency	10.3140	86	3.07652	.33175
	post-test total intercultural interaction frequency	10.2442	86	2.69612	.29073
Pair 2	Pre-Test Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	45.2791	86	8.54008	.92090
	Post-Test Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	45.2558	86	7.75687	.83645
Pair 3	Pre-Test Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	227.2558	86	19.24467	2.07521
	Post-Test Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	226.3372	86	16.79749	1.81132

Table 4: Paired Samples-T Test for the Experimental Group Between the Pre-and-Post Tests (File 2)

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	pre-test total intercultural interaction frequency - post-test total intercultural interaction frequency	.06977	2.83587	.30580	-.53824	.67778	.228	85	.820
Pair 2	Pre-Test Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use - Post-Test Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	.02326	6.14334	.66245	-1.29388	1.34039	.035	85	.972
Pair 3	Pre-Test Total Intercultural Communicative Competence - Post-Test Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	.91860	12.67533	1.36682	-1.79899	3.63620	.672	85	.503

Table 5: Paired Samples Statistics for the Control Group Between the Pre-and-Post Tests (File 2)

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	pre-test total intercultural interaction frequency	9.1429	7	3.07834	1.16350
	post-test total intercultural interaction frequency	9.7143	7	3.77334	1.42619
	Pre-Test Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	52.1429	7	5.87164	2.21927
Pair 2	Post-Test Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	49.5714	7	3.50510	1.32480
Pair 3	Pre-Test Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	245.5714	7	15.57623	5.88726
	Post-Test Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	233.7143	7	11.13125	4.20722

Table 6: Paired Samples Test for the control group between the pre and post-tests (File 2)

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	pre-test total intercultural interaction frequency - post-test total intercultural interaction frequency	-.57143	2.87849	1.08797	-3.23359	2.09073	-.525	6	.618
	Pre-Test Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use - Post-Test Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	2.57143	4.03556	1.52530	-1.16084	6.30370	1.686	6	.143
Pair 3	Pre-Test Total Intercultural Communicative Competence - Post-Test Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	11.85714	16.77725	6.34121	-3.65923	27.37351	1.870	6	.111

Table 7: Group Statistics For the Participants Staying Abroad Alone and Those with Their Families In the Pre-Test

	Staying in the current country mostly:	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	alone, without my family members	162	44.0556	8.51396	.66892
	with my family members	69	45.3043	8.16431	.98287
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	alone, without my family members	162	227.4568	19.65861	1.54453
	with my family members	69	225.1304	17.91476	2.15668
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	alone, without my family members	162	10.9630	2.66304	.20923
	with my family members	69	10.1449	2.77741	.33436
Total Intercultural Behaviors	alone, without my family members	162	51.3395	7.54544	.59283
	with my family members	69	50.9565	7.19974	.86675

Table 8: Independent Samples Test for the Participants Staying Abroad Alone and Those with Their Families in the Pre-Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	Equal variances assumed	.063	.802	-1.033	229	.303	-1.24879	1.20922	-3.63141	1.13383
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.050	133.487	.295	-1.24879	1.18890	-3.60031	1.10273
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	Equal variances assumed	.314	.576	.845	229	.399	2.32636	2.75397	-3.10001	7.75272
	Equal variances not assumed			.877	140.077	.382	2.32636	2.65271	-2.91816	7.57087

Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	Equal variances assumed	.382	.537	2.110	229	.036	.81804	.38778	.05396	1.58211
	Equal variances not assumed			2.074	123.671	.040	.81804	.39443	.03733	1.59874
Total Intercultural Behaviors	Equal variances assumed	.616	.433	.358	229	.721	.38298	1.07018	-1.72568	2.49165
	Equal variances not assumed			.365	134.108	.716	.38298	1.05009	-1.69390	2.45987

Table 9: Group Statistics for the Participants Staying Abroad Alone and Those with Their Families in the Post-Test

	Staying in the current country mostly:	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	alone, without my family members	55	45.9636	6.71638	.90564
	with my family members	25	43.6800	9.49438	1.89888
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	alone, without my family members	55	229.7636	15.82188	2.13342
	with my family members	25	219.6800	18.06867	3.61373
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	alone, without my family members	55	10.4364	2.55142	.34403
	with my family members	25	9.4400	2.77008	.55402
Total Intercultural Behaviors	alone, without my family members	55	50.9091	7.63344	1.02929
	with my family members	25	51.0000	7.78353	1.55671

Table 10: Independent Samples Test for the Participants Staying Abroad Alone and Those with Their Families in the Post-Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper	
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	Equal variances assumed	4.247	.043	1.233	78	.221	2.28364	1.85223	-1.40387	5.97115
	Equal variances not assumed			1.085	35.347	.285	2.28364	2.10378	-1.98577	6.55305
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	Equal variances assumed	.420	.519	2.527	78	.014	10.08364	3.99098	2.13821	18.02907
	Equal variances not assumed			2.403	41.409	.021	10.08364	4.19649	1.61119	18.55608
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	Equal variances assumed	.474	.493	1.576	78	.119	.99636	.63212	-.26210	2.25483
	Equal variances not assumed			1.528	43.222	.134	.99636	.65214	-.31862	2.31134
Total Intercultural Behaviors	Equal variances assumed	.263	.610	-.049	78	.961	-.09091	1.85247	-3.77889	3.59707
	Equal variances not assumed			-.049	45.691	.961	-.09091	1.86622	-3.84810	3.66628

Table 11: Group Statistics for the Participants Staying Abroad Alone Without Their Families Between the Pre-and-Post Tests

	Test Stage	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	pre-test	162	44.0556	8.51396	.66892
	post-test	55	45.9636	6.71638	.90564
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	pre-test	162	227.4568	19.65861	1.54453
	post-test	55	229.7636	15.82188	2.13342
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	pre-test	162	10.9630	2.66304	.20923
	post-test	55	10.4364	2.55142	.34403
Total Intercultural Behaviors	pre-test	162	51.3395	7.54544	.59283
	post-test	55	50.9091	7.63344	1.02929

Table 12: Independent Samples Test for the Participants Staying Abroad Alone Without Their Families Between the Pre-and-Post Tests

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	Equal variances assumed	3.852	.051	-1.509	215	.133	-1.90808	1.26410	-4.39969	.58353
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.695	117.284	.093	-1.90808	1.12589	-4.13779	.32163
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	Equal variances assumed	2.209	.139	-.788	215	.432	-2.30685	2.92907	-8.08021	3.46651
	Equal variances not assumed			-.876	114.857	.383	-2.30685	2.63383	-7.52402	2.91033
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	Equal variances assumed	.275	.600	1.280	215	.202	.52660	.41129	-.28407	1.33727

Total Intercultural Behaviors	Equal variances not assumed			1.308	96.887	.194	.52660	.40266	-.27258	1.32578
	Equal variances assumed	.139	.710	.364	215	.716	.43042	1.18100	-1.89741	2.75824
	Equal variances not assumed			.362	92.360	.718	.43042	1.18781	-1.92855	2.78938
	Equal variances assumed									
	Equal variances not assumed									
	Equal variances assumed									

Table 13: Group Statistics for the Participants Staying Abroad With Their Families Between the Pre-and-Post Tests

	test stage	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	pre-test	69	45.3043	8.16431	.98287
	post-test	25	43.6800	9.49438	1.89888
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	pre-test	69	225.1304	17.91476	2.15668
	post-test	25	219.6800	18.06867	3.61373
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	pre-test	69	10.1449	2.77741	.33436
	post-test	25	9.4400	2.77008	.55402
Total Intercultural Behaviors	pre-test	69	50.9565	7.19974	.86675
	post-test	25	51.0000	7.78353	1.55671

Table 14: Group Statistics for the Participants Staying Abroad With Their Families Between the Pre-and-Post Tests

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	Equal variances assumed	.706	.403	.816	92	.417	1.62435	1.99152	-2.33098	5.57968
	Equal variances not assumed			.760	37.629	.452	1.62435	2.13817	-2.70555	5.95424
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	Equal variances assumed	.006	.937	1.300	92	.197	5.45043	4.19137	-2.87398	13.77485
	Equal variances not assumed			1.295	42.249	.202	5.45043	4.20837	-3.04091	13.94178
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	Equal variances assumed	.001	.974	1.088	92	.279	.70493	.64790	-.58186	1.99172
	Equal variances not assumed			1.089	42.670	.282	.70493	.64709	-.60035	2.01021
Total Intercultural Behaviors	Equal variances assumed	.036	.850	-.025	92	.980	-.04348	1.71728	-3.45414	3.36719
	Equal variances not assumed			-.024	39.836	.981	-.04348	1.78174	-3.64496	3.55801

Table 15: Group Statistics for the Female and Male Participants in the Pre-Test

	Gender:	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	Male	99	43.0909	7.69189	.77306
	Female	132	45.4318	8.81116	.76691
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	Male	99	224.9091	20.90508	2.10104
	Female	132	228.1515	17.66589	1.53762
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	Male	99	10.5354	2.74536	.27592
	Female	132	10.8561	2.69898	.23492

Table 16: Independent Samples-t Test for the Female and Male Participants in the Pre-Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Upper	
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	Equal variances assumed	.973	.325	- 2.108	229	.036	-2.34091	1.11024	-4.52850	-.15332
	Equal variances not assumed			- 2.150	223.715	.033	-2.34091	1.08894	-4.48679	-.19502
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	Equal variances assumed	3.944	.048	- 1.276	229	.203	-3.24242	2.54200	-8.25112	1.76627
	Equal variances not assumed			- 1.245	190.258	.215	-3.24242	2.60358	-8.37802	1.89317
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	Equal variances assumed	.146	.703	-.887	229	.376	-.32071	.36149	-1.03298	.39157
	Equal variances not assumed			-.885	209.298	.377	-.32071	.36238	-1.03508	.39367

Table 17: Group Statistics for the Female and Male Participants in the Post-Test

	Gender:	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	Male	24	44.6667	7.39957	1.51043
	Female	56	45.5000	7.88324	1.05344
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	Male	24	224.0417	20.77306	4.24028
	Female	56	227.7143	15.34419	2.05045
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	Male	24	9.9583	2.85107	.58197
	Female	56	10.1964	2.57555	.34417

Table 18: Independent Samples-t Test for the Female and Male Participants in the Post-Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper	
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	Equal variances assumed	.077	.782	-.441	78	.660	-.83333	1.88928	-4.59461	2.92794
	Equal variances not assumed			-.453	46.242	.653	-.83333	1.84151	-4.53957	2.87290
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	Equal variances assumed	1.755	.189	-.879	78	.382	-3.67262	4.17804	-11.99046	4.64522
	Equal variances not assumed			-.780	34.231	.441	-3.67262	4.71003	-13.24216	5.89693
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	Equal variances assumed	.585	.447	-.367	78	.715	-.23810	.64892	-1.52999	1.05380
	Equal variances not assumed			-.352	39.862	.727	-.23810	.67613	-1.60474	1.12855

Table 19: Group Statistics for the Study-Abroad Male Participants Between the Pre-and-Post Tests

	test stage	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	pre-test	99	43.0909	7.69189	.77306
	post-test	24	44.6667	7.39957	1.51043
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	pre-test	99	224.9091	20.90508	2.10104
	post-test	24	224.0417	20.77306	4.24028
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	pre-test	99	10.5354	2.74536	.27592
	post-test	24	9.9583	2.85107	.58197

Table 20: Independent Samples-t Test for the Study-Abroad Male Participants Between the Pre-and-Post-Tests

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper	
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	Equal variances assumed	.228	.634	-.907	121	.366	-1.57576	1.73765	-5.01590	1.86438
	Equal variances not assumed			-.929	36.048	.359	-1.57576	1.69677	-5.01681	1.86529
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	Equal variances assumed	.110	.741	.183	121	.855	.86742	4.75074	-8.53791	10.27276
	Equal variances not assumed			.183	35.182	.856	.86742	4.73227	-8.73781	10.47266
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	Equal variances assumed	.057	.812	.917	121	.361	.57702	.62928	-.66881	1.82285
	Equal variances not assumed			.896	34.098	.377	.57702	.64407	-.73175	1.88579

Table 21: Group Statistics for the Study-Abroad Female Participants Between the Pre-and-Post Tests

	test stage	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	pre-test	132	45.4318	8.81116	.76691
	post-test	56	45.5000	7.88324	1.05344
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	pre-test	132	228.1515	17.66589	1.53762
	post-test	56	227.7143	15.34419	2.05045
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	pre-test	132	10.8561	2.69898	.23492
	post-test	56	10.1964	2.57555	.34417

Table 22: Independent Samples-t Test for the Study-Abroad Female Participants Between the Pre-and-Post Tests

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	Equal variances assumed	.948	.332	-.050	186	.960	-.06818	1.36309	-2.75729	2.62093
	Equal variances not assumed			-.052	115.167	.958	-.06818	1.30303	-2.64920	2.51284
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	Equal variances assumed	.490	.485	.161	186	.872	.43723	2.71308	-4.91514	5.78960
	Equal variances not assumed			.171	118.515	.865	.43723	2.56293	-4.63785	5.51231
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	Equal variances assumed	.248	.619	1.553	186	.122	.65963	.42470	-.17821	1.49748
	Equal variances not assumed			1.583	108.314	.116	.65963	.41670	-.16631	1.48558

Table 23: Group Statistics for the Participants with and without Previous Study-Abroad Experiences in the Pre-Test

	Have you previously studied abroad in a non-Arab country?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	Yes	87	46.4598	7.67934	.82331
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	No	163	226.4479	19.49744	1.52716
	Yes	87	227.2414	18.77527	2.01292
	No	163	10.5828	2.73707	.21438
	Yes	87	10.7011	2.67249	.28652

Table 24: Independent Samples-T Test for the Participants with and without Previous Study-Abroad Experiences in the Pre-Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for Equality of Means								
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Upper	
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	Equal variances assumed	.216	.643	-3.064	248	.002	-3.29413	1.07524	-5.41190	-1.17636
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.138	188.130	.002	-3.29413	1.04962	-5.36467	-1.22359
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	Equal variances assumed	.056	.813	-.310	248	.756	-.79353	2.55593	-5.82763	4.24057
	Equal variances not assumed			-.314	181.561	.754	-.79353	2.52667	-5.77894	4.19188
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	Equal variances assumed	.052	.819	-.328	248	.743	-.11833	.36046	-.82829	.59163
	Equal variances not assumed			-.331	179.399	.741	-.11833	.35785	-.82446	.58780

Table 25: Group Statistics for the Participants with and without Previous Study-Abroad Experiences in the Post-Test

	Have you previously studied abroad in a non-Arab country?	N	Mean	Std.	Std. Error
				Deviation	Mean
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	No	56	44.1429	7.26743	.97115
	Yes	37	47.7568	7.66089	1.25944
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	No	56	225.5357	18.87082	2.52172
	Yes	37	228.9459	12.05761	1.98226
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	No	56	10.2143	2.76809	.36990
	Yes	37	10.1892	2.80711	.46149

Table 26: Independent Samples-T Test for the Participants with and without Previous Study-Abroad Experiences in the Post-Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper	
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	Equal variances assumed	.908	.343	-2.297	91	.024	-3.61390	1.57317	-6.73882	-.48898
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.272	74.336	.026	-3.61390	1.59039	-6.78258	-.44522
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	Equal variances assumed	7.747	.007	-.975	91	.332	-3.41023	3.49885	-10.36027	3.53980
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.063	90.929	.291	-3.41023	3.20756	-9.78172	2.96125
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	Equal variances assumed	.176	.676	.043	91	.966	.02510	.58973	-1.14633	1.19652
	Equal variances not assumed			.042	76.460	.966	.02510	.59144	-1.15274	1.20293

Table 27: Group Statistics for the Participants with No Previous Study-Abroad Experiences Between the Pre-and-Post Tests

	test stage	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	pre-test	163	43.1656	8.31202	.65105
	post-test	56	44.1429	7.26743	.97115
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	pre-test	163	226.4479	19.49744	1.52716
	post-test	56	225.5357	18.87082	2.52172
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	pre-test	163	10.5828	2.73707	.21438
	post-test	56	10.2143	2.76809	.36990

Table 28: Independent Samples-t Test for the Participants with No Previous Study-Abroad Experiences Between the Pre-and-Post Tests

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Upper	
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	Equal variances assumed	1.652	.200	-.783	217	.435	-.97721	1.24846	-3.43787	1.48344
	Equal variances not assumed			-.836	108.130	.405	-.97721	1.16919	-3.29471	1.34029
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	Equal variances assumed	.009	.924	.304	217	.761	.91214	2.99573	-4.99232	6.81659
	Equal variances not assumed			.309	98.254	.758	.91214	2.94810	-4.93808	6.76235
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	Equal variances assumed	.012	.913	.867	217	.387	.36854	.42518	-.46947	1.20654
	Equal variances not assumed			.862	94.533	.391	.36854	.42754	-.48029	1.21736

Table 29: Group Statistics for the Participants With Previous Study-Abroad Experiences Between the Pre-and-Post Tests

	test stage	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language	pre-test	87	46.4598	7.67934	.82331
Use	post-test	37	47.7568	7.66089	1.25944
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	pre-test	87	227.2414	18.77527	2.01292
	post-test	37	228.9459	12.05761	1.98226
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	pre-test	87	10.7011	2.67249	.28652
	post-test	37	10.1892	2.80711	.46149

Table 30: Independent Samples-t Test for the Participants with Previous Study-Abroad Experiences Between the Pre-and-Post Tests

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper	
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	Equal variances assumed	.058	.810	-.861	122	.391	-1.29699	1.50614	-4.27855	1.68457
	Equal variances not assumed			-.862	68.134	.392	-1.29699	1.50467	-4.29940	1.70543
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	Equal variances assumed	6.167	.014	-.509	122	.612	-1.70457	3.35034	-8.33690	4.92777
	Equal variances not assumed			-.603	102.777	.548	-1.70457	2.82510	-7.30763	3.89850
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	Equal variances assumed	.293	.589	.962	122	.338	.51196	.53246	-.54209	1.56602
	Equal variances not assumed			.942	65.057	.349	.51196	.54320	-.57286	1.59678

Appendix 12: Impact of Study-Abroad in the UK, North America, Australia and New Zealand

Descriptives

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	The UK	259	44.9807	8.28675	.51491	43.9667	45.9947	18.00	65.00
	North America (USA and Canada)	9	44.7778	8.61362	2.87121	38.1568	51.3988	31.00	54.00
	Australia and New Zealand	43	42.5581	7.68518	1.17198	40.1930	44.9233	27.00	64.00
	Oman (I competed for study abroad scholarships but didn't get)	32	44.8125	6.44799	1.13985	42.4878	47.1372	33.00	62.00
	Total	343	44.6560	8.07447	.43598	43.7984	45.5135	18.00	65.00
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	The UK	259	226.2703	18.40554	1.14366	224.0182	228.5224	175.00	280.00
	North America (USA and Canada)	9	238.7778	14.07815	4.69272	227.9563	249.5992	218.00	257.00
	Australia and New Zealand	43	226.9302	20.15345	3.07337	220.7279	233.1326	173.00	275.00
	Oman (I competed for study abroad scholarships but didn't get)	32	227.2188	17.59900	3.11109	220.8736	233.5639	183.00	266.00
	Total	343	226.7697	18.49742	.99877	224.8052	228.7342	173.00	280.00
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	The UK	259	10.5290	2.69261	.16731	10.1995	10.8584	3.00	15.00
	North America (USA and Canada)	9	11.5556	1.74005	.58002	10.2180	12.8931	9.00	14.00
	Australia and New Zealand	43	10.5814	2.96192	.45169	9.6699	11.4929	3.00	15.00

Total Intercultural Behaviors	Oman (I competed for study abroad scholarships but didn't get)	32	9.9688	2.91254	.51487	8.9187	11.0188	5.00	15.00
	Total	343	10.5102	2.72830	.14731	10.2204	10.8000	3.00	15.00
	The UK	259	50.9691	7.52715	.46771	50.0481	51.8901	23.00	71.00
	North America (USA and Canada)	9	56.2222	7.39557	2.46519	50.5375	61.9070	45.00	67.00
	Australia and New Zealand	43	51.1860	6.91532	1.05458	49.0578	53.3143	31.00	64.00
	Oman (I competed for study abroad scholarships but didn't get)	32	53.8125	6.76060	1.19512	51.3750	56.2500	40.00	71.00
	Total	343	51.3994	7.43909	.40167	50.6094	52.1895	23.00	71.00

Test of Homogeneity of Variances

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	Based on Mean	1.051	3	339	.370
	Based on Median	.808	3	339	.490
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.808	3	330.991	.490
	Based on trimmed mean	1.020	3	339	.384
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	Based on Mean	.296	3	339	.828
	Based on Median	.296	3	339	.828
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.296	3	332.939	.828
	Based on trimmed mean	.287	3	339	.835
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	Based on Mean	.775	3	339	.508
	Based on Median	.727	3	339	.536
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.727	3	324.640	.536
	Based on trimmed mean	.758	3	339	.519
Total Intercultural Behaviors	Based on Mean	.585	3	339	.625
	Based on Median	.628	3	339	.598
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.628	3	337.963	.598
	Based on trimmed mean	.590	3	339	.622

ANOVA

		Sum of		Mean		
		Squares	df	Square	F	Sig.
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	Between Groups	217.467	3	72.489	1.113	.344
	Within Groups	22079.939	339	65.133		
	Total	22297.405	342			
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	Between Groups	1369.909	3	456.636	1.339	.262
	Within Groups	115646.896	339	341.141		
	Total	117016.805	342			
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	Between Groups	19.525	3	6.508	.873	.455
	Within Groups	2526.189	339	7.452		
	Total	2545.714	342			
Total Intercultural Behaviors	Between Groups	445.585	3	148.528	2.725	.044
	Within Groups	18480.695	339	54.515		
	Total	18926.280	342			

Multiple Comparisons

Tukey HSD

Dependent Variable	(I) Location of present study (or stay):	(J) Location of present study (or stay):	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	The UK	North America (USA and Canada)	.20292	2.73650	1.000	-6.8622	7.2681
		Australia and New Zealand	2.42256	1.32898	.264	-1.0086	5.8537
		Oman (I competed for study abroad scholarships but didn't get)	.16819	1.51224	1.000	-3.7361	4.0725
		The UK	-.20292	2.73650	1.000	-7.2681	6.8622
		Australia and New Zealand	2.21964	2.95832	.877	-5.4182	9.8575
		North America (USA and Canada)	-.03472	3.04505	1.000	-7.8965	7.8271
	Australia and New Zealand	Oman (I competed for study abroad scholarships but didn't get)	-2.42256	1.32898	.264	-5.8537	1.0086
		The UK	-2.21964	2.95832	.877	-9.8575	5.4182
		North America (USA and Canada)	-2.25436	1.88417	.629	-7.1190	2.6102
		Oman (I competed for study abroad scholarships but didn't get)	-.16819	1.51224	1.000	-4.0725	3.7361
		The UK	.03472	3.04505	1.000	-7.8271	7.8965
		Australia and New Zealand	2.25436	1.88417	.629	-2.6102	7.1190
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	The UK	North America (USA and Canada)	-12.50751	6.26273	.191	-28.6767	3.6617
		Australia and New Zealand	-.65996	3.04149	.996	-8.5125	7.1926
		Oman (I competed for study abroad scholarships but didn't get)	-.94848	3.46090	.993	-9.8839	7.9869
	North America (USA and Canada)	The UK	12.50751	6.26273	.191	-3.6617	28.6767
		Australia and New Zealand	11.84755	6.77038	.300	-5.6324	29.3275
		Oman (I competed for study abroad	11.55903	6.96888	.347	-6.4334	29.5514

		scholarships but didn't get)						
		The UK	.65996	3.04149	.996	-7.1926	8.5125	
		North America (USA and Canada)	-11.84755	6.77038	.300	-29.3275	5.6324	
	Australia and New Zealand	Oman (I competed for study abroad scholarships but didn't get)	-.28852	4.31210	1.000	-11.4216	10.8445	
		The UK	.94848	3.46090	.993	-7.9869	9.8839	
	Oman (I competed for study abroad scholarships but didn't get)	North America (USA and Canada)	-11.55903	6.96888	.347	-29.5514	6.4334	
		Australia and New Zealand	.28852	4.31210	1.000	-10.8445	11.4216	
		North America (USA and Canada)	-1.02660	.92561	.684	-3.4164	1.3632	
		Australia and New Zealand	-.05244	.44952	.999	-1.2130	1.1082	
	The UK	Oman (I competed for study abroad scholarships but didn't get)	.56021	.51151	.693	-.7604	1.8808	
		The UK	1.02660	.92561	.684	-1.3632	3.4164	
		Australia and New Zealand	.97416	1.00064	.765	-1.6093	3.5576	
	North America (USA and Canada)	Oman (I competed for study abroad scholarships but didn't get)	1.58681	1.02998	.414	-1.0724	4.2460	
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency		The UK	.05244	.44952	.999	-1.1082	1.2130	
		North America (USA and Canada)	-.97416	1.00064	.765	-3.5576	1.6093	
	Australia and New Zealand	Oman (I competed for study abroad scholarships but didn't get)	.61265	.63732	.772	-1.0328	2.2581	
		The UK	-.56021	.51151	.693	-1.8808	.7604	
	Oman (I competed for study abroad scholarships but didn't get)	North America (USA and Canada)	-1.58681	1.02998	.414	-4.2460	1.0724	
		Australia and New Zealand	-.61265	.63732	.772	-2.2581	1.0328	
Total Intercultural Behaviors	The UK	North America (USA and Canada)	-5.25311	2.50355	.156	-11.7168	1.2106	

	Australia and New Zealand	-.21693	1.21585	.998	-3.3560	2.9222
	Oman (I competed for study abroad scholarships but didn't get)	-2.84339	1.38351	.170	-6.4153	.7286
	The UK	5.25311	2.50355	.156	-1.2106	11.7168
North America (USA and Canada)	Australia and New Zealand	5.03618	2.70648	.247	-1.9515	12.0238
	Oman (I competed for study abroad scholarships but didn't get)	2.40972	2.78583	.823	-4.7828	9.6022
	The UK	.21693	1.21585	.998	-2.9222	3.3560
Australia and New Zealand	North America (USA and Canada)	-5.03618	2.70648	.247	-12.0238	1.9515
	Oman (I competed for study abroad scholarships but didn't get)	-2.62645	1.72378	.424	-7.0769	1.8240
Oman (I competed for study abroad scholarships but didn't get)	The UK	2.84339	1.38351	.170	-.7286	6.4153
	North America (USA and Canada)	-2.40972	2.78583	.823	-9.6022	4.7828
	Australia and New Zealand	2.62645	1.72378	.424	-1.8240	7.0769

**Appendix 13: Impact of Length of Stay Abroad on Omani Participants' ICC,
SEIELU and IIF**

Descriptives

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	Less than a year	93	42.9140	8.21274	.85162	41.2226	44.6054	18.00	62.00
	1-2 years	86	44.1279	7.84226	.84565	42.4465	45.8093	26.00	65.00
	3-4 years	99	45.5758	8.07881	.81195	43.9645	47.1870	20.00	65.00
	5-6 years	20	45.6000	6.54860	1.46431	42.5352	48.6648	36.00	64.00
	More than 6 years	13	51.7692	10.40155	2.88487	45.4836	58.0548	36.00	65.00
	Total		311	44.6399	8.23205	.46680	43.7214	45.5584	18.00
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	Less than a year	93	226.1828	20.09161	2.08340	222.0450	230.3206	173.00	274.00
	1-2 years	86	226.1628	16.83334	1.81519	222.5537	229.7719	190.00	273.00
	3-4 years	99	226.8990	19.44773	1.95457	223.0202	230.7778	175.00	280.00
	5-6 years	20	226.5500	17.35231	3.88009	218.4289	234.6711	192.00	275.00
	More than 6 years	13	233.2308	15.24879	4.22925	224.0160	242.4455	213.00	264.00
	Total		311	226.7235	18.61392	1.05550	224.6466	228.8003	173.00
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	Less than a year	93	10.6022	2.74313	.28445	10.0372	11.1671	3.00	15.00
	1-2 years	86	10.6279	2.75701	.29730	10.0368	11.2190	3.00	15.00
	3-4 years	99	10.1515	2.69680	.27104	9.6136	10.6894	3.00	15.00

5-6 years	20	11.1500	2.36810	.52952	10.0417	12.2583	7.00	15.00
More than 6 years	13	12.1538	2.19265	.60813	10.8288	13.4788	8.00	15.00
Total	311	10.5659	2.70746	.15353	10.2638	10.8680	3.00	15.00

Test of Homogeneity of Variances

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	Based on Mean	1.640	4	306	.164
	Based on Median	1.326	4	306	.260
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.326	4	296.606	.260
	Based on trimmed mean	1.700	4	306	.150
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	Based on Mean	1.761	4	306	.137
	Based on Median	1.763	4	306	.136
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.763	4	302.542	.136
	Based on trimmed mean	1.756	4	306	.138
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	Based on Mean	.434	4	306	.784
	Based on Median	.318	4	306	.866
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.318	4	300.446	.866
	Based on trimmed mean	.384	4	306	.820

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	Between Groups	1065.471	4	266.368	4.087	.003
	Within Groups	19942.194	306	65.171		
	Total	21007.666	310			
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	Between Groups	608.358	4	152.089	.436	.783
	Within Groups	106799.861	306	349.019		
	Total	107408.219	310			
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	Between Groups	57.057	4	14.264	1.970	.099
	Within Groups	2215.342	306	7.240		
	Total	2272.399	310			

Multiple Comparisons

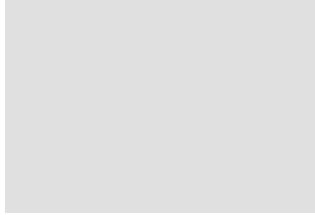
Tukey HSD

Dependent Variable	(I) Length of your stay abroad	(J) Length of your stay abroad	Mean Difference (I- J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	Less than a year	1-2 years	-1.21393	1.20771	.853	-4.5280	2.1002
		3-4 years	-2.66178	1.16578	.153	-5.8608	.5373
		5-6 years	-2.68602	1.98980	.660	-8.1462	2.7742
		More than 6 years	-8.85525*	2.39037	.002	-15.4147	-2.2958
	1-2 years	Less than a year	1.21393	1.20771	.853	-2.1002	4.5280
		3-4 years	-1.44785	1.18999	.742	-4.7133	1.8176
		5-6 years	-1.47209	2.00408	.948	-6.9715	4.0273
		More than 6 years	-7.64132*	2.40227	.014	-14.2334	-1.0492
	3-4 years	Less than a year	2.66178	1.16578	.153	-.5373	5.8608
		1-2 years	1.44785	1.18999	.742	-1.8176	4.7133
		5-6 years	-.02424	1.97910	1.000	-5.4551	5.4066
		More than 6 years	-6.19347	2.38147	.073	-12.7285	.3416
	5-6 years	Less than a year	2.68602	1.98980	.660	-2.7742	8.1462
		1-2 years	1.47209	2.00408	.948	-4.0273	6.9715
		3-4 years	.02424	1.97910	1.000	-5.4066	5.4551
		More than 6 years	-6.16923	2.87605	.204	-14.0614	1.7230
More than 6 years	Less than a year	8.85525*	2.39037	.002	2.2958	15.4147	
	1-2 years	7.64132*	2.40227	.014	1.0492	14.2334	
	3-4 years	6.19347	2.38147	.073	-.3416	12.7285	
	5-6 years	6.16923	2.87605	.204	-1.7230	14.0614	
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	Less than a year	1-2 years	.02001	2.79486	1.000	-7.6494	7.6894
		3-4 years	-.71619	2.69784	.999	-8.1194	6.6870
		5-6 years	-.36720	4.60476	1.000	-13.0032	12.2688
		More than 6 years	-7.04797	5.53177	.707	-22.2278	8.1318
	1-2 years	Less than a year	-.02001	2.79486	1.000	-7.6894	7.6494
		3-4 years	-.73620	2.75387	.999	-8.2931	6.8207

	5-6 years	-.38721	4.63781	1.000	-13.1139	12.3395
	More than 6 years	-7.06798	5.55932	.709	-22.3234	8.1874
	Less than a year	.71619	2.69784	.999	-6.6870	8.1194
3-4 years	1-2 years	.73620	2.75387	.999	-6.8207	8.2931
	5-6 years	.34899	4.58000	1.000	-12.2191	12.9170
	More than 6 years	-6.33178	5.51118	.780	-21.4551	8.7915
	Less than a year	.36720	4.60476	1.000	-12.2688	13.0032
5-6 years	1-2 years	.38721	4.63781	1.000	-12.3395	13.1139
	3-4 years	-.34899	4.58000	1.000	-12.9170	12.2191
	More than 6 years	-6.68077	6.65572	.854	-24.9448	11.5833
	Less than a year	7.04797	5.53177	.707	-8.1318	22.2278
More than 6 years	1-2 years	7.06798	5.55932	.709	-8.1874	22.3234
	3-4 years	6.33178	5.51118	.780	-8.7915	21.4551
	5-6 years	6.68077	6.65572	.854	-11.5833	24.9448
	1-2 years	-.02576	.40253	1.000	-1.1303	1.0788
	3-4 years	.45064	.38855	.774	-.6156	1.5169
Less than a year	5-6 years	-.54785	.66320	.922	-2.3677	1.2720
	More than 6 years	-1.55170	.79671	.295	-3.7380	.6346
	Less than a year	.02576	.40253	1.000	-1.0788	1.1303
1-2 years	3-4 years	.47639	.39662	.751	-.6120	1.5648
	5-6 years	-.52209	.66796	.936	-2.3550	1.3109
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	More than 6 years	-1.52594	.80068	.316	-3.7231	.6712
	Less than a year	-.45064	.38855	.774	-1.5169	.6156
3-4 years	1-2 years	-.47639	.39662	.751	-1.5648	.6120
	5-6 years	-.99848	.65963	.554	-2.8086	.8116
	More than 6 years	-2.00233	.79374	.088	-4.1804	.1758
	Less than a year	.54785	.66320	.922	-1.2720	2.3677
5-6 years	1-2 years	.52209	.66796	.936	-1.3109	2.3550
	3-4 years	.99848	.65963	.554	-.8116	2.8086

	More than 6 years	-1.00385	.95858	.833	-3.6343	1.6266
	Less than a year	1.55170	.79671	.295	-.6346	3.7380
More than 6 years	1-2 years	1.52594	.80068	.316	-.6712	3.7231
	3-4 years	2.00233	.79374	.088	-.1758	4.1804
	5-6 years	1.00385	.95858	.833	-1.6266	3.6343

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.



Appendix 14: Impact of Multilingualism

Descriptives

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	1	223	44.0717	7.80819	.52287	43.0413	45.1022	23.00	65.00
	2	100	45.1200	8.35969	.83597	43.4613	46.7787	18.00	65.00
	3	20	48.8500	8.56723	1.91569	44.8404	52.8596	38.00	65.00
	Total	343	44.6560	8.07447	.43598	43.7984	45.5135	18.00	65.00
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	1	223	225.5022	19.16333	1.28327	222.9733	228.0312	175.00	275.00
	2	100	228.6600	16.72065	1.67207	225.3423	231.9777	173.00	280.00
	3	20	231.4500	18.72087	4.18611	222.6884	240.2116	196.00	264.00
	Total	343	226.7697	18.49742	.99877	224.8052	228.7342	173.00	280.00
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	1	223	10.3363	2.81548	.18854	9.9648	10.7079	3.00	15.00
	2	100	10.9000	2.59565	.25956	10.3850	11.4150	3.00	15.00
	3	20	10.5000	2.25948	.50524	9.4425	11.5575	6.00	14.00
	Total	343	10.5102	2.72830	.14731	10.2204	10.8000	3.00	15.00
Total Intercultural Behaviors	1	223	50.6682	7.61206	.50974	49.6636	51.6727	23.00	71.00
	2	100	52.8600	7.05680	.70568	51.4598	54.2602	34.00	71.00
	3	20	52.2500	6.43081	1.43797	49.2403	55.2597	40.00	67.00
	Total	343	51.3994	7.43909	.40167	50.6094	52.1895	23.00	71.00

Test of Homogeneity of Variances

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	Based on Mean	.332	2	340	.717
	Based on Median	.271	2	340	.763
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.271	2	334.290	.763
	Based on trimmed mean	.315	2	340	.730
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	Based on Mean	1.091	2	340	.337
	Based on Median	1.061	2	340	.347
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.061	2	335.739	.347
	Based on trimmed mean	1.090	2	340	.338
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	Based on Mean	1.453	2	340	.235
	Based on Median	1.327	2	340	.267
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.327	2	336.417	.267
	Based on trimmed mean				

Total Intercultural Behaviors	Based on trimmed mean	1.563	2	340	.211
	Based on Mean	.597	2	340	.551
	Based on Median	.608	2	340	.545
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.608	2	337.694	.545
	Based on trimmed mean	.616	2	340	.540

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	Between Groups	449.443	2	224.722	3.497	.031
	Within Groups	21847.962	340	64.259		
	Total	22297.405	342			
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	Between Groups	1153.666	2	576.833	1.693	.186
	Within Groups	115863.139	340	340.774		
	Total	117016.805	342			
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	Between Groups	21.939	2	10.969	1.478	.230
	Within Groups	2523.776	340	7.423		
	Total	2545.714	342			
Total Intercultural Behaviors	Between Groups	347.046	2	173.523	3.175	.043
	Within Groups	18579.234	340	54.645		
	Total	18926.280	342			

Multiple Comparisons

Tukey HSD

Dependent Variable	(I) number of spoken languages	(J) number of spoken languages	Mean Difference (I- J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	1	2	-1.04825	.96475	.523	-3.3193	1.2228
		3	-4.77825*	1.87112	.030	-9.1829	-.3736
	2	1	1.04825	.96475	.523	-1.2228	3.3193
		3	-3.73000	1.96355	.140	-8.3522	.8922
	3	1	4.77825*	1.87112	.030	.3736	9.1829
		2	3.73000	1.96355	.140	-.8922	8.3522
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	1	2	-3.15776	2.22168	.331	-8.3877	2.0721
		3	-5.94776	4.30892	.352	-16.0911	4.1956
	2	1	3.15776	2.22168	.331	-2.0721	8.3877
		3	-2.79000	4.52177	.811	-13.4344	7.8544
	3	1	5.94776	4.30892	.352	-4.1956	16.0911
		2	2.79000	4.52177	.811	-7.8544	13.4344
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	1	2	-.56368	.32789	.200	-1.3355	.2082
		3	-.16368	.63595	.964	-1.6607	1.3334
	2	1	.56368	.32789	.200	-.2082	1.3355
		3	.40000	.66736	.821	-1.1710	1.9710
	3	1	.16368	.63595	.964	-1.3334	1.6607
		2	-.40000	.66736	.821	-1.9710	1.1710
Total Intercultural Behaviors	1	2	-2.19184*	.88966	.038	-4.2861	-.0976
		3	-1.58184	1.72548	.630	-5.6437	2.4800
	2	1	2.19184*	.88966	.038	.0976	4.2861
		3	.61000	1.81071	.939	-3.6525	4.8725
	3	1	1.58184	1.72548	.630	-2.4800	5.6437
		2	-.61000	1.81071	.939	-4.8725	3.6525

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Appendix 15: Impact of Educational Level

Descriptives

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	Diploma	63	41.6508	7.45559	.93932	39.7731	43.5285	23.00	65.00
	Bachelor	121	45.8678	8.15469	.74134	44.4000	47.3356	20.00	65.00
	Master	96	44.2604	8.25163	.84218	42.5885	45.9324	18.00	65.00
	PhD	63	45.9365	7.55383	.95169	44.0341	47.8389	26.00	63.00
	Total	343	44.6560	8.07447	.43598	43.7984	45.5135	18.00	65.00
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	Diploma	63	226.7937	17.51327	2.20647	222.3830	231.2043	193.00	262.00
	Bachelor	121	227.5785	19.14974	1.74089	224.1317	231.0253	182.00	280.00
	Master	96	226.5208	17.48562	1.78462	222.9779	230.0637	183.00	270.00
	PhD	63	225.5714	19.98928	2.51841	220.5372	230.6057	173.00	270.00
	Total	343	226.7697	18.49742	.99877	224.8052	228.7342	173.00	280.00
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	Diploma	63	10.5714	2.53183	.31898	9.9338	11.2091	3.00	15.00
	Bachelor	121	10.7355	2.51253	.22841	10.2833	11.1878	3.00	15.00
	Master	96	10.4688	3.11179	.31760	9.8382	11.0993	3.00	15.00
	PhD	63	10.0794	2.70186	.34040	9.3989	10.7598	3.00	15.00
	Total	343	10.5102	2.72830	.14731	10.2204	10.8000	3.00	15.00
Total Intercultural Behaviors	Diploma	63	50.8730	6.94794	.87536	49.1232	52.6228	36.00	67.00
	Bachelor	121	51.2314	7.58041	.68913	49.8670	52.5958	23.00	68.00
	Master	96	52.0521	7.12353	.72704	50.6087	53.4954	36.00	71.00
	PhD	63	51.2540	8.18529	1.03125	49.1925	53.3154	33.00	71.00
	Total	343	51.3994	7.43909	.40167	50.6094	52.1895	23.00	71.00

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	Between Groups	864.968	3	288.323	4.560	.004
	Within Groups	21432.437	339	63.223		
	Total	22297.405	342			
Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	Between Groups	175.596	3	58.532	.170	.917
	Within Groups	116841.208	339	344.664		
	Total	117016.805	342			
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	Between Groups	18.239	3	6.080	.815	.486
	Within Groups					

Total Intercultural Behaviors	Within Groups	2527.475	339	7.456		
	Total	2545.714	342			
	Between					
	Groups	63.099	3	21.033	.378	.769
	Within Groups	18863.181	339	55.644		
	Total	18926.280	342			

Multiple Comparisons

Tukey HSD

Dependent Variable	(I) Educational level:	(J) Educational level:	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval		
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	Diploma	Bachelor	-4.21697*	1.23533	.004	-7.4064	-1.0276	
		Master	-2.60962	1.28922	.181	-5.9382	.7189	
		PhD	-4.28571*	1.41671	.014	-7.9434	-.6280	
	Bachelor	Diploma	4.21697*	1.23533	.004	1.0276	7.4064	
		Master	1.60735	1.08677	.451	-1.1985	4.4132	
		PhD	-.06874	1.23533	1.000	-3.2581	3.1207	
	Master	Diploma	2.60962	1.28922	.181	-.7189	5.9382	
		Bachelor	-1.60735	1.08677	.451	-4.4132	1.1985	
		PhD	-1.67609	1.28922	.564	-5.0046	1.6525	
	PhD	Diploma	4.28571*	1.41671	.014	.6280	7.9434	
		Bachelor	.06874	1.23533	1.000	-3.1207	3.2581	
		Master	1.67609	1.28922	.564	-1.6525	5.0046	
	Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	Diploma	Bachelor	-.78486	2.88432	.993	-8.2317	6.6619
			Master	.27282	3.01017	1.000	-7.4989	8.0445
			PhD	1.22222	3.30783	.983	-7.3180	9.7624
		Bachelor	Diploma	.78486	2.88432	.993	-6.6619	8.2317
Master			1.05768	2.53746	.976	-5.4936	7.6089	
PhD			2.00708	2.88432	.899	-5.4397	9.4539	
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	Master	Diploma	-.27282	3.01017	1.000	-8.0445	7.4989	
		Bachelor	-1.05768	2.53746	.976	-7.6089	5.4936	
		PhD	.94940	3.01017	.989	-6.8223	8.7211	
	PhD	Diploma	-1.22222	3.30783	.983	-9.7624	7.3180	
		Bachelor	-2.00708	2.88432	.899	-9.4539	5.4397	
		Master	-.94940	3.01017	.989	-8.7211	6.8223	
Bachelor	Diploma	-.16411	.42422	.980	-1.2594	.9311		
	Master	.10268	.44273	.996	-1.0404	1.2457		
	PhD	.49206	.48651	.743	-.7640	1.7481		
Bachelor	Diploma	.16411	.42422	.980	-.9311	1.2594		
	Master	.26679	.37320	.891	-.6968	1.2303		

Total Intercultural Behaviors	Master	PhD	.65617	.42422	.411	-.4391	1.7514
		Diploma	-.10268	.44273	.996	-1.2457	1.0404
		Bachelor	-.26679	.37320	.891	-1.2303	.6968
	PhD	PhD	.38938	.44273	.815	-.7537	1.5324
		Diploma	-.49206	.48651	.743	-1.7481	.7640
		Bachelor	-.65617	.42422	.411	-1.7514	.4391
	Diploma	Master	-.38938	.44273	.815	-1.5324	.7537
		Bachelor	-.35839	1.15892	.990	-3.3505	2.6337
		Master	-1.17907	1.20948	.764	-4.3017	1.9436
	Bachelor	PhD	-.38095	1.32908	.992	-3.8124	3.0505
		Diploma	.35839	1.15892	.990	-2.6337	3.3505
		Master	-.82068	1.01955	.852	-3.4530	1.8116
	Master	PhD	-.02256	1.15892	1.000	-3.0147	2.9696
		Diploma	1.17907	1.20948	.764	-1.9436	4.3017
		Bachelor	.82068	1.01955	.852	-1.8116	3.4530
	PhD	PhD	.79812	1.20948	.912	-2.3246	3.9208
		Diploma	.38095	1.32908	.992	-3.0505	3.8124
		Bachelor	.02256	1.15892	1.000	-2.9696	3.0147
		Master	-.79812	1.20948	.912	-3.9208	2.3246

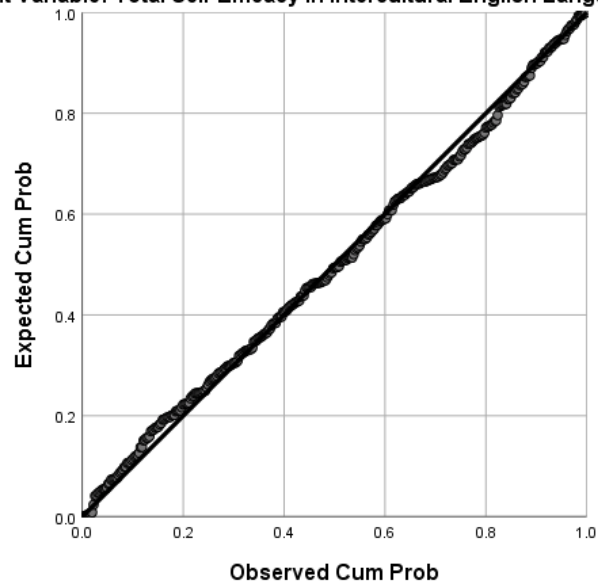
*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Appendix 16: Contribution of ICC and IIF to SEIELU Development

Table 1: Correlations

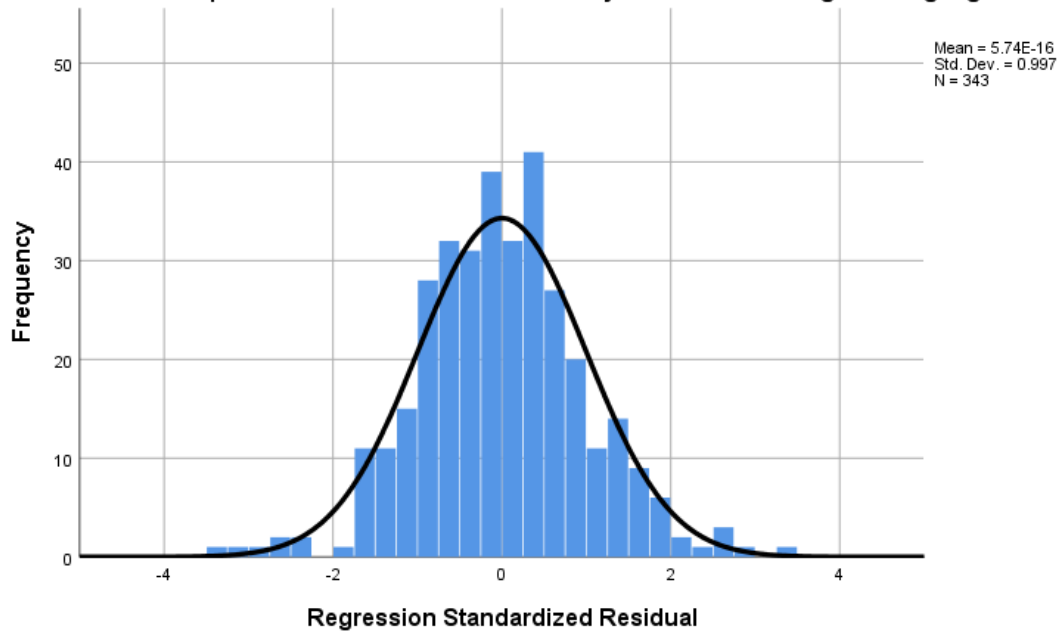
		Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency
Pearson Correlation	Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	1.000	.471	.234
	Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	.471	1.000	.414
	Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	.234	.414	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	.	.000	.000
	Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	.000	.	.000
	Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	.000	.000	.
N	Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	343	343	343
	Total Intercultural Communicative Competence	343	343	343
	Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	343	343	343

Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual
Dependent Variable: Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use



Histogram

Dependent Variable: Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use



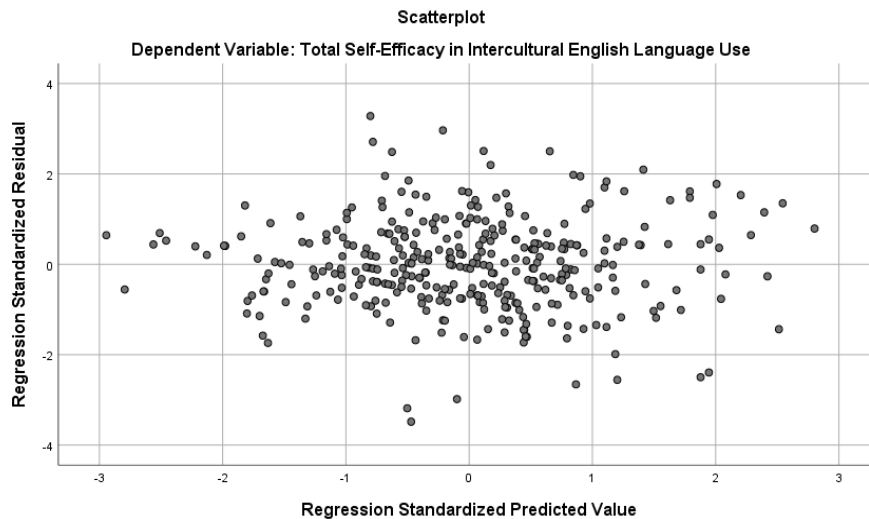


Table 2: Case-wise Diagnostics

Case Number	Std. Residual	Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use	Predicted Value	Residual
88	-3.187	20.00	42.7375	-22.73751
225	-3.484	18.00	42.8564	-24.85641
340	3.280	65.00	41.5950	23.40502

a. Dependent Variable: Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use

Table 3: Residuals Statistics^a

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	33.4131	55.3577	44.6560	3.81860	343
Std. Predicted Value	-2.944	2.803	.000	1.000	343
Standard Error of Predicted Value	.391	1.431	.635	.205	343
Adjusted Predicted Value	33.2478	55.1915	44.6562	3.81648	343
Residual	-24.85641	23.40502	.00000	7.11445	343
Std. Residual	-3.484	3.280	.000	.997	343
Stud. Residual	-3.490	3.290	.000	1.001	343
Deleted Residual	-24.94554	23.54289	-.00023	7.17720	343
Stud. Deleted Residual	-3.549	3.339	.000	1.006	343
Mahal. Distance	.032	12.763	1.994	2.107	343
Cook's Distance	.000	.040	.003	.005	343
Centered Leverage Value	.000	.037	.006	.006	343

a. Dependent Variable: Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use

Table 4: Model Summary of the Six Predictors

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.511 ^a	.261	.248	7.00433	1.866

a. Predictors: (Constant), Total Intercultural Behaviors, total intercultural Emotion Regulation, total intercultural Skills, Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency, Total Intercultural Cognition, Total Intercultural Attitudes

b. Dependent Variable: Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use

Table 5: ANOVA for the Six Predictors

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	5813.041	6	968.840	19.748	.000 ^b
1 Residual	16484.364	336	49.061		
Total	22297.405	342			

a. Dependent Variable: Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use

b. Predictors: (Constant), Total Intercultural Behaviors, total intercultural Emotion Regulation, total intercultural Skills, Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency, Total Intercultural Cognition, Total Intercultural Attitudes

Table 6: Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	4.590	5.239		.876	.382	-5.716	14.896					
Total Intercultural Interaction Frequency	.130	.161	.044	.809	.419	-.186	.446	.234	.044	.038	.748	1.337
Total Intercultural Attitudes	.245	.063	.240	3.913	.000	.122	.368	.427	.209	.184	.583	1.715
1 total intercultural Emotion Regulation	.181	.183	.050	.988	.324	-.179	.541	.193	.054	.046	.843	1.186
total intercultural Skills	-.177	.097	-.098	-1.836	.067	-.367	.013	.138	-.100	-	.774	1.293
Total Intercultural Cognition	.425	.119	.204	3.577	.000	.191	.659	.361	.192	.168	.676	1.479

Total													
Intercultural Behaviors	.219	.065	.201	3.363	.001	.091	.346	.387	.180	.158	.614	1.628	

a. Dependent Variable: Total Self-Efficacy in Intercultural English Language Use

**Appendix 17: List of Omani Participants' Reasons to Not Interact Meaningfully
with the Other in a Descending Order**

Table 1

No.	Barrier	Type of reason to not interact	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	My shy introvert personality	Personal	343	7.62	2.565
2	My negative perception of other culture(s)	cultural	343	5.74	2.193
3	Others' negative perception of my identity and culture	cultural	343	5.19	2.408
4	Less confidence in my English language abilities	linguistic	343	5.00	2.745
5	Family commitments	domestic	343	4.97	2.500
6	My own customs and traditions	cultural	343	4.66	1.980
7	Fear of negative images and reactions from my cultural group members	cultural	343	4.65	2.310
8	Less knowledge about other culture(s)	cognitive	343	3.85	1.972
9	Study/work commitments	Educational/professional	343	3.49	2.288
10	Others? (explain):				
	Valid N (listwise)		343		

Table 2

Type of reason to not interact	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cultural	343	6946.00	20.2507	3.87768
Personality	343	2615	7.62	2.565
Linguistic	343	1718	5.01	2.747
Family	343	1703	4.97	2.500
Cognitive	343	1316	3.84	1.959
Educational/professional	343	1198	3.49	2.288
Valid N (listwise)	343			

Table 3

Type of reason to not interact	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cultural	311	6271.00	20.1640	3.91714
Personality	311	2383	7.66	2.550
Family	311	1566	5.04	2.501
Linguistic	311	1551	4.99	2.726
Cognitive	311	1203	3.87	1.934
Educational	311	1081	3.48	2.298
Valid N (listwise)	311			

Appendix 18: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Interviewee: _____

Interviewee No.: _____

Country of Study Abroad: _____

Form of Online Interview: _____

Date of Interview: _____

Interview Length: _____

Introduction

Peace be with you, I am Ahmed Al-Abri, a PhD student at the University of Exeter, UK. I distributed a survey to complete in two periods of time. I would like to thank you for completing the two surveys. The aim of the survey you completed twice was to assess the impact of study abroad in the UK, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand on Omani students' self-efficacy in intercultural English language use, intercultural communicative competence and intercultural interaction frequency. I found there seemed to be no statistically significant differences between Omani students who study abroad and at home in the aforementioned aspects. The aim of this interview is to learn more about your intercultural experience you lived abroad.

Note: the quantitative inquiry findings were dismissed to the interviews when asked for as it was their right to know about these results. The questions asked to interviewees varied in accordance with their responses.

Topic	Question
General Information about the Interviewee	Can you please introduce yourself? (background, nationality, country and years of being abroad)
Reasons to study abroad	<p>Why did you choose to study abroad?</p> <p>Why did you particularly choose to study in the UK?</p>
Inability to develop interculturally beyond the levels developed at home	<p>Can you please describe your lived experience abroad in general?</p> <p>What did you like and not like about your lived experience abroad?</p> <p>Can you please describe your interactions with people while abroad? How do you feel about these interactions? Can you please tell me about people who were most often around you while abroad? who are they? Where are they from?</p> <p>How often did you interact with people from other cultures, the native English speakers in particular, daily or weekly while abroad? How much time did you often spend in your intercultural engagements while abroad? if less time, Why? If much time, how did you manage this?</p> <p>Did you have any relationships with people from other cultures, the native English speakers in particular? If yes, how did you form them? If no, why couldn't you?</p> <p>Did you experience any challenges in your intercultural interactions? What are these challenges? How did they challenge you? Did they have any impact, if any, on your interactions with people from other cultures while abroad? How?</p> <p>Have you experienced any unpleasant incidences while abroad? Can you describe any of these incidences? What action(s) did you take after experiencing these unpleasant incidences? How did you see people who were culturally different from you?</p>
Gained benefits of study abroad	<p>What did you benefit from study abroad?</p> <p>Can you please describe your English language abilities and communication capabilities before the experience and now?</p>

	<p>What are your suggestions to improve your study abroad experience in general and to experience more meaningful intercultural engagements in particular?</p>
<p>Students' Evaluation of study-abroad experience and its outcomes</p>	<p>After all, how did you see your study-abroad experience in general and its benefits in particular?</p> <p>Did the study-abroad experience meet your expectations? Can you explain, please?</p> <p>If you are given another chance to study abroad in the current country, would you consider taking this opportunity again? Why?</p>
<p>Other comments</p>	<p>Anything else you want to add about your experience abroad? Please feel free.</p> <p>Do you have any questions?</p>

Appendix 19: An Example of a Transcribed Semi-Structured Interview

Interviewee's pseudonym: Yahiya (Interviewee 8)

Interviewer: Why did you choose to study abroad?

Yahiya: I think studying abroad is a great experience to expand my knowledge, my skills about different topics in education. This is number one. The second reason is that it was only an option. there is no Ph. D program here in Oman. So, I have to study abroad because, you know, there is no other options here in Oman.

Interviewer: Did you say you studied abroad because you wanted to do improve your skills?

Yahiya: Yes, my knowledge about research in education, and my communication skills, my language skills, my other skills.

Interviewer: Did you improve your skills, your English language skills and communication skills in general?

Yahiya: Yes, to some extent yes. I think I have improved to some extent my English language and other skills like communication with others, maybe some computer skills, knowledge about different cultures, and customs.

Interviewer: You mentioned that you improved your English language. Can you give me some examples of improvement?

Yahiya: Ummmmm, hahahah (laugh with smile). I feel some improvement. In speaking, I have more confidence and also in terms of other things like vocabulary, listening, writing, to speaking. I think that there is an improvement. But, the improvement is not to the extent to which I hoped at the beginning of the journey. I thought I would be like a native speaker, but now I think I still feel I need to improve more because I think we think that if we go there, we will improve our language for a high extent. I think the most important thing here is the exposure to the language whether we are in Oman or in the UK. Here in the UK, we do not get exposed to the language, we do not interact with others. This is one of the reasons why we don't improve our language to the extent that we aim to.

Interviewer: What part of your English did you improve most?

Yahiya: Maybe speaking and writing.

Interviewer: I would like you to tell me about your daily interactions abroad. Whom do you interact most often with? How often do you interact with people of different cultures while abroad? Tell me about your friends if you have friends abroad. Tell me about these things.

Yahiya: Yes. In terms of my interactions, most of my interaction are with Omanis and Arabs, especially with Saudis. If you asked me why, because we have something in

common. We have the same culture, the same language. Even in terms of food and goals, we share the same interest. I feel more close to Omani and Arabs and others. The second thing is that in our School of Education, most of the students are Arabs and Chinese. But it is difficult to interact with Chinese because of their nature. They just want to be with themselves only. So, it was a must to interact with Arabs and Omanis. We do not have native speakers in our department. This is one of the reasons.

Interviewer: This is inside the university campus. What about your interactions outside the university?

Yahiya: Yeah, most of my interaction is inside the university. Outside the university, I spend most of the time with my family and with Arab friends, Omani friends. Most of the time, we interact in the shops, in restaurants with few interactions.

Interviewer: Do you mean you interacted most often with Omanis and Arabs in general?

Yahiya: Yeah

Interviewer: What about your interactions with people from other cultures, especially with the English people?

Yahiya: With English people, I didn't have any interaction with them. Maybe except two cases. I have a friend from the UK. He was a colleague actually. Sometimes, I have some interaction with him. And also another student, a girl student, is from the UK. She was a colleague. I sometimes had some interaction, but that was a normal interaction with people from the UK.

Interviewer: How often did you interact with him? And how much time did you spend with him?

Yahiya: Maybe Once or twice a week for 10 to 20 minutes in the restaurant. So maybe once or twice.

Interviewer: Ok. You told me that you interacted most with Arabs. Does that mean you used the Arabic language in most of your interactions abroad?

Yahiya: Yes, yes. I can say that maybe 80% of my interactions abroad were in Arabic or 70%

Interviewer: Interesting. You said at the beginning of the interview that you improved your speaking skill, how did you improve it?

Yahiya: We have to speak in English over there. So, I think there is an improvement. I used to be like, I couldn't speak English. I had to think in Arabic before speaking. I think now in English and I speak English. That's why I feel more confident.

Interviewer: Okay, you interacted with few English people abroad. What benefits did you get from these interactions?

Yahiya: The most important thing is speaking. I tended to improve my speaking, which was not the aim of the interaction. The aim of the interaction is to exchange knowledge about research and our studies. The other benefit is to improve my speaking skills and improve my confidence which is very important in my field to be like a native speaker of English.

Interviewer: You mentioned that you improved your speaking. We also have vocabulary, writing, and reading. Which one of these did you most get benefits from your interactions abroad?

Yahiya: In terms of interaction, of course, the speaking, but in general I can say I improved my writing because I have to write during the MSc and now for the PhD. I have to write a couple of hundreds of words. so I think that writing is the most important skill which I have improved. But in terms of interaction, it should be speaking. Interaction needs speaking and listening.

Interviewer: I would like you to describe your English before the experience and now.

Yahiya: Before coming to the UK, my English is not bad, but, I think, I didn't have that confidence my language. So before speaking I have to think of what I want to say. I have to choose the vocabulary. But now I speak without hesitation. And I feel more confident. Even if I make mistakes, sometimes I make mistakes, but I feel more confident. I didn't need to think about what I'm gonna say. I speak directly without hesitations.

Interviewer: Interesting. Let's go back to your interactions with people from other cultures. You mentioned that you interacted most with Arabs. So, what stopped you from engaging with English people or people from other cultures in general? Were there any barriers or challenges that you faced?

Yahiya: There were no challenges, but it is because of lack of interest. My interest was with Arab students. If I want to go to a restaurant, most of the customers are Arabs. At the university, It's the same. The interest is with Arabs because of culture. Even when we go to the prayer room, there are almost Arabs. I think it is more related to culture. There are no challenges to interact with others, but I feel more related to Arabs.

Interviewer: You said you interacted most with Arabs because of culture.

Yahiya: Yes.

Interviewer: How did you approach cultural differences? In other words, did the cultural differences between you and British people hinder or make your engagements with them difficult?

Yahiya: Yes. I think so. I think this is maybe the main reason of my interactions with Arabs rather than the British people is culture. I sometimes used to speak with them, to chat with them, to sit with them, but the very interesting difference is totally different from what in Oman. They speak about their girlfriends, what they drank last night, and things like that. For me, the interest is different, let's speak about politics, about sports, about other things. About girlfriends! What is private in our culture is not private in their culture, and vice versa. What is private for them is not private for us.

Interviewer: What do you mean? Can you give me an example?

Yahiya: For example, they like to speak about their daily life, their girlfriends, their mom, their father. In our culture, we do not like to speak about these things. We like to speak about general things. They like to talk about everything in their private life, their mothers, fathers, boyfriend, girlfriend and these things.

Interviewer: So most of your friends abroad are Arabs. Right?

Yahiya: Exactly

Interviewer: Did Arabs around you abroad hinder or stop you from interacting with people from other cultures?

Yahiya: No, not at all. It is the opposite. We usually encourage ourselves to interact with others. We say we have to interact with others and we have to engage with others. They actually support us.

Interviewer: But you couldn't interact with people from other cultures because of cultural differences in general.

Yahiya: Yeah. I have interaction with them, but it's not to the extent or to the highest level. I would interact if I have something with them or if we have something in common in terms of our study. This is the only thing. It's not related to our interest. There is nothing in common between me and them in terms of interest, in terms of culture. Just if I have something specific with them in terms of work, in terms of study.

Interviewer: Interesting. why did you choose exactly to study in the UK, not somewhere else, for example, the US, Australia, New Zealand or anywhere else?

Yahiya: This is, I think, one of the best questions which we need to ask ourselves about: why did we choose to study here? For me, I chose the UK for many reasons. The first one is that the UK has some high quality procedures in their universities. it's close to Oman, comparing to the US. We need only 7 hours of flight. And most of my friends, my colleagues usually go to the UK, and the UK, as a country, Oman has good relations with the UK. if there are any problems with the students I think things can be sorted out easily, but in the US the things are different. It is far away from our country. I feel more safe in the UK.

Interviewer: Interesting. Let's talk in general about your experience abroad. Did the experience meet your expectations?

Yahiya: Ummmm. In some parts yes. In other parts, no. For example, I improved my research skills, in my field, specifically about education, about how to use technology in education. In this term, yes. It meets my goals. In terms of outside our studies, no. In terms of interaction and intercultural communication, no. I feel that I should have better experience with them if I have to interact with others. I have to learn from them because no one would involve you to do what they do. We can learn from them. We can accept them. In this term, I turned to some extent to interact with others.

Interviewer: You mentioned you wanted to interact with others, you suggest that you need to interact with others. What do you need to interact with others? What do you need to do to help you interact with others?

Yahiya: I think I have to be more. What to say? [silent] I sometimes stop my research. They have trips to go to other parts of the UK, but I do not go with my colleagues [from other cultures]. I think I have to go. I have to interact with them. I have to go with them to a restaurant. I'm not 18 years old now and I'm more than 35, so I can control myself. I think I have to go with them, I have to interact with them to do something. No one will force me to do something I do not like. So, if I want to do something, I can do it. If I do not want, I can stop. So, if I repeat this experience again, one of the things I have to do is that I have to interact with others to learn from them.

Interviewer: Interesting. I would like to go again further with other questions. What did you like, or not like about your experience?

Yahiya: What thing I liked? It was a great experience to know people from different parts of the world. I have a lot of friends from Saudi Arabia, from Oman, from Kuwait, and China. I have another friend from Dominica and from Trinidad [?]. I have different friends from different parts of the world. This is the most important thing, in addition, of course, to my studies. The main purpose of study abroad is to achieve my studies. The other thing is that I know a lot of friends from different parts and I'm still now in contact with them. This is the most important thing and I know the life. I have improved my vision of life. I have seen how people suffer and how people interact. I feel that we are lucky to live in our countries. Life is easy. Everything is close to us and our social relations are so good. I know what the nation means, what does the country needs.

Yahiya Continues: What I did not like. Nothing in mind now. I might remember the answer later on.

Interviewer: Okay, I will even remind you of the question. Let's talk about your study. Was studying abroad or doing your PhD a barrier to your engagement with people abroad?

Yahiya: No. I do not think so, no. it is the opposite. It actually encourages me to interact with others because I have to ask, to learn from others. I have to attend seminars and workshops. So, it was a means to interact with others, but it was my fault, not because of my study. I had a lot of time. I spent just 5 to 6 hours in my study. I still have 17 hours.

Interviewer: Do you mean it is all about time management?

Yahiya: It is about that you should have the desire and intention to encourage you to interact with others. You should have a strong intention to interact with others. It is not a matter of study because I spend just 5 to 6 hours in my study.

Interviewer: Interesting. Did you encounter or experience any unpleasant incidence abroad?

Yahiya: Mmmmm. I do not think so. No. there's nothing in my mind now. But we see a lot of drunk people around, but we are used to it. It is something common.

Interviewer: We talked about English language, let's talk about your intercultural communication. I said this question at the beginning, but I would like you to elaborate more. Did you improve your intercultural communicative competence, your intercultural communication abilities?

Yahiya: What do you mean by intercultural?

Interviewer: intercultural interactions mean interactions with people from other cultures. The English language is only one part that makes you interact with others. There are other things you need in order to interact with others. So, regardless of your English language, did you face any difficulties when interacting or engaging with people abroad?

Yahiya: For me, the language is not a challenge. So, as I said, at the beginning, it is because of [the lack of] the interest, because of the culture, because what I like maybe they do not like. For example, they go to bars, they go to other places. For me, I just go to restaurants. so, I think it's because of the interest, not because of the language. There is nothing common between me and them. This is the mistake. I think I have to find something common. I'm sure that there are a lot of common things between us as human beings. But, it's our fault and their fault maybe. Therefore, we have to find a point where we can meet.

Interviewer: Interesting. What would you do to improve your experience in the future? Well, let me ask this question first. Would you study in the UK again?

Yahiya: For sure, 100%. It was a great experience. I learned a lot of things, but I believe what you are studying or what you are focusing on is, I believe, one of the most important things which we need to highlight, and I think you put your hand on the right thing. I think because of our culture, because of our nature, we don't have the intention and the desire to interact with others. I think maybe your recommendations

are very important recommendations, but I'm sure you will give us a good recommendation, how to interact with others, how to support our students to interact with others. Do they need professional courses before going abroad? I think this is one of the things which you have to think of, for example, any additional courses I mean here in Oman for like one month, two months, to tell them how to interact with others, how to engage with others. Even when there is nothing common in between, we have to find common things in between. We have to understand them. We have to understand how these people think because we need them more than they need us. We need to interact with them. We need to learn from them.

Yahiya continues: What you [addressing the researcher] are studying now is one of the most important things which we have to focus on and I'm looking forward to reading your recommendations. Insha Allah very soon.

Interviewer: Inshallah. What are your suggestions to improve your study in general and your intercultural engagement in particular abroad or for future Omani students?

Yahiya: As I just mentioned, I think it's possible to get them like professional course in one place or some things about how to communicate with others. We have to follow some of the students before sending them abroad. The other thing is that I think we have to choose to interview those students before sending them abroad. It is not just the students who get high marks, [but also] we need to send them. For example, high marks should be one of the criteria. For example, you can get like 50% for the marks and the other 50% for other skills. You have to interview students. We have to see what is the purpose of studying abroad? So, I think this is another thing. And also I think that the cultural attaché in London has to follow the students, has to ask them about their progress, about their communication with others. the Omani society is there. There are Omani societies in different cities. I think they have to encourage the students to interact with others, have to tell them that they can interact with others, especially the PhD students. The PhD students, our students who are above 30 years, I think, most of them, and unfortunately, most of them just think about their families, which is, of course, their right. And the other thing is that most of them don't want to interact with others because they actually say they need the PhD. So I think we need encouragement. We need to follow them the four years abroad.

Interviewer: Okay. You mentioned that before sending students abroad, they need to be interviewed. What qualities should the Omani students have before being sent abroad?

Yahiya: Students should be open minded to others, should have the intention to interact with others. Of course, they will say they want to interact with others, but I think the members of the committee, I know it's difficult, should have some skills how to know the students who are open-minded, but it's difficult. Wasta (influence) will interfere here, I know. This is a suggestion. I do not know if this is the right thing.

Interviewer: Your suggestions are important. That's why I'm listening to you.

Yahiya: It is difficult to interview because the Wasta will interfere and it's sometimes difficult to measure people's skills. If we can't do these interviews, we have to follow up the students. Before sending students abroad, give them a pre-session course, as I mentioned and then follow them. And the cultural attaché and the Omani student societies have a huge role over there in the UK.

Interviewer: How would the cultural attaché follow up thousands of students abroad? What do they need to do?

Yahiya: I know, there are only four to five people. They can increase the number of employees. And the Omani embassy has a lot of staff there.

Interviewer: You mentioned that some of the challenges that Omani students face abroad is because of themselves. They lack desire to interact with others. They don't tolerate cultural differences. And you mentioned also because of the Ministry of higher education here as they don't prepare students to study abroad. They don't have intercultural courses that prepare students to tolerate and how to deal with the cultural differences and even the nature of the experience abroad. You mentioned this, but what about the host university? What about the universities in the UK? Do they need to do something to help you interact with others?

Yahiya: At least according to my experience at our university, the university has tens and hundreds of programs, if you want to interact. They have the career zone. They have daily courses related to the language, to the culture, to the interaction. So if you join one of these courses, or you can join as many as you can of these courses. Also, there are networks. You can join these networks. I think the university has a massive number of courses. so I think it's not related to the university and also we can't control the university. I can blame myself, my attaché, my society. For the university, I think, they are doing their job.

Interviewer: Interesting. Would you like to add anything or to tell me more about your experience abroad?

Yahiya: In terms of Omani students, I think I told you about it, but about I think I have to repeat that your study is really significant. And I think your recommendations have to be taken into account. And I think it's also your role. It is not enough to just say this is my study and put it on the shelf. I think it's your role to follow up and to get to the Ministry of Higher Education. You're doing a great job. And I can say thank you to you. I think it's your role to follow up and to check. Just give them your study and asalam alaikum. I know you have very important points in your recommendations.

Interviewer: Interesting. I would like you to tell me about your feelings after spending years abroad, how do you feel about yourself and about your experience?

Yahiya: I have been studying in the UK since September 2016 and I am now almost in my fourth year. For me, it went very, very fast. I feel that I'm in my first year. So, the experience is really interesting. And I like it. And as I mentioned, I've learned a lot

of things. So it's been an experience. I couldn't say anything else. It's a great experience. Of course, it's not perfect. I have lots of ups and downs. Sometimes I miss the country [Oman]. I miss my family because now I'm now in Oman. But it was a great experience. And if you ask me do you want to repeat it? Yes, I want to repeat it again and again.

Interviewer: Thank you so much about your points and suggestions. They are very interesting and important to me.

Appendix 20: Thematic Table with Some Sample Quotes and a Screen Shot

Example of Coding

Figure 1: A Screen Shot of Coding Example

“The UK was considered more attainable to me than the USA, Australia and Canada, for example, because it was closer to Oman. The university courses can be completed in a year.” Inter 3

(shorter distance to home country/shorter period for study completion and qualification attainment)***

“I chose the UK for many reasons. The first one is that the UK has some high learning quality standards in their universities. It's closer to Oman, comparing to the US. We need only 7 hours of flight *** And most of my friends and colleagues usually go to the UK. Oman has good relations with the UK. If there are any problems with the students, I think things can be sorted out easily, but in the US, things are different. It is far away from our country. I feel safer in the UK.****” Inter 8

(Quality of education/ shorter distance to home country/security)

positive background information about the experience and close individuals' encouragements

“For me because to have a master's degree in the UK, you need only to study for one year. So that was practical for me especially that I wanted to continue my career as well.*** And because of what I also heard and saw, I really loved the UK and wanted to travel there... [and] also having some background knowledge as my husband also at that time, went there and he was one of the people who encouraged me to go there. ****of course, besides all of these, the UK has very good reputed universities.” Inter9

(shorter period of time for the qualification attainment/ positive background information about the experience/ others' encouragements/good reputation and quality of education

Table 1: Overview of the reasons to Omani students' inability to benefit from study abroad, gained benefits and experience satisfaction

Main theme	Definition	Sub-themes	code	Sample quote
RQ 3: What were the possible reasons, according to Omani students, why the quantitative results showed no study-abroad effect?				
(1) Attitudes towards cultural differences	Refer to students' attitudes towards the general study abroad experience prior to departure (study abroad goals), and various cultural differences and culturally distinct individuals while abroad and ultimately intercultural interactions.	Motives for studying abroad (Refers to any kind of reasons that make students study abroad in the UK) RQ4: What were the Omani students' reported motives to study abroad particularly in the UK?	Professional development refer to the motives to develop professionally. Professional development here includes linguistic, career, specialization, personal, and educational development as well as social reputation	"I chose to study abroad because I wanted a more comprehensive educational experience than what was offered here in Oman, to learn how to depend on myself more, meet new people, experience living abroad and visiting new places, and of course the added benefit of having "UK graduate" added to my CV that makes you automatically more appealing to companies wanting to recruit new employees." Inter3 I thought it would add a lot to me, for example, in terms of the language, getting new insights into my career, and so on. So, I wanted really to try getting my master's degree in a different country, from different perspective and so on." Inter9
			Enjoyment and excitement for novelty Refers to the affective motives for undergoing a new different experience.	Because it is a <u>new experience</u> for me, I wanted to try a new educational system in a different country. I heard a lot about the UK, so I really wanted to try that experience. Inter9 I've always been a big fan of traveling and meeting new people from different cultures, different places. So, I'm quite <u>excited</u> about the idea. I also <u>enjoyed</u> the idea of independence and wanting to become more dependent on myself. Inter 7
			Experience Practicality refers to the short distance and time required for arriving at the study abroad destination as well as completing	"The UK was considered <u>more attainable</u> to me than the USA, Australia and Canada, for example, because it was <u>closer to Oman</u> . <u>The university courses can be completed in a year.</u> " Inter 3 "For me because to have a master's degree in the UK, <u>you need only to study for one year</u> . So <u>that was practical for me especially that I wanted to continue my career as well</u> . Inter9

			the intended course.	
			<p>Security and comfort zone</p> <p>Refers to the perceived feeling of security and comfort for taking the decision to study abroad due to previous good experiences and familiarity with the study abroad country</p>	<p>most of my friends and colleagues usually go to the UK. Oman has good relations with the UK. If there are any problems with the students, I think things can be sorted out easily, but in the US, things are different. It is far away from our country. I feel safer in the UK. Inter 8</p> <p>“I had a chance to travel to the UK in the past, and I studied English there for two months in one of the English cities. So, I was a little bit aware of the country and its culture. I liked the country, so I decided to study in the UK, rather than studying in other countries” Inter1</p>
			<p>An obligatory experience</p> <p>Refer to any compulsory inevitable reason to study abroad in the current country.</p>	<p>The UK was not my first option. I actually did not intend to study in the UK...My plan was to study in the United States. The problem was with my program, as I couldn't find a university offering the same program I was looking for. So, I didn't have much time to look for it. Also, the sponsor was insisting for certain universities, so I didn't have any options...So I ended up in the UK. Inter11</p>
			<p>Prior to experience positive expectations and assumptions</p> <p>Refer to the positive expectations and perceived attainments of studying abroad formed in relation with the available promising information about study abroad.</p>	<p>“This was based on my own experience because I did the bachelor and master's degree as well abroad. Therefore, <u>I had a very good learning experience</u>. I also <u>assumed</u> that my language would be more developed, and I can interact with the other culture and have that experience other than just simply education.” Inter 5</p> <p>“...when a student goes for the first time to, let's say, to Britain, Australia or Canada or the USA to learn English, they would <u>expect</u> that the host family would be there for them 24/ 7 practicing their English with them.” Inter1</p>

		Attitudes towards cultural differences while abroad	Limited tolerance of cultural differences Refers to the attitude of rejecting differences in lifestyles, foods, ways of doing things and so on.	“The cultural differences were the main reason to my limited interactions with them. These people have different cultures. For us, it was difficult to spend a very long time with them, not only because of the food, but also because of the lifestyle.” Inter 10
			Limited motivation to interact Refer to the limited desire and willingness to build meaningful maintained interactions with the Other	“simply not in the mood to communicate.” Female (survey response) “I think because of our culture and nature, we don't have the intention and the desire to interact with others.” Inter 8
			Limited open-mindedness to the Other (refers to the limited readiness and welcoming acts to consider new outer-circle counterparts for meaningful interactions, no matter of cultural differences and opinions.)	We are not very open to others and other cultures due to our customs and traditions. So, it [interaction] is very limited”. Inter 5 “Students should be open-minded to others, and should have the intention to interact with others. Inter 8
(2)Limited Confidence and capabilities in intercultural English language use	Refers to the less confident use of the English language in real life interactions with the Other due to the limited English language	Limited confidence in English language		“I interacted less with people from other cultures maybe because of trust and being more comfortable and confident to interact with those who speak the same language [Arabic language]” Inter9 “Before I started my bachelor, I thought my English learnt in Oman was perfect. When I went to England [...] for my bachelor and

	capabilities of graduates from the educational system in Oman			started studying with those people, I found that my English was nothing. Inter2
			Limited Speaking abilities	<p>I didn't struggle in doing the presentations because they are prepared in advance, but I was struggling really when I have a face to face conversation, as you need to get that quick response to some of the questions in conversations. Inter 2</p> <p>“At the beginning of the first two years, I found it slightly difficult to interact with the people from different cultures because of language barriers. [...] I would feel a bit as if there was a wall between me and everybody else who doesn't speak Arabic. Sometimes, I would feel like I'm inferior to other people because of my lack of language abilities. So, I think language was the main thing.” Inter 6</p>
			Limited listening abilities	<p>“I did not like the difficulty of sometimes understanding the different accents of people abroad and [thus] sometimes asking them to repeat themselves.” Inter 3</p> <p>At the beginning, [...]It was difficult for us to understand the Scottish accent. It was difficult for us to understand the people who were talking to us when, for example, calling taxis, or ordering food from restaurants. Inter 10</p>
			Limited vocabulary and knowledge of topics under discussion	<p>“[...] I think it was harder to make deep conversations about, for example, politics, sociology and current issues because I didn't have the right vocabulary, and I think I wasn't as eloquent and fluent. So, if people argue with me, I'll just be quiet and I wouldn't try to express my opinions at that time.” Inter6</p> <p>“Because we are told to not go and discuss issues like these with people. I am talking about your country [Oman], and things like that. I even don't have enough information about this, so I do not want to speak about something which I don't know about. I do not know about the economy in my country. I don't know about many things.” Inter 5</p>

(3)Limited intercultural personality quality	Refers to the personality characteristics that refrain individuals from experiencing meaningful interactions with the Other.	Innately shy and introvert		<p>“I am introvert, so I tend to avoid being around people as much as possible regardless of their cultures.” Female (survey response)</p> <p>“I would describe myself as a shy person. So, I really hesitate a lot to approach people, and to get in contact with them.” Inter 2</p>
		Shyness of incompetent English and fear of perceived consequences		<p>“I believe that we are shy and afraid of committing mistakes in English, and people might laugh at us, especially we are not speaking the language. It is not our native language.” Inter 2</p> <p>“That's all because of my language. So, I'm a bit shy. I should not talk. I don't want others to laugh at me.” Inter4</p>
		Fear of intercultural misunderstandings and violation of host culture taboos		<p>“fear of being misunderstood by others due to cultural differences.” Female (survey response)</p> <p>“we are afraid of maybe doing something that is culturally not relevant to the culture in here.” Inter 2</p>
(4)Limited regulation of negative intercultural emotions	Refers to the control and resilience of negative emotional reactions occurring due to perceiving and experiencing negative incidences with people of distinct cultures.			<p>“of course, it impacted me when you hear the odd comment of things like you're a terrorist, go back to your country, things like that. [...] We were always careful when we went out, but I don't think that bothered me too much because the majority of people are quite accepting my culture and my religion, so it comes from a small number of people who are probably not in the full mental state.” Inter 7</p> <p>“I studied with them, and we worked together and they're nice, but you can tell that there isn't something innocent or normal in our interaction. You can feel the assumptions when you talk to them. As time goes on, you just become tired, and say why I care about interacting with those people or even trying to be friends with them? I'd rather be with my other international friends who don't have these assumptions or just my Muslim friends who are from different cultures, like British Muslim friends.” Inter 6</p>
(5)Limited Intercultural	Refer to any kind of skills that facilitate			The main barrier was perhaps their culture [. Their culture] was more open towards drinking alcohol and going to such places, while I did

communication skills	meaningful communication with people from other cultures as well as the skills individuals have developed to escape and avoid intercultural interactions			<p>not enjoy that scene. So, although I did befriend some English people, their preference of these activities stopped me from going out with them and as such, <u>drifting away</u>.” Inter3</p> <p>“I tried to adjust my own behavior. For example, when they invited us to a bar or to have coffee, I try to be very polite and diplomatic in rejecting that. I don't want to embarrass them” Inter 5</p>
(6)Limited intercultural cognition and Awareness	Refers to individuals' limitation in awareness of the experience abroad, host culture, its people, and knowledge of handling a stable everyday life abroad as well as the prevalence and adoption of stereotypes.	<p>Limited intercultural knowledge and awareness</p> <p>Refers to the knowledge and understanding of the experience abroad, the host culture and its people, and subsequently how to interact with these people.</p>		<p>“I still do not know their culture very well. So, I think about it a lot in my head, how I'm going to approach them, what I'm going to say, how to do this? how to do that with them? Is that okay? Is that not? Is that acceptable with them? Is that not acceptable with them? So, all of these questions are in my mind and I find it a bit challenging, especially when talking about cultures, what is acceptable to them? What is not acceptable to them to do? So that is the biggest challenge I believe.” Inter 2</p> <p>“especially for the people who haven't been abroad, I would truly recommend that they spend time with homestay families for a year or so <u>to know the culture, and traditions of the country a bit more</u>, and even simple things such as the hygiene and the recycling system, as well as the bus system which is among the things that are not easy to understand.” Inter 7</p>
		<p>Limited knowledge of general life management and daily living requirements</p> <p>Refers to the knowledge of the necessities to settle and handle general life abroad.</p>		<p>“especially for the people who haven't been abroad, I would truly recommend that they spend time with homestay families for a year or so to know the culture, and traditions of the country a bit more, <u>and even simple things such as the hygiene and the recycling system, as well as the bus system which is among the things that are not easy to understand</u>.” Inter 7</p> <p>“for example, how much time does a student need to register in an electricity company? Some students struggle for about 5, 6, and 7 days, and sometimes even more than a week just to get to know how to do it. It would be a good idea for students' associations, let's say, from Oman or other countries to prepare booklets in which they explain what you need to do about these different daily life aspects, so you get to know about these things before you even travel. You could arrange for things. you</p>

				could get to know these things. And then when you are there, you are fully aware or at least you are aware to a great extent of what you are supposed to do there.” Inter 1
		Negative intercultural stereotypes refer to the negative mind images, assumptions and overgeneralizations about people from other cultures, which do not have solid experienced evidence.		The British people, from what I have first heard from my friends who studied in the UK before, and also from friends in the United States, are quite conservative, so you cannot make friends as in the United States.” Inter 11 “I feel we, Omanis, have an impression that these people are close [introvert]. They do not like to talk to others, comparing to the Americans. So, we do not have that courage to go and approach them and talk to them.” Inter 2
(7)Educational challenges	Refers to any kind of educational issues that challenge the students’ engagement with the host culture and its people.	Limited research knowledge and incompatible learning skills		Yeah. I think they [the educational challenges] are some of the reasons that encouraged me to interact with my close friends” Inter10 “if students are fully aware of research skills and research philosophies, they would definitely have more time to focus on their subject areas and they would have time to probably attend gatherings and educational events which revolve around the subject matters or the fields of their studies. They would have time also to explore the country to get to know about the regulations there, [...]. Because students, in fact, struggle in the first two years just to get to know and learn these things, especially ...the ones who are being abroad for the first time, and especially in cities where there are no others from the same country, who would definitely support them.” Inter 1
		Limited awareness of the host educational system Refers to the limited understanding of the new learning environment due to scarcity of information.		“...I wanted from the Ministry of Higher Education and those who are sponsoring us to study abroad to give us a clear picture of what is going on in these universities abroad. We haven’t had enough information about these universities and their systems.[...] they did not give us enough information about these universities and their systems. Inter 5 “they’re in need also to be aware of what their obligations are [...]. This should be done before students travel to study. This would definitely reduce the time they spend on these issues and give them more time to interact with

				the culture and people there, and to focus on things that would really add to their language, knowledge, experiences, and so on.” Inter1
		Study commitments and time restrictions		<p>“you as a PhD student were expected to spend at least eight to nine hours on a daily basis working on your PhD and one of the major issues was that the majority, if not all, of students there in that program were Arab PhD students. They had this huge educational load on them.” Inter 1</p> <p>“I am quite busy all the days. From time to time, I have to finish my assignments, especially it's a very intensive program. The opportunity to meet people from other cultures depends on how much time I have.” Inter 4</p>
(8)Family Commitments	Refers to any kind of family commitments that challenge individuals’ meaningful interaction with the host culture and its people.			<p>“After the hours I spent at the campus, I was busy with my family at the weekends. I was sometimes busy traveling around with my family, and also looking after the house during the day and finishing things that I didn't have time to do during the working days, and so on.” Inter 1</p> <p>one of the challenges that we've got here is having a family in here. Sometimes this would hinder and prevent you from doing all of these activities because you have some responsibilities as well to your family.” Inter 2</p>
(9)Incompetent intercultural communication behaviors	Refers to students’ lack of interaction initiative as well as limited frequency, depth (time) and breadth of interactions with host people abroad.	Limited intercultural interaction initiatives		<p>I think both parties should interact and it's to be honest more on the part of the international students. They should be the ones who initiate interactions with the locals. Inter 1</p> <p>“I could have joint, interacted and engaged more. I really feel regret because I didn't.” Inter 2</p>
		Limited frequency and depth in the initiated intercultural interactions		<p>“I did interact with English people on a daily basis at shops, in the bus, and on campus, but the depth of the encounters was low. It wasn't really up to my expectations.” Inter 1</p> <p>About interactions with English people, “<u>Maybe Once or twice a week</u> for 10 to 20 minutes in the restaurant.” Inter 8</p>

		the less time spent in these encounters.		<p>“[I interact] with the neighbors, maybe, let's say, <u>once every two weeks or three weeks</u>. We have a visit and then we <u>talk about something very general</u>.” Inter 2</p> <p>“Just circumstances changed with having a baby in the last 10 months or so. So obviously, not as often now. Before, I'd say, <u>once a month at least</u>.” Inter 7</p>
		<p>Limited breadth in intercultural interactions contexts</p> <p>Refers to the limited range and contexts of individuals' intercultural encounters due to their limited flexibility with different cultural groups and adaptability to various intercultural contexts.</p>		<p>“I'd say [at the] university campus. Our main interactions would be for studying together just, at the library or somewhere else at the university. We might meet up for lunch breaks. So, mainly it goes to [the] campus. Most of the time, I would say [at the] campus.” Inter 6</p> <p>“inside the university we met mates from different countries. [...] But when we were outside, we usually spent our time with our friends from Gulf countries like Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Some of them were from Oman as well.” Inter 9</p>
		High frequency of inner-circle interactions	Comfort zone due to the large numbers of Arabs abroad, and subsequently commonalities	<p>Most of my interaction is with Omanis and Arabs, especially with Saudis. If you asked me why? because we have something in common. We have the same culture, the same language, even in terms of food and goals. We share the same interest. I feel closer to Omanis and Arabs. The second thing is that at our school of education, most of the students are Arabs and Chinese. But, it is difficult to interact with Chinese because of their nature. They just want to be with themselves only. So, it was a must to interact with Arabs and Omanis. We do not have native speakers in our department.” Inter 8</p> <p>“they [Omani students] have friends from our culture because just it's easier for everybody for the culture they share among themselves.” Inter 6</p>
			Educational support	“My very close friends were Omani friends who went with me to study abroad. We were

				all living in the same flat, sharing everything together. Since we were spending all the day together, we were actually talking about everything, for example, things that we need in our study. We were going to the university together. if we have questions and inquiries about our studies or whatever, we were always there to support and help each other.” Inter 9
			Everyday life support	“being with students from the same country or from neighboring countries of the same culture is not really a bad thing, as I said before. It does have its benefits. For example, the students who are there for the first time, get a lot of help from these students. They try to make their life much easier there, and they provide a lot of support to them” Inter1
			Emotional support and security	“I would like to travel again with my close friends because that would make me, psychologically and emotionally secure and comfortable, and that would actually encourage me to do my best in my studies and so.” Inter 9 “I think I would have wanted to be closer to my Omani friends. I would have loved to have Omani friends at the university. I think that would have improved my mental health, my self-esteem and all that.” Inter 6
Study abroad outcomes RQ5: RQ5: What benefits did the Omani students report to have gained while abroad?	Refers to any kind of benefits individuals gain from studying abroad	No perceived improvements		“studying at a university where there are a lot of other Arabs and Omanis means that there is no difference between studying here in Oman and studying abroad. So, what’s the difference if I’m staying with Omanis and Arabs living in the same house and going out together?” Inter 4
		Limited English language improvement		“regarding English, when you talk to Arab students, what kind of improvements would you get out of conversations in Arabic?” Inter 1

				<p>“Yeah, <u>more vocabulary some time and the use of vocabulary as well.</u> Yeah, sometimes we may know some vocabulary, but we don't know how to use them <u>and expressions as well</u>” Inter 4</p>
		Professional and research skills development		<p>We have to make use of technology and how to make use of electronic programs like EndNote, Nvivo, and SPSS. I came to know about critical reading, how to write critique articles and a systematically critical literature review, how to choose the best methodology, ethics, and quality of research. Inter 5</p> <p>“<u>Mmmmm. I improved my research skills, in my field of study, specifically about education, how to use technology in education. In this term, yes. It meets my goals.</u> In terms of outside our studies, no. In terms of interaction and intercultural communication, no. I feel that I should have had a better experience with them if I had interacted with others. Inter 8</p>
		Limited intercultural competence development		<p>“Mmmmm. I improved my research skills, in my field of study, specifically about education, how to use technology in education. In this term, yes. It meets my goals. <u>In terms of outside our studies, no. In terms of interaction and intercultural communication, no. I feel that I should have had a better experience with them if I had interacted with others.</u> Inter 8</p> <p>I wasn't able to know more about the people there, to get deeply involved into cultural issues to get to know more about the British families. It wasn't very possible to do so.” Inter 1</p> <p>“The streets, things to do, currency, where to buy food from, the amount of money needed to survive per month for a student, weather and so on.” Inter3</p>
		Enjoyment and some personal development		<p>“I have learned to depend on myself, that I am able to travel abroad and live alone for a long time, that I can move houses within a foreign country quickly without trouble and without needing anyone’s help. Inter 3</p>

<p>emotional response to study abroad</p> <p>RQ6: What were the Omani students' perceptions of the study-abroad experience in general and its outcomes in particular?</p>	<p>Refers to the emotional reactions to the study abroad experience in general and gained benefits from the experience</p>			<p>“it was <u>a good experience.</u>” Inter 2</p> <p>“It's <u>a great experience.</u> Of course, it's not perfect. I have lots of ups and downs. Sometimes I miss the country [Oman]. I miss my family. But, it was <u>a great experience.</u> And if you ask me do you want to repeat it? Yes, I want to repeat it again and again.” Inter 8</p> <p>“No. I was expecting much more from the university, but unfortunately I couldn't because everything is about academic things, which I am really fed up of. Everything is about research, which I know about. Perhaps I improved my English at some point.” Inter11</p>
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Appendix 21: Table of Qualitative Data Obtained from The Distributed Survey

(N=15 UK-Based Respondents)

Open-Ended Question Respondent No.	Gender	Obtained Quote
1	Female	Difficulties with the correct English word pronunciation.
2	Female	The nature of my personality and love of staying alone (introversion).
3	Female	It is all because of English.
4	Male	Fear of culturally distinct individuals' negative perceptions and reactions.
5	Female	Other people who are in my cultural group give wrong images of us.
6	Female	Shyness
7	Female	I am an introvert so I tend to avoid being around people as much as possible regardless of their culture.
8	Female	My shy personality clashes with my desire to join cultural groups.
9	Female	Simply not in the mood to communicate.
10	Female	cultural activities that are against my religion such as drinking or clubbing.
11	Male	Embarrassed about my English language.
12	Female	Not welcoming talk with me in work groups. (Translated from Arabic)
13	Female	People from other cultures are rude sometimes.
14	Female	fear of being misunderstood by others due to cultural differences.
15	female	Fear of looking like a fool in English.